SHOW CASE
SHOW CASE

A DESIGN-TECH PORTFOLIO FOR

THEATRE AND ALLIED FIELDS

SECOND EDITION

RAFAEL JAEN

DEVELOPING, MAINTAINING,

AND PRESENTING

Focal Press is an imprint of Elsevier
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preface</th>
<th>ix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PART I WHAT IS A DESIGN-TECH PORTFOLIO?

#### Chapter 1: What is a Design-Tech Portfolio?
- The Winning Design Portfolio 4
- The Winning Technical Portfolio 15

#### Chapter 2: Traditional Portfolio Development Techniques
- Planning and Creation 24
  - Models, Styles, Dimensions, and Handling 24
- New Trends 30
- Inside the Case: Supplies and Materials 31
  - Multiring Refill Pages 31
  - Three-Ring Binder Sheet Protectors 31
- Specialty Layout Materials and Supplies 32
  - Where to Find Specialty Materials and Supplies 34
- Basic Strategy to Get the Right Materials 34
- Brother MFC-6490CW With Wireless 35
- Product Review: Brother MFC-6490CW 35

#### Chapter 3: The Effective Showcase
- General Considerations 40
- Organizing the Body of Work: Beginning, Middle, and End 40
  - The Beginning 40
  - The Middle 41
  - The End 41
- Presenting Visual Content: Page Layout Options 43
  - Opening Page 45
  - Horizontal Layout 46
  - Vertical Layout 49
- Inserts: Adding Conversation Pieces 49
- Featuring Best Artwork, News/Media Reviews, and Photographs 52
  - Back Pocket: Research and Organizational Paperwork 55
- The Designer and Technician’s Archives 56
- Marketing and Networking: Identifying Portfolio Requirements by Venue 56
  - College Applications 60
  - Organizations That Offer Portfolio Reviews 60
Multimedia Sharing and Social Media 139
About Interactive Portfolios 152
Final Words: Things to Know When Designing Websites 154
  What is a Domain Name? 154
  What are Domain Name Registrars? 154
  How Do I Know I Am Buying from a Real Registrar? 154
  What Are Some Recommended Resources for People Starting Out? 155

Chapter 8: Digital Portfolio Do’s and Don’ts 157

PART III PRESENTING AND MARKETING THE PORTFOLIO

Chapter 9: Portfolio Presentation Techniques 163
  The Professional and Appropriate Appearance for Portfolio Presentation 164
  Foundations of Presenting
    Being Present, Presenting, and Leaving a Present 165
  Post-Interview Maintenance 170
  Self-Evaluation 170
  Networking: What’s Next? 171

Chapter 10: Portfolio Presentation Techniques Do’s and Don’ts 173
  Do’s 174
  Don’ts 174

Chapter 11: Design-Tech Résumés, CVs, Business Cards, and Stationery 177
  Intent and Purpose of a Résumé 178
  How to Present Your Work History and Education 178
  The Design-Tech Résumé: Specific Expectations 179
    Résumé Formatting 180
      A Blueprint for an Effective Résumé Presentation 181
    The Bio and the Curriculum Vitae 184
  Other Marketing Tools: Business Cards and Brochures 185
    Tips on Successful Use of Business Cards and Brochures as a Marketing Tool (or as a “Present”) 185

Chapter 12: Design-Tech Résumés, CVs, Business Cards, and Stationery Do’s and Don’ts 191
  Questions a Résumé Must Answer 192
  Design-Tech Résumés, CV, Business Cards, and Stationery Do’s 193
  Design-Tech Résumés, CV, Business Cards, and Stationery Don’ts 193
PART 4  PORTFOLIO MAINTENANCE AND NEXT STEPS

Chapter 13: Establishing Goals and Reviewing, Choosing, and Updating Work  
   Rafael Jaen Teaching Points 1: The Carrying Case 197  
   Rafael Jaen’s Teaching Points 2: Featured Works 197  
   Rafael Jaen’s Teaching Points 3: Portfolio Size 198  
   Rafael Jaen’s Teaching Points 4: Communicating Process 199  
   Rafael Jaen’s Teaching Points 5: Organization 200

Chapter 14: Self-Assessment 203  
   The Basics of a Self-Evaluation 204  
   The Comprehensive Self-Evaluation 204

Chapter 15: Planning for the Next Job 209  
   Why Planning? What Planning? 210  
   Putting it Together 210  
   The Big Picture: The Design-Tech Career Concept 210  
   Your Concept: Identifying Practical Considerations 210  
   The Small Steps: Your Blueprint for Short-Term Goals 212

Chapter 16: Words of Wisdom: Do’s and Don’ts Highlight Summary 215  
   Portfolio Development Do’s: Good Practices 216  
   Portfolio Development Don’ts 216  
   Digital Portfolio Do’s and Don’ts 217  
   Theatre, TV, and Film Portfolio Presentation Techniques Do’s and Don’ts 217  
   Résumé, CV, and Business Cards Do’s and Don’ts 218

PART 5  CONTRIBUTORS


I first got interested in portfolio development in the 1980s. While in college, I created an art book sampler that helped me transfer from a renowned architectural school in South America to the BFA Theatre Design Program at New York University—not a small accomplishment for someone who didn’t speak English! Later, I used various formats to get internships in my field, get into graduate school, get jobs, and get a teaching position in higher education. Through the years one thing has remained constant: Every goal I set up for career development has been dependent on a portfolio. These combined experiences inspired the first edition of this book. After the book’s publication, I had the opportunity to present many workshops across the country and observe numerous trends. I have also had the privilege of chairing portfolio reviews for various regional chapters of the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF), the U.S. Institute for Theater Technology (USITT), and United Scenic Artists (USA) 829. These opportunities, combined with the growing interest in digital portfolios, branding, and marketing, have refueled my interest.

Why a Second Edition?

I wrote the first edition to assist others after I realized that there was a need for a comprehensive reference book. With the second edition I want to expand the chapters and explore 21st-century approaches, including branding, social networking, and interactive e-portfolios. As a comprehensive guide, this book’s main objective is to bring excitement to the process of building a portfolio, helping plan and develop details such as personal presentation, pages layout, content variety, aesthetic sequencing, marketing, and next steps. It also covers a wide range of aspects, from the beginner’s portfolio to the advanced portfolio and from the traditional portfolio to the e-portfolio. Each chapter features interviews, essays, and updated visual samples plus lists of “do’s and don’ts” provided by experienced professionals in a variety of design-tech fields. In addition, I have been able to gather a superb cast of contributors at different stages of their careers, including recent graduate students, officers of renowned organizations, and international theater artists. The book also features art directors to represent narrative artists in the allied fields of film, TV, and other media. To this end the book is designed as a reference guide, workbook, and inspirational tool. The final objective is to assist the reader in the process of developing an excellent showcase that can be used to apply for graduate school, to pursue new jobs in the field, and for career marketing purposes.

The Parts

The book consists of five main parts with various expanded and updated chapters. Each chapter has beautiful graphics. Part 1 is dedicated to the realization of effective portfolio showcases and identifies materials and techniques used to produce them. The chapters in this part also identify specific requirements by discipline, including scenery, costumes, lighting, and sound, and cover the various portfolio requirements to apply for graduate school, jobs in the field, and professional organizations and to be used for promotional purposes. Part II is dedicated to the development and use of e-portfolios and looks at digital approaches, software options, and Web servers in this area. Part III is about presentation and marketing; it covers first impressions, how to develop personal presentation techniques, and how to build effective résumés, business cards, and brochures. Part IV offers key information in regard to the maintenance and updating of traditional and digital portfolios. Each chapter features real samples from a wide range of professionals in the field and a page of “do’s and don’ts” with comments from experts in each design-tech
discipline. Finally, Part V contains the biographies of the many contributors.

This book also includes detailed information on helpful subjects such as:

- Steps to develop and maintain an effective traditional portfolio
- Steps to create an effective e-portfolio, digital slide show, and/or a website
- Considerations in choosing software and Web servers for e-portfolios
- Personal presentation and rapport-building tips
- Steps to develop versatile and/or purpose-specific résumés, business cards, brochures, and stationery
- Planning next steps in developing existing portfolios and marketing plans

In Conclusion

A design-tech portfolio is a showcase of a designer or technician’s process, resourcefulness, and artistry. This showcase is key in opening new doors and getting into choice colleges, obtaining scholarships, and getting new jobs in the field. With new expectations in the 21st century, putting together a (traditional or digital) portfolio for presentation can seem like an impossible undertaking. The process can become time consuming and challenging. The objective of this book is to offer useful information that can motivate and aid in the process of developing and maintaining a design-tech portfolio.

I hope you find each chapter useful, inspiring, and helpful!

Best wishes,

Rafael
Introduction to Developing and Maintaining a Design-Tech Portfolio: A Guide for Theatre, Film, and TV, First Edition

At the time that I finished graduate design school as a costume designer, a portfolio was a fairly uncomplicated affair. It consisted of a case: leather if you could afford it, plastic or fabric covered if you could not. We had all been encouraged to draw large sketches in school, so our portfolios were, out of necessity, also large, usually measuring $24 \times 36$ inches. Inside they were equipped with flimsy plastic pages, which we eventually replaced with the infinitely preferable, but also significantly heavier, polypropylene (vinyl) pages.

The rules were simple: produced work in the front, class projects in the back, strongest work first, update it regularly, and be prepared to show it anywhere.

Although the guidelines for assembling and maintaining a portfolio were straightforward, my classmates and I spent countless hours working and reworking our sketches, poring over and selecting photographs, reorganizing layouts, and critiquing each other’s work. Before long, opportunities arose to present our portfolios to obtain work as costume designers and assistants.

I showed my portfolio everywhere. I showed it to producers in their offices, to designers in their studios and costume shops, and to directors wherever I could. I showed it sitting on the floors of rehearsal rooms. I even showed it in restaurants. “Oh! Do you do weddings?” the waitress exclaimed, looking at my production of Faust. I found that directors always asked about the other directors, and producers always asked about budgets. Costume designers always looked the most carefully and asked the widest range of questions.

Every time I showed my portfolio I came across something to remove and thought of something new to include, so I managed to keep it regularly updated. The advent of color copying and resizing capabilities added to the flexibility I needed to refurbish my portfolio. Suddenly, I could show many more sketches in much less space. I could include work from more shows, even my research. The possibilities were endless.

I had been out of school for many years when I found that the need to show my portfolio to get work was lessening. Because I was looking at it less frequently, I was not maintaining it as regularly. And, gradually, I found I had less and less time to devote to its upkeep, although the amount of material I wanted to include was increasing.

As a guest lecturer, however, I was frequently asked to display my portfolio to students. Although somewhat outdated, it was the perfect layout with the perfect amount of content to display in the space of an hour, the average amount of time for such a presentation.

Although in a display setting I seemed to achieve the ideal length and layout, there still remained a considerable amount of material that I had yet to add, and my portfolio was already extremely heavy (I practically needed the services of a sherpa to help me carry it around). It seemed impossible to include everything, and I discovered an even greater dilemma in the question of what exactly I wanted to show. I found I no longer knew how I wanted to represent myself through my portfolio.

For many years I had been reviewing portfolios for the United Scenic Artists (USA) 829 costume exam. Initially, the exam consisted not only of this review but also, more important, an extensive home project that was legendary for its ability to terrorize applicants. At that time, the portfolio was only half the equation.

A few years ago the home project for costume designers in the eastern region of the United States was eliminated. It was determined that the costume
business had changed. Designers no longer had to demonstrate that they could design a wide range of events chosen by the exam committee. If they were being hired for jobs with companies that had a collective bargaining agreement with International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) USA 829 and had both a portfolio that fulfilled the union requirements and three letters of recommendation, they were qualified to join. The exam committee laid out the new portfolio requirements very carefully. In their eyes at least, the portfolio gained a new level of importance.

The portfolio requirements are specific; applicants are not encouraged to put too much energy into making a concise book for presentation to our panel of reviewers. Instead we ask to see two complete projects for which the applicant has been the principal costume designer or first assistant within the past two years. These projects must include a full set of swatched, full-color sketches, production photos, bibles, and research. We also want to see other projects, spread out around a table or stacked up in groups, as well as supporting production photos, research, and bibles if the project has been produced.

Even as I was helping students and young designers prepare their portfolios for work and union interviews as well as graduate school applications, my own portfolio quandary loomed large. I wondered about the possibilities. Maybe I should consider a smaller portfolio? Did I need an archival portfolio? What about digital? A friend sent me a copy of a portfolio she was sending out for review for a tenure position. It had pages and pages of scanned sketches, photos, and design statements. It was beautiful. On the other hand, another friend had dispensed with portfolios altogether and just took a large sheaf of sketches with him to his interviews.

What does one do, I wondered, when one is changing direction and there are no longer teachers and classmates to turn to for feedback? How does one think objectively about one’s portfolio?

When I heard about Rafael’s book I was delighted. My own dilemma aside, I am aware that not all schools can devote an entire year or even a semester to portfolio concerns. Discussions of portfolio creation and presentation often occur at the end of a student’s academic career, when they are busy trying to finish their final projects. When they finally have time to work on their portfolio, their teachers may not be available for comment and critique.

Rafael’s book is exhaustive in its treatment of the whole topic of portfolio composition. He very carefully covers all the various types of portfolios and the strengths and weaknesses of each. He presents different types of layout, details the materials necessary to create each one, and lists sources for those materials.

He examines the differences between traditional hard portfolios and digital portfolios. He also covers résumé writing, business cards, and promotional materials, and last but not least, offers presentation guidelines and techniques.

The remarks and advice from expert designers and educators included in the book are extremely helpful in answering questions one might have about the merits of digital versus traditional portfolios and what designers, producers, and educators are looking for in portfolios presented to them by prospective employees and students.

The specifications for constructing a portfolio have not changed all that much: produced work in the front, classwork in the back, strongest work first, update it regularly, and be prepared to show it anywhere—these rules still apply. However, the range of choices for presentation has expanded dramatically, offering designers and technicians myriad ways to present themselves and their work. Rafael’s book takes us
through all the options and makes it possible to choose among them. He also includes guidelines for self-evaluation that enable one to objectively assess one’s own work, portfolio choices, and presentation style.

This book is useful to a wide range of people: students applying to college or graduate school, graduate students looking for jobs, designers aspiring to join a professional organization, teachers seeking university positions, professors applying for tenure, and anyone who has found that the direction of their life has shifted or who wants to make a change.

Rafael’s book offers all these people direction and the tools necessary to make portfolio decisions for themselves. He addresses the issue of change, making it clear that portfolios need to be modified depending on the purpose for which they are intended. I was especially impressed by the final chapter, in which Rafael urges the reader to make plans and set short-term goals, thus leading to the drafting of long-range ambitions and to planning the creation of a portfolio that will aid in the achievement of these objectives.

Rafael’s belief in the power of a portfolio is absolute and inspiring.

And I, for one, have been inspired. So now, if you’ll excuse me, I am finally going to go and update my portfolio.

Kitty Leech
Chair of the Costume Design Exam Committee for the United Scenic Artists Local 829
TDF/Costume Collection’s Advisory Committee Chair
Design Faculty, NYU Tisch School of the Arts
Introduction to the Second Edition

When I finished my undergraduate degree at the University of Iowa in 1969 I had several watercolor renderings on 16 × 20 inch cold-press illustration board, a handful of very rough draftings, perhaps a dozen 5 × 7 inch photos of the three designs that I had done in the old Armory at Iowa, and a handful of art projects of varying sizes and shapes. My plan was to apply for grad school or a job somewhere in theater. My wife took a job teaching eighth- and ninth-grade English in a small town in Wisconsin, and I started sending letters of inquiry to a number of schools, theaters, and individuals. Most of the responses that came back to me requested a portfolio. I knew what a portfolio was, but I had no idea how to put one together or what it should look like.

A trip to the library at the University of Wisconsin was less than helpful. I found books on artists’ portfolios, photographers’ portfolios, and one book on architects’ portfolios, but nothing about theater portfolios. Armed with an assortment of the portfolio books I began the process of making mine. Because most of my materials were on 16 × 20 inch illustration board it seemed obvious that I should start with those materials. I matted the renderings with different colors of mat board and created a book by gluing two matted plates back to back with a fabric hinge. I then made a front and back cover from illustration board covered with black felt. I cut letters out of white felt to spell out “Donald J. Childs’ Portfolio” and glued them to the cover. I then started sending it off to schools, theaters, and individuals. Each time it came back I sighed a big sigh of relief that it had actually been returned undamaged. I guess it worked because I got a number of offers from schools and an offer of an apprenticeship from Jo Mielziner, which I was unable to accept because I thought I was about to be drafted into the Vietnam War.

Since then I have created at least 15 other portfolios, discovered art stores with materials and supplies that made the process of portfolio creation easier, and learned to be especially concerned about protecting my work. One school where I applied for a teaching position kept my portfolio for over a month, and I was nearly apoplectic by the time it was returned.

When I got the announcement that a book was being published entitled Developing and Maintaining a Design-Tech Portfolio, my response was “Finally!” I purchased the book at the next USITT conference and, even though I wasn’t working on a portfolio at the time, I read it immediately. As I was reading it I frequently found myself thinking, “Wow, I wish I had thought about that!” or “Good idea” or “Where was Rafael when I was creating the first portfolio?” Or, for that matter, “Where was he (and his book) when I was making any of the fifteen-plus portfolios I have made over the years?” The inclusion of comments, portfolios examples, and ideas from working professionals, coupled with Rafael’s high level of expertise, made the book a must-read on my bibliography for any class I have taught since.

When Rafael asked me if I would write an introduction to the second edition of the book, I accepted without hesitation. The second edition has taken on the challenge of a sequel and moves solidly into the 21st century.

As in the first edition, Rafael turns to working professionals in all areas of theater design and technology for expert advice and praiseworthy examples of portfolios from a number of perspectives. In addition, he includes guidance from professionals beyond the theatrical arena to provide the reader with multiple resources designed to assist in the process of preparing, presenting, and marketing oneself as a professional. The book is a true bible for creating a complete marketing package, from the selection and arrangement of materials through the proper way to present oneself at an interview. Rafael successfully taps experts, from marketing agents to psychologists, for this process.
Rafael also turns to students and recent grads for examples of working portfolios and marketing packages. He draws on the full spectrum of practitioners to give the reader a well-rounded perspective of what is happening and what is working for theater artisans at all levels of experience and development.

The expanded section on digital portfolios and networking alone would keep the book on top of my bibliography of must-read books for students and professionals, but it goes way beyond those areas. Rafael addresses the issues of today’s marketing tools as well as those of more traditional marketing. Again, as I read through the manuscript for the second edition, I frequently found myself thinking, “Wow, I wish I had thought about that!” or “Good idea” or “Where was Rafael when I was creating the first portfolio?” but now I can say I’m honored to have the opportunity to formally introduce this book to all the readers who will benefit from its contents. This book will make my next portfolio, presentation, or exhibition so much easier to create and to display.

Thank you, Rafael.

Don Childs
Director, Stagecraft Institute of Las Vegas