10 Development and Presentation

Any photographic image, be it iconic or obscure, by an emerging artist or a household name, was once unknown to the world. It started as a concept conceived in the shower, a sight captured as a file on an SD card, a half-formed composite on the monitor, or an option on a print test strip. At this stage, no one but the creator had seen it.

For an image to emerge into the world, an artist must execute the idea and see if it "works." This task is often lonely, but the artist doesn't need to be alone: mentors and peers can shed light on the process and a collaborator can provide teamwork and moral support along the way. Importantly, logistics are just as crucial as motivation and ideas. Where there is a will, there has to be an executable way. This chapter will provide a field guide for this undertaking, which will be referred to as *development*.

At some point, once it has been through significant development, the work will be introduced to individuals outside the small circle of creation. Of course, the artist is always hopeful that these new viewers will be impressed and in turn advocate for the artist's recognition and opportunities. These initial presentations, what will be referred to as *reviews*, are the work's debuts. Needless to say, they are decisive on the success of the work. In a review, verbal and visual communication are equally important; these skills and strategies will be detailed in this chapter.

A work of art is created so it can be shown. The offer of an exhibition, perhaps coming out of a review, is not just an exciting dream come true, but also the beginning of another stage of creation: how should these images be presented in a gallery space? At this stage, visual art pieces must be further visualized in a real-life environment, considering spatial structure and viewer interface. This chapter will also survey innovative gallery presentations that may be used as inspiration.
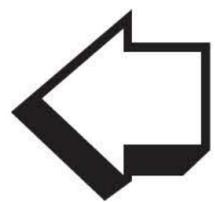
◀ For Freedoms, *Where Do We Go From Here? Eric Gottesman x Project Row Houses*, Houston, TX, 2018, photograph of billboard on vinyl (detail). This image's political message is well-suited to a roadside billboard where many people can see it every day. Its impact would be diminished in a gallery space. See Photo 10.23 for more.

Body of work

Any individual photograph is part of a much larger collection of images that share common ground: this will be referred to as a *body of work*.

Examining the work of artists before our time, or contemporaries at a mature career stage, it might seem that it takes a lifetime to develop a body of work. A person's life journey is one of *figuring out*: from larger questions like "How do I cope with being a student?", "With whom should I spend most of my time?" or "What career should I take on?", to small yet essential questions like "What should I wear today?", "How do I keep my place clean?" or "How do I drive safely?" Artists who leave the world the most precious gems also spend their lifetimes figuring out how to create their art. Amadeus Mozart is portrayed as a genius who wrote his first pieces at the age of four, but the fact is, among his 41 symphonies, the latter half much surpass the early half in terms of originality and innovation. If Mozart had not spent his whole, short lifetime figuring out how to write music, if he dabbled as a "weekend warrior" and wrote a few pieces "just for fun," or if he gave up music and became a scribe, he would be just another obscure name in music history. Throughout the history of all artistic media are examples of artists' prolonged efforts to *figure out*.

Take for example Gregory Crewdson, a photographic artist inspired by film directors like Alfred Hitchcock and David Lynch.[1] Over the course of his career, we can see his prolonged engagement with cinematic visual qualities, leading to increasingly complicated and nuanced images. In his early series *Natural Wonder* (1992–1997), Crewdson constructed sets mimicking suburban American yards where he staged scenes in the everyday lives of flora and fauna, played by stuffed birds and taxidermied animals (Photo 10.1).

PHOTO 10.1
Gregory Crewdson, *Untitled*, 1998, c-print, 48 × 60 inches / 121.9 × 152.4 cm. © **Gregory Crewdson. Courtesy Gagosian.**

Crewdson's later series like *Twilight* and *Beneath the Roses* continue his exploration of suburban America, though with a focus on the humans who live there. Constructing even larger and more elaborate sets, Crewdson works with a full film crew to light and stage his images like scenes from a Hollywood movie.

Suspicious behaviors and unnerving phenomena can be inferred from the image's nuanced details, much like how a suspense film doles out clues to the narrative along the way. While a movie typically provides several hours to put the pieces together, Crewdson provides just one image, requiring

PHOTO 10.2
Gregory Crewdson, *Untitled*, 2005, digital chromogenic print, 64¼ × 94¼ inches framed / 163.2 × 239.4 cm.
© **Gregory Crewdson. Courtesy Gagosian.**

active leaps of imagination on the part of the viewer to fill in the narrative. Enlisting the viewer in the meaning-making process intensifies the image's emotional impact. By devoting his entire career to the pursuit of cinematic storytelling through still images, Crewdson has created a genre all his own.

Another example of long-term engagement with specific content and concept is Edward Burtynsky (see Photo 9.3), who began his career making traditional landscapes before discovering a passion for capturing industrial landscapes in the mid 1980s. From then to now, he has worked on project after project in this content area, each based on extensive research and traveling the world to sites where industrial operations create striking visual anomalies. Over time, his vantage points have also trended higher: his later works are uniformly aerial views, looking downward to observe the phenomena while underscoring their scale.

Such artists might appear to be simple-minded, building their whole life's body of work on a single concept or subject matter. This sharp focus, endurance, and even obsession, however, can drive their creativity to high levels of nuance and sophistication – nothing simple anymore – placing them at the very top of the field.

Projects

If we interpret a *body of work* literally as a body, then *projects* are that body's organs. Compared to the entire body of work, projects are smaller and more specific. A project has a definite goal, though the artist's approach might remain fluid as they undergo trial and error to find the best way to convey the desired message.

Taking Edward Burtynsky as an example again, visit his official website at www.edwardburtynsky.com to view his many projects including *Tailings*, *Shipbreaking*, and *Water*. Each project is narrowly focused on a particular content area, though they all share an overarching conceptual interest in industrial landscapes. Each project is a building block of his impressive body of work. A rookie does not have a body of work, but can start building it through projects.

Funding

Funding is an integral part of almost any art project: without at least some money, executing an idea is impossible and a concept, no matter how intriguing, will remain only a concept. Even Duchamp's *Fountain* (see Photo 9.1) required funds to purchase the urinal!

The majority of art projects are self-funded. Although it might not sound glamorous, self-funding has many advantages, which will become evident after a brief introduction to other sources.

For students, just like tuition for all types of education, there are loans, scholarships, and, for some, parents' pocketbooks to help fund projects. As a student at an educational institution, you may have access to free, or heavily discounted, facilities. Make the most of these resources: once you are out of school, only the extremely fortunate enjoy this level of financial support.

Out in the real world, a practicing artist can seek support from a wide array of institutions including grants from foundations, artistic fellowships and residencies, contests from major publishers, and more. Applying for these funding opportunities often requires the artist to present a portfolio (discussed later in this chapter), along with a resume or curriculum vitae (CV), biographical information, an artist's statement, or other materials. All funding opportunities are highly competitive. The Guggenheim Fellowship, one of the more prestigious accolades for artists, receives more than 3,000 applicants each year and makes only about 175 awards.[2]

Most funding opportunities come with strings attached: the artist must produce a show, provide a workshop, donate pieces to the funding organization, etc. Some opportunities are limited to artists of specific ages, locations, ethnicities, or work focusing on specific subject matter.

Selling artwork is perhaps the most logical way to fund an art project. However, this is no easier than creating the art in the first place.

As you can see, self-funding, i.e. paying for project expenses out of one's own pocket, has many benefits: there is no application, no competition, and no strings attached.

Conceptualizing a project

The analysis in Chapter 9: Content and Concept is useful both for those who want to better appreciate images, and those who want to create them. In this chapter, we will revisit content and concept, purely from the perspective of the creator.

Recall that conceptual art is defined in this book as art that is based on the artist's ideas, or thoughts. Adding a concept into a project, or elaborating on its existing concept, will be referred to as *conceptualization*. Conceptualization is not just a fad in contemporary art; it is a catalyst for creativity, capable of transporting the art-making process to whole new ground. Thinking is the engine that drives conceptualization. This engine runs on open-mindedness and life experience; it is oiled with mindfulness and jump-started by inspiration. Not all photographic projects are conceptualized, but when they are, their engines are turbocharged, able to achieve what they couldn't have before.

TRY THIS 10.1: Project starter

Starting a new project? Use the following lists to help you get started.

1. **Find a topic**
   Start with this flowchart, and execute the to-do lists below as prescribed:
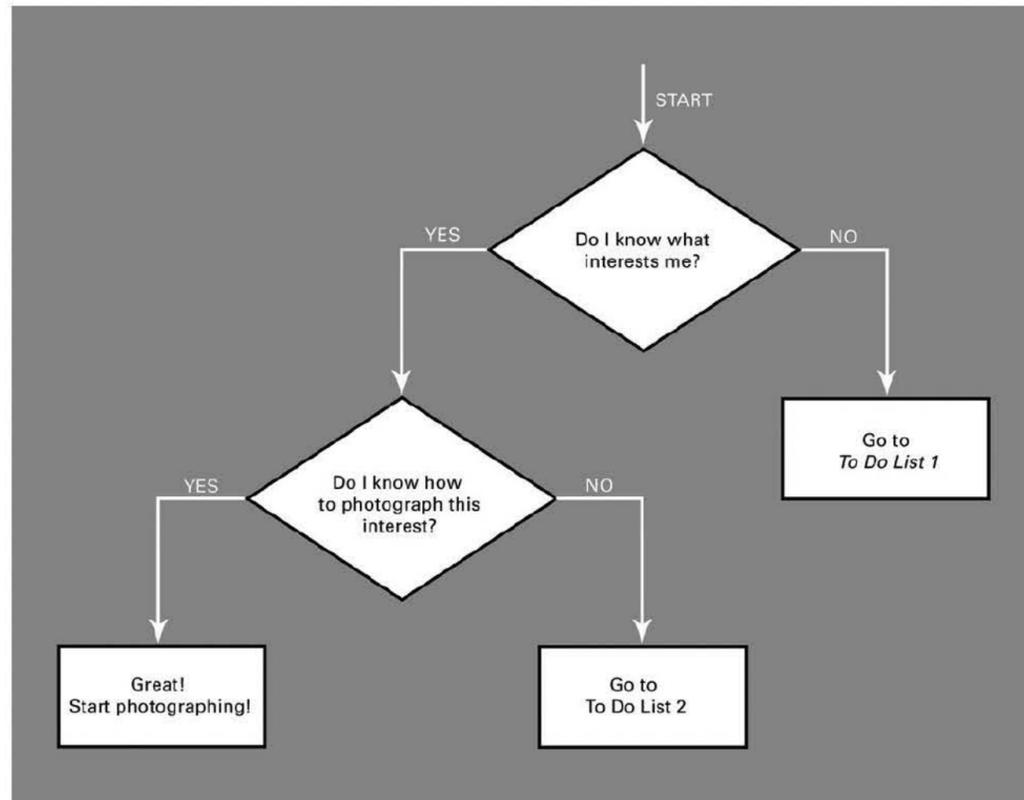
To-Do List 1
- Read books and/or watch movies
- Go to museums
- Take art classes
- Try unfamiliar foods
- Learn a sport or music instrument
- Try a new hobby
- Pay attention to the news
- Go to a concert/play/performance
- Get out of town

To-Do List 2
- Learn/do more about the interest and this time, think about how to visualize the experience
- Brainstorm with mentor/peers
- Research artists who depict similar interests
- Pick up the camera and try

2. **What do I photograph?**
   Look through ALL the photographs in the world (ok, that's impossible, but let's imagine that you try): what do they depict? It might come as a surprise that the list is not very long:
   - Objects, natural and artificial: toys, trash, artifacts, rocks, food, the moon, etc.
   - Places: the wonder of nature, cities, the middle of nowhere, etc.
   - People: myself, friends and family, celebrities, strangers, etc.
   - Living things: cats, dogs, fish, trees, insects, bacteria, etc.
   - Events and their aftermaths: gatherings, rallies, disasters, etc.
   - Performances: yoga demonstrations, a dance troupe, someone jumping off a roof, a musical performance, etc.

   More often than not, a photo includes more than one of the listed items. Try this: just for fun, can you create an image with all the items in the list?

3. **What equipment do I need?**
   - A camera for still photos and/or video
   - A tripod or other support: stands, clamps, etc.
   - Filters
   - Lights
   - Light modifiers
   - A computer

- Software
- Props
- Costumes
- Something not on this list
- Nothing on this list – I will make my images through appropriation

4. **Do I know how to …**
   - Operate the equipment?
   - Set up the lighting?
   - Use the programs/applications?
   - Access/interact with the individuals to be photographed?
   - Get funding, if necessary? (See the box called *Funding* for more about this)
   - Do any other necessary tasks in order to complete the project?

5. **What do I need to spend money on?**
   - Buying/renting equipment
   - Renting a venue
   - Buying materials
   - Attending classes to learn new skills
   - Paying for help
   - Traveling to locations

6. **What's the project's timeframe?**
   - Is there a deadline?
   - Am I depending on someone else to do something?
   - Am I depending on weather/lighting conditions?
   - Do I need to acquire something before I can get started?
   - Are there any other factors that can delay/expedite the process?

The items in this box are hands-on and practical, helping you to launch a project. However, even though it might look like the checklist a pilot runs through before taking off, it is by no means that complete. You, squarely in your own situation, must fill in the gaps with your own specifics, to make it a true takeoff checklist.

FLIP THE PAGE

The question of *what to photograph* eventually leads to a project's *content*. The quest for compelling content goes beyond photography or even art: it is really about an individual coming to an understanding of the world around them and determining their own interests and passions. Throughout this book are examples of artists walking their own life paths and along the way, developing unique content. For example:

Argus Paul Estabrook, Chapter 3: Exposure. When photographing on the streets, Estabrook tries to remain open and empathetic to his subjects. "I think street photography is really *people* photography … once we get over our own fears and understand that photography is really something bigger than ourselves, our instincts can kick-in unhindered."

Prince V. Thomas, Chapter 9: Content and Concept. Thomas uses important moments in his life as inspiration. "All my projects start with a seed from my personal life, something that has affected me in such a way that I feel compelled to speak (make art) about the subject. In 2014, I lost my father. I had been his primary caregiver for many years … [The series *Ancestors*] aims to take this very personal experience of loss and translate it to a larger audience by exploring grief and mourning in its various forms."

Keily Anderson-Staley, Chapter 11: Tradition. Anderson-Staley's interest in the people around her led her to photograph them using a particular traditional process. "Above all else, I am interested in people – meeting them, learning about their lives, making photographs that capture them. One thing I've always liked about collodion is that the long exposures capture the person over an extended period of time. There seems to be an intensity that gathers in their gaze."

TRY THIS 10.2: Conceptualizing a project

Artistic concepts often stem from the artist's core: their personality, their beliefs, and their fascinations. Therefore, finding a concept is a journey of self-discovery.

Ask yourself these question:

- Is my approach literal or metaphoric?
- Is my narrative straightforward or veiled?
- Am I opinionated? Am I open-minded?
- Am I serious? Am I funny?
- Am I neat or messy?
- Am I optimistic or pessimistic?
- Am I more interested in pathology or the cure?
- Am I introverted or extroverted?
- Am I minimalistic or complex?

The answers to these questions might not be apparent, but attempting to find their answers is a good first step towards conceptualization. Remember that your concept may reflect or contradict your core, if you choose to deliberately betray it. For example, "I am so neat, I should try to make a mess." This thought, in and of itself, is conceptualization.

If you already have an intended topic for the project that needs conceptualization, or want to further elaborate the concept of an ongoing project, try these ideas:

- **Narrowing the topic's scope**
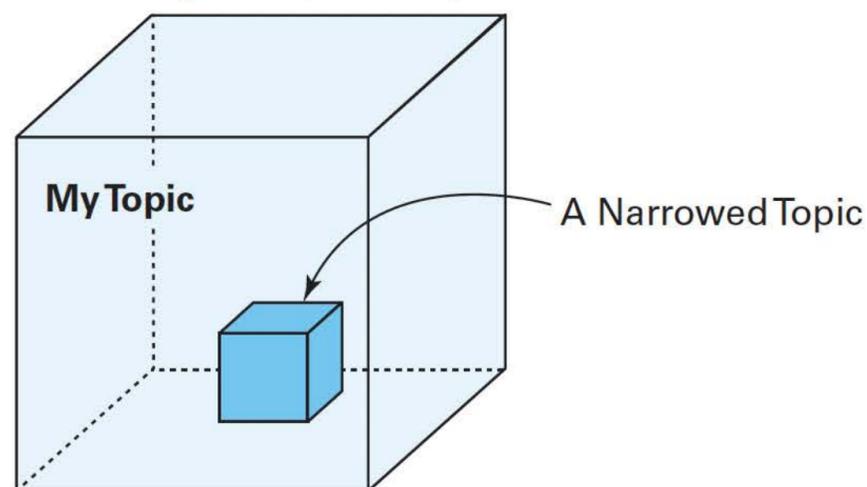
Making a topic more focused can simplify its execution and result in a more nuanced narrative.

Example: Going from, "I would like to portray the lives of immigrants in this city," to, "I would like to portray the work ethic of the Vietnamese immigrants in this city, who arrived as refugees."

- **Find a second topic that intersects with the current one**
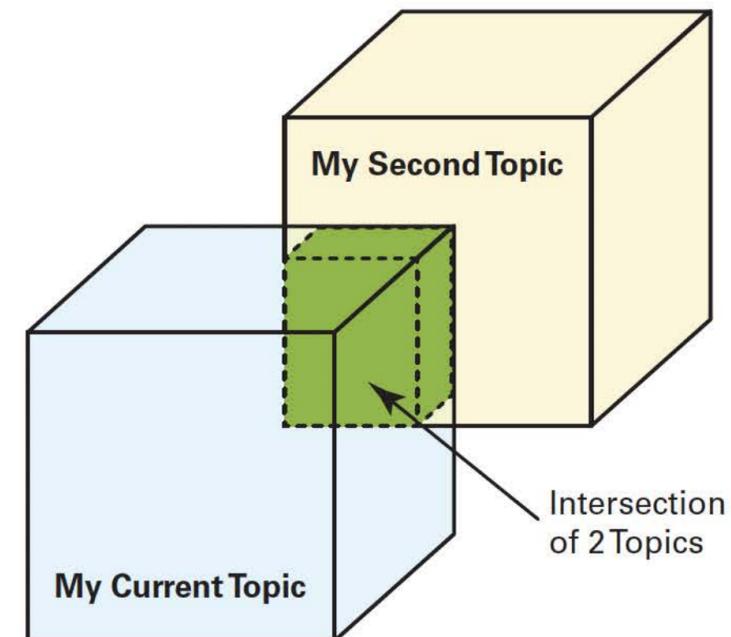
The intersection of two topics is often less commonly visited and this can make for refreshing images.

Example: "Photographing my childhood neighborhood in New Orleans" can intersect with "Photographing the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina."

■ Switch the genre

Address the same topic, but using an entirely different genre, or approach, of photography.

Example: Moving from "observing social phenomena as they happen" to "staging and emulating social phenomena."

■ Disrupt the genre

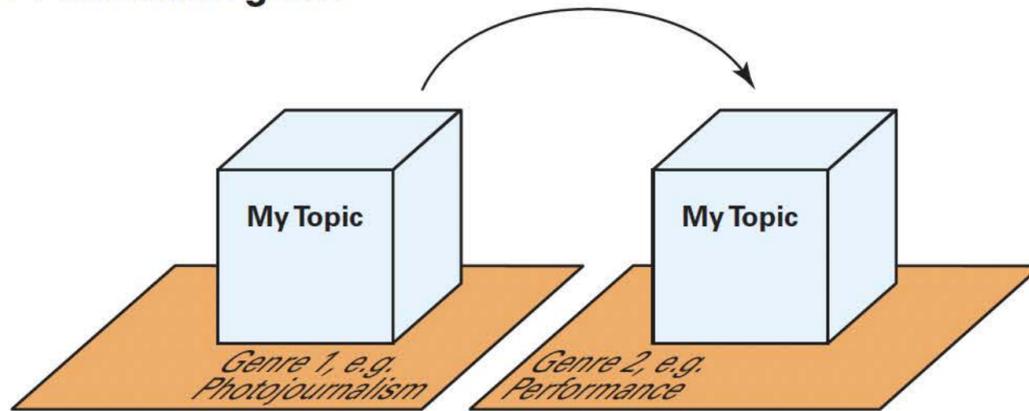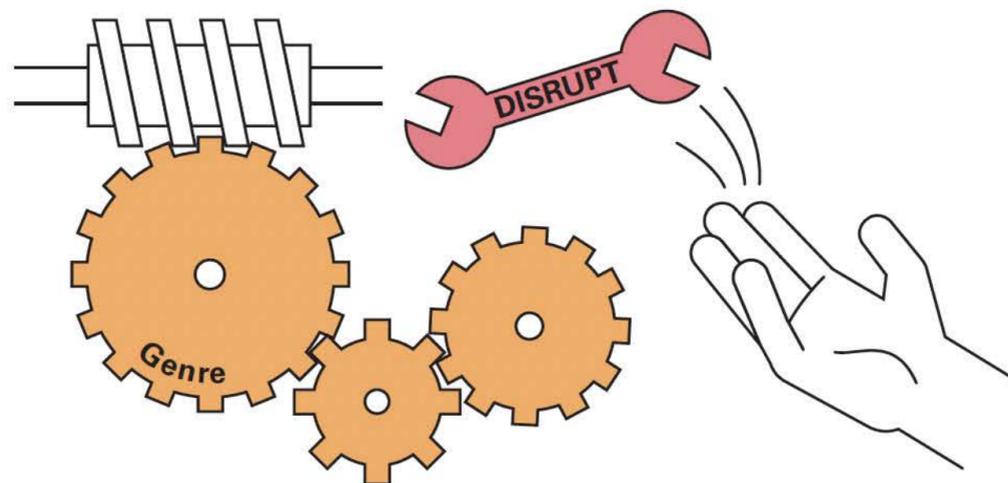
Every artistic genre – portraiture, street photography, still lifes, etc. – has its traditions and norms. Violating, or disrupting, them can lead to interesting results.

Example: "I am going to make portraits of celebrities, but instead of showing the faces everyone knows, I am going to photograph their backs and use their names as the titles."

■ Change the presentation
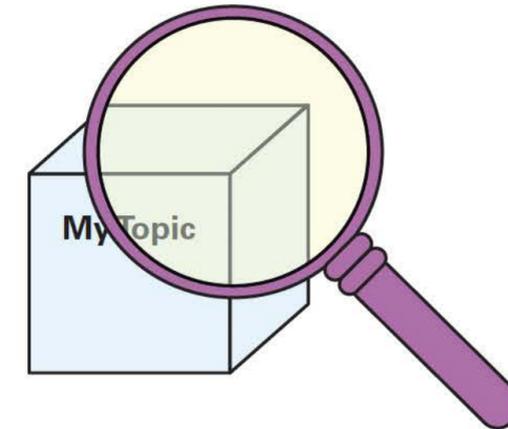
Changing the presentation can change the way viewers interpret the images.

Example: Instead of presenting a series of prints, the images are composed into a book with associated writings.

■ Change the process

By approaching the same goal through different processes, the impact of the resulting images can be fundamentally altered.

Example: Rather than photographing a particular scenario in the real world, build models and use figurines to lay out the scene and then photograph it.

TRY THIS 10.2: Conceptualizing a project *(continued)*

■ **Collaborate with other artists**
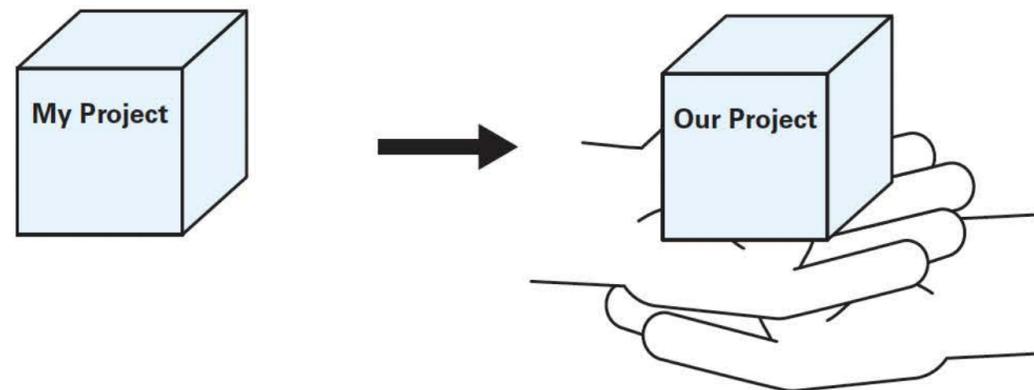
Multiple minds form a collective mind, which can give birth to something each one couldn't achieve alone.

Example: Photographer A: "I have been wondering how I can portray sports in a way that is not like photos from *Sports Illustrated*." Photographer B: "How about adopting my interest in X-Ray photography and focusing on sports injuries?"

■ **Cross the media boundaries**

A particular artistic medium has both its strengths and its limitations. When multiple media are put together, they can be liberated from those limitations to create what wasn't possible before.

Example: "I will cut the photograph into pieces, and reconstruct them into a sculpture, turning a 2-dimensional photo into a 3-dimensional artifact."

FLIP THE PAGE

The approaches to conceptualization presented in this box can be seen throughout this book's images. Flip to some of your favorite images and ask yourself: what conceptualization approach did this artist take when developing this work?

How does a rookie develop a project from the ground up? A few of the authors' students share their own lessons learned.

Sydney Holland
Washed Away Childhood

Sydney A. Holland, image from the series *Washed Away Childhood*, 2018.

Sydney A. Holland, image from the series *Washed Away Childhood*, 2018.

"This project focuses on Six Flags New Orleans because I wanted people to see something that once brought happiness to the people of New Orleans, myself included, that was suddenly washed away. This was no easy quest as I had to face the alligators and security guards that patrol the abandoned amusement park, making it extremely difficult to take pictures. However, I was able to walk away with about 200 pictures and in the end, I felt even more inspired and I hope to one day do more projects associated with this type of subject."

Doug Kibodeaux
Blue Lives ...

C. Doug Kibodeaux, *Makeup*, from the series *Blue Lives ...*, 2018

C. Doug Kibodeaux, *Tony*, from the series *Blue Lives ...*, 2018

"In my photo series *Blue Lives...* I wanted to show police officers as humans. Not the guy that arrested your cousin, but the human being that likes the same TV shows as you. They say that writers should always write about what they know. I think that's true for most creative endeavors, so when tasked to make a collection of themed photos, I chose the thing I know the most about. I have spent a lifetime in a police uniform, so the series turned out to be black-and-white shots of friends being themselves."

Caroline Craft
Chakras

Caroline Craft, image from the series *Chakras*, 2018.

go out and shoot and play around with the materials. He said the ideas and creativity would come as I continued to shoot. And it worked: the more and more Candice and I went out to make photos, the shots got better, and I had a clearer vision of what I wanted this collection to convey to my viewers. We spent hours playing with the color powder and she did yoga pose after yoga pose until we got the perfect shot. It was definitely collaboration with a lot of thoughts and ideas going into every photo."

Annine Berg
Look At Me!

Annine Berg, image from the series *Look at Me!*, 2018.

Caroline Craft, image from the series *Chakras*, 2018.

"My series *Chakras* was inspired by a previous assignment in my photography class where I photographed a woman named Candice. She is earthy and has a strength in yoga, so I focused on that and a couple of other things that make her *her*. During the critique for this assignment, I realized that I could create something bigger by getting more creative with it. I immediately thought about the yoga term "chakras" and realized I wanted to illuminate her chakras in my photos. To do that, I used the color powder often used in India for a holiday celebration called Holi.

"Though I had an idea, I will say at first I was overwhelmed and at a loss about how to begin. My teacher told me to just

Annine Berg, image from the series *Look at Me!*, 2018.

"I chose to do street portraits because I love street photography, but my biggest obstacle is my shyness. I wanted a project that would force me to get out of my comfort zone and make me grow as a person as much as a photographer, so I chose to have my subjects looking straight at me and to interact with them as I took their photo. I tried to find people who stood out in some way and would make the viewer curious to know more about that person's story. Looking into a person's eyes can be quite moving. It felt like such a personal breakthrough after taking my first shots for this series."

Alexis Dickerson
Seeing More

Alexis Dickerson, image from the series *Seeing More*, 2018.

Alexis Dickerson, image from the series *Seeing More*, 2018.

"This series of work was created out of earlier experimentation with mirrors. It started small in both subject and mirror size. I thought of components like the size, shape, and frame of the mirror. I wanted the mirror to act as a portal that offered a fantastically contrasting perspective where the viewer's automatic assumption would be that the image is artificially produced. When they realize the images aren't Photoshopped, that's when the body of work becomes intriguing as they try to break down how the images are actually made."

Kristin Bartlett
Schmidt Family Cookbook

"*Schmidt Family Cookbook* began as a way to document and preserve my family's food history, but as the project went on it became much more about connecting with my grandparents through their food memories and stories. I began by interviewing my grandparents about their memories of food and where famous family recipes began. We then cooked dishes together, which I staged and photographed. By compiling the recipes and photos into a cookbook, I was able to visually represent my family's stories through photography."

The Schmidts

Oma and Opa were married on May 6, 1961 and they moved to Rantoul, Illinois when Opa joined the Air Force. Oma and Opa's cooking early in marriage was whatever they could scrape together. Opa was making about $78 per month as an Airman 4th class. With a wife, he got $25 per month and with a child, $20 more. When Kim was a few months old, Opa was transferred to California where he made $160 per month. By the end of his 4 years, he was an Airman 1st class and was up to $350 per month. Still, after rent, there wasn't much left over for groceries in the early days.

Kristin Bartlett, *Portrait of Oma*, 2018.

When Oma was 9 months pregnant with Kim, she and Opa were living on the Chanute Air Force base in Rantoul, Illinois. They lived in a small one bedroom apartment, barely scraping by on Opa's salary of $78 each month. On April 25, 1963 Opa went to work on the base. Oma's water broke in the morning and she immediately realized she had no food in the house for Opa when he returned home. Thinking she had more than enough time to labor at home (after all, her friends had told her with the first child labor could be as long as a few days) Oma decided to bake a cake for Opa. Unfortunately, she didn't have any eggs so she made a mayonnaise cake instead, substituting the mayo for the eggs. She then called up to the base and let Opa's superiors know that she was heading to the hospital to have their first child. Oma arrived at the hospital around 11:30 AM and no more than 2 hours later, at 1:05 PM, Kimberly Ann arrived, happy and healthy!

Kristin Bartlett, *Chocolate Mayonaise Cake*, 2018.

TRY THIS 10.3: The project development feedback loop

A photographic project is a loop between thinking and doing, often catalyzed by feedback from mentors, peers, and other external sources.

Visualize it like this:
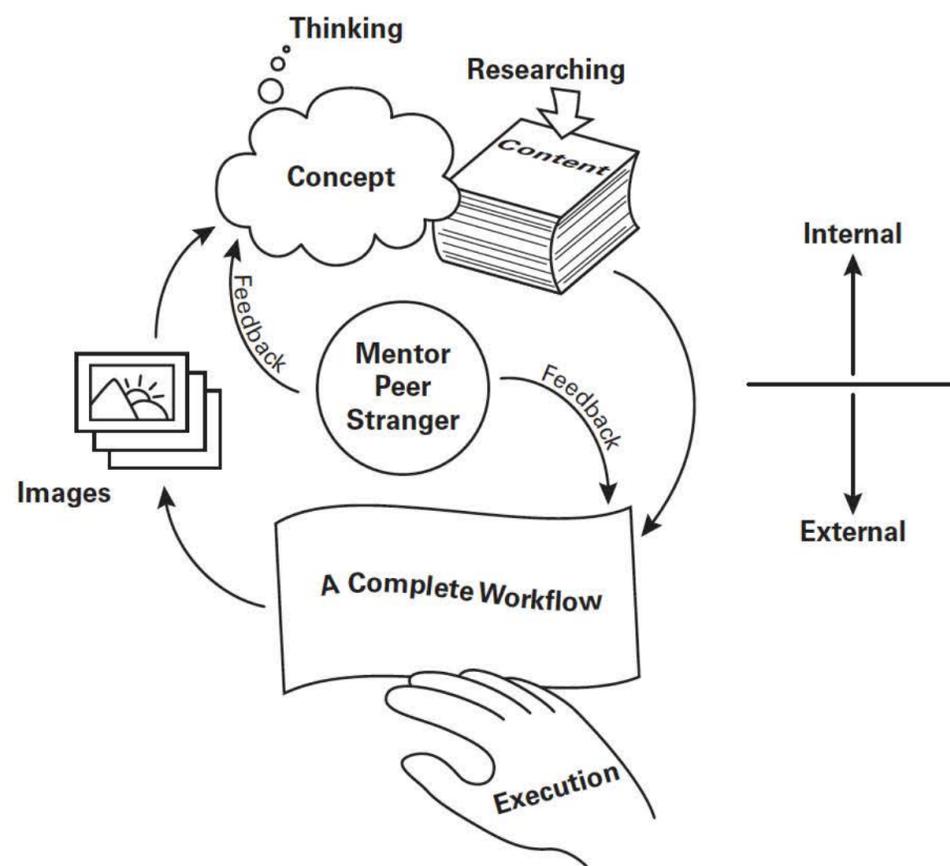
Thinking and researching, the internal parts of the loop, are followed immediately by execution: capturing the images, post-production, and output. This workflow externalizes the concept and content, converting them into images which can be shared with others. These others, in turn, can provide feedback. This feedback aids further thinking and research, and therefore propels image production.

In this loop, several things can happen:

- Ideas are field tested
- Execution is refined
- The project is scrutinized through verbal exchanges, which aids in shaping the project's statement (more on this in Chapter 14: Words)
- The project evolves and an entirely new project might spin off; this mechanism eventually builds a larger body of work

For students with definitive project deadlines, it is best to move through this loop as many times as possible to ensure a high-level final product. Do not worry about bothering your professor or peers by asking them to look at your work: they love to see what you do – if you have been friendly and helpful to them! Remember, to show art is to give, not to take.

The mentor and mentee relationship

For many artists, mentoring is an important part of their growth, artistically and professionally. The University of Washington defines a mentor in this way: "A mentor may share with a mentee (or protégé) information about his or her own career path, as well as provide guidance, motivation, emotional support, and role modeling."[3] For a photographic artist, all of the above is true; a mentor can also be an important voice in the process of refining and expanding a body of work.

A mentor–mentee relationship must develop organically and generally cannot be arranged or demanded, not unlike a marriage. It is also important to know that a mentor must pick their mentee just as a mentee must pick their mentor; both parties need to be invested in order for the relationship to develop.

Let's explore what a mentee sees in a mentor. Note: this is not a list of must haves. It is a list of ingredients that make for a successful mentorship:

- The mentor is the mentee's hero. Enough said.
- The mentor's *4 C profile* is aligned with the mentee. Or, if the mentee does not quite know their own *4 C profile,* they finds the mentor's to be a great model.
- The personalities of the mentor and the mentee click; in other words, they like each other.
- The mentee finds the mentor's resources useful, e.g. connections to galleries, access to facilities and equipment, etc.

The dynamics in all mentor–mentee pairs are different. Even under the assumption that in most cases, the mentor is the mentee's senior, it is highly advisable that the mentee maintains the mentality of equality: the flow of reaching out, friendly gesture, and hospitality should be bi-directional.

Not every artist is lucky enough to find a mentor. The authors wish you luck.

How to research: the attitude

An important, but under-discussed, part of the project development process is research.

Research is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as:

The systematic investigation into and study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions.

Through research, an artist deepens their understanding of their particular content area – i.e. *establishes the facts* – and can enrich their concept – i.e. *reaches new conclusions*.

When an artist researches, they are after materials that can support the work's development. Because of this, an artist's research should always cast a wide net, taking in information through a broad scope – you never know where you might find something that sparks new ideas about your project. Researching might look like reading stacks of books, but it may also be speaking with people knowledgeable on particular subjects, looking at art, or even just going to interesting places. When a glimmer of interest appears, the artist should pounce, seize it, and dig deeper from there. Becoming knowledgeable about your chosen content area enables you to create work from a place of knowledge and even authority.

An artist should know a *lot*. A breadth of knowledge supports current work and enables the artist to scout for the next interesting project.

Managing a project

Movies and literature often portray artists as a crazy bunch: erratic and unpredictable. In reality, an artist must be able to manage their own time and deliver on promises, just like any other professional. An art project is not unlike an engineering project, where one task is followed by another and the project's completion requires all tasks to be executed. Some tasks can take place simultaneously; others must be completed before the next can happen. This makes a project a complicated network of tasks. To be fully in control, careful planning and diligent execution are required.

TRY THIS 10.4: Project planning with PERT

A PERT (Program Evaluation and Review Technique) diagram is a visual tool for project planning originally developed by the U.S. Navy in the 1950s and now used widely across many industries.[4]

A PERT is made of a network of tasks and milestones.

A **task** is denoted with an arrow marked with the task's description and its duration:

edit images
——————————→
1 day

This shows the task of image editing, which will be completed in one day.

A **milestone** is denoted with a node attached to the beginning and/or the end of an arrow:
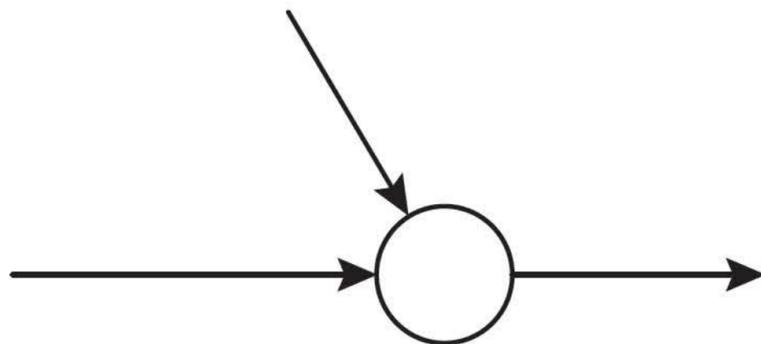
Here, a milestone is reached through the completion of two tasks, and is the beginning of another task.

A **critical path** is the path of tasks with the longest combined task durations:

edit images 1 day · print images 1 day · frame delivery 3 days
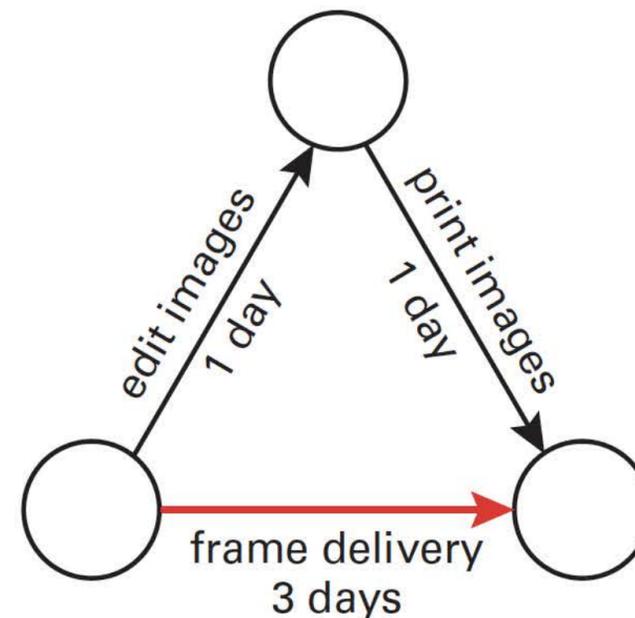
In the preceding example, the combined time required for editing and printing images is 2 days, but in the meantime, the delivery of frames takes 3 days, making the latter the critical path.

Through PERT, a project's tasks and their relationships can be clearly visualized, a critical path can be identified, and the time required to complete the project can be calculated. This can then be compared to the deadline to evaluate the plan's feasibility.

Following is an example of a class project that involves tasks for both the student and the professor. This is an assignment to photograph food at very close range, requiring rental equipment, learning new techniques, and a school facility that must be booked in advance:
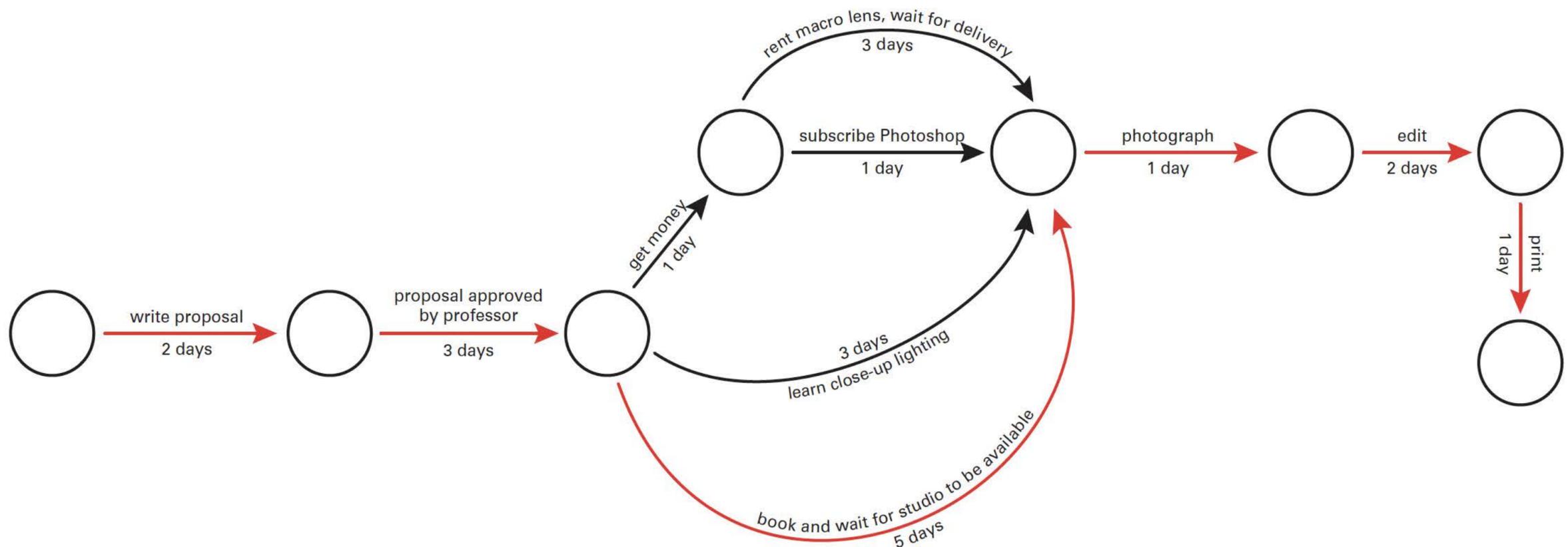
The critical path here is denoted in red. Note that booking the studio is critical, and a delay in this step will result in a delay of the entire project. It is therefore important that this is done as soon as possible: in this case, once the project proposal is approved. The entire project, if executed as planned, will take the total number of 14 days on the critical path. If this timeline does not result in prints ready by the project's deadline, then the plan must be modified. For example, maybe there's a classmate with a studio you can use instead of the school's. You may also be able to edit in one day, instead of two.

Use PERT for your next project and see how it can help with your project planning and execution.

Collaboration

Developing work, as described in this chapter, can be a lonely process. While it is true that solitude is required for reflection and thought, loneliness doesn't need to be the rule. In fact, many artists step out of their silos to join force with other artists and create art as a team of collaborators. The team, or collective, can often achieve things that would be impossible for the individual members to achieve alone.

Artists choose to become collaborators for many reasons. In this section, you will find collaborators contributing various technical skills, areas of knowledge, experiences, cultural backgrounds, and disciplines – among other things – to the collaborative effort. In short, each collaborator brings to the table the unique mixture of things at which they are best.

The many faces of collaboration

Collaboration can take many forms:

Artists in the same discipline working together: in the case of photography, this would be photographers working with other photographers. While the dynamics of each collaborative group will vary, it is very likely that each contributor brings unique expertise to the project.

Artists of different disciplines working together: this is often referred to as *interdisciplinary collaboration*. Examples include a photographer working with a painter, poet, musician, sculptor, etc. In this type of collaboration, the collective force is not just created by the individual artists, but also by the characteristics of each contributor's discipline, including both strengths and limitations. This type of collaboration can become a fusion that encompasses the very best of various disciplines.

Artists working with non-artists: Everyone is creative. The difference between artists and non-artists, though, is that the former are practiced at executing their creativity, thereby producing products we call art. Artists can also channel the creativity of non-artists and, in this sense, make it productive. In some cases, artists may work with professionals outside the arts like craftspeople, engineers, scientists, etc. and rely on the latters' particular expertise to facilitate the creative process.

Involuntary collaborators: Contemporary artists may develop work based on art from the past. The historic creators may no longer be with us and therefore can't agree or refuse to collaborate. In other cases, art pieces may be derived from other works in an act called *appropriation* (more on this term in *Think about it 7.1: Appropriation and fair use*). In both these instances the collaborators are *involuntary* participants. Unlike the previous types of collaboration in which the collaborators inform, influence, and inspire one another, these involuntary collaborations' flow of creativity is a one-way ticket from the past to the present.

Sharing the *4 Cs* and the power dynamics of collaboration

As discussed throughout this book, any artistic endeavor can be divided into four areas of labor: craft, composition, content, and concept, referred to as the *4 Cs*. In Chapter 9.5: Craft, Composition, Content and Concept – The DNA of Photographic Art, we visualized this division of tasks as pie slices: every artist slices the pie in different proportions, based on their specific approach.

When creating art becomes a team effort, each member might agree to take on a specific set of tasks and/or naturally gravitate towards certain aspects of the work.

Like systems of government around the world, the "systems" of each collaboration will vary: some allow each member equal footing and freedom, functioning like a democracy. In other collaborative structures, team members execute creation under a clear directive from a leader, mimicking a (hopefully benevolent) dictatorship. As seen in the following examples, the collaboration's structure is often selected based on the necessities of a particular project.

Collaboration with a community

Gregory A. Jundanian

Spoken Word by Gregory A. Jundanian (American, born 1953) is a series created through community-rooted, interdisciplinary collaboration.

Jundanian initiates each image by attending events hosted by the Boston poetry and spoken word community, gatherings where people read poetry, perform poetry slams, sing songs, etc. Jundanian invites performers to collaborate with him on their portraits: he and his subjects work together to plan each image and the spoken word artist then handwrites their own words on the print.

Spoken Word's creative process is also a process of friend-making. As Jundanian says in the project's statement, "Every time I work with a new person, I find that I'm a new person as a result. It never gets old."[5]

PHOTO 10.3
Gregory A. Jundanian, *Eddy M.*, 2016, archival inkjet print.

Collaboration with a non-artist

Lissa Rivera

The series *Beautiful Boy* by Lissa Rivera (American, born 1984) is an ongoing collaboration with her subject, a friend and now romantic partner who confessed to her that he dressed almost exclusively in women's clothing in college. After this revelation, he and Rivera began setting up shoots where they explored the concept of femininity. Rivera acts as art director, creating or scouting the sets and selecting the costume pieces, while her subject inhabits each scenario and persona. Rivera has likened the process to making a film, where a skilled director and talented actor work together to create a self-contained world in front of the camera.[6] The images have a vulnerability and openness made possible by the photographer and subject being so emotionally connected.

Throughout the process of planning shoots, the two conduct extensive research into ideas about femininity in various time periods: watching movies, reading books, and gathering visual inspiration to identify the types of images they wish to create.[7] The result is a body of work that explores visual references of the past through a remarkably contemporary lens.

PHOTO 10.4
Lissa Rivera, *Boudoir*, from the series *Beautiful Boy*, 2015, archival pigment print.

Collaborators as sources of mutual inspiration

Mark Chen and Shiao-Nan Chen

Author Mark Chen (American, born Taiwan, 1963) works extensively with collaborators across his practice. His series *Renewed* is a collaboration with his mother, Chinese watercolor painter Shiao-Nan Chen (American, born China, 1930). Combining the son's photographic imagery and the mother's traditional Chinese landscape, the pair visually symbolize the conflict between the natural environment and modernization's infrastructure.

Chen's series *Windtopia* is a fictional narrative of a future world powered solely through wind energy produced by a worldwide monopolistic corporation called Windtopia. The work is a parody of corporate communications, encompassing media including photography, video, graphic design, creative writing, music composition, performance art, and technical drawing. Collaborators with talents in these various disciplines are necessary for a convincing presentation. In both *Renewed* and *Windtopia*, Chen integrated his collaborators' contributions in a loop of creativity. He, however, firmly captains the ship under his conceptual compass.

PHOTO 10.5
Mark Chen and Shiao-Nan Chen, *Snow-capped Mountain and Wind Turbines*, from the series *Renewed*, 2016, archival pigment print with applied Chinese watercolor, 20 × 60 inches.

PHOTO 10.6
Mark Chen, *Noah's Birds: A Windtopia Bird Preservation Program*, 2017, video, 2′00″. This video was created in collaboration with Chris Becker, sound artist, and Priscilla Von Sorella, actress.

You, me, and the shoulders we stand on

Tal Rosner and Thomas Adès; Mark Klett and Byron Wolfe

Tal Rosner (Israeli, born 1978) and Thomas Adès (British, born 1970), a video artist and a music composer, worked together to create the musical and video performance *In Seven Days*. The work is based on the Biblical book *Genesis* which describes the world's creation in seven days. Roser and Adès brought another, historical collaborator – the author of Genesis – into their team by selecting historical source material. This collaborator, though involuntarily part of the project, still has profound input in the final work: Adès' music and Rosner's visuals follow the story of Genesis "word by word," Rosner has said.[8]

Unlike most other visual art examples in this book, *In Seven Days* is a musical piece, performed in a concert hall, with video projections above the orchestra. For videos of the work. Google search for videos with the names of the artists and piece as keywords.

In Seven Days' video and music are both abstract. Words are often much more definitive than either visual art or music, though in the case of *Genesis*, the story of the world's creation in a week is beyond the realm of common sense, making it a rather abstract text as well. This leaves plenty of room for interpretation for the present-day collaborators to build upon.

Recall works by Mark Klett (American, born 1952) and Byron Wolfe (American, born 1967) in Chapter 4: Composition and Chapter 9: Content and Concept. In *Four views from four times and one shoreline, Lake Tenaya*, Klett and Wolfe rephotographed the landscape from the same vantage points as historic photographers, who act as involuntary collaborators for the final work, a collage combining the old and the

PHOTO 10.7
Tal Rosner and Thomas Adès, *In Seven Days*, a work for piano and orchestra with moving image, 2009.

new. Klett and Wolfe acknowledge these silent collaborators in the work's full title which lists the artists responsible for each historic image.

In their book *Drowned River: The Death and Rebirth of Glen Canyon on the Colorado,* the artists retraced the footsteps of photographer Eliot Porter (see Photo 9.12 and Photo 9.13).

Both series by Klett and Wolfe are based on historic materials by artists who are no longer with us. These collaborators could not actively participate in these projects, yet they provide a platform for the contemporary artists to build upon. Like Rosner and Adès, Klett and Wolfe stand on the shoulders of past masters to reach new heights.

PHOTO 10.8
Mark Klett and Byron Wolfe, *Four views from four times and one shoreline, Lake Tenaya,* inkjet print, 2002.

A story seen and heard

Kate Philbrick and Rob Rosenthal

Photographer Kate Philbrick (Canadian, born 1965) and radio producer Rob Rosenthal (American, born 1961) joined forces to create *Malaga Island: A Story Best Left Untold.* Through Philbrick's photographic images, Rosenthal's audio documentary, and archival materials, they tell the story of the mixed-race residents that had inhabited this isolated place in Maine since the Civil War, but were forcibly evicted by the state in 1912. This award-winning collaboration has been shown in museums and galleries, played on public radio, and is now archived as a website at http://malagaislandmaine.org.

Recounting history can take many forms: film, photography, audio, and more. For Philbrick and Rosenthal, telling a story both visually and through audio created a documentary experience that drew on the strengths of both their media and resulted in a product with more depth than would have been possible with a single medium alone.

This project's creative process was lengthy and time consuming: working on the project part-time over three years, Rosenthal recorded approximately fifty hours of interviews, Philbrook took thousands of photos, and they spent hours upon hours in libraries and archives reading and scanning documents and newspaper reports.[9] In this case, two heads and four hands were not only better than one but were absolutely necessary to get the work done.

PHOTO 10.9
Kate Philbrook, image from the series *Malaga Island: A Story Best Left Untold*, 2006–2009.

THINK ABOUT IT 10.2
How to work together (and not kill each other)

The recipe for success in collaboration is a form of art in itself. A team can only be sustained by harmony and that's much more difficult to maintain than it might seem. Consider the legendary rock band the Beatles: while they amazed the world in the 1960s and 70s with original artistry and commercial success, the team ultimately broke up due to personal disagreements and shifting group dynamics. Even for some of the most successful artists in the world, teamwork is difficult.

Successful collaborators are both similar and different to each other. Their shared interests can form the work's content and their like-minds can develop its concept. At the same time, each collaborator brings special skills and experiences to the table to create a well-rounded team.

The most basic recipe of success, however, is not even about art; it is about basic work ethics. The following are essential qualities in a collaborator:

■ Punctuality
■ Keeping promises
■ Responsiveness
■ Communication skills

Someone can be a great artist but, lacking these basic qualities of work ethics, they just might not be a good fit as your collaborator. If a collaborative team can't make good on their promises and aren't able to follow through on creating their work, they stand the chance of being dumped by galleries, curators, and dealers.

In the case of students creating collaborative work, team members might be assigned. These "arranged marriages" might not find you the love of your life, but when things are not going as you wish, remember: all situations – whether exhilarating or stressful – are learning experiences. Learning how to plug a leaky ship is an essential survival skill.

In a collaboration, each member either leads or follows. It is important to know how to play both roles. Collaboration between artists tends to be more organic than in institutions with clear structures. This means that the members of an artistic team must figure out their team's working style for their own unique situation. When all collaborators are mindful about the group's dynamics and are actively working to improve them, the team's sustainability is assured.

The portfolio

A portfolio is a collection of images that showcases an artist's or a group of artists' work. Portfolios are presented in various media at various venues as a way to make the artist and the work known. The bridge between obscurity and opportunity, a portfolio is often decisive to the artist's success.

The relationships between the portfolio, body of work, and projects are seen in Illustration 10.1.

Here, we visualize an artist's work as an iceberg. The iceberg is built around the artist's *4 Cs*: craft, composition, content, and concept. It is onto this core that projects are built. Over time, an artist's body of work is constructed through various
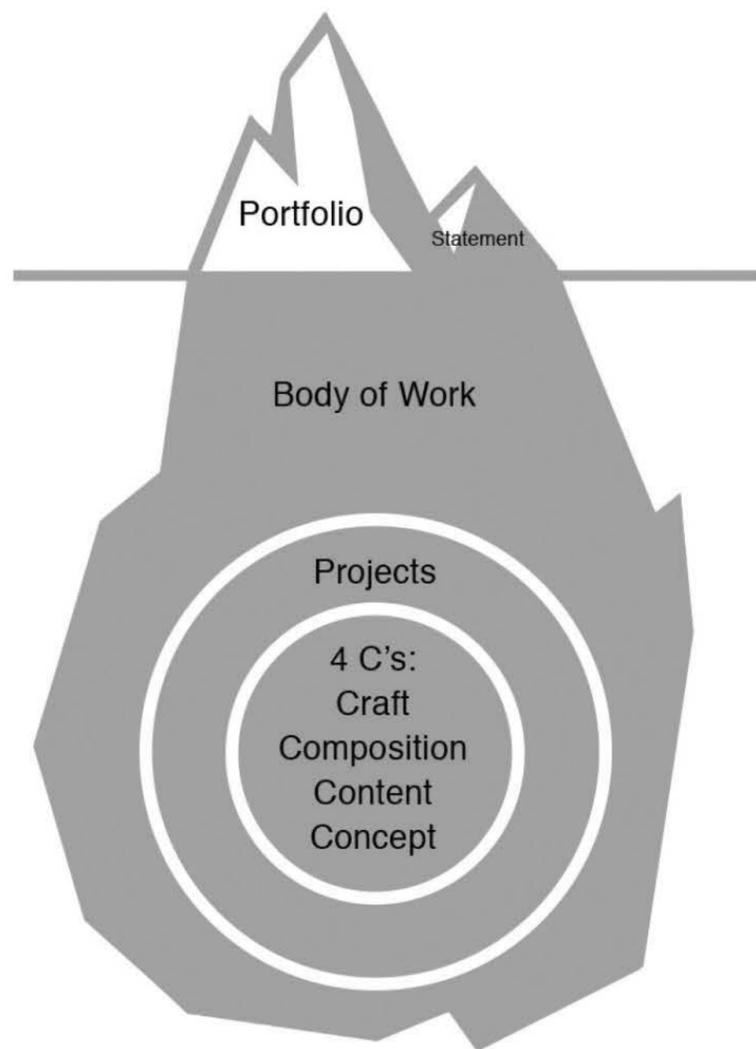
ILLUSTRATION 10.1
If a body of work were an iceberg …

projects. The portfolio, along with the written statement that accompanies it, is the tip of the iceberg: while it may be just a small part, the larger the iceberg, the more impressive this visible portion becomes.

Illustration 10.1 represents an ideal situation where an artist has spent long and persistent effort on building a body of work. At the beginning of a career, the iceberg is small and the tip won't be so impressive: this is a stage that every artist goes through. The higher the artist's productivity, the faster the body of work grows, and the sooner the artist will be proud of the portfolio above the surface.
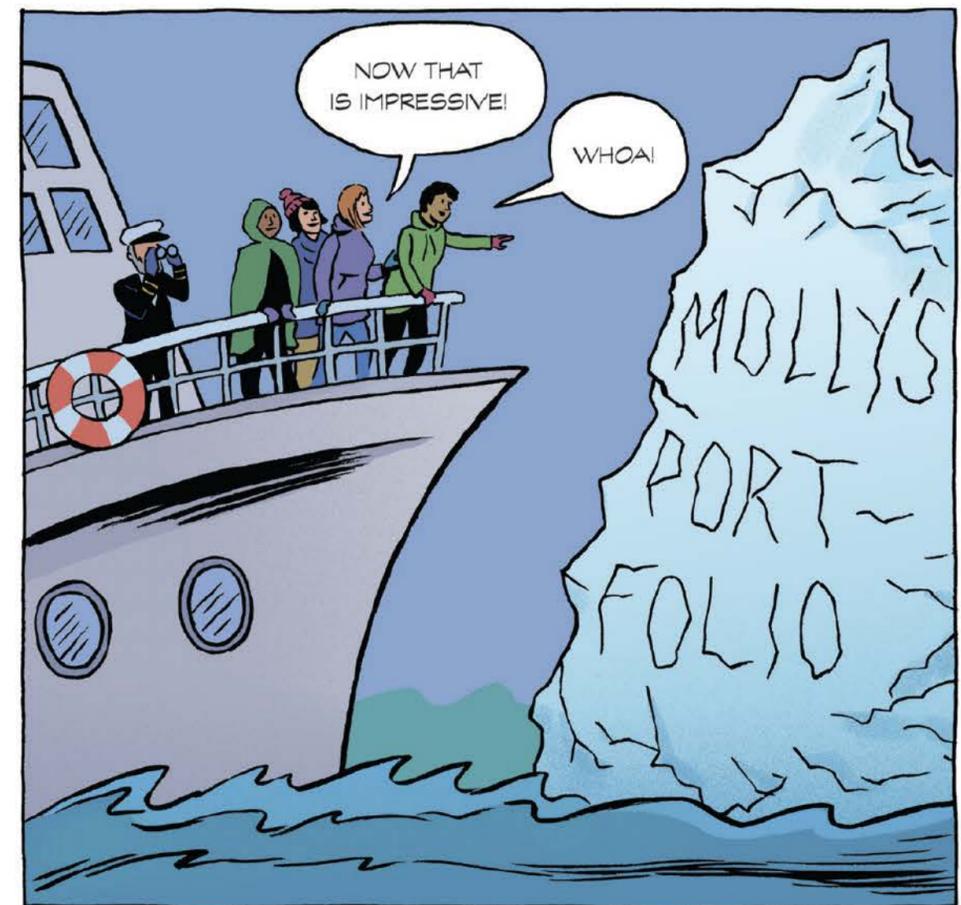
Portfolio media

Traditionally, a portfolio consisted of printed photographs physically taken to in-person meetings with peers, mentors, curators, and other reviewers. As in all other areas of photography, the digital revolution has opened up new possibilities. Decades into the age of Internet, a website showcasing an artist's work is standard and on some level this is due to the general public's expectations. If we hear about an artist, we expect to look them up online and find a one-stop shopping hub where we can access a good collection of images and biographical information, at the very least. If we pick up an artist's business card at a conference, we expect to see a web address where we can learn more about them.

Many artists have also turned to social media to easily share their work with the world, posting new and experimental work, and even using platforms themselves as artistic media.

Presenting the work: virtually or physically?

Online avenues for sharing work like social media and websites eliminate boundaries: anyone, anywhere in the world can see your work, at any time. This is a strength, but also a weakness. With all the artists in the world screaming for attention online, it is difficult to stand out from the crowd. While there are some exceptional cases of social media-made stars, most artists can only use their online presence as a passive medium, waiting to be looked up. This is not to diminish the importance of having an online presence, but relying on the internet alone to launch one's career is simply not a viable strategy for most emerging artists.

On the other hand, physical presentation of work in face-to-face settings is more than alive and well in this digital age: it is still the major way to introduce work, especially to those who matter in developing a career as an artist – those who can provide feedback, connect you to the right people and resources, and those who can put on a show of your work.

In these face-to-face presentations, referred to as *reviews*, physical prints are typically preferred over digital images on screens. This is true for two reasons: the first is that as humans in the twenty-first century, we are constantly bombarded by digital images of all sorts and so most people in the *serious* photo world will jump at the chance to view physical prints. Second, physical prints are better references for how the images can be presented in a show: a typical photography exhibition displays physical prints, after all. The portfolio's prints can be spread out to be viewed side by side, emulating the overall impression of hanging them on the walls of a gallery. Importantly, the prints' order is easily rearranged. Images displayed on a digital device, by contrast, must be shown in a particular sequence.

There are, of course, exceptions to this physical preference and scenarios when artwork must be shown on a screen, as when viewing video.

Artists' websites

While no two artist's websites are identical, if you visit the website of just about any artist featured in this book, you'll notice some similarities: typically several galleries of images/videos, a biography and maybe a curriculum vitae (CV) or at least a list of exhibitions they've participated in, links to their social media presences, perhaps links to reviews or essays others have written about their work.

Mary Virginia Swanson, a noted author, educator, and respected advisor to emerging and established photographers has this advice for artists about their website:

"Even if you have other social media presences, your website is basecamp. Do not ignore your website! It doesn't have to be deep or encyclopedic, but it's still where we go to get the basics. It should be clean, and simple, and functional."

"Your website is where people go to find you and to see what the work looks like on the wall, if that's your final format, or maybe what the image looks like on a page. Not showing what the work looks like in its final format is a huge mistake because a curator visiting your website wants to see the work's scale and what it looks like when it's exhibited."

"Whether you're sharing that your work was in the student show and then it was at the coffee shop downtown, every one of those pictures tells me you've had experience professionally presenting your images. You had to collaborate with someone acting as a curator at each place. You had to set a price list. You had to edit your images. You had to write and speak publicly about them. All of those things are important experiences that should be conveyed on your website. Share your experience visually: document your practice through installation views, even if it means hiring another photographer to take them."

Websites needn't be complicated or expensive. Even a simple website built with a free service like Wix.com that properly showcases your work does the job.

Mary Virginia Swanson gives more advice about sharing your work with others later in this chapter; see *The Reviewer's Perspective.*

The portfolio: the physical presence

A portfolio, packed nicely into a box or a tube, is the constant companion of a photographic artist who sets out on the journey to present their work to the world. Photo 10.10 shows a portfolio in its box.

To buy a portfolio box, shop online using the keywords "photo portfolio box." When considering size, it is best to match the size of the prints so they fit snugly. The box does not need to be very deep if the prints are not matted. If the prints are matted, do some math and see how thick the whole collection of matted prints will be and get a box to accommodate them. For more on matting, see *Show me 10.2: On Framing*.

A large portfolio box can be nearly 30 inches on its long side, becoming awkward to carry around. Any prints at this size or larger might need to go into a tube, as in Photo 10.11, rather than a box.

PHOTO 10.10
A portfolio of prints in its box.

PHOTO 10.11
A portfolio of prints rolled into a tube.

Prints in a tube are rolled up, meaning their edges will be curled when they are removed. Choose a carrying tube with a wider diameter, which makes the prints curl less than a narrower tube. Look for one at least 4 inches in diameter. It would be false to say size doesn't matter for portfolio prints as larger prints do provide a viewing experience unmatched by small prints, but bringing large prints to a review is clumsy. In a 15-minute review, spending 30 seconds fumbling over massive curled prints is valuable time wasted. Bring large prints to a review only when it is absolutely necessary.

If video is part of the portfolio, cut it to the absolute shortest length possible and preload it onto a laptop or tablet so it is ready to play at a click.

The portfolio: building an A-team

Putting together a portfolio is a process of selecting an *A-team* from a series of work. Yes, it should be from a single series, not from *everything that I do*. From a practical standpoint, a portfolio should help the reviewer to visualize a possible exhibition and an exhibition, by default, cannot show everything.

TRY THIS 10.5: Putting together a portfolio

For a series in its infancy with only, say, 10 images, the A-team might be the entire team. Get your act together and produce more images! There is no other way forward to improve the quality of the portfolio at this stage.

When your efforts pay off and you have more than enough images for the portfolio, double the number of the desired portfolio prints and select that many images. Print and spread them out. The first task is kick out the oddballs, the ones that immediately seem to not belong. If you are doing this alone, use your instinct. If this is a group effort, identify the oddball(s) and explain why it deserves eviction. Your committee members can debate or agree.

When instinct has run its course and rationale must kick in for further selections, consider the *coherence* of the images based on the *4 Cs*:

Craft: Do the prints have consistent quality? Are the photo papers the same across the board? Are all exposures and edits consistent? If the prints are matted, do the mats look consistent?

Composition: Step back and look at the prints as a whole (try taking off your glasses if you wear them – for some, this makes colors more prominent): do the images' color tones look consistent? This applies to color as well as black-and-white images. Stay at that distance (and put the glasses back on if you took them off): do the compositions of each image harmonize with each other, so that the image group appears

to have a collective composition? Imagine an acapella group singing – does each member contribute to the whole?

Content: Images in a portfolio should share some common ground. This is often, though not always, their content. The collection of images should tell a story. This does not mean every image makes the same statement or conveys the same message: each one might have a different "personality" but when they are put together in a certain order (see *Try this 10.6: Sequencing a portfolio*), a narrative becomes apparent.

Concept: When a concept plays a part in a series, it creates rules. Every image in the portfolio should obey these rules. Take, for example, a series of work on the artist's own interaction with strangers on the street. While most of the images are portraits of these people looking at the camera and some even appear to be engaged in a conversation with the photographer, one is a pedestrian, a passerby: this image breaks the rules set by this concept and therefore might not belong to this particular portfolio.

In Chapter 9.5: Craft, Composition, Content and Concept – The DNA of Photographic Art, the *4 C* profiling technique gave us some ideas about how each of the *4 Cs* weighs in a series of work. The same weights should be applied when selecting images for a portfolio so that the "tip of the iceberg", as seen in Illustration 10.1, is more or less representative of the entire body of work.

A portfolio should be succinct because most formal portfolio review gatherings are tightly scheduled, allowing for only 15 to 20 minutes for each review session. Within this limited time frame, talking is as important as viewing: how can the reviewer give advice, or offer a show, if there is no time to talk? This means the reviewee should not bog down the reviewer with too many images. If a reviewer is unable to see all the images in the allotted time, the review won't end with the bang the artist had planned.

TRY THIS 10.6: Sequencing a portfolio

Each image in a portfolio is part of a larger narrative, but also a distinctive piece of art that is different from all the rest. This means that the order in which you present your images matters, that the narrative should move from the introduction to the conclusion, and that the variation between images should flow in a way that makes sense. This order, taking all these things into consideration, is called *sequencing*.

Recall that when selecting images for a portfolio, you are looking for an A-team: images that are both strong on their own and that work with the other members of the team. Your A-team might not be totally finalized until you go through the sequencing process: some of the images you thought were great might turn out to be especially challenging to be sequenced and so should be eliminated from the portfolio.

There are no hard and fast rules for sequencing, but a lot of possible approaches. The following is by no means a complete list: when it comes to sequencing, an artist should exert as much imagination as when the images were created.

1. **Bookend it,** with the very best image at the end and the second-best at the beginning. This way, the portfolio draws the viewer in with a great intro and finishes with a bang that echoes.
2. **Color-shift it.** If color is an important feature of the portfolio's images and there is a clear flow between the images' dominant colors, you may want to arrange the images with increasing or decreasing color saturation or in a way that mimics the color wheel.
3. **Zoom in/out.** When the collection of images depicts similar objects from different perspectives, try a shift in scope, going from wide to narrow, then back to wide, or vice versa.
4. **Put it in chronological order,** and this does not just apply to a single sequence of an event. Any collection of images that has an implied cause and effect or precursor-event-aftermath relationship can be sequenced in a way that makes chronological sense.
5. **Narrate it,** like telling a story, moving from the introduction, to the content's meat, and then to the conclusion.

One approach might be particularly effective for one portfolio and ineffective or even inexecutable for another.

Generally, a portfolio should have 12 to 20 images. These members of the A-team should of course be the very best in the series. Note the word *should* in these statements: there are always exceptions to the rule. If a review does not have definitive time limit, e.g., in a private appointment, then more images might be appropriate. Whether the images are the absolute best is also not the only criterium: each of the images must also be compatible with the others, just like each member of an A-team must be able to play well with each other. The keyword for compatibility is *coherence*, as described in *Try this 10.5: Putting together a portfolio*.

➤ FLIP THE PAGE

It takes more than just a great portfolio to impress your reviewers – how you talk about your work can be as important as the work itself. Using words to enhance visuals is addressed in Chapter 14: Words.

Where to go for portfolio reviews and what to expect

If you are majoring in art, chances are you've encountered more than a few reviews, often in the form of group critiques (see Chapter 14: Words). Don't let yourself get tired of them: remain fresh by always bringing something new to the table (by being productive) and by being sincerely interested in others' work and willing to help. This persistent engagement does you as much good as an athlete's field trainings.

Getting off campus, there are plenty of places in the "real world" to get your work reviewed by a wide variety of people:

A local photography center. The most well-known of these is the International Center of Photography, New York (ICP), but there are plenty of others around the world. Google "photography center" + the name of your nearest major city to see if there's a photography center near you (examples include Houston Center for Photography, the Photographic Center Northwest, Seattle, and The Photographer's Gallery, London). These institutions, often nonprofits, perform multiple functions including producing exhibitions, publishing books, and providing educational opportunities for their communities. Check to see if your local photography center offers group critiques: these sessions are typically led by a guest artist or curator and can be a great way to get additional feedback about your work.

The Society for Photographic Education (SPE) and its local chapters in the U.S. This organization gathers together educators and students of photography in its annual conferences where reviews are open to all participants. The majority of the reviewers are educators, so consider this an intercollegiate version of your classroom reviews.

Photo festivals like FotoFest (Houston, Texas), PhotoLucida (Portland, Oregon), PhotoNOLA (New Orleans, Louisiana), Les Rencontres d'Arles (Arles, France) and its new partner in Asia, Jimei x Arles (Xiamen, China). Festivals feature massive, multi-venue exhibitions and educational programming like lectures, workshops, and reviews. These reviews are the pinnacle in terms of reviewers: there are magazine editors, museum curators, art agencies, gallerists, festival organizers, etc. These are the people who can offer shows, publications, and purchases, or at least important guidance.

Reviews at major photo festivals are multi-day events where an artist will meet one-on-one with multiple reviewers. The meetings take place in a large conference room with tables for each reviewer and a tightly controlled schedule. The reviewees are like dolphins, swimming among the reviewers' islands, visiting one after another on command.

Reviews: mindset and strategy

A review means receiving feedback, both positive and negative. It can become very intense when more than a dozen reviewers give you a piece of their mind in a matter of two days. Such meetings require mental and strategic preparation.

"Am I ready?" is one frequently asked question and it can be difficult to answer. If we define *ready* as having 100% finished the work, then no one would ever be ready. There are natural moments, however, in the development of a project when it comes to a state that feels more or less complete and these are great checkpoints that signal the work is ready for review.

It is not just the images that need to be ready – the artist must be prepared, as well. Ask yourself the following questions to determine if you are ready for the intensity of a formal review:

- Have I thrown so much effort into the work that I feel the urge to stop and show it?
- Can I envision my work in a group or solo show?
- Do I have a clear idea of where I'd like to show my work? For example, a for-profit gallery, a nonprofit exhibition space, a publication, etc.?
- Have I had plenty of "drill" reviews, in the classroom, for example?
- Am I curious about how people perceive my work?
- Do I know how to talk about my work?
- Am I, at least moderately, prepared for rejection and criticism?

- If you answered yes to 4 out of the 7 questions, you are quite ready for a formal review. If you have a score of 6 or higher, book the next major review to which you can feasibly travel. If you are not quite there yet, don't worry: this list can be used as a to-do list to get yourself ready.

So, you've signed up for a review. Now what?

Know your reviewers. Find out what they do and what they are interested in. Read their bios. In some reviews, a list of reviewers and their info is provided for the reviewee to choose from, and in such cases, do opt to **select your reviewers**. Find yourself good matches: for example, a photography curator from a science museum is a good match for your wildlife studies, while a for-profit gallerist may not be a good match for your highly experimental work with uncertain sellability. On the other hand, a nonprofit gallery oriented towards challenging contemporary art might be a good fit.

At the review, remain calm and **do not over-talk**. A brief introduction of who you are and what the work is entitled is sufficient, then let the portfolio do the "talking," at least for a while. After the reviewer has seen several pieces, a question might come up – that is your cue to speak.

If the reviewer likes the work very much, ask for next steps on your part, as well as theirs. Does the reviewer have any advice to expand or elevate the work? Is the work ready to be shown? If yes, where and when?

If the viewer dislikes or even hates the work, do not expect to change their mind – at least, not in this short meeting. Find out the reason behind their lack of enthusiasm. Importantly, they might not be alone. Negative reviews can expose issues that need continued thought and work, ultimately leading to better work. A negative response is as good of a lesson as a positive one.

Be professional. You may love your work like a child, but you should never be as protective of it. Coming out of reviews in rage or tears is not always your fault, but is to be avoided – for your own sanity, as well as maintaining a pleasant atmosphere.

Reviews: mindset and strategy

(continued)

Reviewers are not saints and their grumpiness might just be because they have sat there for too long and looked at too many portfolios. Be friendly and cheerful, not just to make it easier on the reviewer, but also to keep your own spirits up.

Be friendly and network with your fellow reviewees. Being a decent human being should always supersede the quest for professional success. Fights among reviewees are not unheard of, but if you engage in that type of behaviour, don't even think of asking the authors to autograph this textbook – you are disowned! Your fellow reviewees are potential friends, collaborators, or even spouses – who knows?

Be aware of review etiquette. Pay attention to time and be ready to wrap up a minute before the bell rings. That is, unless, it is the reviewer who doesn't want to stop, in which case, wrap up as quickly as possible and find an opportunity to apologize to the waiting reviewee. Be generous and let others know if you are giving up a review for whatever reason (reviews often have a bulletin board for this purpose). Sometimes, fellow reviewees may be up to swap review sessions, too.

Here are some other commonly asked questions:

- **Should I bring more than one portfolio?** Yes, why not if you have more than one that showcase multiple series of work. That being said, pick just one for each reviewer. It is possible that a reviewer might be interested in seeing the second or third portfolio, and they might just rather see something else. When sporting multiple portfolios, hide the secondary ones in a separate box, or in the same box with a divider, and reveal them only when needed.
- **Should I present a written statement?** Yes, but generally begin by verbally making your statement, very succinctly. Keep your written statement until the end, when you can give it to the reviewer to keep. If the statement is very, very short, you may present it earlier in the review and pause for a few moments for the reviewer to read. If the reviewer is reluctant to read, you should quickly switch to verbal mode.
- **Should I leave my card?** Absolutely – and make sure the card is designed as a reminder of the shown work. Yes, that means there should be a specific card for each portfolio. Of course, the card should have your name and contact info, including web and social media addresses.

The reviewer's perspective

Mary Virginia Swanson

Mary Virginia Swanson is an artist consultant, author, educator, and frequent reviewer at many of the world's largest photography festivals.

She has this advice for photographers attending a formal review:

Each reviewer is unique, with their own background, interests, and needs. "The most important thing about investing – and that's literally what it is, investing – in a review is really looking hard at who's going to be there. Are they the assistant to the assistant to the assistant or is the decision-maker coming? I want photographers to see lots of different types of reviewers: people from galleries, museums, book publishers. I also want photographers to see curators for corporate collections and graphic designers who are choosing images for fiction covers. I want them to see the great magazine editors, of course, but there's also a whole other world of editorial that lives online only.

"Do your homework. Who are you speaking to? Understand how they work with photography and with photographers. If I were seeing somebody from a magazine, I would want to pitch my story and focus on its subject matter. If I'm pitching a project to a museum curator, they are more interested in the long-term progression of the project, so I would talk about the evolution of the project's ideas."

Seek out new opinions. "I always encourage photographers to try to get a meeting with someone they've never had a chance to meet before. If you've never had a graphic designer look at your work, why not have one of your 10 meetings be with somebody that pushes your knowledge? Not because you think you can get something tangible from them like a sale or a commission, but treat it like continuing education and you'll get a lot out of it."

Don't expect instant success. "One of the most important things to understand is that it may be years before a curator has a chance to bring your work to their venue. That curator or that gallerist may be impressed by your work at the review, and they are going to start watching you. It takes time. It rarely happens tomorrow."

When she's reviewing, an artist's words can matter just as much their images. "I ask the photographer, before we look at a single picture, to tell me what the work is about. If they can't tell me, it gives me a window to the fact that they're not very deep into the project yet. It's really important that you can talk about your work. You never know, the person you meet at the next industry gathering could fund your project simply because you're like-minded but you must be able to talk about the work, to articulate your passions. Speaking and writing are the most important tools you will use to inform others about your work."

Speaking and writing about your images is covered in more depth in Chapter 14: Words.

The veteran reviewee's perspective

Luis Delgado Qualtrough

Luis Delgado Qualtrough (American and Mexican, born 1951) is an artist whose practice spans photography, book-making, and publishing. Reviews are an important, and frequent, part of his career.

"Reviews have been a tremendous force for my practice – my work would not be where it is today without them. I attended my first formal review in 1984. The experience was equally painful and fun. In a review, it is important listen to what is being said, and also what is not being said. It can be difficult to encounter criticism, but take it one day at a time, one review at a time. Do not take yourself too seriously: keep your sense of humor and be polite. You will encounter reviewers who flat-out dislike your work, but hey, the world is round and people have different tastes. It is important to listen and mull everyone's input. Take the time to enjoy meeting people on both sides of the table (reviewers and reviewees). I continue to go to reviews to this day to develop those relationships."

PHOTO 10.12
Luis Delgado-Qualtrough, page from
***10 Carbon Conundrums* artist book, 2016,**
pigment on paper. Delgado-Qualtrough's work often takes the form of artist books that combine photographs and text. Each page of *10 Carbon Conundrums* is a meditation on a major challenge facing life on Earth, including pollution, genetic manipulation, and in this example, the hunting of endangered species.

37° 44'31.82" N - 122° 24'45.73" W

The King Falls On His Sword
40° 25'4.64" N - 3° 42'51.52" W

Spain

2 June 2014

Juan Carlos Alfonso Víctor María de Borbón y Borbón-Dos Sicilia

In April 2012, Spanish King Juan Carlos faced heavy criticism for his elephant-hunting trip in Botswana. Spaniards only found out about the trip after the King injured himself and a special aircraft was sent to bring him home.

In April 2012, Spain's unemployment was at 23 percent overall and at nearly 50 percent for young workers. *El País* estimated the total cost of the hunting trip at 44,000 Euros (USD 57,850), about twice Spain's average annual salary.

In April 2012, the King was honorary president of the World Wide Fund for Nature. In July 2012, WWF-Spain held a meeting in Madrid and decided 226 votes to 13 to remove him from the honorary presidency.

The king later apologized for the hunting trip.

A new reviewee's perspective

Moe Penders

PHOTO 10.13

Photographer, teaching artist, and curator Moe Penders (Salvadoran, born 1988) attended their first formal portfolio review shortly after graduating with a fine arts degree in photography. Though classroom reviews were a regular part of their degree program, the formal review process was a new challenge.

The sheer volume of ideas encountered in a review can be overwhelming. "You're processing a lot of information in a very short amount of time. In my first review, I spoke with four people and they all told me completely different things. It's like, "Who do I listen to?"

Research and strategize. "Really read everyone's bios and see what they're interested in. Where do they work – is it a gallery, a museum, a nonprofit? And where do you want to show your work? For me, a gallery is not my goal. If a gallery wanted to show my work I wouldn't say no, but I don't feel like my work necessarily fits there. I'm more interested in showing in nonprofits or other places that engage with my community, so those are the reviewers I'm trying to see."

Perhaps even more important than in-the-moment feedback is the professional network you can build. "Some of my reviewers have been really cool people. They knew I was young and could use their help and they have stayed in touch. I actually I just got an email from a reviewer I saw two years ago to be part of a show."

PHOTO 10.14
Moe Penders, *Chancletas and Tamarindo*, from the series *Cultura*, 2017.
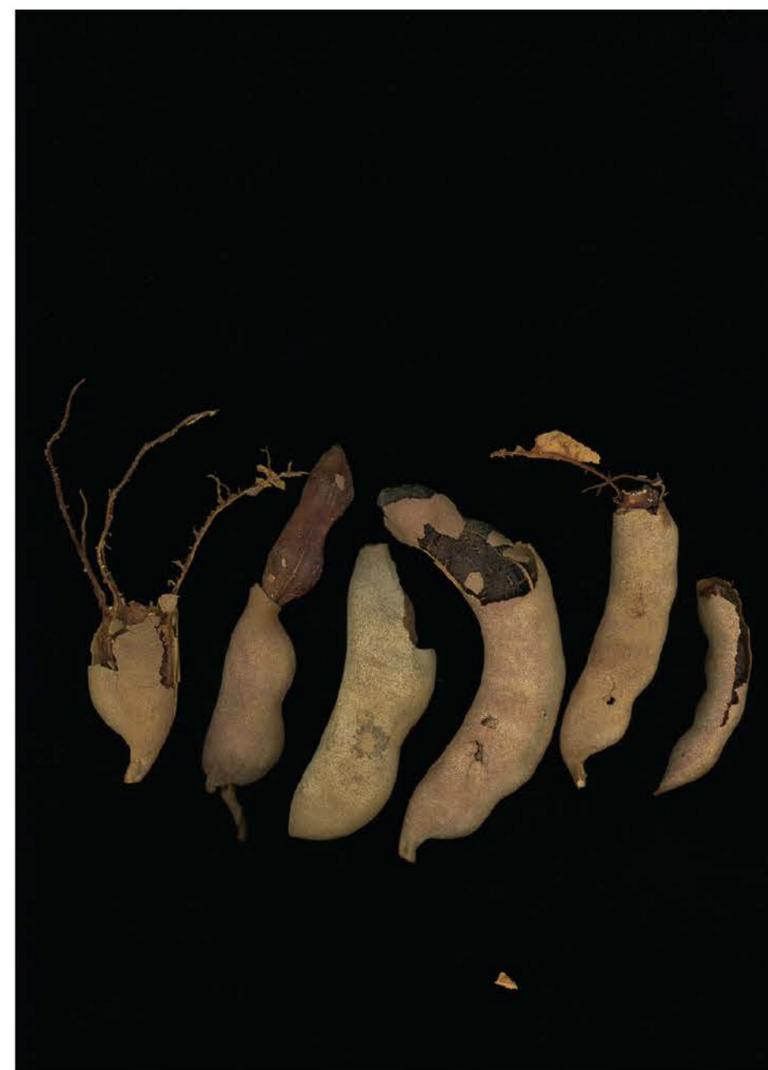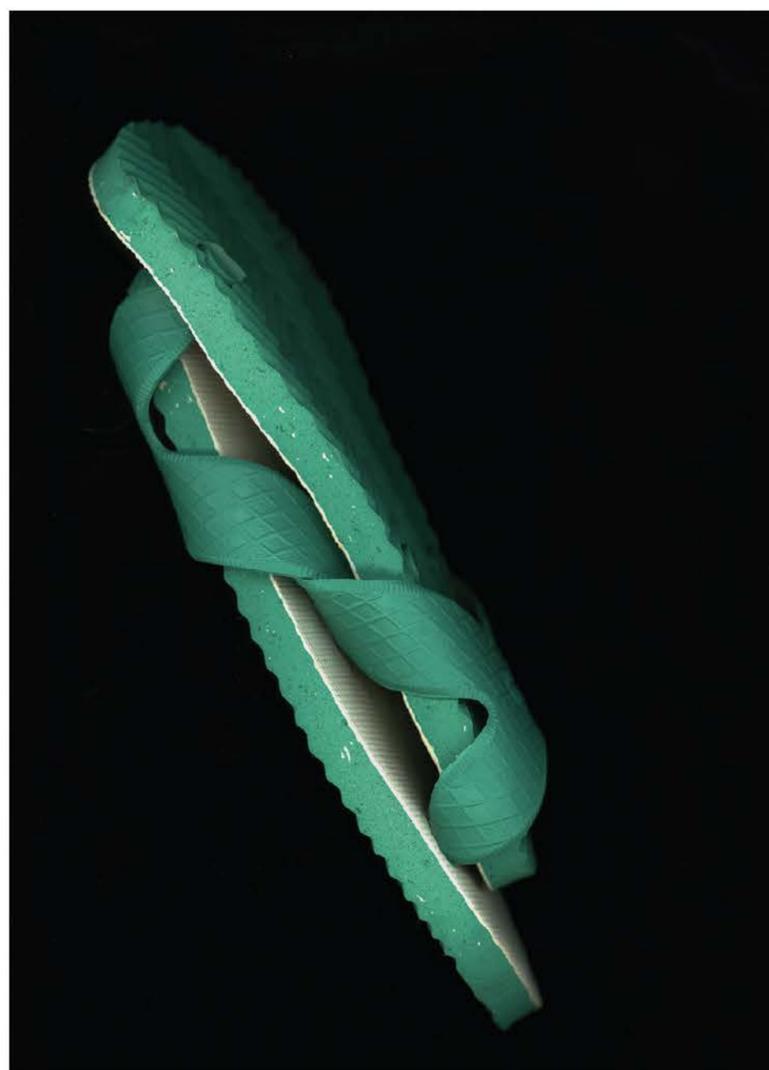
On rejection

Not all review experiences are pleasant: you may encounter reviewers that for one reason or another simply do not like your work. This fact extends beyond the review meeting: people and their tastes are fickle, meaning that criticism and rejection are the norms of being an artist. We can confidently say that all artists, even the most successful, have faced rejection at some point in their career. The important thing is to learn from the experience. Some of the artists featured in this book share their own perspective and advice on rejection:

Marja Pirilä (Chapter 2: Optics):

"At first rejection always feels bad, naturally, but for me it usually also starts a process of self-reflection. It makes me curious to find alternative ways to think about my work and that usually leads to new perspectives and can even inspire new work."

Argus Paul Estabrook (Chapter 3: Exposure)

"Something Warhol said which really resonated with me was, 'Don't think about making art, just get it done. Let everyone else decide if it's good or bad, whether they love it or hate it. While they are deciding, make even more art.' I think that's a sound way to move forward and it has been very helpful in my own life."

Laura Plageman (Chapter 8: Prints)

"Rejection happens and it's not fun. We have to remind ourselves that it's all subjective and just keep going. One way to avoid burnout is to be selective about what you apply for: make sure you are targeting your work to the proper audience. It can take a bit of homework and follow-up but eventually, if you're true to your vision, the tide will turn."

Prince V. Thomas (Chapter 9: Content and Concept)

"Rejection is only a negative if you define success by it. To use an analogy, no baseball player bats a thousand. No basketball player makes all their shots. Failure is built into the process. Embrace it. I once got a rejection letter from a gallery that couldn't even be bothered with sending me a standard rejection letter. They simply mailed me a rejection on a Post-It note. I loved it! It's now pinned on my memory wall in my studio. Don't let rejection define you. Define your own success."

Mark Chen (author)

"You will often be rejected not because you are not good enough but because your work doesn't fit the decision-maker's agenda."

Exhibition presentation

You have been offered a show – it's time to celebrate! After the well-deserved party, the next question is: how are you going to present your pieces on the empty walls of the gallery?

This is a major divergence point for artists. Some may simply choose to print and frame their photos, and leave all the rest to the gallery; others may opt to go further and design an environment that turns the gallery into an aesthetic and/or conceptual extension of the work. These approaches, on a spectrum from minimalist to complex, will be surveyed in the rest of this chapter. It is worth noting that some of the decisions will be determined by the type of venue your exhibition will be held in; various venue types will be covered in Chapter 10.5: Money.

To frame, or not to frame?

A frame can be used to enhance a photograph's physical presence. The bare necessities of this approach are a frame and mat paper. These elements are often as simple as possible: nothing but black or white for colors and for shape, nothing but clean, straight lines, without excessive texture or design. Thus, our job title – photographer – is maintained, sidestepping the roles of graphic or interior designers.

The preceding statement is rather puritanical. While this strategy is music to the ears of photographers who consider the task of framing a misallocation of brain power, it is by no means a rule that must be followed. If the work's aesthetics or concept calls for extended design effort, beyond the borders of the photos, then the question of framing becomes more nuanced. In fact, the very necessity of a frame might be called into question.

The invention of new print media provides many options like metal and acrylic prints: photos printed on a piece of metal or mounted to the backside of acrylic. The image is therefore sturdy and protected – no frame required. Producing these types of

PHOTO 10.15
Penelope Umbrico, installation image of *2,303,057 Suns from Sunsets from Flickr (Partial) 09/25/07*, 2007. Artists may choose not to frame their prints for any number of reasons. Here, Penelope Umbrico printed some of the more than 2 million photographs of sunsets that had been posted to the image sharing site Flickr at the time she made this work (that number would grow to more than 30 million by 2016). By installing the prints without frames, the images have no space between them, creating a large, crowded field of similar images, mirroring the repetitiveness of images posted to social media platforms.

prints is normally beyond the capabilities of a photographer's studio and can be handled by some commercial labs. See *Show me 10.3: Printing on unusual media* for an example.

This chapter's goal has been to show that developing impactful work is not a mysterious act of magic: the question of an artist's talent, as it turns out, is not so much about either having or lacking some innate quality as it is about taking concrete steps to strengthen it. This chapter is a handbook on using simple methods to advance your thinking, and thereby your artistic production. Moving forward, the remaining chapters will visit areas of special interest and answer questions that many are too afraid to ask.

The components: the frame, glass (or plexiglass), artwork, matboard, backboard, and hanging accessories all fit together to complete the framed piece.

Here we see, from the top, glass, matboard and a backboard fitted into a metal frame.

The materials: Most frames are made of wood and metal. Wood frames tend to come in one piece, while metal frames are typically sold as assemblies of four independent sides. Wood frames have many decorative options for their surfaces from traditional to modern, while metal frames are consistently minimal and modern. Metal frames are more durable than wooden ones: if dropped, a wooden frame can crack or chip. Metal bends and can dent, but because metal frames are made of four independent sides, the damaged parts can easily be replaced.

The transparent cover in front of the artwork is typically glass or plexiglass. The latter does not shatter but might warp if it is thin. Using thicker plexiglass can avoid warping, but will increase weight. Choose the option of UV protection to reduce the artwork's exposure to UV radiation, thereby extending the print's archival time.

Matboards are used to surround the image, creating a buffer between the image and the frame. Make sure to use acid-free matboard to increase the print's archival time. The edges of the board that border the artwork are often cut into bevels – cuts with an angle – in order to reveal the material's thickness and create extra visual interest:

Backboards are placed behind the image, the glass, and the matboard. The most common material for backboards is foam core because it is lightweight and reasonably durable.

The size: Size matters when it comes to frames. A few measurement to consider include:

❏ The width, height, and rabbet, as illustrated here:
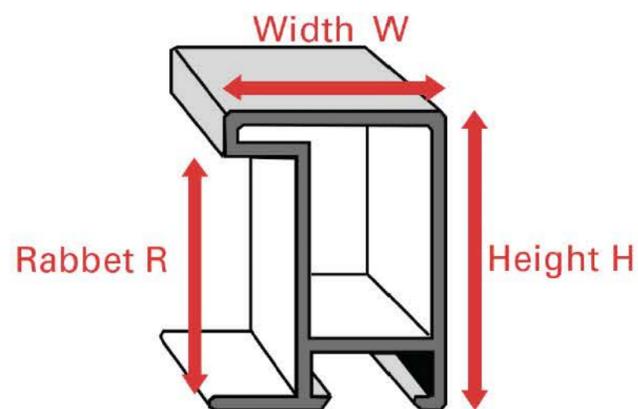
❏ The width forms the frame's façade and the height determines how far the frame stands out from the wall: together they create the impression of volume. The wider and higher the frame, the heavier it feels, and vice versa. Rabbet is the height of the interior space that accommodates the glass, art, matboard and backboard.
❏ The width of the matboard is purely the artist's choice. In the galleries, we can see images framed with no matboard at all (meaning the frame is right on the edge of the art piece), to artworks with more than a 10-inch-wide matboard surrounding a small 4 × 4-inch print. Generally speaking, a wider mat keeps the frame "away" from the image, hence isolating the image from the design of the frame. A nonexistent or narrow mat "fuses" the frame and image into a singular visual piece.

The aesthetics: A photograph can never be viewed in a vacuum – an image all by itself exists only in our imagination. When viewed in the physical world, an image is either on a book page, a monitor, a TV screen, nailed to the wall, or framed and hung. The overall look of a framed piece of art is then an almost inevitable presentation for a photograph and its various additives – frame, matboard, etc. – are important components of the presentation equation.

The question is, do we want these components to play an active or quiet role? The answer, yet again, is highly individual. The rationale behind the answer could be conceptual: do I consider my pieces images or objects? It could be organizational: is this work for a group show in which it has to compete/harmonize with many uncoordinated pieces, or is it in a solo show in which I have full control of the presentation? It can also be purely logistical: do I need to ship these framed artworks? Will this frame fit into my trunk?

Chapter 8: Prints introduced the process of making inkjet prints. For many photographic artists, inkjet prints produced on an in-house printer are just what they need: a simple, relatively affordable, and traditional way to display their photographic images. For others, the concept behind a project might push the artist toward less expected print media in order to create a particular viewing experience. Following are some examples of photographic projects displayed on media beyond the standard inkjet print. Many of these specialty prints are beyond the capability of the typical photographer's studio and must be produced by outside labs.

The Volcano Cycle by **Meridel Rubenstein** (American, born 1948) is a series depicting the active volcanoes of Indonesia's Ring of Fire. Rubenstein shows the volcanoes as places of primordial creation; their steaming craters and new rock formations are like scenes from the earth's beginning.

The images are printed via a dye sublimation printer on aluminum sheets. The metal surface shines through the images, adding a metallic sheen to the work that enhances the elemental and mysterious subject matter. For most artists, prints on metal require working with a commercial printing lab to make the prints to the artist's specifications. A word of caution: metal prints' characteristics differ significantly from inkjet prints. It is recommended that newbies try out different labs using small prints to learn about print quality, and sample different surfaces before committing to large and expensive prints.

Annu Palakunnathu Matthew's (American, born India, 1964) series *The Virtual Immigrant* uses lenticular printing technology to animate her images.

PHOTO 10.16
Installation view: Meridel Rubenstein, *Volcanic Leaf Suspended*, from the series *The Volcano Cycle: Ring of Fire between Heaven and Earth*, 2013 (negatives 2010-11), dye sublimation on aluminum.

PHOTO 10.17
Annu Palakunnathu Matthew, *Anirudh*, from the *Viritual Immigrant* series, 2006, archival digital print mounted with lenticular lens with audio.

A lenticular print is made in such a way that the visible image changes as it is viewed from different angles. You may have encountered simple lenticular prints as novelty items like stickers and postcards marketed as "holographic." More sophisticated lenticular prints can be made by some photo labs that carefully calibrate the way the print displays multiple images, creating a 3-dimensional and/or animated effect to the artist's specifications. As viewers move in front of a lenticular print from Matthew's *The Virtual Immigrant* series, they see a transition between two images: in one, her subject wears traditional Indian attire, and in the other, Western-style clothing.

The series explores the daily realities of Indian call center workers, who must shift between their own culture and that of the Western customers they interact with professionally. The lenticular prints' transition – never fully complete – mirrors these workers' constant state of flux between cultures. The series also includes videos, which at the time of this writing can be seen on Matthew's website for a more complete visualization of the transitions.

Nobuhiro Nakanishi (Japanese, born 1976) creates room-sized installations that begin as digital photographs.

Nakanishi photographs natural landscapes over the course of many hours in order to capture the passage of time. He then prints these images on transparency film with an inkjet printer, resulting in transparent photographs that are hung, often from the gallery ceiling, so that the gallery's light shines through the prints, casting images on the floor and walls that extend his photographs beyond the boundaries of the print's edges.

PHOTO 10.18 & 10.19
Installation view, Aomori Contemporary Art Centre, Aomori, Japan (2011): Nobuhiro Nakanishi, *Layer Drawing – Cloud/Fog*, inkjet print on film, acrylic sheets, 100 × 100 cm (100 sheets), set of 2, 2005, © Nobuhiro Nakanishi.

> **▶ FLIP THE PAGE**
>
> Printing on media other than paper is nothing new: as discussed in Chapter 11: Tradition, some of the earliest photographic technologies required printing on glass and metal plates. Today, many artists continue to use these antique printing methods.

As we explored in *Show me 10.3: Printing on unusual media*, standard inkjet prints do not always serve an artist's presentation needs: sometimes, other print media are required to make the desired visual impact. For other artists, prints alone – on any media – are insufficient for their artistic goals, leading some to experiment with displaying their photographic images along with a range of other media. This additional media can illuminate new dimensions of the images' subject matter, providing more information and food for thought than possible with prints alone.

Delilah Montoya's (American, born 1955) *Contemporary Casta Portraiture: Nuestra "Calidad"* depicts her subjects through several media: photographs, audio recordings, and DNA testing.

The series' title refers to the Spanish Colonial *casta* paintings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which illustrated social hierarchies and racial identities. Montoya's project complicates the idea of visual markers of identity by digging deeper with modern tools: Montoya had her subjects take a DNA test, the results of which are exhibited along with the photographs, visualized as a map showing her subjects' ancestors' places of origin. Montoya also made audio recordings of her subjects discussing the DNA results and telling family stories which are accessible via QR codes embedded in the images. The result are complex, multimedia portraits that encourage viewers to consider the complicated nature of contemporary identity.

PHOTO 10.20
Delilah Montoya, *Contemporary Casta Portraiture: Nuestra "Calidad" Casta 1*, 2018, mixed media, wood, die sublimation on metal, test tube, brass etching.

**Andres Serrano** (American, born 1950) is known for controversial work.

PHOTO 10.21
Andres Serrano, *Torture*, installation at the Station Museum of Contemporary Art (Houston, Texas), 2017.

As its name suggests, his series *Torture* consists of large prints depicting scenes of torture: these are not documentation of real occurrences, but reenactment of contemporary torture practices. As discussed in Chapter 9: Content and Concept, when viewers are confronted with challenging work, an artist statement can help them to "digest" the artwork. In *Torture's* presentation, Serrano includes a video which acts much like a statement, providing some background information about his subject matter. The video assembles Serrano's photographs into a slide show of sorts, sprinkling in facts and names about the places, people, and torture devices he depicts. The video's soundtrack is the song *If I Didn't Care* from the 1930s. The light-hearted tune and lyrics contrast with the discomforting visual content, providing a sense of detachment and relief, as well as irony.

By including a video in the presentation of *Torture*, Serrano provides viewers a chance to take a break: physically, by sitting down and watching for a few minutes, and mentally, by learning some of the context behind these challenging images. The video informs about Serrano's content and concept and provides space for the viewer to process their thoughts.

PATRICK McNALLY
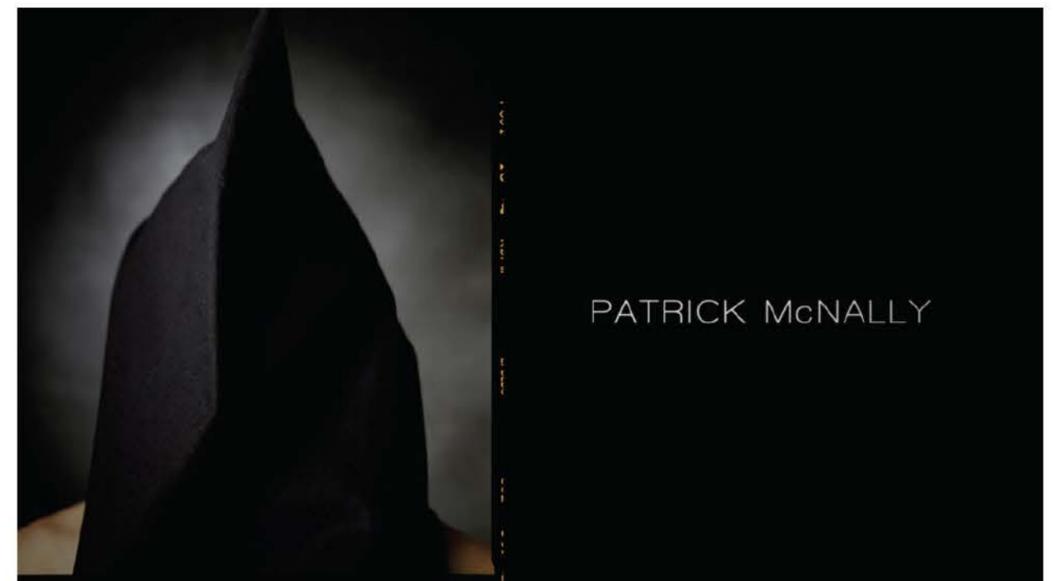
PHOTO 10.22
Andres Serrano, *Torture* (still frames) 2015, video, 7'17".

FLIP THE PAGE

Making video can be natural progression in the practice of a photographic artist. Video art is surveyed in Chapter 11: Video.

For some photographic artists, photos in frames just do not suffice and other, more innovative methods of presentation are required for their images to have the desired impact.

While roadside billboards are typically used to sell products, **Hank Willis Thomas** and **Eric Gottesman**'s *For Freedoms* project uses these tools of mass communication as a platform for public art. The project recruits artists, many of whom are photographers, to create billboards with political messages, with the goal "to deepen public discussions on civic issues and core values."[10] Presenting the work on billboards is a necessary extension of the projects' content and concept: it's unlikely that images hung on a gallery's walls, seen by a relatively small audience, would ever enter public discourse in the way a billboard's message can when thousands of people pass by each day.

Artist **JR's** (French, born 1983) *Inside Out Project* similarly makes use of large, publicly displayed images. JR is known for his large-scale *pastings*: photographs pasted onto buildings and other structures, sometimes illegally. When JR won the 2011 TED Prize which gives its winners $100,000 to realize one wish to change the world, he devised *The Inside Out Project* to empower anyone to make their own public art statement. Participants submit portraits of themselves and others in their community through the project's website, http://www.insideoutproject.net/. JR's team processes these images, produces large prints, and mails them back to the participants, who in turn post them in their community. In Photo 10.24, the photos have been posted on a roof in Tel Aviv. The result is a world-wide collaborative artwork in which more than 260,000 people have participated.[11]

PHOTO 10.23
For Freedoms, *Where Do We Go From Here?* Eric Gottesman x Project Row Houses, Houston, TX, 2018, photograph of billboard on vinyl.


PHOTO 10.24
JR, *INSIDE OUT, The People's Art Project*, Tel Aviv, 2011.

Allan deSouza (Kenyan, born 1958) also takes his photographs beyond the gallery walls – though this time, to the gallery's floor. deSouza's *DisCourses of Empire* is a site-specific installation made of deSouza's personal and family photographs, as well as his artworks. The family photographs are arranged on the floor in the shape of the city of New Orleans. By walking over the images on the floor in order to get to the photographs on the wall, gallery visitors damage and even destroy traces of family history, like hurricane Katrina did to much of New Orleans in 2005. The nontraditional display approach physically involves the viewer in the artwork itself and underscores deSouza's conceptual interest in how historical records are both created and erased.[12]

PHOTO 10.25
Allan deSouza, *DisCourses of Empire* installation view, 2010.
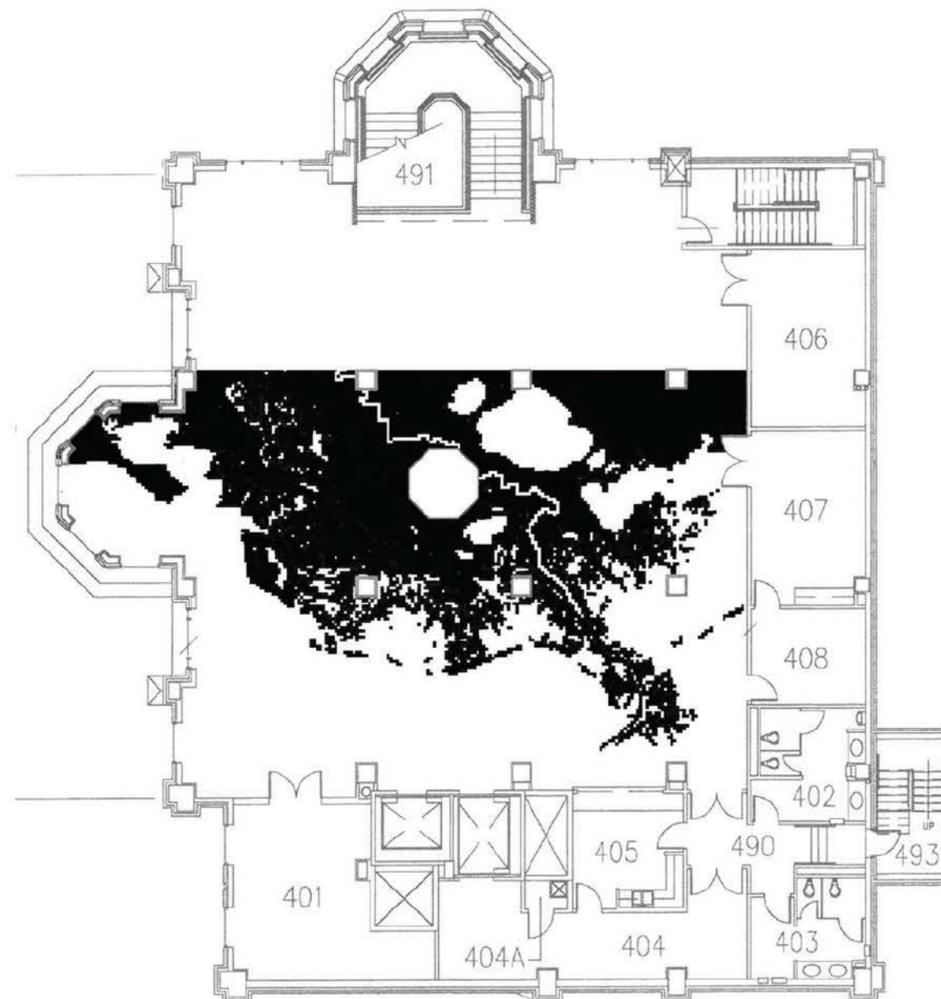
ILLUSTRATION 10.2
Allan deSouza, *DisCourses of Empire*, floorplan, 2010.

10.5 Money

Let's consider all the photographic artists who continually invest money and effort into their artform. To sustain this pursuit, what many call "an expensive hobby," a photographer needs a source of income. This income can come from:

- The art **practice itself**, through selling photographs as pieces of art.
- **A photo-related business or job**, like operating a commercial photo studio, freelance work, contributing to stock photo agencies, being a photographic educator, etc.
- **Jobs unrelated to photography** like being a lawyer, a construction worker, a bartender, or anything really, to make enough money to pay the bills and also make art.

In reality, any photographer's income stream is likely to be a combination of the above sources.

This chapter will focus on the various ways a photographer can make an income from their photography, offering a glimpse into how others have made it work.

Selling art

Traditionally, art sales are made through exhibition venues or agents. The era of the internet and social media has also created online marketplaces.

Agents

Here, we define an *art agent* as a middle-person who connects the artist to buyers and is not based in a brick-and-mortar exhibition space like a gallery (discussed next).

An art agent can operate in various ways: some represent the artist, sharing their work with individuals interested in purchasing art. The agent keeps a portfolio of artists and actively promotes their work (the agent's portfolio is not to be confused with the artist's portfolio: while you, the artist, put work together as a portfolio, the agent collects artists into their portfolio of people). When a sale is made, a percentage of the revenue – say, 30%, 40% or 50% – goes to the agent.

Other agents operate as art consultants: their clients are the art buyers, rather than the artists. These buyers might be a corporation wishing to decorate their new offices or collectors seeking pieces to their liking. Art consultants collect a fee from the buyer, meaning that the artist is paid the full purchase price for their works of art.

Exhibition venues

Exhibition venues are called by a variety of names: gallery, museum, art center, etc.. These names do not, in fact, say much about the nature of these venues, but there are a few more definitive ways to categorize them:

Commercial vs. nonprofit: A commercial venue's major source of income is commissions on art sales, while a nonprofit sustains itself in a variety of ways including contributions from individuals, foundations, and/or the government. While a traditional business is committed to making profits, a nonprofit is committed to a particular cause, as defined by its mission statement. A nonprofit might not actively engage in sales, but most are willing to connect artists with potential buyers. Whether or not they will share a cut of the sale depends on the particular venue.

A commercial gallery often represents a portfolio of artists, meaning it makes a concerted effort to promote them, acting as agents, as discussed earlier.

PHOTO 10.5.1
The Houston Center for Photography is a nonprofit organization that exhibits photography in addition to offering photography classes, group critiques, and other community events.

PHOTO 10.5.2
Some museums, like FOAM (Fotographiemuseum Amsterdam), are dedicated to exhibiting photography. Many museums like FOAM are nonprofits.

Curated vs. non-curated: Many exhibition spaces are programmed by curators, professionals who, among other things, determine what art will be shown, setting standards for the venue. These decisions are often not in a single curator's hands and are also influenced by the space's director, board of directors, other staff members, and/or other leaders within the organization. These decisions are also influenced by the venue's mission statement.

The de facto mission statement of a commercial space is profit, meaning that the decision to include an artist in the gallery's rotation is, at least to a large degree, sellability – a quality that depends on the venue's clientele. A gallery owner or its curator must consider who among their clients are potential buyers for the particular artist's work.

The mission statement of a nonprofit space (defined as part of its tax identity and monitored by the board of directors – yes, nonprofits are serious business) is, on the other hand, a much more complex matter. Some nonprofits might have missions as general as promoting the art of photography; others have more specific aims, like enhancing social justice, raising environmental awareness, promoting artists with diverse backgrounds, and more. If you can think of a mission statement, there is probably a nonprofit art space promoting it.

Mission statement

A mission statement defines an organization's goals, values, and core purpose. Many businesses and all nonprofit entities have one. In fact, a nonprofit's mission statement defines the nature of the organization and, often, what it can and cannot do in the eyes of the law. Many arts organizations are nonprofits and their mission statements determine, among other things, what art will be shown in their venue.

On the other end of the spectrum, the hurdle to entry into a non-curated space is not artistry or sell-ability, but money: paying a fee is often the only qualification for renting a venue and hanging your art in it.

It is important to realize that a curated space offers something a non-curated space can't: *reputation*. Because a curator's professional responsibility is to maintain certain standards for their venue, a curated space has a level of prestige to people within the art world: "If so-and-so artists could show their work at so-and-so place, they must be good!" By showing at these prestigious spaces, an artist moves up in the art world's echelons. Showing in a rental place can be exciting for friends and family who can come and pat your back and say "good job!", but it does not necessarily elevate your standing.

How does one get into a curated space? Take a look at the discussion of portfolio reviews in Chapter 10: Development and Presentation for some ideas.

THINK ABOUT IT 10.5.1
Am I good enough?

Every aspiring artist will at some point ask themselves, "Am I good enough?" It is a legitimate question that drives us towards improvement, but it is also a question that can drive us nuts.

When a gallerist, curator, or juror looks at your work for possible inclusion in a show or other opportunity, their reasoning is indeed, first and foremost, "Is this work good enough?" But there is also another equally important question: "Is it a good fit for my venue?"

This question of "fit" for a commercial gallerist is often simple sellability. For a curator of a nonprofit space, "fit" usually refers to whether the work aligns with the venue's mission. Regardless of the agenda or the type of venue, commercial or nonprofit, the answer to the question of "fit" is independent of the question of "good."

Your abstract studies of form, no matter how original and striking, can't be sold by a gallerist with clients who only buy landscapes. Your portraits of celebrities, no matter that they rival those by Annie Leibovitz, won't get attention from a nonprofit venue where only politically charged work is shown.

If you are turned down for these reasons, you should blame yourself for not doing your homework to learn about these places and their preferences, not for being a mediocrity with no chance of a breakthrough.

THINK ABOUT IT 10.5.2
How should I price my photographs?

The marketplace for art, like many things, follows the rules of the free market. Its mechanisms for pricing are just like those for real estate, cars, or groceries: the right price is the price at which the seller is willing to sell and the buyer is willing to buy.

There is, however, a distinctive difference between art and other commodities, lying in the fluidity of art's value. While it is easy to compare the prices of houses or bananas, comparing the prices of works of art is much more difficult. While prints by famed German photographer Andreas Gursky may sell for more than $4 million, it's safe to assume that our's will not.[1] Let's consider a more realistic scenario: you are an emerging artist having your first exhibition in a local, juried group show. The organizer asks for the sales price of your piece. What should you say? Here are the *don'ts*:

- Don't undersell: lack of experience should not translate into lack of confidence and should not be reflected in your pricing.
- Don't sell at a number less than two digits (in US dollars). If a fine art photo is well-printed, well-presented in a frame, and displayed in a decent venue, that gives it a value at least in the hundreds. Whoever wants to buy a print for less than that should get a poster instead of an original photo.
- Don't compare yourself, and your prices, to others. Your art is unique: its pricing should be, too.

Here are the *dos*:

- Do make it logical: for example, prints of the same size from the same series should be the same price.
- Do consider profit sharing: if the gallery takes 40%, will the remaining 60% be a reasonable take-home for you?
- Do be flexible: give price breaks to those who are deserving, like a potential buyer who surprised you with incisive commentary, or a fellow financially tight student who supported you as a friend or colleague.

Online art marketplaces and stock photography

The age of social media has also created online art marketplaces. Websites like Etsy and Devianart provide platforms for artists to offer their work for sale and buyers to shop for art. It sounds like a dream come true for both sides … but is it?

Think about shopping for photographic art through web browsing vs. in person in a gallery through viewing prints. The former has an absolute advantage of convenience. The latter, however, implies a certain level of seriousness: the artist has at least made the prints and a gallery has shown them, endorsing their quality. The displayed prints are also either the very product or a precise representation of the product the buyer will obtain. For a collector who really wants to invest, the inconvenience of physical shopping is a non-issue.

As of today, for many artists, the main channels of art photo sales are still through conventional galleries or brokers, detailed in this chapter.

Stock photography, on the other hand, has thrived online. According to UrbanDictionary.com, a stock photo is "a photograph, usually presented in a searchable online database, that may be purchased for specified uses." Stock photographs are literally all around us, used in advertisements, on posters, on book covers, websites, corporate communications – anything that be illustrated photographically can make use of stock photos (there are even some in this book!). Stock photography is not new: before the internet, there were stock photo agencies like The Image Bank who kept an inventory of slides, mailed printed catalogs to potential clients, and conducted transactions in brick-and-mortar stores. Today, Getty Images, who purchased The Image Bank as well as prominent competitors like iStock, is among the leading online stock photo agencies.

Stock photographs are *licensed*, that is to say, the stock photo agency grants permission to the customer to use the photograph in a specific way. Art photos may also be licensed, of course, (in fact, all the artistic photographs in this book were licensed from the artists), though usually for a much stiffer fee.

Readers may be wondering, if stock photos are made to be sold, what makes for sellable photos? The differences between stock photos and art photos can be examined through the lens of the *4 Cs*:

- **Craft**: stock photo agencies require their submissions to be technically "perfect:" sharp focus, low noise, accurate colors, to name a few items in typical guidelines. Art photos, on the other hand, might have technical standards overridden by their concepts.
- **Composition**: The products made from stock photos are mostly for public consumption. Under this premise, the composition of stock photos tends to be *loud and clear*: for example, strong definition of the subject through the use of foreground/background and large, contrasting negative space which allows flexibility for additional graphic elements.
- **Content** must be very well defined so users can, at the very least, identify the image as usable before they buy it. For example, an image promoting eating vegetables could have happy diners chewing on their salads, and an image addressing workplace unity could have a diverse group of people with smiling faces sitting around a meeting table. Veiled nuances, irony, or satire – qualities that often make great art photos – typically do not help stock photo sales.
- **Concepts** for stock photos are similarly straightforward – think about the mass market and sellability.

A typical stock photograph that could easily be used in corporate communications looks something like this:

Keywording is the responsibility of the contributing photographer and is an important, sometimes grueling, process in producing stock photos. Refer to the keywording section of Chapter 6. Keywords must be comprehensively assigned to an image, so the image will appear in potential buyers' searches. Keywords are usually about content, for example: *vegetable, food, health, corporate, employee, office,* etc. Keywords can also be about composition, like *green, rule of thirds,* etc.

Not adhering to the preceding tips does not mean the photo will not sell at all, but it could mean that it only sells once in a blue moon. Contributors sign a contract with the agency and whenever there is a sale, the contributor gets a cut based on the agency's formula.

Stock photography as an industry is thriving but, due the popularity of the medium and the vast number of people who are contributing stock photos, it can be difficult to make a significant income from it.

The relationship between an artist and a gallery may initially begin with artistic admiration and collaboration, but will one day become pure business when money is involved.

To sustain this relationship without dispute, obligations should be clearly defined in writing by executing a legal contract at the start of the relationship. The contract should detail the rate of profit sharing, the payment terms, insurance obligations, a list of pieces currently in the possession of the gallery, and – in case of a legal dispute – the choice of court jurisdictions and any other pertinent detail. Please note, this box highlights some points of common sense, not as a replacement for legal advice.

Beyond the contract, all correspondences related to business transactions should be archived: this is simple to do with email. Avoid verbal communication for anything other than informal chatting.

Should there be a dispute like nonpayment, you should try to solve the issue yourself, keeping all the correspondences on file, before resorting to legal proceedings. If it does come to that, the court will want to see a paper trail documenting your efforts to resolve the matter. If the disputed amount is below a certain figure, every U.S. state offers small claims courts which provide easy lawsuit filings and quick processing without legal representation. Google "small claim court amount" and look for the information relevant to your state. Many other legal jurisdictions around the world have a similar small claims process. If the amount you are owed is over your jurisdiction's limit, a lawyer can be helpful (and can likely be afforded) for the proceeding.

Don't think that these unpleasant topics are purely legal, though, as power struggles are at the heart of all confrontations. If we consider the art world a free market and the pieces of art the commodities, then the supply and demand equation is very lopsided: there are many, many more pieces made than can be sold. This puts the artist at a disadvantage in negotiations with galleries, as the general consensus is that the former need the latter, not the other way around. This also means that galleries can feel empowered to punish: "don't make me dislike you, or I will get rid of you."

Because of this imbalance, horrible stories abound, like gallerists recruiting emerging artists hungry for exposure and then not paying them, or galleries selling pieces at lower prices than agreed upon, or payments being delayed for no reason.

These risks are generally higher with commercial galleries. Nonprofit venues that allow artists to sell work but stay out of the transaction are much safer, though they may not actively promote sales like a commercial gallery.

For all aspiring artist who want to enter the market, beware and be prepared. Arm yourself with knowledge of the business, do your homework to learn the track records of the galleries you are interested in (despite the cautionary tales above, there are plenty of reputable galleries), conduct yourself with the utmost professionalism, and finally, good luck!

Photography-related businesses or jobs

Photographs might be produced purely from the artist's own motivations; they can be also produced in response to an external request, which we will refer to as an *assignment*. In an assignment, a client hires the photographer who produces and delivers images based on the client's requirements. An assignment typically includes pre-negotiated fees paid to the artist, making them much more financially predictable than selling art. In other words, these photographic jobs can be the artist's day jobs, or "gigs."

Here are a few examples of the many types of photo assignments:

- **Magazine and newspaper assignments.** The range of photographic images for these assignments is as wide as what magazines and newspapers cover: profiles of individuals, events, reviews of businesses, and more.

PHOTO 10.5.3
An image like this could be made by a photographer covering a local pride parade for a magazine or newspaper.

- **Commercial portraiture.** At some point in almost everyone's lives, they will need to have a professional portrait taken: from newborns, high school seniors, executive headshots, anniversary parties, to family gatherings, there is a long list of occasions when people want their portraits taken. These portraits might be taken in the studio or on location.

PHOTO 10.5.4
Carmen, a yoga instructor, needed professional portraits in order to advertise her private lessons.

- **A wedding** is often one of the most important occasions of a person's life, and one on which many are willing to spend a great deal of money. The gown, the food and drinks, the flowers, and the venue are all pricey items, but they only have a short moment of glory. To preserve them in memory, professional photographers must step in. Video is almost as commonly requested as still photos.

PHOTO 10.5.5

- **Real estate.** Photography's demand is on the rise in the internet age when more and more properties are promoted online: good photos, and sometimes videos, are essential to pique a potential buyer's interest. High-tech options like drones and 3D cameras, which provide aerial views and interior "tours," are quickly becoming the norm in this field.

PHOTO 10.5.6
Shooting from high above with a Phantom 4 Pro drone camera, photographer Gisele Parra (American, born 1991) was able to show off this property's unique geometry.

Freelance photographer

Lizette Belen

PHOTO 10.5.8

Lizette Belen (American, born 1993) graduated from the University of Houston's Photography / Digital Media program in 2016 and quickly turned her photography skills into a successful business. "Some of my clients include The Menil Collection – a museum in Houston – and a dog collar company called 1st Rodeo. I also work a lot of private events for a local magazine called *PaperCity*. I love shooting events: I'm a social butterfly and love meeting all types of people."

Lizette has a minor in business management, something which has proven helpful as a self-employed freelancer. "When you are working for yourself, you are your own boss, accountant, secretary – everything. My minor gave me insight into my business: I'm constantly aware of who my competitors are and what the demand is. I'm always asking myself, "What can I offer that no one else can?" I also learned it is VERY important to have a solid contract. That can go a long way in the case of any unforeseen situations."

Don't be afraid to put yourself out there. "Network: you never know who is looking for a photographer. It's as simple as leaving your business cards at a local coffee shop or starting a conversation while in line at the grocery store. You can also join networking groups and creative workshops to meet other artists."

Photo 10.5.9

Freelancer

A freelancer is person who does work for different organizations or individuals, rather than being committed to a particular employer long-term. Freelancers are often self-employed and might take assignments from many clients, operating as a free agent. The rise of the "gig economy" has seen an increase in those who support themselves as freelancers, whether driving for a car-sharing service, helping others with household tasks, or hiring-out their artistic skills.

■ **Products** must be photographed in order to be advertised. While many vendors will do this in-house (meaning that positions as an in-house photographer exist),

PHOTO 10.5.7
This image not only shows off a product, but also demonstrates its use.

Fashion and commercial photographer

Traci Ling

PHOTO 10.5.10

While she had always been creative, Ling (American, born 1980) did not begin to pursue photography professionally until after she started a family. "A career in photography found me in my early days of motherhood. This was not a linear career path with a fixed goal, but photography was a way to stay creative with a baby in one hand and an iPhone in the other."

Today, much of her work is in the fashion and commercial worlds. "Fashion photography found me after I started shooting for some up-and-coming fashion bloggers. It was combination of skill and being in the right place at the right time."

"I like to think that while I can work with clients to make their visions come to life, I also stay true to my aesthetic as an artist. I often face challenges when my client has a creative vision that does not mesh with mine. If it's someone I know and work with often, we can usually find a compromise. If they want something that just doesn't work with my aesthetic, I usually refer the job to someone else. Not only do I want to stay true to my work, but I want the client to be happy."

Finding a balance between her photography business and her family can be a challenge. "As a mother of three, I have carpool and school activities in my daily mix, so my window for work during the day is very small. For the most part, I stick to that window and try not to overbook myself. It's not always perfect, but somehow I manage!"

PHOTO 10.5.11
Traci Ling, image from the *Leggings and Louboutins* series, 2019.

others contract out to freelance photographers. This type of photography relies on a well-equipped light studio (see Chapter 5: Light).

The market for photo jobs like these is massive and is not limited to a specific region, making it relatively simple to break into. To find yourself a gig, ask around in your network: do you know any real estate agents in need of photography? Have you heard about a distant acquaintance getting married? These could be viable job leads. Advertising opportunities also abound: flyers around your neighborhood, ad spots in relevant magazines, or, for wedding photographers, bridal shows.

There are also many other job opportunities originating from specific sectors: for example, fashion, magazines, advertising, etc. To get into such specialized fields, networking and word of mouth are often the starting point; an apprenticeship as an insider's assistant is a good way break-in and learn the ropes.

The jobs listed here all enable an artist to hone areas of their craft, and for some artists, that's a true pleasure, and an efficient use of time and resources. These types of jobs turn the inevitable investments on equipment and education into business expenses, not only providing tax-benefits, but also supporting the artist's practice.

Creative director

Natalia Gwin

Natalia Gwin (Russian, born 1979) is the creative director of Tennis Express, a tennis specialty realtor with both a storefront and online presence.

Natalia relies on skills in graphic design, photography, project management, and more. "This is not a typical corporate job. Being a creative director for a small business means doing lots of different things: from routine image editing like removing the green screen from product shots to maintaining the website and even IT tasks like restarting servers. Most days, I spend 80% of my time in Photoshop, though sometimes I'm running around the warehouse, and other times I'll spend the whole day in InDesign assembling a catalog or digital magazine."

She often steps into the photographer's role, too. "We have a full-time photographer, but I do grab a camera sometimes if he is sick or we need a second cameraperson. We mostly do product photography, and it's not easy: you have to present the item in the best possible way."

Being a creative director is a second career for Natalia that flowed naturally from her previous experience. "I was a restaurant manager/director for over 20 years and co-owner of the restaurant's event agency. We were always in need of new menus, invitations, backdrops, etc. I went from sketching things out for our designer to downloading Photoshop and CorelDRAW and teaching myself the basics. One day I realized I was sick of working every holiday at the restaurant and that I should become a web designer. I packed my stuff, came to the States for school, and graduated in 2014 with degrees in graphic design and web publishing."

Persistence and open-mindedness are keys to success in her role. "I came to Tennis Express as a part-timer, but that quickly became a full-time job. As people came and went, my responsibilities grew and so did my title. You need a lot of patience for this work and you have to be able to easily accept critique. Your work will not always be appreciated and you just have to move on with a smile and keep going."

ILLUSTRATION 10.5.1

THINK ABOUT IT 10.5.2
To be incorporated, or not?

By taking on gigs as an individual, a photographer is *freelancing*, i.e. working as a self-employed individual. Another way to handle such jobs is through an incorporated entity, i.e. starting a business. In the U.S. there are several business structures you might select from when incorporating your business, including a limited liability corporation (LLC), and C and S corporations. Structures and names will vary in each country, and even each state, as will the impacts of these business types, as discussed below. It's important to know the laws for business structures in your own location.

Should I be incorporated? The answer depends largely on how one views freelancing jobs: are they the bulk of my income? Do I like doing them? Is this a career path I see for myself? There are both pros and cons to being incorporated:

- Pros: corporate shield protection, tax benefits, and a professional image
- Cons: paperwork and additional tax types

Corporate shield protection is the main reason people incorporate their businesses. When a photographer operates as an individual, under an *assumed name* ("doing business as", or DBA) or in a *partnership*, the individual or individuals take on all liability. This means that if for any reason there is a lawsuit against them, their personal property might be in jeopardy. Being incorporated separates personal property from the business' property so that if there is a judgement against the business, the owner won't be personally damaged.

Although photographers don't normally pull teeth, build bridges, fly airplanes, or otherwise do anything particularly dangerous for their clients, their jobs are not free from liability: a studio backdrop might fall on someone's head and cause injury, or a dispute might arise regarding the delivery of finished products. Yes, the corporate shield is a protection worth considering. To incorporate your photography business, talk to an accountant or a lawyer.

THINK ABOUT IT 10.5.3
Commercial practice vs. artistic practice

The goal of this textbook is, simply put, to give readers the tools to become good photographic artists. In the context of this chapter, it is worth asking: does being a good commercial photographer require anything different?

Once again, we can start this discussion with the *4 Cs*, the four components of photographic art: craft, composition, content, and concept. Do they apply to commercial photography? For craft and composition, the answer is yes, absolutely: they are just as important, though priorities might shift. For example, studio lighting skills might play a larger part for a photographer's commercial work, while compositional styles will need to be adapted to particular clients and audiences.

Content also remains an important component – this is perhaps particularly true for advertising as it aims to influence the consumer. In the context of commercial work, content is largely determined by the client, rather than the photographer.

Concepts, when applied to commercial photography, can lead to innovations that sharpen the photographer's competitive edge. Consider these ideas:

For real estate clients, "I will emphasize the kitchen's details because according to statistics, families spend time together, and parties are held, primarily in the kitchen. This means that buyers will be very interested in this area of the house."

For wedding clients, "I will suggest putting heartbeat-counters on the bride and groom and sync their counts to the ceremony's video footage to showcase the couple's excitement."

These conceptual twists can be a way for a practitioner to break away from the competitors, who are often doing the same thing as everyone else.

Some artists also enjoy articulating their artform and should consider a career in art education. The educator is the only photography-related career path that does not require "departmentalizing" the practice: while a wedding photographer who is also passionate about documenting social unrest will definitely not show images of the latter to his wedding clients, a photo educator can and should use their own art practice as examples in the classrooms. See *Teaching photography*.
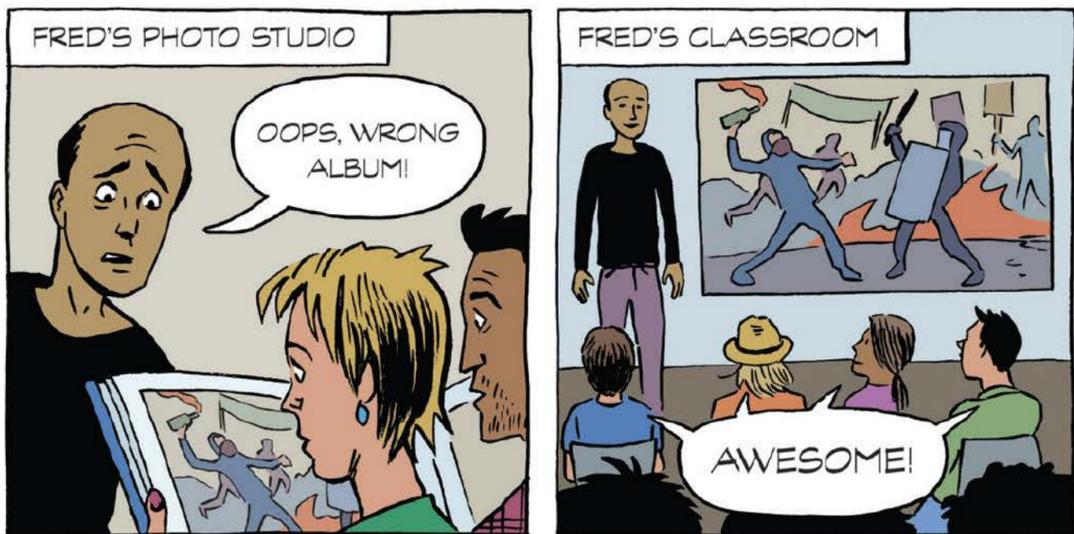
There are many other jobs which do not have the word *photographer* in the title but either require or heavily prefer applicants with photographic skills. A few such positions include media director, web designer, graphic designer, publicist, communications specialist, social media manager, etc. In the age of lean organizations, employers want employees to wear many hats, often including producing photographic images and/or videos. The desired skills include not just operating a camera but also artificial lighting and post-production. When these positions are added to a photographer's job radar, the number of opportunities greatly expands.

Teaching photography

Teaching photography, as with any field of knowledge, is essential to the long-term development of the field. To teach is to pass the torch to the up and coming.

Photography is taught in many different venues: K–12 schools, colleges and universities, commercial and nonprofit institutions, professional training providers, and more. Each represents a very different career path, requiring different qualifications and accumulated experience. The student population of each venue also varies widely in terms of age and experience, among other things, translating to very different classroom objectives.

As we've seen throughout this book, photographic practice includes a wide array of skills with very different qualities. This can make photography particularly challenging to teach. Consider this from the perspective of the *4 Cs*:

- Teaching **craft** grows more complex as new tools are added to the photographer's toolbox. For example, a course on editing programs like Photoshop can look very much like a computer class.

- **Composition** is visual communication; to teach it, though, visuals must be verbalized – often no easy feat. Chapter 4: Composition and Chapter 14: Words shed light on the authors' techniques for this.

Photographer, teaching artist, and arts administrator

Rebecca J. Hopp

PHOTO 10.5.13

With an MFA and an art practice of her own, Rebecca J. Hopp (American, born 1984) has found that working as a teaching artist is a fulfilling way to share her love of photography.

What's the difference between an art teacher and a teaching artist? "An art teacher is somebody who has a full-time job in a school teaching the arts. A teaching artist is someone with an art practice who typically does part-time work through an arts organization going into schools or community centers and teaching about their practice. They take their discipline and connect it with the core curriculum or just spend time with students talking about what art is like in the real world."

Like any job, the teaching artist role has its positives, and its challenges. "There's such joy in the job: you see your students' growth over time and you get to learn and discover things together. That's not to say it's not a challenging job, though. You have to be really good at managing your time and money because most teaching artist positions are short-term contracts and you will probably be working for several organizations at one time. Your effort will pay off, though: Whether they're 9 or 95, it's amazing to see what students do with the creative outlets you provide. You'll have moments where you're like, "They're not getting it, I'm wasting my time!" And then three days later they create this amazing artwork and blow your mind."

Seek volunteer and shadowing opportunities to gain experience in the classroom. "Find an organization and say, 'I want to learn about this. Can I watch a class? Can I chat with an arts administrator or teaching artist about what they do?' I started out as a volunteer: after I graduated from college, I was volunteering for a mentoring program at the Boys & Girls Club. Long story short, they cut the program, but I wasn't done helping those kids so I asked, 'What can I do?' The Club needed someone to teach computer skills, so I did that and I absolutely fell in love with teaching. I was bringing something to the table that the students didn't have before."

In addition to spending time in the classroom herself, Rebecca now also manages a team of teaching artists for a theater arts organization. She has this advice for how to stand out in the pack of applicants: "Poor communication is the most frustrating thing for me as an arts administrator. I'm often working quickly to place teaching artists with schools. The person who is responsive is going to get the job first, as opposed to the person that takes four or five days to get back to me. I understand that everybody's busy but it's as simple an email that says, 'Hey, I've got 30 things going on today. I got your message. I'll call you tomorrow.' No problem, I'll wait on the teaching artist who stays in communication and I'll certainly reach out to them first for the next job."

PHOTO 10.5.14
Rebecca J. Hopp, *Multi-purpose Style*, from the series *Coloring Inside the Lines*, 2018, archival inkjet print. In this series, Hopp plays old family home movie footage, rephotographs the screen, and then manipulates the resulting images in Photoshop.

PHOTO 10.5.15
Rebecca J. Hopp, *On the Line*, from the series *Coloring Inside the Lines*, 2018, archival inkjet print.

- Teaching **content** goes beyond photography. Just like language can express everything under the sun, so, too, can photography. Content is also student-oriented: an aspiring artist chooses what she or he wants to address and the mentor is just there to help.

- **Concept** is the most abstract of the *4 Cs*. To help students along the path of conceptualization, the teacher must become the student's collaborator, "running" the student's projects through their own creative neural network to fire-up the center for abstract thinking. For an insight into how the authors teach about concept, refer to Chapter 9: Content and Concept and Chapter 10: Development and Presentation.

The conclusion is that in order to teach it, a photography teacher must also know how to do it. A photo teacher and their students are like a pack of wolves: the teacher is the alpha leading the pack with their superior experience.

Many teachers find that their teaching practice improves their artistic practice as they debate ideas with curious students and exchange sources of inspiration. The *Book of Rites*, an ancient Chinese book of laws and customs, put it well with the notion that "to teach is to learn." [2]

Degrees, certificates, and experience

Teaching can require any number of qualifications, both formal and informal. The general requirement is for the teacher's degree to be higher than what the students will acquire upon completion of their program. When students go for the terminal (highest) degree, the teacher must have an equal degree. For an artist, this is typically a Master of Fine Art, or MFA, though PhD programs for artists are on the rise.

Teaching in K–12 schools typically requires some specialized training in education. This might be a degree or a certificate, depending on the specific requirements of your local school district or private school.

Many private institutions provide professional certificates specifically in photography. These certificates are not golden tickets to employment or contracts, but are valued by some institutions.

Adobe, for example, offers the Adobe Certified Associate (ACA) certificate at the basic level, the Adobe Certified Expert (ACE) at a higher level, and the Adobe Certified Instructor (ACI) for ACEs with additional teaching credentials. Professional associations also offer certifications, like the Professional Photographers of America's Certified Professional Photographer (CPP).

Teaching experience is highly valued by all institutions. Teaching art is a form of art in itself, and just like any artform, perfecting the process comes with a prolonged effort to *figure out* through hands-on practice. If you are interested in teaching, find some ways to gain experience, like working as a teaching or studio assistant for a teacher at your school, volunteering your time as an outreach instructor for a local non-profit, or even leading your own photography workshops. To embark on a career in teaching at higher education institutions, an MFA degree program is a good starting point, particularly one that offers teaching positions as part of the program.

Supporting an art practice with non–photo-related jobs

Many artists lead double lives: they work as an accountant, a construction worker, or a bartender during the day (or night), and practice art in their spare time.

This setup, which provides financial security through a job unrelated to one's true passion, has an advantage: the passion remains a passion, untainted by the pressures of making a livelihood.

There are, however, downsides to this setup as well. One's time and energy are limited. If the day job is demanding, there might not be any resources left to contribute to the art practice. There is also the question of mindset: if one is not entirely dedicated to art, one might never discover one's true potential.

Finding the balance

To reach success, a person often spends a lifetime figuring out how to make "it" work: this applies to all aspects of life, from artistic creations to career paths. This chapter's goal is to provide a glimpse into some possibilities, but it is up to you to figure out how to make your own particular case work.

So, here is a final word on this subject from your Jedi masters: go find your balance and may the Force be with you.