



The Art of Street Photography

Presenting Your Work

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01 Building a Body of Work

Continuing on from ‘Editing: Creating Order out of Chaos’, we discuss building a body of work.

A body of work (often also called a series or project) brings together individual images into a cohesive collection, joined together by some kind of common thread or subject matter; be that a location (as an example Bruce Davidson’s *Subway*), technical approach, visual style or broader thematic.

“I think the important thing for the development of any photographer is that they get a solid project behind them and then hopefully the career will come to back that up.”

– **Martin Parr**

“Building a body of work can take a long time. It doesn’t have to, of course, but most of my projects – the ones that I feel have been successful – have all been made over several years, so there’s a degree of persistence involved.”

– **Mark Power**

Do I need to build a body of work?

The answer to this question is dependent on you, and what you wish to do or say with your photography. If you are happy simply taking photographs, then no, it is not an essential step. However, if you want to go beyond this and attract attention to the work you are making, and develop a photographic career, then spending time honing a body of work that coherently presents something new is important.

“To attract attention with a body of street photographs these days, it’s got to be more than ‘these are good street photographs.’ [...] What you have to do as a photographer, if you’re trying to seriously build interest in your work – publishers’ interest, audience interest, which is ultimately the same thing – you’ve got to offer something new. You’ve got to offer people access to a place that they didn’t know about. You’ve got to offer a visual viewpoint that is different, and exciting, and gets people talking.”

– **Chris Boot**



Bruce Gilden
New York City, 1989.

02 Building a Portfolio

An essential guide
to portfolio building.

A portfolio brings together a collection of your best work, usually organized by individual bodies of work or projects.

When building your portfolio it is recommended that you:

- Edit each project to a maximum of twenty images (when including more than one series)
- Choose the strongest images that most effectively convey what you want to say
- Print your work to a good standard rather than show it digitally
- Then show it to people. Events such as portfolio reviews are great opportunities to connect with industry professionals, and can be used to gain feedback.

Further Reading

[Creating a Portfolio: Advice from Magnum](#)



03

Making Objects

The importance of making physical objects in a digital age.

In an era where hundreds of millions of photographs are taken and uploaded to the internet every day, it seems more important than ever to create physical objects from the photographs we make.

“One of the things I think is most important is to make objects. Whether they be books or real [prints] of what you have been shooting, especially because we live in this sort of digital world, there’s a need for physical entities. It [can be a] very playful way of looking at your work.”

– **Pauline Vermare**

Prints

For the majority of your tutors, creating prints is an important step in their process, and until the photograph exists as a physical object it is yet to be complete.

“For me, the craft of photography has always been very important. Perhaps never more so than now, in this Instagram generation, where most of us are taking pictures on our phones. You know, we may download them to our computers, we may just leave them on our phones. And the physical print, the end of the process, is the thing for me. I like to hold and look at a beautiful object, and it feels like it completes that circle. Otherwise, the work just feels unfinished to me. If it just exists in the ether, or if it just exists as a cheap work print, it’s not quite there yet. I need to finish the project I began.”

– **Mark Power**

Tips on Printing (and Framing)

Chelsea Jacob, Gallery Director of Magnum Photos, London

- Try to build a relationship with your printer
- Play around with printing on different paper types before you commit to one; different papers can make a big difference to the final result of the photograph
- Pay just as much attention to the framing of your work as to the printing. Don’t be afraid to experiment; a conventional frame isn’t always the answer. A good frame can completely change a work.

Books & Zines

The photobook is arguably one of the most appropriate modes for displaying bodies of photographic work. With the boom in self-publishing and print-on-demand options for emerging photographers, creating your own book or zine is now very much a possibility.

“I like making books, it’s ultimately [...] the most satisfactory way of getting a body of work out because it’s contained, it has a narrative, it has a beginning and [an end] and it’s a physical thing so, even though we are in the day of the internet, the book still really sings out as being the ultimate statement for a photographer. [...] It’s a very good way of seeing how good your pictures are; do they actually hold up and keep someone’s attention for the 50-100 pictures that you need to constitute a book? I would suggest we all make books to see and really appraise how good or bad we are.”

– **Martin Parr**

Further Reading

Discover more advice on photobooks, including interviews with Magnum photographers and guests: [Magnum Photos: On Photobooks](#)

[The Art of Photobook Publishing](#)

[The Future of the Photobook](#)

[The Golden Age of the Photobook](#)

[Working in Photobook Publishing](#)



04 Presenting Your Work

The next step is to get your work seen.
Here are some of the starting points.



Website

Having a good quality website is essential today. Treat it as your digital portfolio; a showcase of your best work presented in an organized and cohesive fashion. Today there are plenty of high quality and affordable website providers with easy to use interfaces. Industry professionals will engage with your website first and foremost, so not having one is a huge disadvantage.

Instagram

This photo-sharing platform is becoming more and more important and influential. It is a great tool to connect with your peers and industry professionals, and is often the first place they will look after meeting you. It also provides you with a platform to showcase your work and build an audience. Check out some of the street photography orientated groups and networks, such as:

- InPublic @in_public_collective
- Streets Storytelling @streets_storytelling
- Street Photography International @streetphotographyinternational
- Miami Street Photography Festival @miamistreetphotographyfestival

Further Reading

[5 Instagram Lessons from Magnum Photographers](#)
[How Can Photographers Harness the Digital Space?](#)

Awards & Competitions

There are numerous awards dedicated to street photography. These can be great ways to gain recognition. For an extensive list, check out [this handy resource](#) from FotoRoom. Be thoughtful before entering. Ensure you are ready and it is worthwhile, and that the award is from a reputable provider.

Festivals

There are also numerous photography festivals that occur around the world. These are fantastic opportunities to meet like-minded people and see great photography. Also from FotoRoom, [here is a list of festivals around the globe](#). Many of these host open calls for entry, which can result in an exhibition or showcase of some kind if you are successful.

Professional Practice Events

As touched upon in the 'Building a Portfolio' section, professional practice events such as portfolio reviews, workshops and sharing events are great ways to gain feedback on your work while meeting industry professionals and building a peer network. Most festivals host portfolio review events, so keep an eye out. Keep an eye on Magnum Photos events [here](#).

Exhibitions

Showcase your work by organizing an exhibition, alone or with peers. Remember: you don't need a 'white cube' gallery space to do this. Be creative, work collaboratively and enjoy the process.



05

Defining Your Vision: Some Words of Advice

Don't expect to find your voice immediately.

Finding your artistic voice can take a long time. It takes patience and a lot of understanding of what you have done before and what you are doing now. This can only come through looking deeply at your own work, learning from it and moving forward from it.

Find out who you are and what you care about.

Your tutors all share the view that getting to the core of what you are interested in, what you are passionate about, and who you are both as an individual and as a photographer, is fundamental in developing a strong voice as an artist.

“[You have to] dig deep into yourself, try to see who you are, what your interests are; and then go out and try and photograph that. Try to express yourself through your photography.”

– **Bruce Gilden**

Be persistent.

You must work hard and persevere, to keep trying to make work that excites and interests you; be persistent in your development, in sharing your work and engaging in the industry. You must push yourself, challenge your comfort levels and seek out advice to grow as an artist.

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