

# **ADVICE FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS ATTENDING THE 2008 MEETING PLACE FOTOFEST 2008 - THE INTERNATIONAL MEETING PLACE, PORTFOLIO REVIEWS MARY VIRGINIA SWANSON**

## ***PREPARATIONS BEFORE THE PORTFOLIO REVIEWS***

- **SET GOALS**, consider in advance what results you are seeking. Are you seeking advice or guidance or information - on clarity of content, print quality or editing or sequencing? Are you hoping for a discussion on marketing the completed work? Are you seeking representation for the work? Do you wish to place an exhibition of a completed body of work with a gallery or institution? Are you hoping to secure a publishing contract? Be clear about what you want, but be also realistic with your goals.
- **TIGHTLY EDIT** your work to present to reviewers, remembering the specific amount of time you will have together. I suggest you bring 20 images to your review session. I find with more than 20, we don't have time to talk about marketing the work - we'd spend the entire time looking, and little time talking. It is important to present a fully realized, cohesive, body of work. Your main presentation should be this body of work. If the body of work is larger than 20 images, you may want to bring aside an expanded group. If you have two bodies of work, bring the second one to show if you have time left, or to show in the informal reviews or to your peers. You can also bring examples of recent pursuits, small booklets, or other prints to reflect other works.
- **PRACTICE** your presentation. Remember you only have 20 minutes to introduce yourself, present your work, and get feed back.
- **RESEARCH THE REVIEWERS.** Read the professional biographies of the reviewers; decide who will be the best fit for your work. Go beyond their bios, do some online research. Concentrate on making the most of your time with them towards your desired end results.
- **PREPARE MATERIALS TO LEAVE WITH REVIEWERS.** Design and produce a simple promotional piece that will serve to remind the reviewers of your work as well as providing your contact information. I suggest a postcard size card, with an image of your work on one side, and all your contact information on the other side. If you have other materials - cds, booklets, exhibit catalogues, etc.- ask the reviewer if he wants them before you give them to him, do not assume the reviewer wants to retain them. Don't burden a reviewer with a bulky packet to take home from the event, offer to mail it to them at their office after the event (if they are interested in more information). If a reviewer encourages you to stay in touch and keep them apprised of your work, ask what format they prefer your communication to be in - paper or email? Image sent via cds or examples of images in print? Make note of their preferences for your records.

## ***DURING THE PORTFOLIO REVIEWS***

- **PRESENTATION IS IMPORTANT.** Bring good prints, not xeroxes, laser copies, etc. Most reviewers do think that techniques and processes are important components of a successful work of art. Print images the same size/paper. Protect the work but not to such an extent that it takes too much time to wrap/unwrap each print.

- **EASE IN HANDLING** will maximize your time to talk with the reviewer. Package your portfolio such that you can carry it, open it, show it, and put it away fast. Simple clamshell portfolio boxes are recommended. The size of tables you will be presenting on are likely to be standard folding tables, so don't assume you will be able to bring 20 oversized prints and actually be able to present a large group in 20 minutes. If you have any questions about a special area that may be available to share larger work with reviewers, call the organizers to inquire well in advance. Consider bringing several samples of larger prints rolled in a tube, with a more complete group in a smaller size. Accept the fact that your work may show some "road wear" by the end of the event; you are there to show work to as many reviewers and peers as possible.

- **KEEP IT SHORT AND SIMPLE!** Don't make the mistake of talking the entire time. Be mindful of the time limit with each reviewer; you will want to ensure time within the session to receive feedback!

- **TAKE NOTES** during your session, whether you bring a tape recorder (always ask permission to record for personal use) or make a binder with a page dedicated to each reviewer at the event, with their bio and your notes for that specific reviewer. Some photographers print out a sheet with thumbnails of all the images they intend to share, to note which images each reviewer responded most strongly to. It is difficult to present work and to take notes at the same time, so come up with a system that will work best for you. Whatever note taking or recording format works for you - do it! You want to take home as clear a memory of each discussion as possible.

## ***AFTER THE EVENT***

- **KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THE REVIEWERS YOU MET!** Consider this experience the chance to begin relationships with professionals who respond positively to your work.

© 2007 Mary Virginia Swanson. Adapted from "Making The Most Of Your Portfolio Review Investment" posted online on March 9, 2007. An expanded version of this article is featured in the book "The Business Of Photography: Principles And Practices" "available on the website at: [www.mvswanson.com](http://www.mvswanson.com)