NORTHERN MANHATTAN ARTS ALLIANCE (NOMAA)
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Practical Steps for Digital Image Preparation
WORKSHOP
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Practical Steps for Digital Image Preparation
Work samples are an essential part of any application for arts project funding, artist fellowships and all professional opportunities.

Work Samples should present your work in the best light. Remember you are presenting work to people who may not know your work.

Preparing work samples is not a perfect science- design what's best for YOUR work.

What You Can Control: How your information lands on the screen of the right people.
Always follow instructions to the letter. You don't want to be excluded because you didn't pay attention to detail.

Make it easy and clear for people to understand what they are looking at.
Remember! Each review/exhibition/grant panel is comprised of a different set of individuals, who all may respond differently to your samples.

YOU CAN ASK: How will your images be viewed?
For example: individually on a laptop or projected; two at a time; side by side; three or four at a time; on a black background.

This can help you organize and curate your images. Take time to plan how you would like the jury/selection panel to see your work.

Contact the organization to ask how images are viewed.

IMAGE PREP
UNDERSTANDING DIGITAL FILES
Digital Image Files: *Three most relevant:*
RAW: These are files created by an SLR camera –raw data that cannot be used on its own, i.e. printed or edited. Raw files contain the most information; they are very large files. If you have RAW files, SAVE a folder just for them. Process them separately into TIFFS and JPEGS.

TIFF: TIFFS are image files that have been processed but are uncompressed. They contain all the data recorded by the camera, in a form that can be used. Tiffs are used for offset printing and any large image to be printed. SAVE your TIFFS as master files. Edit as copies and as JPEGS.

JPEGS (JPG): JPEGS are compressed files. They are smaller and are used for web, email and portfolios. They contain only partial data- the computer takes the raw data and keeps enough data (depending on size) to recreate the image, and leaves out information to make the file smaller.

NOTE: JPEGS should not be edited over and over again- each time you edit and resave a JPEG it loses quality. JPEGS lose data over multiple generations, especially if you do a lot of editing.

Additional Image/File Types
PNG: A PNG file is an image saved in the Portable Network Graphic (PNG) format. PNG files are commonly used to store web graphics, digital photographs, and images with transparent backgrounds.
GIF: A GIF file is an image file saved in the Graphical Interchange Format (GIF).
These are for low-res web images only.

Document File
PDF: Portable Document Format (PDF) file. PDFs are typically used to distribute read-only documents that *preserve the layout of a page.* Commonly used for documents: *such as cv, artist statement, and sometimes for image files with text info included. This keeps the formatting of your original doc consistent across platforms.*

File Size and Image Quality꞉ **Understanding Image Dimensions**
PIXELS
Pixels are smallest controllable element of a picture represented on the screen: small squares that make up the two-dimensional grid of the screen. Pixels determine the size of the image: Number of pixels wide x high. Pixels blend together to create the illusion of smooth gradations of tone and colour, so that you see a smooth image, not the pixels.
This is the most important info to understand file size.

File size
> The digital size of an image is measured in kilobytes (K), megabytes (MB), or gigabytes (GB). File size is proportional to the pixel dimensions of the image. More pixels means more detail, but it also means bigger files.

If you spread the same number of pixels over more inches, the individual pixels become visible.

Understanding Pixel Dimensions
Megapixels
Megapixels are the total number of pixels in the rectangular image. They do not tell you the aspect ratio of the rectangle.

DPI *(dots-per-inch)*
DPI means almost nothing by itself. This refers only to printer resolution- print size (dots of ink per inch) on your local printer. It is completely relative.

PPI *(pixels-per-inch)*
This is the crucial resolution to understand.
PPI is the number of pixels per inch displayed on a computer screen. PPI is relative to display size, measured in inches. The number of pixels in an inch does not tell you the size of the image unless you also know the image's dimensions in inches.

For example, an image can be 600x900 ppi, or 2400x3600 ppi, which are absolute – the number of pixels in the image file, across and down. Both of those image sizes can be set to 300 PPI, in which case, the first would make a 2"x3" print, and the second would make an 8"x12". The 600x900 ppi image printed at 2"x3" will contain 300 pixels-per-inch, but only 200 pixels-per inch when printed at 3"x4.5".

General Image Size Specs
Email: 600 pixels at longest dimension
Website: 600-800 pixels at longest dimension, up to 1100
Home printer: 200 ppi at the printing dimension. For example, 200 ppi at 8x10" for an 8x10 print.
Portfolio: Generally 2000 pixels at longest dimension is a good scale for a portfolio.
Printing professionally on paper (invitations, catalogs, postcards) 300 ppi at 8x10" absolute minimum. These are recommendations not absolutes, except for printing.

Changing Image Dimensions
Very Important!!
Remember: You can DOWN-SIZE an image BUT NEVER UP-SIZE!!
The computer will be inventing the information. If you make an image file smaller, you will be throwing away data, which you cannot retrieve. Always make a copy of your original image when resizing, so you never edit the original file- keep it as a master.

Always follow specs exactly.
File Labeling:
Proper labeling of image files is a simple but **very** important task to make sure your images are read properly by the computer, and are identifiable by the viewer.

Create a labeling system that works for you.
Do not assume that you will remember or know which images are which.
You do not want files full of images named IMG1223.

Numbering files correctly is essential.
Standard Format
01_LastName_FirstName or initial.jpg
ALWAYS name your files with identifying info especially your name!

Always use two digit (01; 02; 03) so images will be read in the correct order.
Number image files in the order you want them to be viewed. The computer will sort the images by the filename.

Image List:
This is sometimes a separate document listing the work in same order as the digital file.
Image List should contain your contact info at top.
Provide the following information for each file:
01. Last Name, First Name: Title, **Date, Medium, Size.**

Italicize Titles. Terms such as Mixed-media are too general- be specific and list materials.
Make sure file numbers correspond to numbers on your Image List.

Dimensions
Height x Width x Depth
(always in that order)   **72" x 24" x 3"   or   72 x 24 x 3"**
Two-dimensional works can be: Height x Width
72x24"

Don't mix system of units
72" x 2'
In the US inches is common, internationally centimeters are used. You can use both inches and centimeters. To convert centimeters to inches: 1 in. = 2.54 cm.

A "Thumbnail" of each image can be helpful, but definitely not required. Always optimize PDF's to reduce file size. *No one will open a 50mg Image List!!*

How to Size Images in Photoshop and Bridge
To Change Image Size and Resolution in Photoshop
Go to **Image**, then **Image Size**. This is the box that shows the size and resolution of your image.

Always keep the **Constrain Proportions** box checked- this will insure that whenever you change one dimension the other will change proportionately.

The **Resample Image** box, when checked, will keep your pixel dimension the same, but allow you to change the print size. To change the pixel size, uncheck **Resample Image.**

Be sure you have a saved version of your larger original file before changing pixel dimensions.......
If you downsize and save, you cannot get that info back!

Batch Sizing Images in Photoshop
Once you have organized a group of images in a new file, you can size all of them at one time.

In Photoshop- go to **File**, then **Scripts**, then **Image Processor**. The Image Processor window will open.

Select the folder of images you want to process, then select the file you want them to end in. You can choose the same file; it will add a file for the new images.

Select the dimension you want- choose the largest width, i.e. 1025, then height. It will keep sizes proportionate.

Click **Run**. Photoshop will automatically process that group of images in exact size you want. This way you have consistency in the whole group of images, and do not have to process each image size individually.

Adobe Bridge
Adobe Bridge is an enormous help in viewing, organizing, resizing, cropping, and renaming files. You can view your files, and also perform various tasks on groups of images without opening them one by one.

Select a group of images in finder and drag them into **Bridge** on your dock, or just open **Bridge**. On the left you will see a finder-like window. Click on the file you want to view files from there. Once you have a group of images open in the center box, you can move images around to create a curated selection.

To Resize Images:
Select the images in Bridge that you want to resize.
Go to: Tools- Photoshop- Image Processor.
In the Dialogue box, choose where you want the images to go, format and size.
Click Run. Photoshop will process your images all at one and save you from opening each image and resaving one at a time.

Camera Raw
To perform tasks such as cropping quickly, **Select** the group of images in Bridge as in above.

Click on **File**, then **Open with Camera Raw**. This will open the group of images in another window. You will see the images in a row on left. In the large window you can perform various tasks on each image, such as crop, white balance etc.

At top of left window, click **Select All**, then at bottom click **Save Images**. Another Dialogue box will open, select the format you want and where you want them to be saved. Make sure you choose the correct destination and format!

This allows you to work on multiple images at once rather than opening and saving each individually. Many other tasks can be done this way, but master the sizing, cropping and organizing first, then explore other tasks.

To Batch Rename:
In **Bridge** you can view, organize and curate your images, as a group, large or small, by sliding the size viewing bar on the bottom right of the main window. You can drag them around to create the order you want. Once you have organized them as you want them, you can rename them all at once, to keep them in the order you create and give them a uniform naming system.

Select the images you want to rename. Go to Tools, select Batch Rename. A Dialog box will come up with options to rename. Check where you want the files to go (same folder, new etc.). Next is naming format. Here you can create a naming system using the drop downs, and typing the name you want in the box. Click the + or – sign on right to add or remove a box. The file will be named exactly as you've specified, so put in the order you want (i.e. 01_Lastname_first…)

WHAT MAKES A STRONG IMAGE? DOS and DON'TS
Submit images that clearly **represent** your work.

Backdrop should be Neutral. White, black, or gray. Let the art do the talking.

Make sure images are **clear** and **in focus** throughout.

Do **NOT** include picture frames, furniture, or other objects, except for context/installation shots, or if the frame is part of the work itself..

Installation shots can help establish scale, and show context.

Paintings today are often photographed with a small amount of wall around edge to show texture, depth etc. Cropping can flatten the image. *If your paintings are extremely dark, or have a physical dimension, and you want the "objectness" of the painting to be visible, a small border is beneficial.*

Sculpture is often best with a neutral grey background, to show depth- this is dependent on the work.

The best way to know the quality of your images is to project them.
If you do not have access to a projector, set the viewing size in your image program to 100% to see quality of the image. It should be clear and in focus- a large file does not mean it's a good photo.

The images you submit for a grant or exhibition should work together as a whole.
This can be the difference in your work being selected: for exhibitions, grants, proposals, university, etc. *Medium, style, subject, content of images should complement one another and seem to be part of a body of work, a cohesive vision by a single artist*

Think of it as a *Mini Solo Exhibition*

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Proposals: *Questions to consider?*
If you are applying for a specific project- grant proposal, proposing a solo or group exhibition: make sure the work samples relate to the text about the project.

Your artist statement should describe and relate to the work.

Do work sample selections demonstrate a coherent and current artistic vision, as articulated in the written proposal?

Is there a specific or unique element in my proposal that could be illustrated or contextualized by the work sample

You are rarely, if ever, asked for a representation of your entire career and practice. Provide samples to represent your current artistic practice, or to support a given project.

Show work from the last 2-5 years max - unless otherwise specified. If you present older works raise the situation and provide a clear reason for choosing the older sample in the written description.

Share your work samples with someone who will give you an honest opinion about your selection before you submit applications.

In cases when you cannot submit the work sample in the required format *(e.g. for performance, past videos unavailable or recording not permitted by Actor's Equity Association†),* consult program staff to see if you can submit in another format.

Remember, these tips and suggestions do not take the place of the actual work sample requirements of a specific funder.

Ultimately, you know your own work best. Use your best judgment to determine what constitutes the most effective representation of your work. You are making a case for your work.

Good Luck and Be Persistent!
And Remember:
"It's not a rejection! It's just a difference of opinion."
Sharon Louden, artist and editor of the *Living and Sustaining a Creative Life* Book Series

Free Alternatives to PHOTOSHOP

1. Gimp – Works with **macOS 10.9 Mavericks** or later, Linux & Windows

2. Paint.NET – Only for Windows

3. Pixlr x – Web-version available

4. Krita – Works with Apple. Linux & Windows

5. Sumopaint

6. Seashore – Works with Apple

7. Photo Pos Pro

8. Photopea