

Portfolio Guidelines for Fine Art or Ceramic Design

Candidates are required to present their portfolios in person to the college; individual dates and times for presentations will be notified in advance by post. Assessment will be conducted by personal presentation of portfolio. All offers will be made via the CAO system in August.

The portfolio should demonstrate the applicant's visual interest and area of concern. There is no restriction on the amount of work presented, but consideration should be given to selection, evaluation and presentation, and should also display the full range of materials and processes engaged in. There are a few points to avoid. For example, don't weigh the portfolio down with card and glass. Mounting is unnecessary- clean sheets of paper to separate the work are enough.

Do not pack the portfolio with paintings or drawings copied from originals or from photographs. Even if it looks very slick, it only demonstrates a mechanical copying facility, and it is better to include more personal work. However, incorporating images from other sources in a composite piece and using information from photographs or magazines in research is a valid practice. The distinguishing factor is that the end product in this case is an original image which uses other images, not a direct copy of one of them.

Don't leave out sketchbooks and preparatory studies. These support the finished pieces.

There is no 'standard' portfolio, not least because the range of background, experience and access to resources among applicants is very broad. A portfolio prepared by someone on a full-time dedicated course will be very different to one prepared by someone studying 5 other subjects as well as Art for Leaving Certificate.

Someone who has to deal with family and work commitments (and there is a small but significant number of mature students in every intake) will produce a portfolio which needs to be evaluated on a different basis to either of the other two.

Although a large number of students do enter the College direct from school, the experience of a good, well structured Portfolio Preparation Course can make a crucial difference in the ability of candidates to handle the transition to third-level successfully.

When looking at work produced on these courses, it is clear how the students experience of Art and Design media and practice has been extended, allowing them to develop ideas and projects over full working days. Compared to the maximum double period possible in the second-level timetable, this is helpful in the adjustment to studio practice in Art College. However, some of the most impressive work presented at interview has been by second level and mature applicants.

Whether applying for Fine Art or Ceramic Design, drawing should form a central part of the work in the portfolio. Objective Drawing, using marks and materials appropriate to the feature of the object which is being examined, is important as it demonstrates the use of drawing to analyse and explain as well as to record. Objective Painting showing colour observation and mixing is also important and although it is easier to achieve this with paint, exciting objective work can be done incorporating found colour in the form of collage as well as dry media like pastel to supplement the paint. The quality of the observation, the sensitivity of the mark-making, and the use of media are more significant than the choice of media.

Not every school provides the opportunity to do 3D work, however all Year 1 students at the Crawford do 3D projects, so any work showing making skills and experience is worth including in the portfolio. Photographs showing the object from a few viewpoints with something included to indicate the scale of it are fine. It's not necessary to bring the object itself, and considering that furniture, stage sets and whole garden features have appeared at one time or another, often not even possible.

Ideally, any 3D work included should show that the object has been considered in the round and that the visual and practical problems of making it have been approached inventively. Clay is the material which is most available for building, but it is good to see the possibilities of other materials explored. In fact, it is important to see signs that the media used, whether 2D or 3D, have been experimented with and enjoyed, another reason for including preparatory studies and sketchbooks. Print, Photography, Computer Graphics and other media which require planning and control of a process to produce an image successfully are good ways of demonstrating practical ability, too.

Placing sketchbooks containing experiments and rejected ideas as well as work that made it to a finished piece in front of interviewers might seem like a tough thing to have to do, but personal work including sketchbooks and visual diaries show what excites and engages them more clearly than course work does.

All of the work presented will give an interviewer an idea of a student's approach to work, their level of skill and experience and their ability to research and develop an idea visually. Exactly how that is expressed in personal work is a useful indication of where their strengths may lie.