



Cleveland Institute of Art
Creativity Matters

Building a great portfolio

CIA



creating your portfolio

**You're beginning to see yourself as an artist—
and to see yourself in art school.**

We're here to help you take the next steps by creating a portfolio that reflects your best work and your potential for growth. Cleveland Institute of Art admissions counselors can review your portfolio before you submit, suggest ways to strengthen it, and discuss the application process.

**Contact us at 216.421.7418 or
admissions@cia.edu**

**This booklet features
work by first-year
students at the
Cleveland Institute
of Art.**



This illustration offers a sense of personality and style, while also demonstrating technical skill.

why do you need a portfolio?

A strong portfolio can position you for acceptance into an art and design school, and may qualify you for merit-based scholarships.

At CIA, our admissions committee will evaluate the work in your portfolio for:

- technical abilities
- conceptual problem-solving skills
- how you use your chosen mediums

We want you to succeed. Consider scheduling an appointment with one of our admissions counselors for a preliminary portfolio review. You can visit our campus, get helpful feedback on your current work, and be inspired as you build your best possible portfolio.

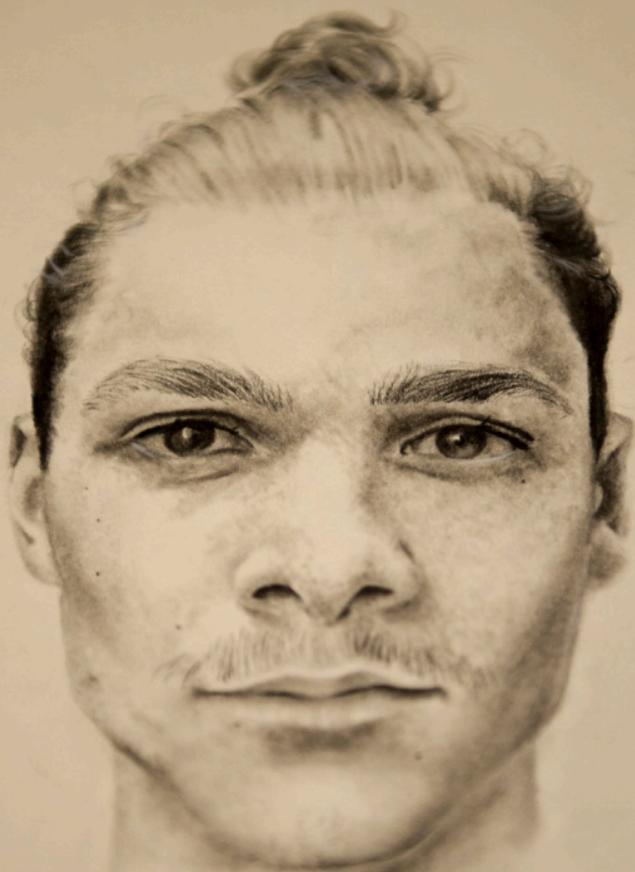
Can't visit? Preliminary reviews can be done by Skype or Google, too.

what to include in your portfolio

Your portfolio should be a selection of your best 12 to 20 pieces of art. Fewer than 12 doesn't allow you to show the breadth of your skills; more than 20 may dilute your overall portfolio submission.

At least four of those pieces should be observational drawings. Sketchbook pages are also encouraged.

Make an effort not to include work copied from photographs or other published work. We want to see how *you* think.



Observational drawings include still life, gesture, figure drawings, portraits, landscapes, and projects involving use of perspective skills.



This sculptural illustration demonstrates creativity in interpreting a story, and interesting use of layers.

organizing your portfolio

Approach your portfolio as a visual story about yourself. Relationships in color, media, composition and concept can link one piece to another and help your portfolio flow cohesively.

Feature your strongest pieces created in your junior and senior year, either in or out of school. In addition to the drawings, you may include works in other media: paintings, prints, photographs, sculpture, animations, illustrations, video, computer-generated work, clay, metal or glass objects.

documenting your work

You don't need sophisticated equipment to photograph your work. A camera that can take clear, focused photographs at a high resolution (300 dpi or higher) will work.

If you are photographing your work: Take your time and be sure your images are sharp and evenly lit. Avoid harsh highlights and shadows. Shoot work against a neutral background to keep the focus on the work. And it's OK to crop your images.

If you are scanning your work: If you plan to scan 2D images using a digital scanner and a computer, be sure you scan the image in at a high resolution (300 dpi), and that your art is lying completely flat against the scanner window so the captured image is sharp. Use photo editing software to correct brightness and color and to crop.

Go to cia.edu/portfolio for helpful videos on photographing 2D and 3D work.



Photograph your work against a neutral background, so the image focuses on the piece rather than where the work is placed.

strengthening your portfolio

Drawing is a bedrock skill for artists and designers. No matter where your career interests lie, you will sharpen your perception and visual thinking with regular drawing practice.

There are many ways to work on your creative skills. Classes at your high school, or community center can expose you to new techniques and fresh thinking. There are even online groups where you can share your work and exchange ideas.

Don't be afraid to share and request feedback with other artists. Be open to both compliments and suggestions for improvement.

Keeping a sketchbook is the best tool to build your portfolio. Colleges want to see how your ideas evolve, and you'll appreciate seeing the growth in your work, too.

CIA's Pre-College program offers two-week residential courses for high school students that can help you build your portfolio, and earn college credit at the same time.

Visit cia.edu/precollege





Projects don't have to be expensive. This student used styrofoam bowls to create a temporary sculpture that shows us how she thinks visually.

need some inspiration?

These prompts are simply a starting point for your creativity. Modify any of these ideas to fit your interests and curiosity:

Keep a sketchbook. Draw from observation regularly — every day, if you can. Fill the pages. Draw your lunch, a family member, your pet, flowers and trees, buildings and tools.

Select something from an old assignment or sketchbook page and remake it. Can you make it better? Paint from an old drawing? Draw from a painting? Scale it up or down? Render it in three dimensions? Focus in on a small part of it? Render it from a different perspective? Use your original idea to kick-start your imagination.

Redesign the cover of your favorite book.

Make value drawings. Create a still life using only black and white media. Use a wide range of values, from white and very light gray to the darkest black your drawing tool allows.

how to submit your portfolio

After you've submitted your application for admission, you will need to upload your digital images. Visit cia.edu/apply for more information on uploading images to your online portfolio.

We also accept portfolios of artwork submitted in a CD or DVD format.



This sketchbook
also shows us how
the student thinks
three-dimensionally.

Self-portraits are an easy way to practice your observational drawing skills.



Submit your portfolio online at
cia.edu/apply.

portfolio checklist

Incoming Freshmen

- Include at least 12 pieces of artwork (no more than 20)
- At least four of those pieces should be observational drawings. Sketchbook pages are also encouraged.

Transfer Students

If possible, include these preferred elements to help us determine your transfer placement:

- 2–3 examples of 2D work
- 2–3 examples of 3D work
- 3–4 examples of digital work (using Freehand, Illustrator, InDesign, or Photoshop)
- 4–6 examples of work pertaining to the major you wish to enter
- Four observational drawings are required.

Combine images into one composite image
if it better represents your piece.



your portfolio + application

To submit a complete application you must include the following items:

- Application** Apply online at cia.edu/apply
- A personal statement** outlining your reason for applying
- Official high school/college transcripts**
- A letter of recommendation** (preferably from an art teacher or counselor)
- Official SAT or ACT test scores**
- A \$40 application fee**
- Portfolio of artwork** online at cia.edu/apply

when should I apply to CIA?

You will be considered automatically for merit scholarships if all of your application materials have been submitted by March 1. CIA will review completed applications throughout the academic year, and may continue to accept students after March 1 based on rolling admission.

Visit cia.edu/apply for more information on applying as a:

- First-time freshman
- Transfer student
- International student
- U.S. veteran
- Non-degree seeking student

Important Dates

	Application Deadline	Priority FAFSA Deadline
First-time Freshmen		
Early Action 1	Dec 1	Dec 15
Early Action 2	Jan 15	Feb 1
Regular decision deadline for first-time freshmen	Mar 1	Mar 15
Transfer Students		
Fall Transfer Student	Jun 1	Jun 1
Spring Transfer Student	Nov 15	Nov 15

Cleveland Institute of Art

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Majors

Animation
Biomedical Art
Ceramics
Drawing
Game Design
Glass
Graphic Design
Illustration
Industrial Design
Interior Architecture
Jewelry + Metals
Painting
Photography + Video
Printmaking
Sculpture + Expanded Media

