Master of Architecture Application Portfolio Tips

The portfolio of work submitted with your application is the best way of demonstrating your capabilities as a designer. The admissions committee looks very carefully at the portfolio because it contains a tremendous amount of subtle information. Keep in mind that yours will be one of hundreds of portfolios the admission committee examines, so it must be both concise and informative.

Applicants to the 2+year M Arch and Post-Professional High Performance Building programs should include architectural design work as well as other evidence of graphic skill and creative design potential. Applicants to the 3+year M Arch program should demonstrate their interest and skill in the visual arts or design.

Suggested types of creative work:
• Drawing and sketching (pencil, pen, charcoal)
• Graphics/illustration
• Painting/watercolor
• Sculpture
• Fine woodworking
• Model building
• Building construction
• Photography (no travel snap shots, photos must show evidence of composition and lighting)
• Set design
• Textile/apparel design and construction

LAYOUT
Your portfolio is a design project. All of its parts should work together to make a complete and satisfying whole. It is a good idea to plan the layout of each page so that it contributes to a graphic sensibility that is consistent from beginning to end.

Your portfolio must be a single bound volume no larger than 10.5 in x 11.5 in x 1.5 in thick. It should be no more than 20 pages (10 sheets double sided). Excluded from page count: table of contents/index, title sheets, and blank separation sheets.
• Do not bind any other application materials in the portfolio (ie., statement of purpose, resume).
• Do not include loose, rolled, or folded material.
• Do not include computer discs or slides.
• Covers should not be made of metal, glass, or other sharp or heavy material.

IMAGES
Choose your images wisely. Do not include original work; instead, use sharp, well-lit, well-composed reproductions. Your images should show breadth of skill and ability. The best work in a given medium or subject area is preferable to a whole range or sequence of works. If you include more than one image of a single project or artwork make sure it contributes something to the presentation that cannot be perceived in other images. Usually a one or two-page spread is enough to describe a project fully, if the images are chosen carefully.

TEXT
Limit the amount of text in the portfolio. The images should do most of the work, but some explanatory text can be helpful. This might include: a title, date, brief project description, an indication of your intentions, and an explanation of your involvement in the project (where this is not otherwise clear). Remember that text can be a powerful graphic device in its own right, so make sure it also contributes to the graphic sensibility of the portfolio.