



SHUTTER
HUB

YOUR GO-TO
PHOTOGRAPHY
PORTFOLIO
REVIEW
GUIDE





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INTRO



Karen Harvey,
Creative Director Shutter Hub

At Shutter Hub we spend a lot of time reading photographic images and reviewing portfolios with photographers - online through our own portal, and all over the world at places such as FORMAT International Photography Festival, Photo Vogue Festival, Belfast Photo Festival, London Photomonth, The Photographers' Gallery, Getty Images Gallery, Griffin Museum of Photography and the Photographic Resource Center.

This guide came about from years of experience and conversations with photographers around the world who want to know how to get the most of their work.

We're sharing our tips as well as stories from photographers we have worked with, plus a list of our favourite opportunities around the world to get your work reviewed.

Portfolio reviews can be life changing but also vulnerable encounters. It's crucial to us that in those 20-30 minutes we have together we do our best to offer the photographer the support that they need. We want to help them see their work differently, share ideas that can change their career and have a positive impact on their future, connect them with new audiences and collaborators, and find different places for them to show their work.

We want people to be able to see the value in what they're creating and make sure they make the most of it. Brilliant work is being made and we've got to find the paths to get that work in front of more people.


We're always looking for the opportunity to make something great happen from the portfolio review experience, and we're hoping this guide will help you make the most of it as well.

"I booked a place on a Shutter Hub portfolio review without having any high expectations. I was so wrong: 5 minutes into our session, they identified themes and continuities which I hadn't seen in my own work. They were so encouraging and made it clear that my methods were legitimate and suited my subject matter. Ever since then, the Shutter Hub team has supported me in so many ways, from answering questions, to making suggestions and helping me gain confidence in my own process through entering exhibitions.

I've also been feasting my eyes on the fascinating, varied, and often stunning work of other Shutter Hub members, and this in itself has been an amazing experience, as I've found such passionate engagement in members' work, and I'm thrilled to be part of this. Going to that portfolio review and joining Shutter Hub was one of the best things I've ever done."

Susan Bittker, Photographer



The background image shows a bright, modern interior space. On the left, large windows offer a view of a brick building exterior. The room is furnished with vibrant green armchairs and a white coffee table. On the right wall, a collection of 12 photographs is displayed in a grid, held by black corner mounts. Three white, teardrop-shaped pendant lights hang from a white grid ceiling. The floor is covered in dark grey carpeting.

"Looking back at 2021, one event stands out for me as the most impactful of all - meeting Karen from Shutter Hub at Format21 portfolio reviews. This changed the course of the whole year for me, I am not exaggerating. The Shutter Hub Award was a huge help that opened many doors and made such enormous difference. There was a real spark in our conversation and being able to connect instantly to someone like Karen gave me the confidence I needed.

It lifted me up and gave me courage to go ahead and do other things: try and experiment, play and make mistakes, win and lose, but not feel put down by the low moments and not get too carried away by the highs. I am in a different place (literally and metaphorically!) now - a stronger, safer and kinder place because of this and the decision to give me an award and introduce me to Shutter Hub, a network akin a family circle, full of friendly and kind people."

Anna Sellen, Photographer

PREPARING FOR A PORTFOLIO REVIEW

MINDSET

You might be nervous about portfolio reviews. You might be worried about meeting somebody new, who you hope is going to like your work, engage with it, and who might want to help you. It's very normal to feel a bit apprehensive, but the best thing to do is to have a bit of a practice and try to turn that nervousness into excitement.

Practice talking through your work with somebody you know. Get them to ask you questions and think about what sort of things you would like to discuss at the portfolio review. 20-30 minutes is not a long time, so if you're uncertain about what you'll ask, or you're not sure you'll remember it, just make some little notes for yourself, nobody minds.

Who are you? What do you do? What do you want? Be prepared. Don't waste those minutes. Make it clear where you would like advice as soon as possible so the reviewer can use that time to help you and send you away with things you can action.

The best thing to do is be yourself and be honest. If you're feeling nervous, say 'I feel nervous about this'. If you haven't got lots of experience, say 'I haven't got lots of experience'. What people want to know is who you are and what your work is about. Reviewers want to help, so for example, if you don't have lots of experience in showing your work in galleries, let them know, so that they can give you the right direction and support.



PREPARING FOR A PORTFOLIO REVIEW

EDIT

Putting your work together for your first portfolio review? Get the edit down. Don't turn up with a hundred prints and just tip them onto the table, or send a bulging dropbox folder. Think carefully about the work that represents you, and where you want to be as a photographer, and share that. If you've got twenty or thirty minutes with somebody, twenty to thirty images should be just about right.

Not sure how to format things – make a sandwich! Start with something strong, layer the images in a good flow, and spread the weaker (but obviously relevant!) images throughout, and then end on a banger! First impressions count, but the last thing people see will stick with them too.

The work should speak about you as a photographer, your consistency and skill. You should speak about what you want to learn and how you want to connect your work with the world. Don't read out a statement, and don't explain the obvious, save the air time for something more!

If you've got a few projects you want to share, and you're going to see several reviewers, you could think about switching it up a bit, if you've got the capacity to remember everything they say!

But really, try to focus on one thing at a time...
and make lots of notes!



PREPARING FOR A PORTFOLIO REVIEW

PRINT

When it comes to print size, reviewers should be able to see the detail and ideally be able to lay prints out on a table. Having loose prints enables you and them to move things around and sequence things together, or change your sequencing as you please.

The biggest size to go for would be A3, or 12x16 at the most because generally you'll be limited on space. In the real world, if you're taking prints to a review, you might have a small table available and you'll want to be able to spread things out a bit.

Handling prints is a great way for the reviewer to connect with your work in that limited amount of time you have together. People will treat your work with respect, so, if possible, allow them to touch the work without white gloves (or at least offer them a clean unused pair!)

If they're handmade prints, something that you can't replicate, or alternative photography that's just a one-off, they will understand. If it's something that you can reprint, you can mount the print on board to make it more robust and give it a bit more life. It's important to allow reviewers to absorb the work without too much focus on how to handle it.

If you're sharing your portfolio online, consider including other images that give extra context for the viewer, such as installation shots showing how you have exhibited the work before.



PREPARING FOR A PORTFOLIO REVIEW

CHOOSING YOUR REVIEWER

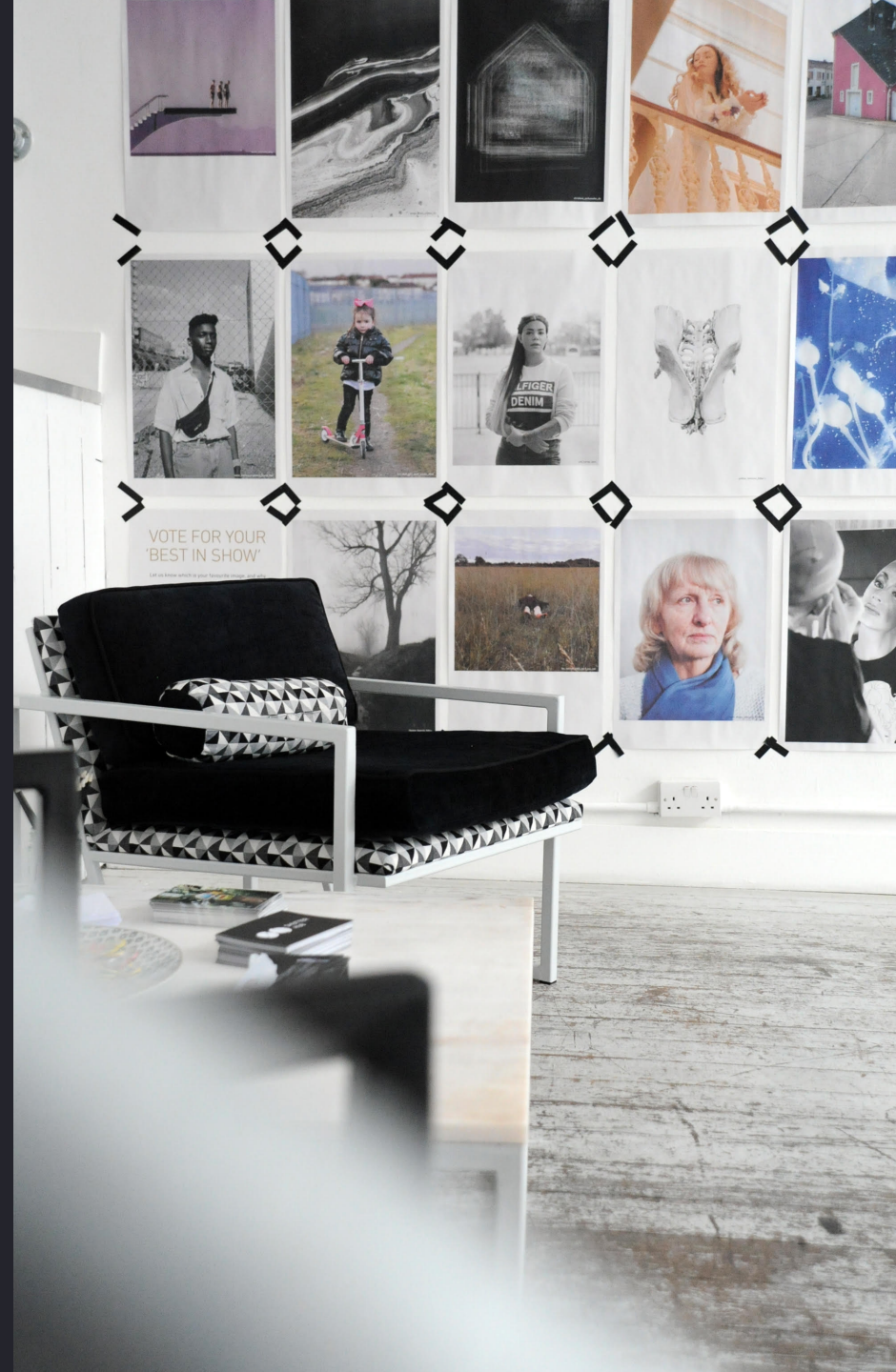
Before booking your review, spend a bit of time researching the background of the reviewers.

Ideally, you will choose someone based on their expertise and background, not just their job title.

If you want to exhibit your work look for someone with the experience to help make that happen, if your goal is to eventually publish a photobook look for someone with publishing experience, if you're looking for creative collaborators look for someone who is part of a network of creatives, and so on.

If, for example, your work is in the abstract fine art category, a reviewer with a career in photojournalism and reportage could still provide some useful insights, but may not be as useful as someone who has had a connection with the genre before.

Most of the time reviewers will say in their bio what type of work they are looking to see. Make sure to pay attention to this so you can get the most from the experience.



MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR PORTFOLIO REVIEW

ON THE DAY

Reviews are not just about the experience of looking at your work, they are also about the conversations that you can have. If you are asking someone to look at lots and lots of images, they might not have the time to have the conversation with you that you would like.

If you're going to an event with many reviewers, you might want to take a few different projects with you and show them to different people. It can be a really full-on experience and you will receive a lot of new information, so get organised and be prepared. Make sure to take notes, or record the conversation (with permission) on your phone.

Not everyone will like your work, and that's okay. Sometimes people just don't like things, sometimes they have good reasons. Try not to be offended or defensive (it's hard!) and do your best to learn from the experience. Take away from it what you want to, and think what could be improved.

Exchange contact details at the end of the session and ask the reviewer if you can contact them in the future – some will say yes, but not all, don't be offended! If you've got postcards, prints, spare books or zines, and you can afford to give them away, do it. Your work can go home with that reviewer and could act as a useful reminder of you and your work.

Always follow up with a thank you.



FINDING A PORTFOLIO REVIEW FOR YOU



BOOK A PORTFOLIO REVIEW

Book an online portfolio review with Shutter Hub right now and start expanding your ideas and career.

Whatever stage of your photography journey you are we'll be able to help you make new connections, find ways to get exhibited and published, and build your future in photography. It's what we do!

[BOOK NOW!](#)

JOIN SHUTTER HUB

Joining Shutter Hub as a member is easy, great value and introduces you to a community passionate about photography and making opportunities accessible to all.

When you join Shutter Hub, you get a free portfolio review included with your membership each year, alongside access to the unique opportunities, exhibitions and events that come with being a member.

OTHER PORTFOLIO REVIEWS WE RECOMMEND

FORMAT [UK](#)

Photo Vogue Festival [Italy](#)

Exposure Photography Festival [Canada](#)

New England Portfolio Review [US](#)



Shutter Hub is a photography organisation providing opportunities and support for creative photographers worldwide.

Through our exhibitions, website and in-person and online meetups and workshops we enable photographers to promote their work and make new connections within the photographic community.

What we offer is unique and personal. We are dedicated to creating fair access to photography, making a positive impact within the industry and opening up opportunities for everyone – be it through our Membership Bursary Awards, Camera Amnesty Projects, or other similar initiatives.

Our growing community makes us proud to represent them and the photography industry wherever we can.

We'd love you to get involved!

[JOIN NOW!](#)

shutterhub.org.uk

