

## TECHNICAL TIPS FOR PREPARING WORK SAMPLES

The quality of a work sample is not synonymous with the quality of a piece of artwork. Besides selecting the most suitable work to be reviewed by a selection panel, one of the important tasks for applicants is how to present their samples correctly and professionally. Below are a number of technical tips for applicants to use as a tool of reference when preparing their work samples.

### General guidance:

- **Always follow the funder's guidelines!** Pay close attention to file size requirements, cue point instructions, maximum number of samples accepted, and formatting instructions. *Consistency in format allows the panel to focus on content.*
- **If you're not sure, ask early!** If you have carefully studied the guidelines and still need clarification or guidance, contact the program staff as early as possible. Waiting until days before the deadline may result in unanswered questions from overwhelmed staff or not enough time to prepare for new instructions.

### Preparing CDs or DVDs

- Find out what kind of equipment your samples will be played on (Mac, PC, DVD player, etc.). Format and test your samples accordingly.
- No stickers on CDs or DVDs as this can jam equipment. Use a marker to write on the back of the disk when necessary.
- Label your samples appropriately and provide notes on navigating disks, menus, etc.
- Always test work samples prior to submission. Many funders do not have the time or resources to prescreen samples.

### Preparing to upload samples into an application

- When an application requires you to submit a video or audio link, be sure to use a trusted third party site such as Vimeo or YouTube.
- Upload quality video documentation of your work TODAY. Don't wait until a deadline is approaching!
- Make sure you upload files in the format, resolution, length & size required by the reviewer.
- Be mindful of image and sound quality after compression. Test the compressed sample before uploading to make sure the image & audio qualities are not lost in process (e.g. image doesn't become grainy when maximized to full screen projection). Also test the sample after uploading, if possible.

- Unless otherwise instructed, title each file with as *ApplicantName#* (e.g. AndyWarhol1, AndyWarhol2, AndyWarhol3...) for order and clarity.

### **Written sample description**

- Use your written sample description to provide an inventory list of samples provided and a short description. This will provide context for the panel on various aspects of the samples as well as limitations if any. Be prepared to provide the following for your samples:
  - Title of piece
  - Year of piece (completion or presentation, as applicable)
  - Place/venue of documentation (if presented publicly)
  - Key artistic collaborators
  - Materials used for visual samples
  - Dimensions: height x width x depth for visual samples
  - Duration of video and audio samples
  - Total number of pages for manuscripts
  - Cue point for video and audio samples
- Include a succinct (20-40 words) description, providing context for the sample, if guidelines allow. This Long texts on the sample description may not be closely read.

### **TECHNICAL TIPS FOR TIME-BASED SAMPLES (VIDEO & AUDIO)**

#### **Video quality:**

- Use separate microphones to record sound and protect audio quality. Do not rely on the built-in microphones in cameras.
- Consider more than one camera angle rather than just having one camera stationed at the back of the house.
- Use a tripod to stabilize the camera.
- Maintain a clear line of sight for the camera (i.e. the camera not blocked by objects or audience).
- Be judicious in use of zoom as it can block out important aspects of work.
- If the recording conditions of your sample are not optimal, consider using your written sample description as a place to prepare the panel for suboptimal recording conditions. *For example: "single camera, back of house" or "amateur video recording" or open rehearsal footage"*
- Sometimes grainy or otherwise low production quality video is still more desirable than still images. When making your selection, consider what video will allow a panel to see that images, music or text alone would not (e.g. quality of acting and directing).

#### **Length of sample:**

- Include the full duration of the work in your sample (beginning to end), and cue to a point in the piece that you believe is compelling. Including the full work gives panels the ability to scroll forward in time to see how the work progresses, if possible.

- If you do choose to submit a brief excerpt of a work (approx. 3 minutes), you may also wish to provide the full-length work on the same disk, if submitting on a DVD. Choose the most compelling section if you are required to show only an excerpt of the work.

**Cueing:**

- Cue your work to a segment approximately 3 minutes in length that you find most compelling. If you do not provide a cue, the reviewer will play from the beginning of the piece.
- Avoid cueing your work to moments when credits are rolling or other introductory information is being shown as it wastes valuable time.

**Editing:**

- Collaged video clips of different sections of a work layered with non-project related music or text (format often used in promotional videos) are generally not appropriate for a panel review process as it may take away from understanding the piece in its original form.
- For durational works (e.g. recording of a 6-hour piece), edited footage could be appropriate. Contact the program staff for guidance.
- For curators of group shows or festivals where numerous artists will be showcased, an edited reel may be most appropriate. Contact the organization you are applying to for guidance.

### **TECHNICAL TIPS FOR VISUAL SAMPLES: STILL IMAGES**

**Image quality:**

- Fill the frame without cropping out the edges of the piece itself.
- Apply even and consistent lighting.
- Protect color subtleties of the piece by learning to use camera settings (e.g. white scale, color contrast, etc.).
- If a background is shown, it should be neutral (white, black, grey).
- Remove all extraneous objects/people from frame, unless they are necessary to demonstrate scale, setting and other contextual detail.

**View & shot options:**

- Consider whether more than one view would be beneficial to understanding a work.
- Use a detail view to show important details of a work that can't be seen when viewed from a distance. Also provide a shot of the entire piece.
- Installation shots can be useful to show work within the context of an exhibition space, highlighting multiple components.
- Consider including a person in the camera shot to illustrate the interactive or performance element of a work. A video recording is another option for this situation.

## TECHNICAL TIPS FOR TEXT-BASED SAMPLES: MANUSCRIPTS

### **Paper:**

- Use white, unlined and 8.5 x 11 inches paper.
- Use only one side of the paper; do not print double-sided.

### **Fonts & formatting:**

- Limit font choices to standard, readable font (e.g. Times Roman, Courier, Arial).
- Do NOT use a script-style or decorative font (e.g. Lucinda), which can make the text less readable and feels unprofessional.
- Use a minimum font size of 12 points, unless otherwise instructed; don't sacrifice readability to create more space.
- Use a running header that appears at the top of every page (except the first) that includes the following information:
  - Author's name
  - Applicant name (if different from author)
  - Title of piece
  - Page number

### **Margins & Spacing:**

- Leave a 1-inch margin on all sides of your manuscript.
- Double-space the text lines.