

## CRITIQUING YOUR OWN

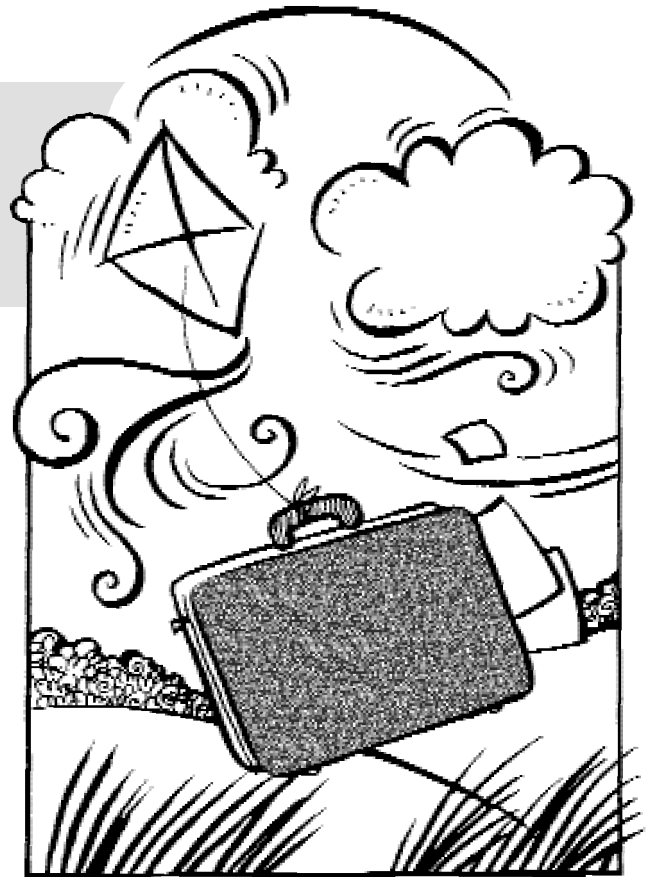
# Portfolio Presentation

## OF CHILDREN'S ILLUSTRATION

Whether you have never put together a portfolio presentation of children's illustration, or you already have a portfolio of artwork, it is a good idea to periodically review your own work with a fresh, perhaps more critical, eye.

Following are some tips and suggestions to help you get started or to use as a checklist when looking over an existing portfolio of artwork in preparing for professional review.

- ❑ **Choose a portfolio**—usually a zippered case with large plastic sleeves for displaying artwork—**that is of manageable size.** Somewhere between 8½ x 11" and 20 x 26" is best for tabletop viewing.
- ❑ **Select 12–15 pieces of your best artwork.** Less, if you feel you don't have 12 pieces that qualify as your best.
- ❑ **Keep your style and goals in mind.** Try to select the pieces that really identify you as an artist and the type of work you want to do. For example, don't display twelve pen and ink portraits of American Presidents and then say you *really* want to do airbrush cartooning.
- ❑ **If you do have distinct and different styles, display the pieces in a way that acknowledges the differences.** Put all your traditional pen and ink in front, and whimsical, airbrush cartoons in back, or in a separate portfolio. It may help the professional reviewer see that you have two distinct styles...and that there won't be any question of what they'll get if they choose to work with you.
- ❑ **Show a wide range of subject matter.** Try to show a variety of children, adults (of different ages and ethnic groups) and animals interacting in different settings, with different moods.



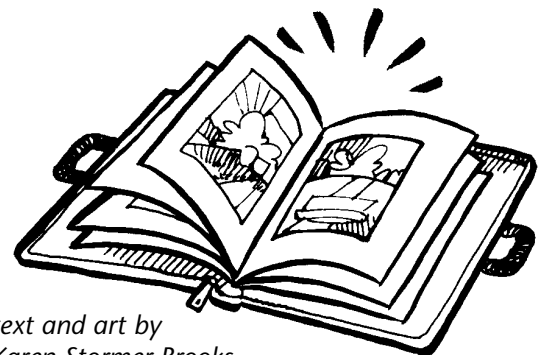
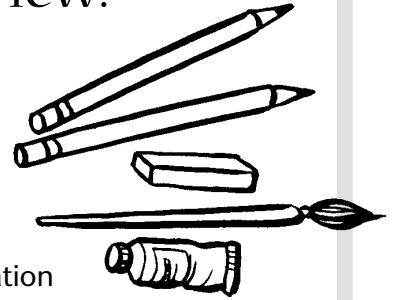
- ❑ **Choose artwork that is dynamic.** Reviewers (who see hundreds of illustrations a week) want to see work that presents images and ideas in unique ways. (Interesting perspective, dynamic composition, unusual use of color, fantastic situations)
- ❑ **Choose artwork that tells a story.** Even if you are illustrating for a non-fiction piece, an interesting illustration can, without text, invite the reader/reviewer to wonder..."What happens next?"
- ❑ If you are interested in book illustration, **show a story progression.** Include a picture book dummy (pencil/rough), if you have one. It shows how you would carry characters throughout a book and it shows you understand the basics of book production/layout. (Be sure you DO understand the basics and that your dummy follows the elements of a standard book.)  
If you don't have a book dummy, try to select 3 illustrations from one story to show movement of characters through a story.

**Portfolio**—from the Italian *portare* [to carry] + *foglio* [leaf, sheet] —literally, a portable book.

- ❑ **Get photo or computer-imaged reproductions, even color copies of very large or framed artwork.** Artwork that will fit into your portfolio is easier to handle and is not as likely to be damaged. Generally, the images do not suffer much from the reproduction, and add to the overall professionalism of your portfolio. Most reviewers are used to seeing these types of reproductions.
- ❑ **Don't put anything in your portfolio that you feel shows a weakness.** Printed samples are nice to include if you have them, since they establish you as a published illustrator, but in most cases, a dynamic, unpublished illustration outweighs a weak, published piece. Especially if you have other published work already in your portfolio.
- ❑ **Avoid accessory or 3-dimensional items.** Anything that cannot fit into a portfolio sleeve, likely doesn't belong there. If you want to include images from a quilt, ceramics, 3-D collage or anything that you feel has a direct relation to your illustration work, have photographs (enlargements) or slides made of your pertaining work and slip them into the sleeves in your portfolio. Toys or T-shirts are not really what most reviewers are looking for in an illustration portfolio.
- ❑ **Have some color copies, postcards, or printed sample sheets** with your name, address and phone number on them in case a reviewer asks for a sample of your artwork.
- ❑ **Get some input.** Show your portfolio to friends and family members (whose aesthetic opinions you trust), and get some feedback.
- ❑ **Present the very best of your unique style.** Don't try to imitate anyone else's style or what may seem to be the illustration style du jour.

## After a Review:

- ❑ **Be encouraged.** Take any comments or constructive criticism as valuable input. You now have some specific information to help you shape your portfolio in a professional way.
  - ❑ **Look for inspiration.** Spend some time in a bookstore or library looking at children's books or magazines. While not following anyone else's style, look for illustrations that are dynamic and exciting and decide what elements have made them so. Look at how action takes place in a picture book, or how a non-fiction subject is illustrated in an unusual way.
- Take some classes or workshops (figure drawing, painting)—something that will help you focus on your artwork differently.
- ❑ **Add to what you have.** Work on building your portfolio by making a book dummy or three illustrations for a classic tale. Re-do an illustration you think you could improve on. In any new illustration project, work toward a goal of producing something more exciting than you have ever done before!



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