A reminder to all that April's Closer Focus night is a portfolio review of YOUR work. We will have a group of accomplished photographers individually review your work. Each portfolio review will last about 10-15 minutes so you can get individual quality time with each reviewer.

To keep things running smoothly and to maximize the time for reviews there are some important things to know

Bring approximately 10 images
Prints from 5x7 to 11x14 are preferred
Digital images should be presented on a tablet or laptop

Here is a list of tips for preparing your portfolio:
Image size – bigger is better, up to 11x14
All images should be of your best quality and work.
Be prepared to explain your vision and theme of the work
Be ready to talk about your work and explain the concepts of your work
Always be courteous to the reviewer even if you do not agree with their opinion.
Set a goal for the review and have general questions to ask the reviewer about your work.
Take notes.

Set a goal and have a purpose for each review and communicate that purpose to the reviewer when you sit down.
Listen to the reviewers for common observations and suggestions to build on for the future.

Prepare a list of questions you want to ask the reviewer.
This is similar to the first tip of setting goals but this tip is a little more specific so you can get specific answers. The questions should be the same for each reviewer so you can see if there are common threads.

Bring what you would show a client.
Each portfolio reviewer is a potential client. Don't bring something you know is subpar that you intend to make better later on. It's perfectly okay to make something better later based on new insight, a better skill set or from advice and comments from those you trust. But showing less than your best at that time is a disservice to you because any comments you receive are not valid to the work you can produce. The whole point of the portfolio review is to get feedback on your work, a reviewer can't give you good feedback if what they are looking at isn't what you actually intend to show.

Prints should be the best possible

Always present your absolute best work. Edit carefully and think about the whole image. You are responsible for everything within the borders of your image, an element either adds to the image or subtracts.

Don't make excuses
If you need to make an excuse you shouldn't be showing it. If during the review process the reviewer criticizes some of your work don't say things such as, "I didn't bring my strongest work." "I didn't have time to put together more." or "I just found out about this event." Remember, this should be the best work you have available at that time and you should listen and learn from criticism.

Take notes
By the end of a review session all the reviews and their comments will start to blend together. Take notes during and after each review before you forget important details. Write down everything both good and bad. It's often helpful to note which images each reviewer liked the best and what they liked the least.
I suggest using a new notebook for the portfolio review event and make a separate page for each reviewer. Paperclip or tape their business card to the top of the page and take notes on which images they liked, disliked, questions they had and feedback concerning your work.

Image Size
The general rule of thumb is the bigger the better. The larger the print the more impact it has. Very large prints though, are hard to carry and expensive to produce. The best advice, unless the images are meant to be seen only in small sizes (e.g. 4x5 contact prints) make them as big as you can reasonably handle and afford. For example, show 11' x 14" prints mounted on 16" x 20" mats.

Print your images similarly on the same size/paper.

Number of images
Only enter about 10 images

One of the common mistakes that photographers make when entering a portfolio review is showing too much work.

Don't have similar images
The single most common mistake is including multiple images that are too similar - images that were clearly shot at the same time and only slightly different.

In the age of the digital camera with its zero-cost images, most people simply shoot too much, sloppily, and edit too loosely. All photographers find it easier to shoot than to edit their own work. Shooting is fun. Taking a hard look at everything you shot and being honest with yourself about whether you have any truly outstanding images is hard.

Packaging your prints
Package your portfolio such that you can carry it, open it, show it, and put it away with minimum fuss. Simple clamshell portfolio boxes are one perennial festival favorite.

There are three common presentation methods, portfolio binders, mounted prints, and loose prints. Whichever method is used all prints should be of the finest possible quality and printed on the same size paper.

Talk about your work and the concepts
Have a very short oral biography of yourself prepared. Be prepared to talk about your work, education and life experiences as they relate to your photography.

Be ready to talk about your work and explain the concepts that hold your work together. You should have a practiced and concise description that you can comfortably give at any time.

Know a few questions that you want to ask each reviewer. Have these in your notebook to remind you if you should forget in the heat of the review. I can't tell you how many people have wished they had remembered some key thing they wanted to ask!

Don't argue
Don't argue with constructive criticism The people looking at your work know what they are talking about. They may all have different opinions, but that is valid considering that people come from different backgrounds and that visual art is very subjective. You may not agree with someone, and that is ok, but don't tell them that they are wrong.

Be polite. Be professional. Be informed. Do not make excuses about your work. Be patient

Don't fumble with apps
The iPad, however, shouldn't be the only means of presenting your work and it is often best as a secondary tool. Lighting conditions can be unpredictable in review rooms and even with auto brightness, there are no guarantees as to how the work will represent. Unless you have access to the review room in advance of the event, you will have no way of knowing the lighting conditions, glare and layout and how that could impact the touch screen experience of the iPad.

The technology of the iPad also requires that you either use third party app or configure a custom presentation with the photo app in the iOS. Whatever avenue you choose, the entire experience needs to be bug-free and idiot-proof so you can control the user experience in advance as fully as possible. Having a reviewer open an iPad and not know where to begin or which app to launch can immediately thwart a good introduction

Don't look for technical advice
You should not participate if you are only looking for advice on technical issues.