



SHUTTER
HUB

PORTFOLIO REVIEW GUIDE



SHUTTER
HUB

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INTRODUCTION



Karen Harvey MBE
Founder and 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 Festival, Vogue, The Photographers' Gallery, Getty Images Gallery, Griffin Museum of Photography, World Photography Organisation, and the Photographic Resource Center.

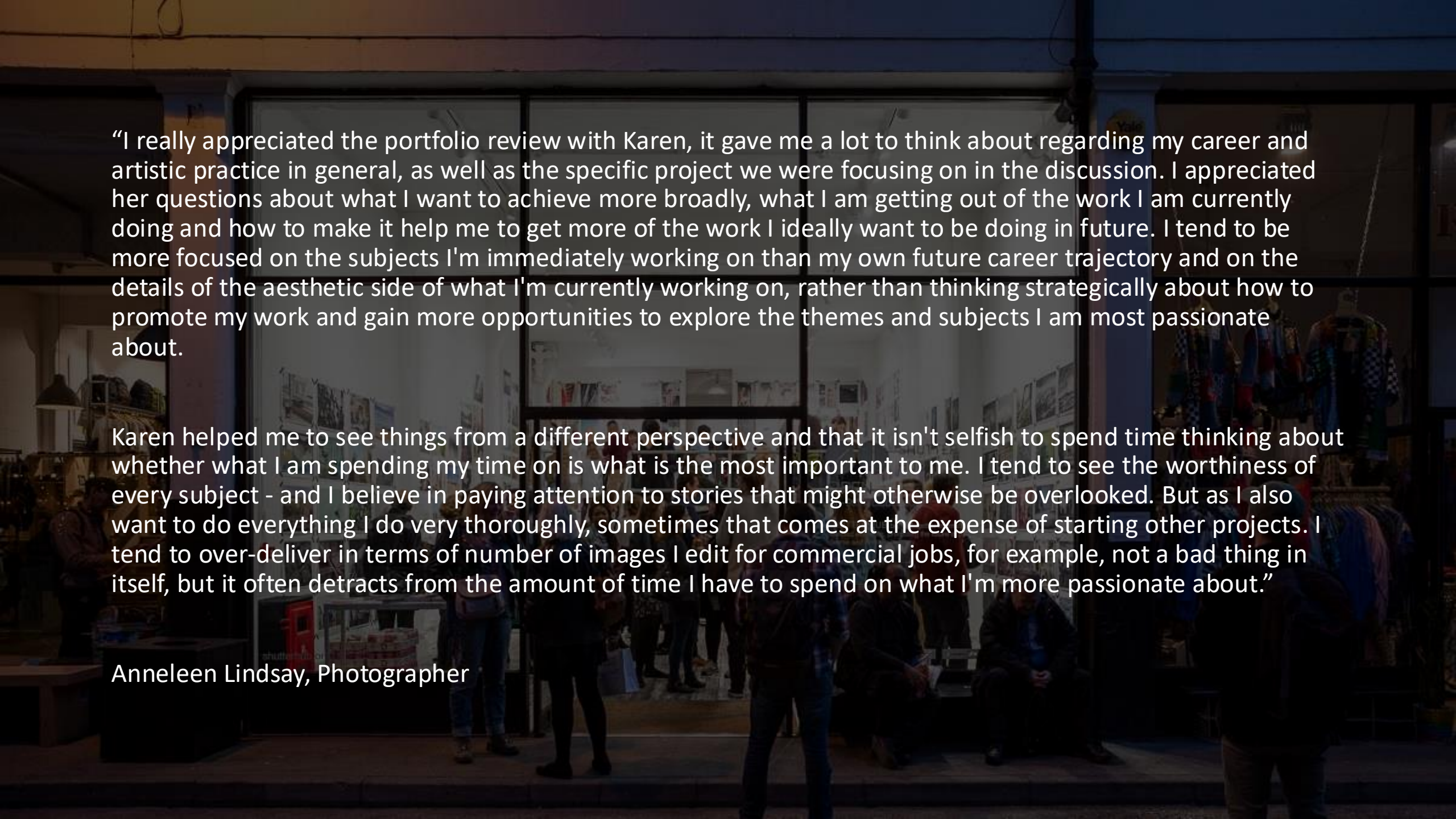
This guide is formed from years of experience and conversations with photographers around the world who want to know how to get the most of their work.

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.

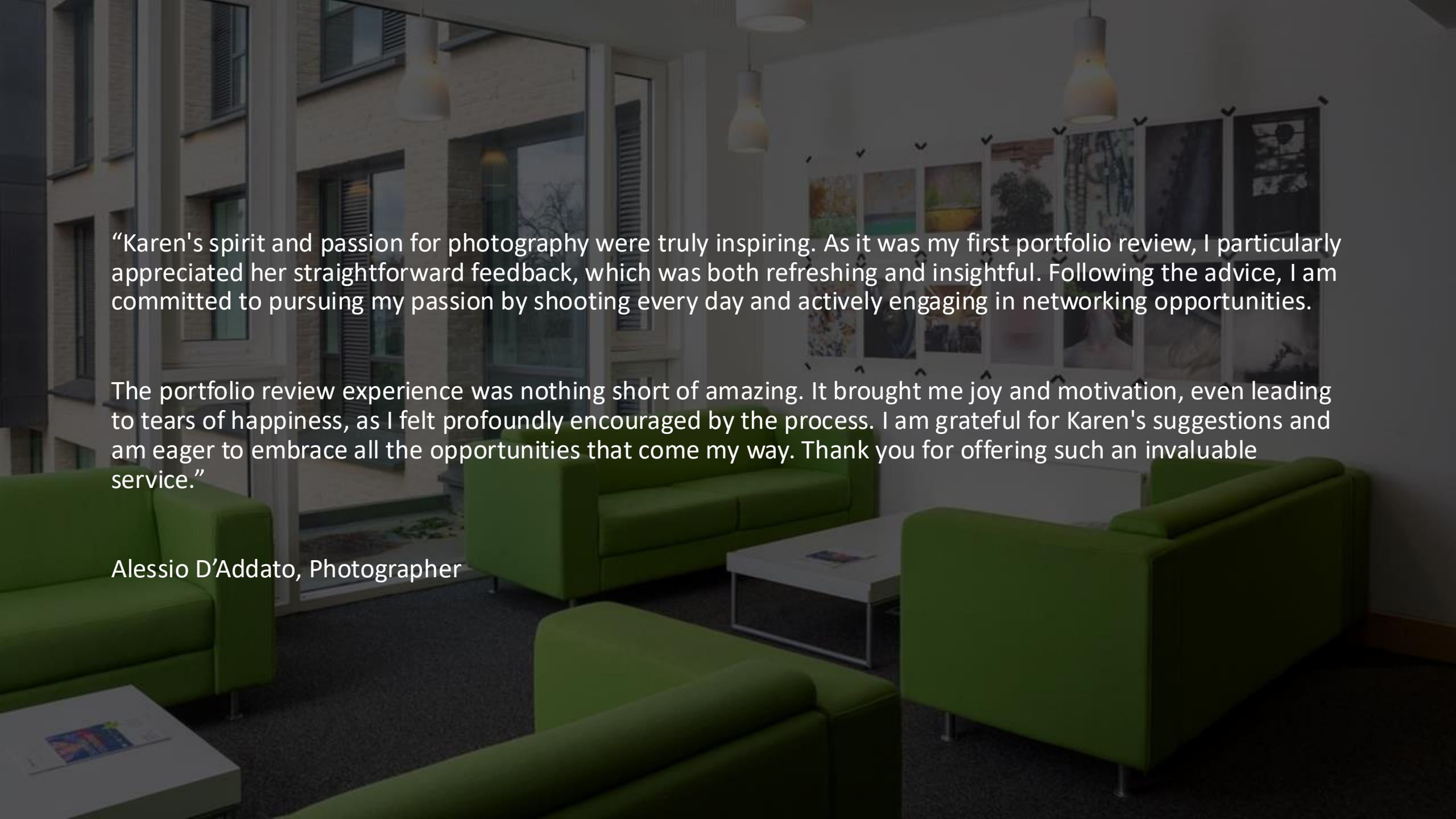
We're always looking for the opportunity to make something great happen from the portfolio review experience, and we're hoping this guide will help you make the most of it as well.



“I really appreciated the portfolio review with Karen, it gave me a lot to think about regarding my career and artistic practice in general, as well as the specific project we were focusing on in the discussion. I appreciated her questions about what I want to achieve more broadly, what I am getting out of the work I am currently doing and how to make it help me to get more of the work I ideally want to be doing in future. I tend to be more focused on the subjects I'm immediately working on than my own future career trajectory and on the details of the aesthetic side of what I'm currently working on, rather than thinking strategically about how to promote my work and gain more opportunities to explore the themes and subjects I am most passionate about.

Karen helped me to see things from a different perspective and that it isn't selfish to spend time thinking about whether what I am spending my time on is what is the most important to me. I tend to see the worthiness of every subject - and I believe in paying attention to stories that might otherwise be overlooked. But as I also want to do everything I do very thoroughly, sometimes that comes at the expense of starting other projects. I tend to over-deliver in terms of number of images I edit for commercial jobs, for example, not a bad thing in itself, but it often detracts from the amount of time I have to spend on what I'm more passionate about.”

Anneleen Lindsay, Photographer

A modern living room with green sofas and a gallery wall. The room features a large window on the left side, offering a view of a multi-story building. The interior is furnished with several bright green sofas and a white coffee table. On the right wall, a series of framed photographs are displayed, held up by black clips. The lighting is soft, with pendant lights hanging from the ceiling.

“Karen's spirit and passion for photography were truly inspiring. As it was my first portfolio review, I particularly appreciated her straightforward feedback, which was both refreshing and insightful. Following the advice, I am committed to pursuing my passion by shooting every day and actively engaging in networking opportunities.

The portfolio review experience was nothing short of amazing. It brought me joy and motivation, even leading to tears of happiness, as I felt profoundly encouraged by the process. I am grateful for Karen's suggestions and am eager to embrace all the opportunities that come my way. Thank you for offering such an invaluable service.”

Alessio D'Addato, 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 airtime 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

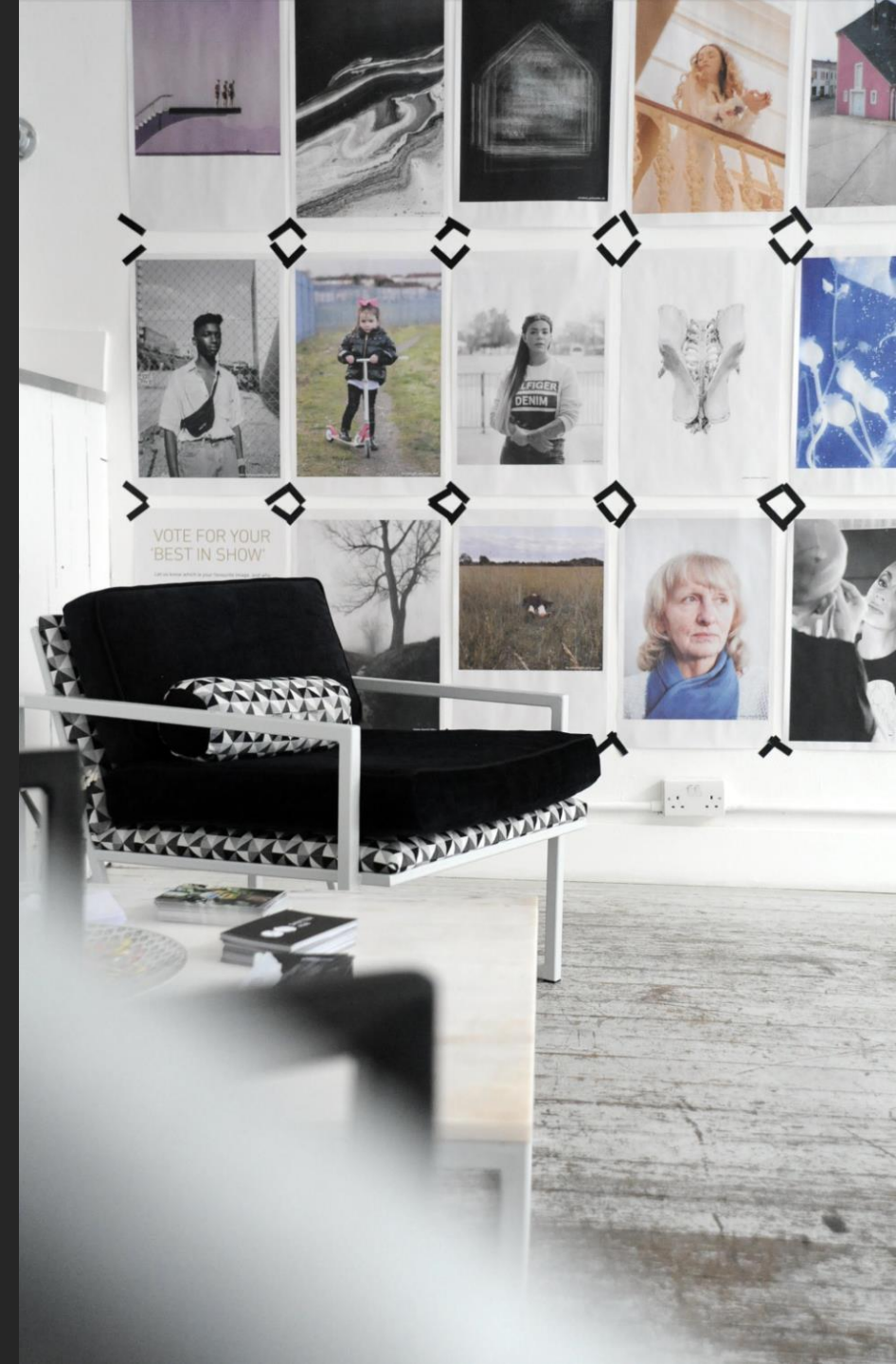
Before booking your review, spend a bit of time researching the background of the reviewers.

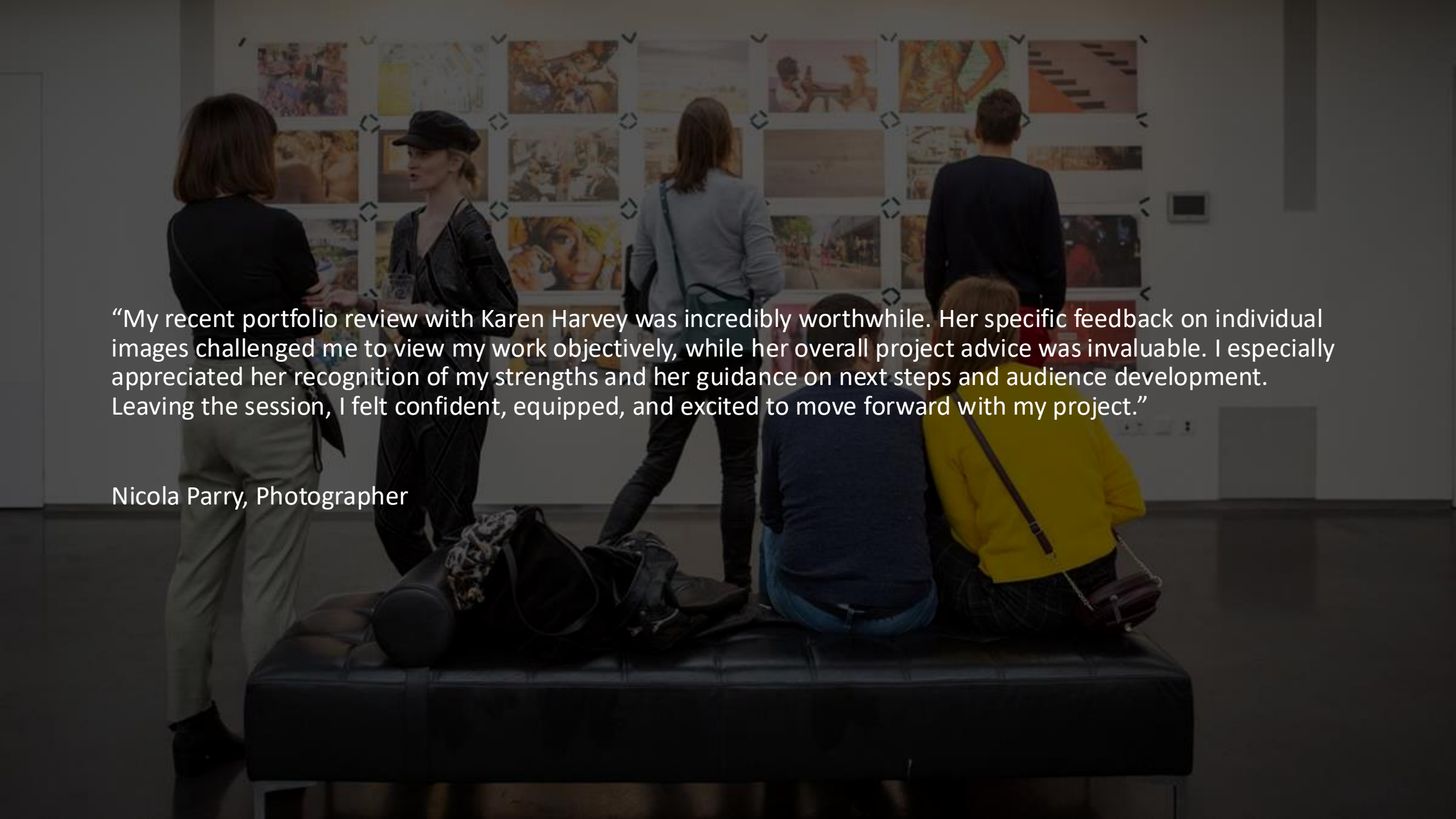
Ideally, you will choose someone based on their expertise and background, not just their job title.

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.



A group of people are in an art gallery, looking at a wall covered with many small photographs. In the foreground, a black leather bench holds several bags and a rolled-up rug. A woman in a black leather jacket and cap stands near the wall, looking at the photos. Other people are standing and sitting, all focused on the artwork. The lighting is soft and even.

“My recent portfolio review with Karen Harvey was incredibly worthwhile. Her specific feedback on individual images challenged me to view my work objectively, while her overall project advice was invaluable. I especially appreciated her recognition of my strengths and her guidance on next steps and audience development. Leaving the session, I felt confident, equipped, and excited to move forward with my project.”

Nicola Parry, Photographer

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 WITH SHUTTER HUB

Book an online portfolio review with Shutter Hub's Karen Harvey MBE right now and start expanding your ideas and career.

Whatever stage of your photography 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!

OTHER PORTFOLIO REVIEWS WE RECOMMEND

FORMAT Festival [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 awards, exhibitions, publications, website and meetups we enable photographers to promote their work, access curated opportunities 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 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!

[FIND OUT MORE!](#)

shutterhub.org.uk

