

So you need to build a portfolio for judging, but you have no idea what it really means, how to do it, or why you need it. Have no fear. I'm here to answer your questions.

The basic idea behind a costume/cosplay portfolio is very simple; to show off your work in detail that judges might otherwise overlook, not have time to ooh and ahh over, or simply be unaware of. Think of this as a great opportunity to have a really in depth one on one with each judge personally – in paper format.

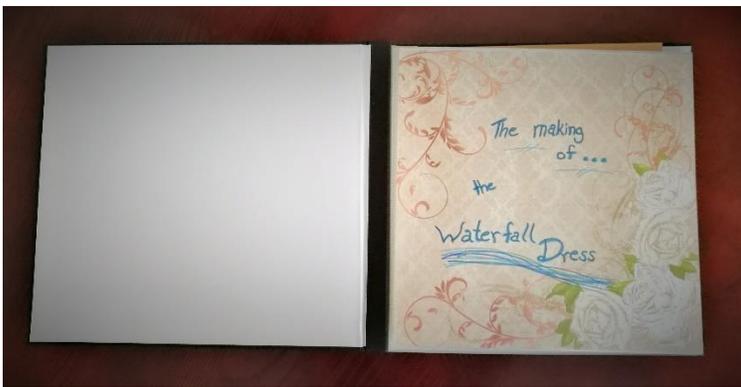
To begin, you will need the following: photos from each step of your working process from your original concept sketches through production to the completed masterpiece (this can include close up shots to showcase detail like hand beading or lace, full body shots to demonstrate how the costume goes together, and anything in between – the judges basically want to be able to follow your process through the photos), the original images you used as your base idea (these are often screen captures, internet sources, or even images of figures), and a write up (this is an in depth, written description of your entire process and should include things like the materials you used, the techniques you used, especially if you learned new ones to complete your project, why you chose the materials and techniques you did, how you made each piece (don't forget to include accessories, wig styling, and just about everything that goes into the finished creation), and anything else you want the judges to know. I am a big over-sharer, so I like to really write all of the details, down to the silly things, or the duh moments I have. This is shown in one of the photos of my own portfolio below – I learned 1/2 inch metal boning is greater than a sewing needle – well duh, huh? But I felt this learning experience was a fun way to add in some humor and personality to my work, while remaining true to the point of the portfolio.

BE AWARE OF YOUR AUDIENCE!!!! I can't stress this enough. Some conventions/judges prefer you take this far more seriously, but I have found most are happy with a hint of humor. Also some conventions/judges don't want to see you in the costume (like when you were in grade school and you had to cut yourself out of all of the science fair photos you were in...ok, well, at least I did. You get the idea) so depending on what you need this for, be sure to use photos that only show you hand, or foot, etc, but not your face. These are rare instances – even the judges for WCS (World Cosplay summit) enjoyed pics with faces and humor. Just be aware!

So now you've gathered your ingredients... Let's get started. Depending on how in depth you want to go with your portfolio (and what you need it for), you can simply create a word document with your write up followed by, or interspersed with, your progress photos. Generally, I only use this method for conventions/judges who ask for a copy in advance because this method is easy to send online via email, forms, etc. Or, you can go all out, such as a photo album with full scrapbook pages, like the one I included in the photos below. The

second version obviously took a lot of work, but I was really proud of how it turned out and it became a great display piece around my house for a couple of years. In the case of the latter, you'll obviously need more materials and time, but it's fairly simple to do and I'll walk you through mine as an example. Before I do, please know there is nothing wrong with either option! For my WCS portfolio, I turned in a simple paper printout based on a Word template for resumes, in one of those flimsy plastic covers with the stiff, brightly colored spine – you know the ones. In that instance I was banking more on the ease of multiple copies and a fun printout instead of four huge photo albums.

Okay, so here's a look at the portfolio for what I call my "Waterfall Dress" (and no, I don't normally name my designs – well, not always – but this one always feels like stepping into the water and I wanted to share that with the judges.

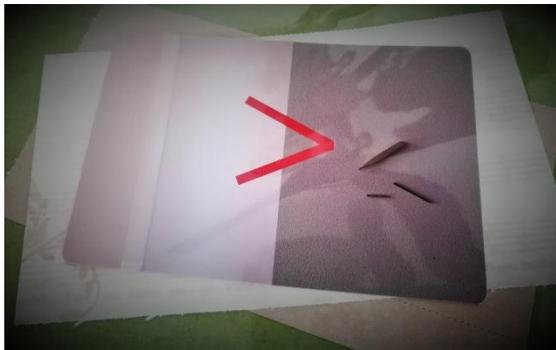
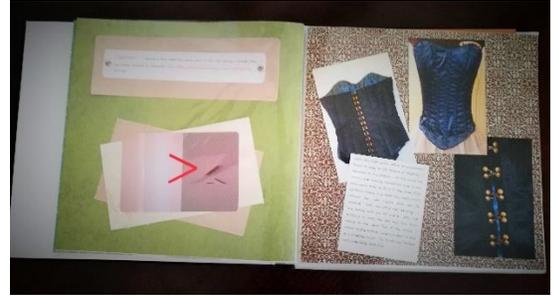


These first two images are the title and first full page of the photo album. I just used a fun, colorful, but not too distracting scrapbook paper I found at a local craft store for a base. I trimmed my write up (which was only challenging to format so I could), and even rounded the edges of every photo (what a pain...) to give it a polished finish. Then I glue the photos and write up sections carefully to the base paper. In some places, I added a few brads that matched with the Steampunk look (screws and keys) to corners of these pieces to add flair. It was by no means necessary to do any of this, but I enjoyed working with all of the pieces.

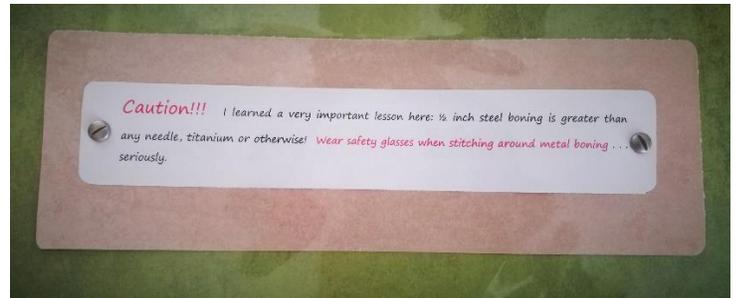


Here's a close up of the brad on the corner.

More Scrapbook pages...



And here is a close up of the photo I mentioned above. It's hard to see with the glare from the photo, but that's metal boning and a very broken needle. Ha Ha.



I think you get the jist... Here are more images of the portfolio.



And Don't forget those accessories!



And a final fun page and an ending with a look at the full polished piece in a glamor shot...

Cause who doesn't like themed glamor shots?





And that's pretty much all there is to it. The best advice I can give you is to have fun with it. This is after all your chance to share how awesome you are and what a fantastic job you did doing something we all love...making your own, as I always say, gravity defying, physics breaking, incredible cosplay. Take advantage of it! And if you do ever get stuck, reach out to your fellow cosplayers. Many of my best friends are cosplayers and I am only fortunate enough to count them as my closest friends because I reached out to them for help, competed against them, or got stuck in an endlessly long green room with them. Seriously, use them! We are fortunate to have such a welcoming group of cosplay senpais, just waiting to pass on their wealth of knowledge to anyone, at any level, who needs/wants it. There are groups online dedicated to this, you can find them on Facebook, Twitter and many social media sites, and of course all over at conventions. If one can't help, don't get discouraged... just find another, someone who can. And you can always reach out to me so now you have no excuses. ^__<

BEST OF LUCK creating your portfolios! I cannot wait to see them and hope you share them with everyone as you go. Who knows, one day maybe you will be the senpai passing on the low down.

Wild & Kimsy