

# One Piece of Advice

Responses from the UM faculty when asked the question:

“What is your best piece of advice for grads heading into the interview process?”

November 23, 2010

1. Be prepared.

(that means be relaxed, ready, research the program that you are applying to and the exact qualifications listed in the job description. It can even help to know the faculty members and research their work/backgrounds ie: where did they go to school, etc.)

2. Every faculty member, everywhere, has had a hard time managing critiques. We are all neurotically convinced that someone else, somewhere, is giving good critiques. If you can tell them a few ways that you lead crits that sound effective they will be impressed.

3. Be able to supply the names of 2 essays you would assign as readings to each class you say you can teach, and why.

4a. Everybody likes a good story. Try to present yourself as a candidate that fits into a story they want to hear. For instance, these days schools don't exactly know how to appeal to students who seem to navigate the world very differently than the people doing the hiring ( i.e. analog versus digital, letterhead versus txts). You enter, and you understand both worlds. This has been explained in your application materials, and now you relate those points in the interview. You have a grasp on tradition, history and craft yet you also frame projects that deal with more contemporary reference points and ways to distribute visual messages.

4b. Don't tell a story that isn't yours, but do try to imagine what issues might be on the minds of the hiring committee - there is never enough space; there is never enough time; faculty never think students think very critically; art programs always want to be more interdisciplinary and boundary-challenging than they are; studios are never safe enough; there is always a new media that current faculty don't understand how to integrate.

5. Shave your beard.

6. Be honest. You do not want to be hired by a place under false pretenses...just to be employed.

7. Follow your gut.

8. Prepare!!!!

9. Have examples or experiences to share that speak to your expertise.

10. Do your research on the position, the people and place that is interviewing you.

11. Be yourself, no one else is qualified, originality means to come from your origins...

12. Often the best candidate is the best fit for a position, not a “know it all”.

13. Humor (if not over used) makes good connections. Humility works the same way.

14. Prepare some honest questions for your interviewers.
15. Practice with someone
16. Be honest about what you've accomplished and realistic about what you hope to achieve.
17. Don't sell yourself short in either.
18. Read the employers web page inside and out, take notes about each person on the web page, what they do.
19. Look at other web pages that are similar at a different employer and compare. Have that information spread out on a table in front of you for the interview and check off each person as they introduce themselves.
20. Have questions ready, about different aspects of the position including about location and other new hires.
21. Try and laugh a few time - humor goes a LONG way in an interview.
22. Don't talk on and on and on, answer THEIR question, this is not about you, it is when they find out about you. This is the biggest mistake that I see people make.
23. Keep a clock by so keep track of how long you are talking. A 20 minute interview is 20 minutes - not 20 minutes for you, but 20 minutes for everything.
24. Remember to thank them for calling and wish them luck with their search.
25. Also, at every interview I have had, the school has asked me how they are seen in the field, what there reputation is - have a good and honest answer.
26. Jot down the names of the folks on the other end of the line so that you can respond using their names.
27. If you anticipate answering questions about your studio work... write down a list of words, and/or names of influences that you would generally reference in less stressful conversations. If you "blank" on a name, go to your cheat sheet for a reference.
28. Write down the questions you are asked so that you can stay on topic, and so that you can practice with answers to these questions in future interviews or at an on-sight interview.
29. One question you will always be asked is..."do you have any questions for us?" ... prepare a list of authentic questions that you have about the institution, their curriculum, and as a last resort, the community.
30. If you aren't sure what they are asking, don't be afraid to ask for clarification.
31. If you aren't sure you answered in relation to what was being asked, don't be afraid to ask

them if your response is getting at their query in as much detail as they would like.

32. Do as much research as possible about the position, the faculty, and the students. when I interviewed on the phone here, I didn't know who would be on the committee, but as the phone introductions emerged, I was familiar with each person because I had done my homework.

33. Answer with authenticity and accuracy... fabrication and embellishment can be seen (heard) from miles away. Plus, it probably wouldn't be any fun to wind up with an opportunity or position that didn't come out of your authentic way of being.

34. Relax... a relaxed voice sounds more confident. Some people have a clearer voice if they are standing up rather than sitting. Try it... many radio personalities do all their work standing. Ever see those clips of voice actors reading lines... they are always standing!

35. Take your time... though visual queues to your contemplation aren't helpful, you can give some verbal acknowledgement that you are thinking by repeating the question to the interviewers and/or giving subtle clues like "uh huh" etc...

36. Have a couple of courses that aren't typical of a traditional curriculum set that you would be interested in developing. Often these can stem from your own work or research, but should never be: "ART 247: Make Art Like Me".

37. Schools usually hire based on fit over best artist/educator available. Your art or research/writing gets you to the final cut, then based on interviews, a faculty almost always select based on perceived fit. This sometimes means personality, likability, and hopefully, what you can add that is not currently present.