



interview with EMILY MCMACHEN

AS How has your PW portfolio, and education, shaped your career? What kind of jobs have you worked since leaving?

EM The PW program at MSU definitely showed me that it's possible to have a successful career with writing. I wasn't 100% sure what I wanted to do once I graduated, but working on my portfolio helped me organize and truly understand all of the skills and talents I had. Since graduating I moved to NYC where I got a job with an advertising agency working as a Copywriter.

AS Why did you choose the pieces in your portfolio? How do the pieces represent your skill sets?

EM I chose the pieces in my portfolio because, like I said, I wasn't sure exactly what I wanted to do. So, I showcased a broad range of interests of mine (writing, design, editing). I'm pretty set on what I like visually, so I knew I had to have equal pieces for each category...so I narrowed it down to the pieces I was most proud of.

AS Now that you've been out of the program for a bit, how would you critique the pieces in your portfolio?

EM I still feel insecure that I never had any of my pieces published. However, it's never gotten in the way of a job or an interview. I think my pieces showcase a variety of skills but now as I move forward with a career in copywriting, I definitely want to narrow it down more to show that I'm an "expert" at something.

AS What kind of concepts did you want to articulate in your visual brand?

EM I did know that I wanted to work more in the business/startup/up-and-coming side of writing. With students who work in the publishing industry, I feel like it may be a bit more strict. Whereas I felt like I could express myself a bit more while maintaining a professional identity. I wanted to showcase myself in a more personal light.

AS How was your portfolio used during job interviews, and what kind of questions were asked?

EM I had tons of interviewers comment on my homepage where I talk about myself, my cheeseburger and craft beer appreciation. I think nowadays employers do really want to know the people they're hiring and I think making them laugh right off the bat made them a bit more comfortable with me. In the interview for my current job she said, "this is going to be the hardest question I ask you all day...what's your favorite brewery?" I also ended up interviewing with a beer company in Chicago...showcasing your personal side and interests can go really far and help you get to where you truly want to be. Other employers I interviewed with would bring up a piece from my portfolio and ask me to explain it. For example, my mock press release got

a lot of attention. Although it was never published, having the opportunity to speak to your work is a great chance to reel them in.

AS What kind of feedback did you get about your portfolio from interviewers?

EM See above

AS Do you have any tips or advice that you wish you would've known starting out?

EM Don't stress about your portfolio so much. Some people will love it, others won't fancy it. Regardless, I think employers in general appreciate the time you put into your craft and showcasing it—whether it's their style or not.

I wish I would have gotten to meet Emily, but it seems appropriate in this context that we only communicated through writing on the Internet. Her answers to my questions were both enlightening and unexpected. The first thing that stood out to me in this interview was not Emily's answers, but the way that she wrote them. Her voice translates effortlessly through her writing, and by extension her website. This is one of the key reasons I think her page is so effective. Her answer about being published left a mark on me, and I feel it is very valuable and practical advice. College is one of the best places to get published. A theme I found throughout her questions was that she trusted her instinct and let her personality as an individual take the forefront. Her comment about employers "really wanting to know the people they're hiring" is a very nice and hopeful thought. Her easy final advice, to not stress about the portfolio, again echoed the sentiment that if you put time and work into your craft, and trust your instinct, people will appreciate it.

By: Annie Sommer

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