



FIELD GUIDE / 2026 EDITION

How to Judge an **Interior** Studio

Five things to look for in a portfolio when you cannot do the work yourself, and the exact crops to ask a studio to send before you commit.

START HERE

You are not judging taste. You are judging whether it behaves.

Almost every studio that renders buildings will also render interiors. A smaller number are actually interior specialists, and the difference is not visible in a thumbnail. It shows up in how materials behave — how a cushion takes weight, how light comes through a sheer, whether a tile reads at the right size next to a door handle.

You do not need to know how any of that is made. You need to know where to look, and what to ask for when the portfolio does not answer. That is this guide: five tests, then the exact images to request.

What a generalist interior looks like

- Correct, tidy, and strangely airless
- Fabric that looks like painted geometry
- Everything equally lit and equally sharp
- One strong hero, and a weak supporting set

What a specialist interior looks like

- Soft things that have clearly been sat on
- Light that changes as it crosses the room
- Material sizes you can check against a door
- Eight images that feel like one afternoon

A useful framing before you start: a generalist can produce one excellent interior. A specialist can produce twelve consistent ones. If you are buying a set — a show apartment, a hotel, a whole range — the second thing is what you are actually paying for.

STEP 01

The five tests, and where to look for each

01 Soft goods under weight

Go to the seat cushions, the bed, the throw over the chair arm. Look for compression where something rests, a seam that pulls rather than sits straight, a fold that has a direction. **Look for:** the underside of a cushion meeting the seat, and the corner of a bed where the mattress takes the cover. Painted-on creases and perfectly symmetrical pillows are the tell.

02 Light passing through, not just landing on

The hardest thing in an interior is what light does after it hits something. **Look for:** a backlit sheer curtain, a glass of water, a lampshade lit from inside, a translucent shower screen. A fabric that glows softly along the folds and casts a warm, unsharp pool on the floor is a different skill from a curtain that is simply a bright rectangle.

03 Material scale against something you know

You cannot judge whether a stone slab is right, but you can judge it against a door handle, a socket, a wine glass or a stair riser. **Look for:** tile grid against a doorway, timber grain running across a wide surface, a large-format porcelain veined like a sample chip. Wrong scale is the most common fault in generalist interiors and the easiest one for a non-specialist to spot.

04 Styling that has been lived in

Showroom styling is symmetrical, evenly spaced and brand new. Lived-in styling has a chair pulled out, a book that is not parallel to the table edge, a cable, a worn edge, a plant with one bad leaf. **Look for:** anything asymmetrical. Note that not every project wants this — a product catalogue may want showroom — but the studio should be able to do both and should say which they were briefed for.

05 Consistency across a whole set

Ask to see every image from one project, in the order delivered. **Look for:** the same time of day, the same colour temperature, the same styling logic, the same level of finish in the sixth image as in the first. A set where image one is a masterpiece and image six is grey and empty tells you where the budget ran out, which is exactly what will happen to yours.

Run all five on two or three studios in an hour. It is a faster and more reliable filter than any call, because none of it depends on what anyone tells you.

STEP 02

The exact crops to ask them to send

Portfolios are edited for effect and shown small. These six requests get you past that, and no reasonable studio will object to any of them. Paste the block below.

Before we shortlist, could you send the following. Existing work is fine, nothing needs to be made for us.

1. A 100% crop of a seat cushion or bed corner where something rests on the fabric.
2. One image with a sheer or a backlit fabric in it, full size.
3. A wide shot that includes a door, a socket or a handle in the same frame as a tiled or stone surface.
4. Every image from one completed interior project, in the order you delivered them. Not a selection.
5. One project where the brief was a lived-in look, and one where it was a clean product look.
6. A close crop of a metal or gloss surface with a room reflected in it.

Who would be doing the work on our project, and is this their own work or the studio's collected portfolio?

Why request four matters most

A full delivered set cannot be curated after the fact. It shows you the floor of their quality, not the ceiling, and the floor is what you will receive on image nine of twelve when the deadline is close.

Why the final question matters

Portfolios often contain work by people who have left, or by subcontractors. Asking who will hold your project is not rude and the answer is frequently different from what the website implies.

STEP 03

Reading what comes back

Score each studio out of the five tests. The pattern of what they cannot show is more informative than the score.

IF THEY	IT USUALLY MEANS
Send everything within a day, including the full set	They have interior work at depth and are used to being asked. The strongest signal available.
Send heroes only, at web size, and skip the crops	The detail does not survive at full size. Ask once more, politely and specifically. A second evasion is an answer.
Have no backlit fabric anywhere	Exteriors studio doing interiors. Not disqualifying for a simple job, expensive to discover on a show apartment.
Show a full set that visibly weakens after image three	They price a hero and absorb the rest. Budget accordingly, or scope fewer images at a higher standard.
Offer a small paid test on your own project	Usually a good sign, and worth taking. A paid test on your real geometry answers more than any portfolio.

One thing this guide will not tell you to check

Turnaround. Every studio quotes one, and it is the least reliable number in the industry — ours varies too much by project to publish as a benchmark, and so does everyone else's. Judge the work and the answers. Then agree a schedule in writing, with the stages named, and treat it as a shape rather than a promise.



Maverick Frame production render.

WORKING WITH A STUDIO

Cost, and how to brief it

Two things people ask us before anything else. Both answers are short.

COMMISSIONED WORK	FREELANCER	STUDIO
Single exterior still	\$100 – 300	\$250 – 600
Single interior still	\$120 – 350	\$300 – 700
Package, 5–8 views	\$600 – 1,500	\$1,500 – 4,000
Animation, per minute	\$1,000 – 3,000	\$3,000 – 8,000

Market ranges we are willing to publish. Turnaround and revision-round figures are deliberately not in this table: ours vary too much by project type to state as a benchmark, and an invented number here would be worse than none.

How to brief it — shorter is better

This is the opposite of what most people assume. Four things:

- What you need — **how many images, and of what**
- The plans and elevations, as they are
- A few reference images for mood and light
- One clear line on what the images are *for*

Inflating a small job into a fifty-page specification backfires: taken literally it comes out ugly, and it misleads the people doing the work. Tell them the intent and let the team that does this daily handle the detail.

The mistake that costs the most

The biggest failure we see is not choosing the wrong vendor. It is **timing**. People start looking only after the first supplier has already failed and the deadline is on fire, then choose in a panic.

Line up and vet rendering partners **before** you need one. One, ideally a few, briefed and ready to take work. It costs an afternoon now and saves a project later.

10+

YEARS RENDERING
VISUAL STORYTELLING

350+

BRANDS & AGENCIES
EMPOWERED GLOBALLY

95%

CLIENT
SATISFACTION RATE

40%+

OF OUR COMMISSIONS NOW
INCLUDE MOTION OR 360



MAVERICK
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STUDIO

When the image has to hold up, **talk to us**

We are a CGI studio: architectural and product rendering, 3D modelling, animation, 360 tours and VR. Ten years, 350+ brands and agencies, and the kind of work that still looks right when somebody counts the windows.

Send us the plans and a line on what the images are for. You get a scope and a price, and no obligation to use either.

START HERE

maverickframe.com/contacts

SEE THE WORK

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Maverick Frame production render. · Cost ranges are market ranges as of 2026 and are not a quotation.

