



FIELD GUIDE / 2026 EDITION

Your Practice Is Invisible Without **Images**

Why a practice with only photography of built work is marketing half of itself, and a scored audit you can run on your own website this afternoon.

START HERE

Almost all of it is pictures

Write down everything your practice does to win work. A website, project pages, competition boards, awards submissions, journal pitches, a capability document, a social feed, the deck you open a first meeting with. Now remove the images from each one and see what is left.

Architecture marketing is not text with pictures in it. It is pictures with a little text underneath. Which makes it strange that most practices have exactly one source of imagery — photography of finished buildings — and nothing at all for the work that is unbuilt, unfunded, on site, or lost in a competition.

What a practice usually has

- Professional photography of completed projects
- Some of it shot years ago, in one season
- Plans and sections exported from the model
- Phone photographs from site visits
- A competition board nobody can read at screen size

What is therefore invisible

- Every project currently on the boards
- Everything unbuilt, shelved or unfunded
- Competition entries — often the most interesting work
- The sector you want to move into and have not built in yet
- Scale. Three built projects looks like a practice of three

The last line is the one that costs fees. A client shortlisting practices reads the portfolio as the practice. A studio with twenty live projects and four photographed ones presents as a studio with four projects, and is priced accordingly.

STEP 01

What a practice actually needs

Not more images. A different distribution of them. Six things, in the order they change how the portfolio reads.

01 One strong image per project, not twelve weak ones

A project page with a single image that holds the eye outperforms a gallery a visitor scrolls past. Twelve images is what you send a client who already hired you. One image is what you show a client who has not.

02 Unbuilt work visualised to the same standard as built

This is the whole argument. If the competition scheme is rendered and the finished house is photographed, both sit on the same page at the same weight, and the portfolio doubles without a single new commission.

03 A consistent treatment across every project

Same rough time of day, same tonal range, same relationship to sky and people. A portfolio in one visual key reads as one practice with a view. A portfolio in eleven keys reads as eleven suppliers.

04 Detail and material imagery

The junction, the reveal, the handrail, the brick bond. Buildings are won on wide shots and remembered on close ones, and detail images are what convince a technically literate client that you can actually build the thing.

05 At least one image per project that is not the front elevation

The interior, the threshold, the view out, the thing at night. Most practice websites are a row of front elevations, which is the least distinguishing view a building has.

06 Images sized and cropped for where they will live

The same image needs a wide crop for the site header, a square for a feed, a tall one for a phone. Ask for the crops at production time. Confirm current dimensions with the platform itself rather than trusting a figure in a blog post.

One in-house 3D artist needs around ten software subscriptions, a workstation, and a stack of adjacent skills. It pays off only at a headcount that keeps that person busy every day.

DIM KUZMENKO, FOUNDER, MAVERICK FRAME STUDIO

Which is why most practices are better served by a standing external arrangement than by a hire — the work arrives in bursts around submissions and competitions, and a salaried artist is idle between them.

STEP 02

The audit — run this on your own site today

Open your website on a phone. Score each line honestly, 0 or 1. It takes about twenty minutes and it produces an argument you can take to a partners meeting.

CHECK	SCORES 1 IF	SCORE
Projects shown	The number on the site is within reach of the number you have worked on in five years	
Unbuilt work	At least one unbuilt or competition project is presented as seriously as a built one	
Sector you want next	Something on the site shows the sector you are trying to win work in	
Lead image	Each project opens with one image you would defend as the best you have	
Visual consistency	Scrolling the portfolio, the images feel made by one practice	
Not all front elevations	Fewer than half the lead images are the main facade, straight on	
Detail imagery	At least one close material or junction image per project	
Interiors	Interior imagery exists for projects where the interior is part of the offer	
People and use	Buildings are shown being used, not only as empty objects	
Phone crop	Every lead image still works cropped to a phone screen	
Age	Nothing on the front page is more than about two years old	
Drawings	Plans and sections are presented as graphics, not as exported CAD screenshots	
Total		/ 12

0 – 5

The site is an archive, not a pitch. The fastest fix is not a redesign. It is imagery for three live projects, treated consistently.

6 – 9

The material is decent and unevenly applied. Pick the weakest four lead images and replace them before you touch anything else.

10 – 12

You are in maintenance territory. The risk now is drift: set a rule that no project goes live without its lead image.

STEP 03

Fixing it without a marketing budget

A practice does not need a campaign. It needs a standing rule and one piece of work a quarter.

The standing rule

Every project gets one image, produced at the point the design is resolved enough to show and before the practice moves on. Not at completion, which may never come. The images you need most are of the schemes that stalled — and those are precisely the ones nobody ever gets round to visualising.

The quarterly piece

One project per quarter, visualised properly: a lead image, a detail, an interior. Four projects a year, and after two years the portfolio is unrecognisable. This is a smaller number than most practices expect, which is why it actually happens.

PRACTICE IMAGE BRIEF — one page, per project

PROJECT	_____
STATUS	built / on site / unbuilt / competition
WHY THIS ONE	the sector we want more of? ____ the best design argument we have? ____ both? ____
IMAGES	lead ____ detail ____ interior ____ night ____ context ____ other ____
THE TREATMENT	(same on every project, written once)
time of day	_____ weather _____
people	_____ tone _____
CROPS NEEDED	site header ____ square ____ tall ____
FILES	layered ____ text-free ____ print res ____
REUSE	awards, journals, competition boards ____

The treatment block is the one to write once and never rewrite. It is the difference between commissioning eleven images and building a visual identity, and it costs nothing but a decision.



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

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

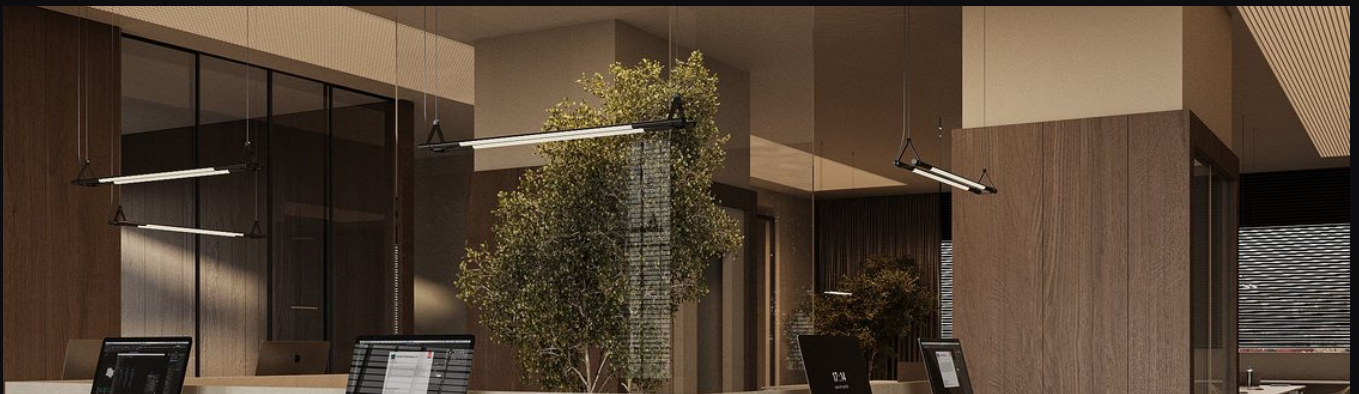
SEE THE WORK

maverickframe.com/gallery

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