

**From project  
to publication:**

**A simple guide  
to getting your  
architectural  
work out there.**

**The point of PR is to build an image for your firm and, through that image, maintain good relationships with your key publics — clients, potential clients, publications, writers, and, to a lesser degree, other architects.**

**Over the last twenty years of working in this field, we've come to develop a deep understanding of the life cycles of projects — from construction to publication — and of firms. We know what it takes to get a project in print; what it takes to get a profile in the *New York Times*; what keeps editors interested in your work.**

**We know what it takes to build a consistent image for a firm, one that is both timeless and nimble, that will serve as a baseline for your image for many years as well as adapt as your firm grows and evolves.**



Much of the specific public relations work we've done over the last seven years has built upon our own careers as architecture writers, critics, and historians. These particular skills have been crucial to us as we've navigated this landscape, and you'll have your own skills to lean on. But beyond our particular skills, we have learned the ins and outs of the publishing world. This guide will be your crash course. It condenses our years of experience, hard-won lessons, and insights, so that you can get going on doing PR for your firm with all those tools in your belt.

The publishing industry is constantly in flux, yet also remarkably consistent. Editors and writers want to publish things that will make people look, that will make people buy their publication and keep coming back for more. Some publications keep public editorial calendars, so you can get a sense of what they'll be publishing throughout the year. Other publications keep that information closer to the vest. In both cases, one crucial part of your job is developing close working relationships with editors and writers. This will help you keep up with the publication landscape, track evolutions in publishing trends, and understand the focus of each publication. It will also, simply, help you get coverage for your firm. We cannot overstate this: you will need good working relationships with people who write and produce stories about architecture to ensure consistent, quality coverage for your firm.

You'll also want to develop relationships with a mixture of types of publications — shelter magazines (those that deal only in architecture, or design, or interior design, like *Architectural Digest* or *Dwell*) and more general publications (like *The New York Times* or the *Wall Street Journal*). As you get to know writers and editors, you'll find that your firm's work might be consistently a fit for certain publications and not for others. This is great information for you — it lets you know what kind of an audience your work is finding and where you can reliably expect a "yes" when you send a pitch. Each project will find its right home, and we encourage you to try for publications you might not expect a "yes" from to keep your coverage fresh.

# So, where do you start?

**The most important part of getting any press coverage is knowing the story you want to tell.** Because architecture is a physical and visual field, this often starts with images. We'll cover everything you need to know about photographing projects in the first section. From there, you'll need to develop words to accompany the images. We'll cover this in the "Narrative" section. Setting a baseline story about your firm will ensure that anyone who encounters your work has a way into it and understands who you are and what you do.

Then, you have to take that story to a publication; that's called pitching, and we have a whole section on that. After you're published, the work doesn't stop. Post-publication is when you can ensure you get the most eyes on the story you've just placed. That's the final section of this guide.

We've also anticipated that you might need support, so this guide concludes with a list of services we're available to provide as you take on this work.

Good PR slides under the radar. It should be subtle and fine-tuned. When a project is published, it should be clear that it belongs there.

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**We know that this work often happens behind a curtain. The purpose of this guide is to take the skills necessary to do this work out from behind that curtain and make it easier for anyone willing to dedicate the time and effort to develop a solid narrative for their architecture firm and to earn top-level publications.**

# Photography is more than a representation of your project.

In many ways, photography is likely to be the only version of your project that most people ever see. Therefore, photography is in many ways the **most central** piece of collateral that you have, and needs to be treated with respect, reverence, and absolute protection.

It's helpful to have a sense of where you'd like your project to be published before doing photography. Some magazines, like Architectural Record, demand a focus on details, architectural decisions, and formal ideas. Others, like Elle Decor, rely on lively styling and a sense of interior decor. It's essential for you to work with your photographer in assessing which publication might be interested in your project and organizing the shoot accordingly.

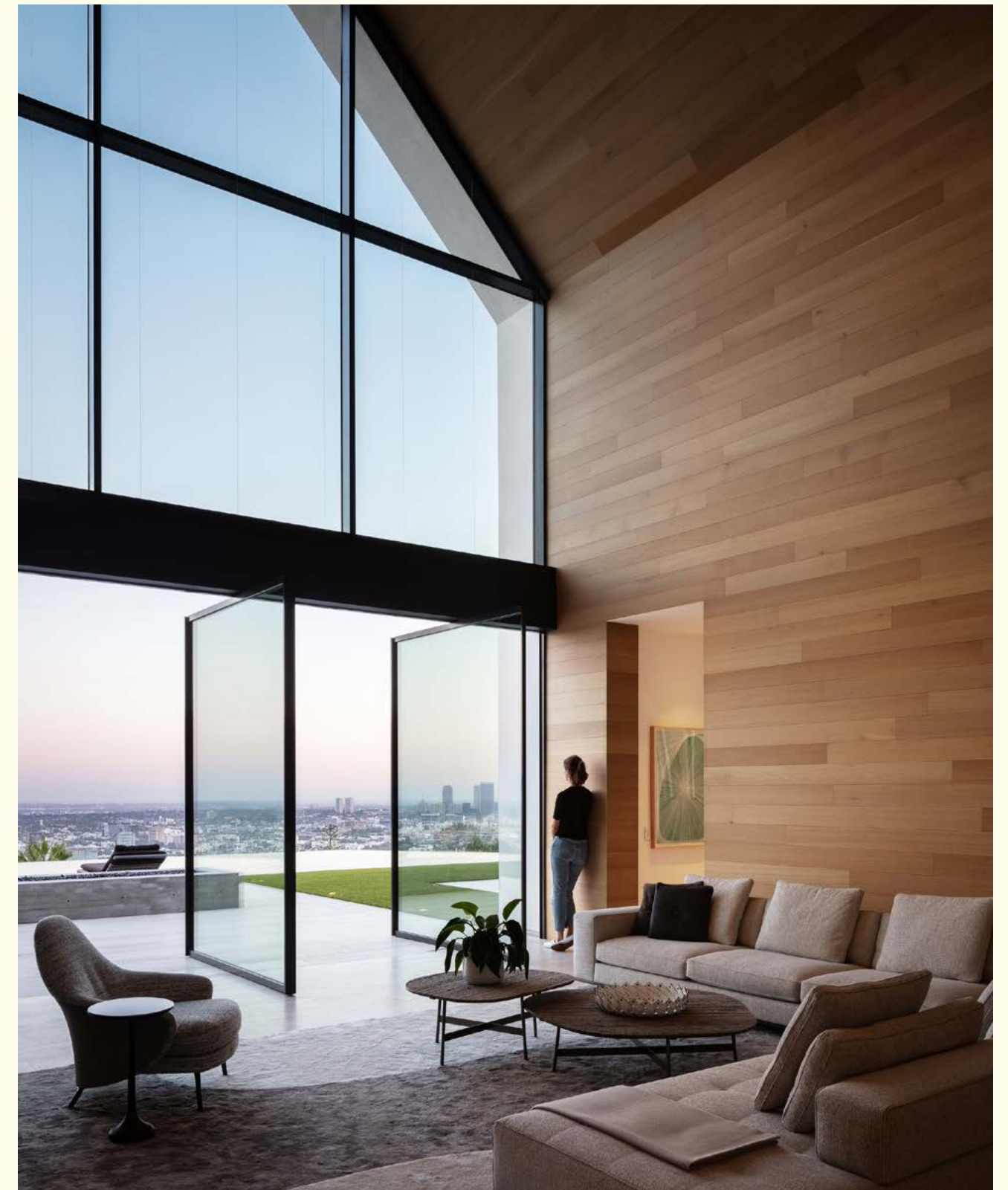
## Basic Rules

**No photography of a finished project should be released anywhere**, including Instagram, a personal site, the firm website, Houzz, Archinect, and the like, until there has been a print publication, or, if a print publication isn't possible, an online publication. Publications want exclusives; they want to be the first to show a project. If your photos have appeared elsewhere already, that project will have no shot at publication. No shot. No matter what. Guard your photography with your life. Do not share it with contractors, collaborators, flooring companies — do not share it with anyone — until it has been published.

**Ensure that your licensing deal with your photographer is clearly hammered out in advance.** Does your fee include retouching? How much? Does it include processing and post-production? Do you get to request edits, or does your photographer make their own decisions? What do your rights include?

Generally, photographers will charge one fee, often a day rate, to scout, shoot, post-produce, and license for web and marketing use only. Print licenses are often retained by photographers and as such, publication must be worked out between a print magazine and the photographer. Your photographer will most likely give you a folder of web-res images to use however you like and retain their own print-res images. If they do give you access to the print res images, *never* share them without explicit written permission.

**Hire good photographers.** This is not the place to be budget-conscious. Again, an image may be the only version of your building most people ever see.





It is recommended that you do a scout before doing a shoot, so that you can discuss with the photographer what they believe the most important angles are. It is not recommended that you attend the shoot; in fact, we recommend that you do *not* go to the shoot. It is very difficult for the architect to let go of ownership at this stage, but photographers are trained to see buildings and projects with an editorial eye, which is what is needed. We have many times encountered architects who want to art-direct a photo shoot, resulting in unworkable editorial photography that needs to then be re-shot, at significant expense to the designer. Just hire a good photographer and get out of their way.

**Aim to have 10–15 good pictures of every project. If residential, one must be a bedroom and one must be a bathroom.**

For “incomplete” projects, use your best judgment. If your firm is very interested in the building’s relationship with the landscape, for instance, it’s best to wait until the landscaping is finished. If, however, your firm mostly does urban infill and the backyard isn’t finished but the backyard doesn’t really matter, go ahead and shoot. We have often seen firms wait for everything to be absolutely finished before shooting, which isn’t always necessary.





# Staging

**To stage or not to stage! This is an eternal issue.** Unless the furniture was selected by you and/or by an interior designer whose work you really love, we recommend staging. Professional staging can make a world of difference to the editorial possibilities, and experienced stagers will know what different magazines want/need. If you are a skilled interior designer as well as architect, you can work with the stager. Otherwise, hire them and get out of the way.



**Who are we?  
What do we do?  
What do we  
want to do?**

Developing a firm narrative starts with asking yourselves: who are we? What do we do? What do we want to do? Any useful firm narrative will be based on what you actually do, what you've actually built, and how your values and goals as a firm are expressed through that.

**NARRATIVE**

# **We recommend you develop a 400–500-word firm description that can serve as the basis for your image as you start pitching projects.**

Then, for each project, it is very useful to have a project description to give to a writer or editor when you pitch them. Every project description should lean on the key points in your firm description and emphasize which aspects of your firm that particular project exemplifies. Different magazines will go for different angles, so it's helpful to have a "central" narrative and then be able to tweak it for different audiences.

Some publications, like Dezeen, will essentially quote from whatever you send them, so make sure it's publication-ready. Others will skim it to get a sense of the project but write their own stories based on images and interviews. *NOTE: this is NOT a press release! Do not send press releases. No one will read it.*

# The narrative should encompass a few points:

## The program/brief

What was this building intended to do, and what does it do?

## Exciting and intriguing challenges

Was the site particularly difficult? Were there complicated zoning issues at play?

## Emotional/storytelling

Was there a tree that reminded you or the client of an idyllic childhood? Did you spend early design meetings lying on the ground and feeling the meridians? Is there a wildlife corridor that you wanted to protect? Was this project the culmination of years of practice? How did it feel to do?

## Practical

How many bedrooms, bathrooms, office spaces. What is the kitchen like?

## Clients

Were they collaborative? What did they want? How did you communicate with them?



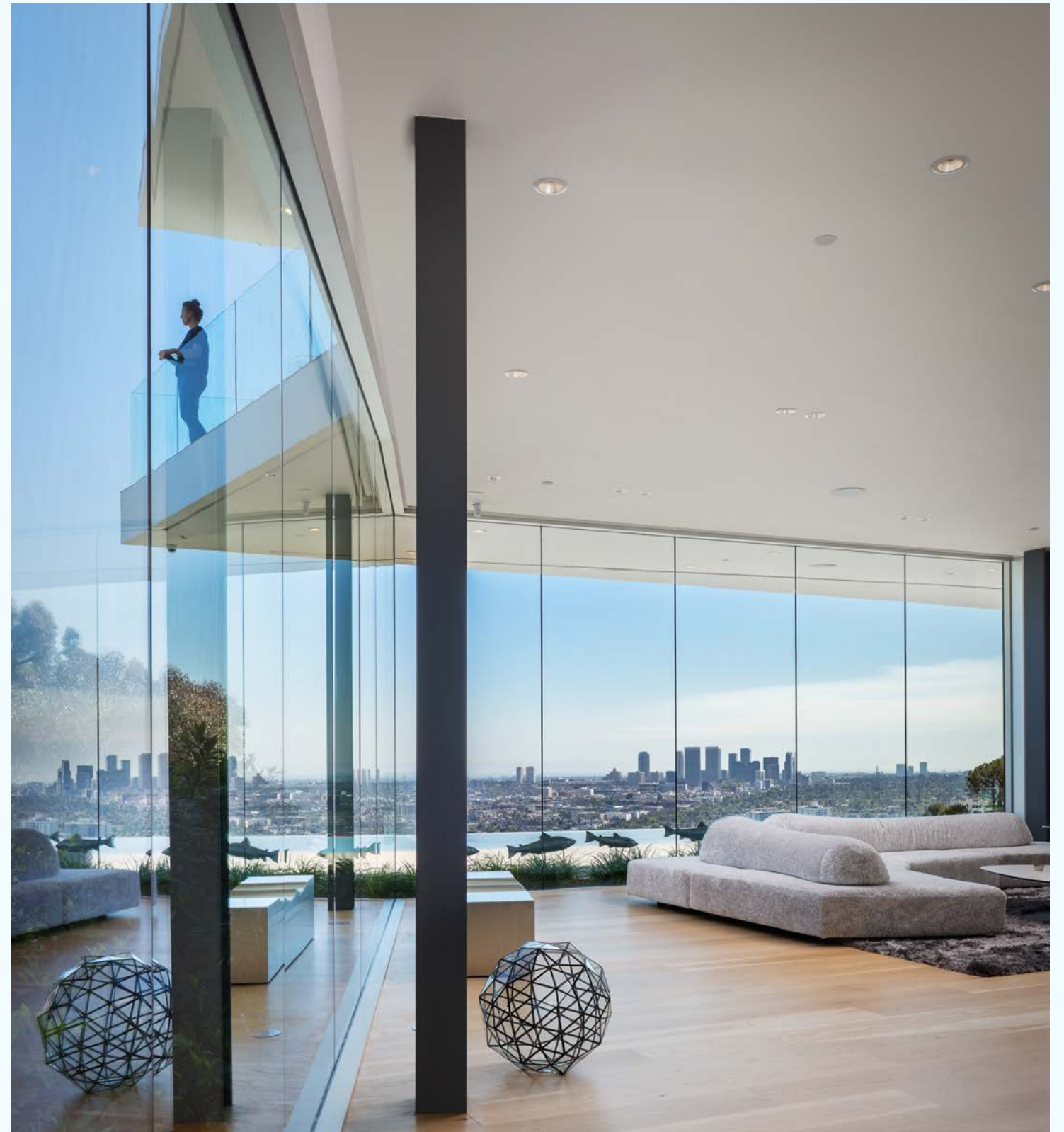
# The narrative will be listed as a “project description” and should be about 500–600 words.

It should be accompanied by a Fact Sheet, which contains the following information, if applicable:

- Architect
- Personnel in firm who should receive special credit
- Architect of record
- Interior designer
- Engineers
- Consultants (Landscape, acoustic, etc)
- General contractor
- Photographer

## SPECS:

- Structural System
- Exterior Cladding
- Roofing
- Windows
- Glazing
- Doors
- Hardware
- Interior Finishes
- Furnishings
- Lighting
- Conveyance
- Plumbing
- Energy



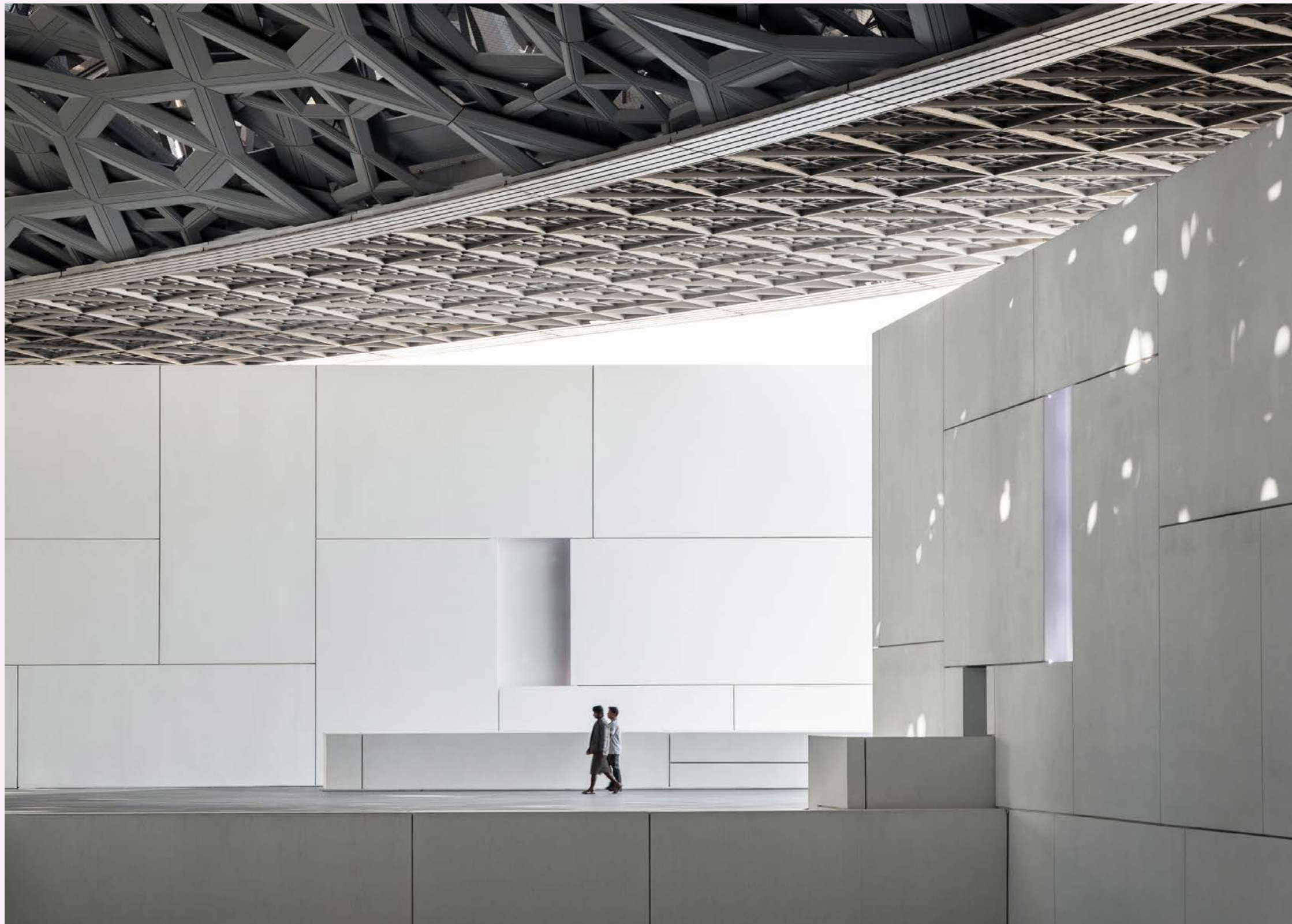
# Pitching a project for potential coverage at a publication.

First, you need to figure out what the clients are available to do. Some magazines require that clients be named, some that they be interviewed, and some that they be re-photographed by a photographer the magazine chooses. Some magazines are willing to interview clients and give them fake names.

# Here is a breakdown of the magazines' current requirements, so far:

<b>Elle Decor</b>	Anonymous okay, interview required, re-photography not required.
<b>Architectural Digest</b>	Anonymous okay, interview not required, re-photography not required. That said, it is <i>*extremely*</i> rare--and becoming rarer every issue--to place a project with Digest that doesn't have an extremely famous, named client attached. If your client was Jennifer Aniston, go for it! If you have a very good project with a non-famous client and you send it to them, they may want to take it for online-only. You should still hold out for print, which will most likely mean eventually taking it somewhere else.
<b>Dwell</b>	Pseudonym okay, interview required, re-photography ideal but not required.
<b>Wallpaper*</b>	Anonymous okay, interview required, re-photography not required.
<b>New York Times</b>	Clients need to be named, re-photography ideal, interview required, costs of construction must be disclosed.
<b>T Magazine</b>	Anonymous okay, interview required, re-photography ideal but not required.
<b>Architectural Record</b>	Anonymous okay, interview not required, re-photography not required.
<b>All online publications</b>	Anonymous okay, interview not required, re-photography not required.





**It is very tough to land a print publication without the clients being willing to at least be anonymously interviewed, so make sure that they're totally on board before you start pitching.**

Many clients are very nervous about this, so it's up to you to reassure them that magazines are very experienced working with very high-profile anonymous clients, that this is industry standard, and that no information will be shared that they're uncomfortable with. Coddling and hand-holding will go a long way. Share other examples of anonymous publications with them, by the writers and magazines that you're pitching, and show them how sensitively things have been handled. Clients often really freak out about costs being disclosed, so show them a few examples of *New York Times* stories and how costs are disclosed (sometimes it's total cost, sometimes it's by the square foot, etc).

Once you've got the clients on board and know what they're willing or not willing to do, you'll need to find contact information for who you want to pitch. Look at mastheads and bylines in the publications that you're going for. Nowadays, most editors and writers have their email addresses listed publicly – either on a website or on Twitter. You might have to do a little digging, but usually you'll be able to find this information on the Internet.

You'll also need to make a folder with the following things: images of the project, a project description, a spec sheet. You'll link to this folder in the pitch email.

# A good pitch has three components:

## 01

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A brief description of the project that makes it clear why this publication would want to publish it.

## 02

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Very basic information (when completed, who photographed, interior designer and landscape architect if relevant, the link to the folder above.)

## 03

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Three or four attached images that cater to the interests of the particular publication you're pitching.

**This last piece is crucial:  
the photos in the email  
you send are the first and  
most important impression  
an editor or writer will get  
of the project.**

Choose photos that will speak to that publication's priorities. Pitching *Elle Decor*? Send your best interior shots. Pitching *Architectural Record*? Send photos that showcase the smartest architectural moves. Pitching *Dwell*? Send the most lived-in images.

# You have two avenues for pitching

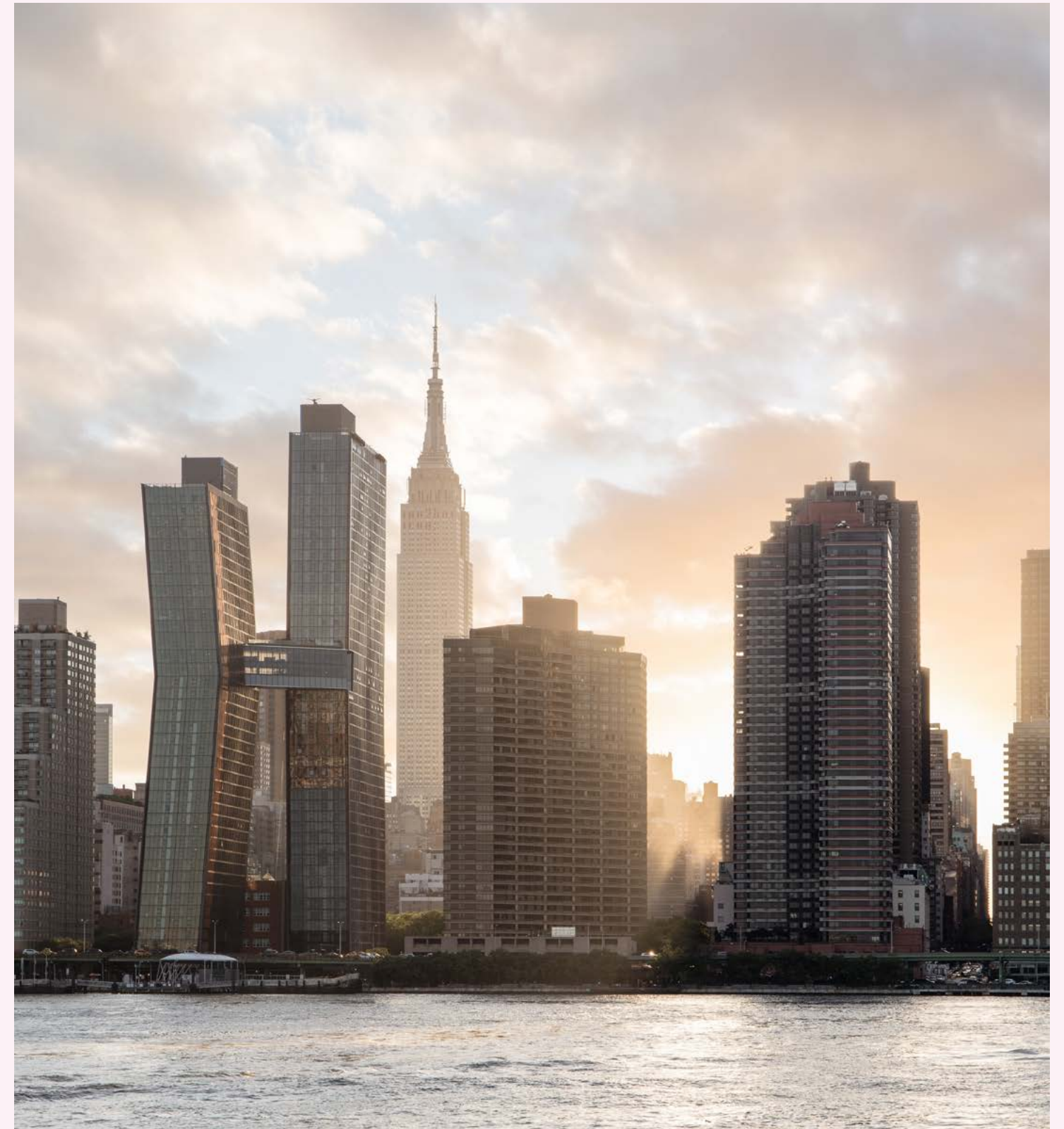
**One is to a writer, one is to an editor.**

**Each has pros and cons.** The upside of working with writers directly is that they also have skin in the game — most writers need to keep pitching/landing stories in order to keep paying their rents. You can also develop long-term relationships with writers who will be invested in your career. Writers also love the sense of discovering someone — so if you can get a writer emotionally invested in your development as a practitioner, that's great — they'll write about you again and again for decades.

The downside is that writers ultimately don't have any editorial power/control, and you may need to wait a while for them to pitch an editor, get a response, and if necessary, pitch another one. You also cannot control where the story ends up: it's impolite to pitch it to a writer and then refuse a publication if they've landed it, even if that publication isn't your ideal. That said, we consider it usually best to go straight to a writer, who will shepherd your piece through, than to an editor, but sometimes you might want to go straight to an editor.

Pitching to an editor can be more direct and faster. Editors, however, still have editorial meetings, and can't usually give definitive answers, so you may be in limbo for a while. The upside is that editors can give you a "soft yes" more quickly than a writer could. The downside is that you will have absolutely no control over which writer is assigned, and some writers are less ideal than others.

Pitching to an editor should be even more direct than pitching to a writer; editors get hundreds of pitches a day and are most focused on the visuals and ensuring that they have the exclusive.





## Pitching to a writer

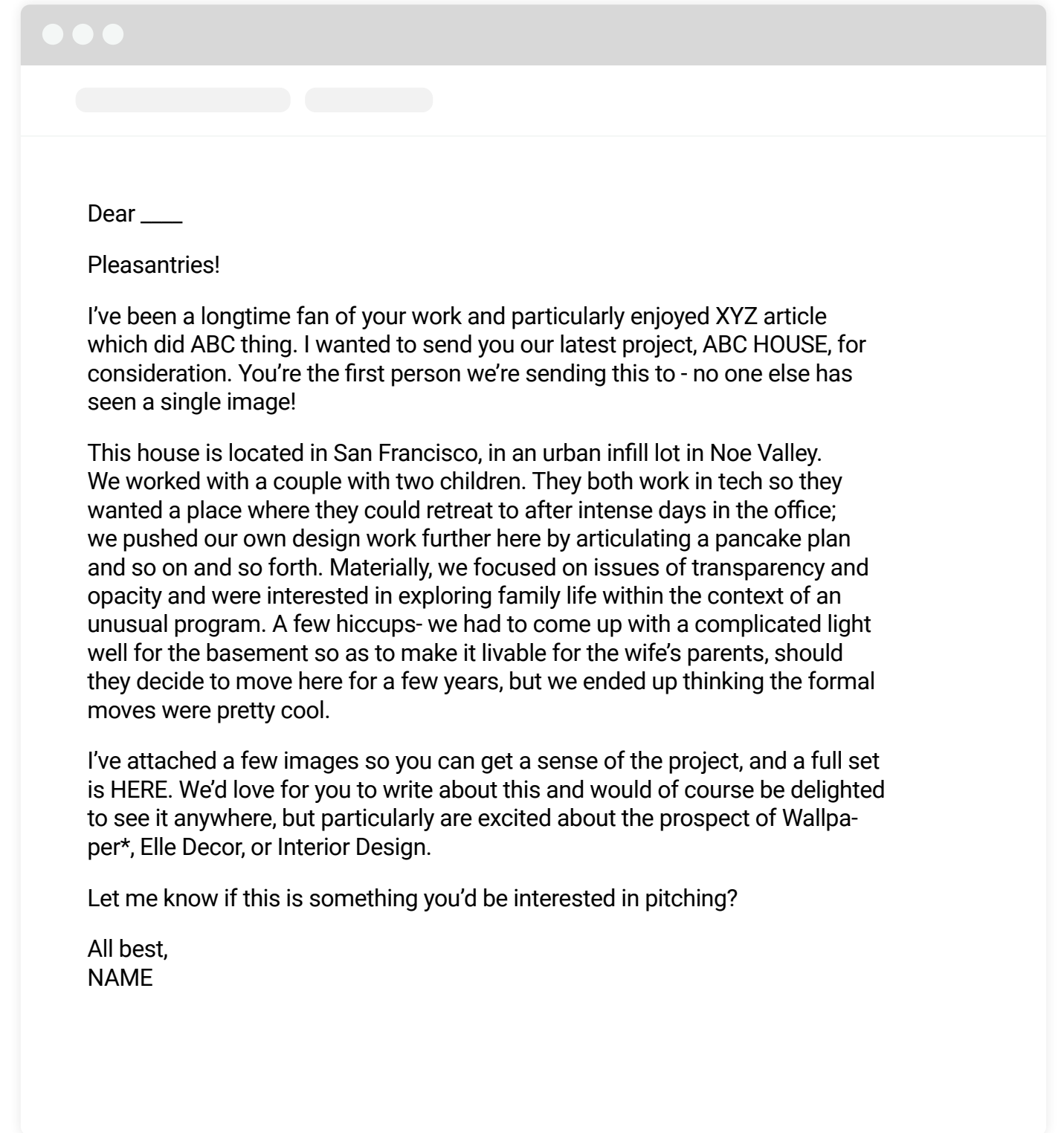
**Take note of articles that you read about your colleagues, competitors, etc, that you enjoy.** Every writer has their own spin and take. Some are more interested in public projects / infrastructure. Some are very good at handling single-family homes. Most writers at this point are freelance, and write for multiple publications. Make a spreadsheet that lists writers, and where you've seen their bylines. It's usually best to pitch a writer and indicate which publication you think they might want to take this to – and to not suggest a publication they've never written for. Everyone wants to be in T, so don't tell a writer to take it to T, unless you've seen multiple bylines.

When you pitch a writer, send a short email outlining the project, giving the basic details in the body of the email: where it's located, whether you have photography or will be getting photography, the basic brief/program, a few things that you think are cool/exciting about the project, and confirming exclusivity status. Then directly ask if they're interested in pitching this to any of the places they write for. Attach four images to the email, making sure they're small enough to go through, and then send a link to a dropbox that contains full photography, if available. If it's not, just say you're sending scouting shots and will send photography when available.

Also let them know how long you can hold it for them before taking it to another writer/publication. Industry standard is a month.

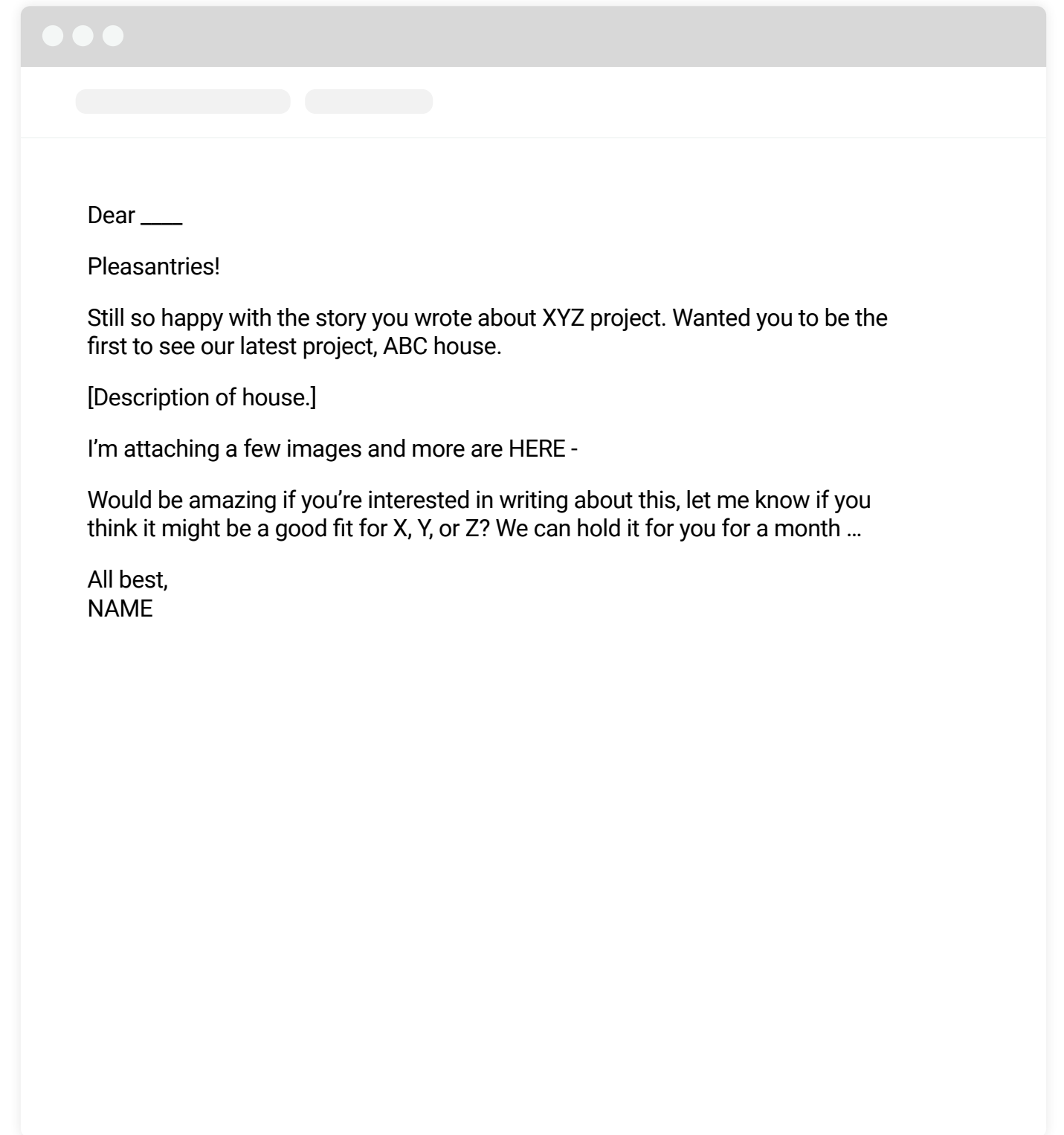
## EXAMPLE EMAIL

# If you don't know the writer



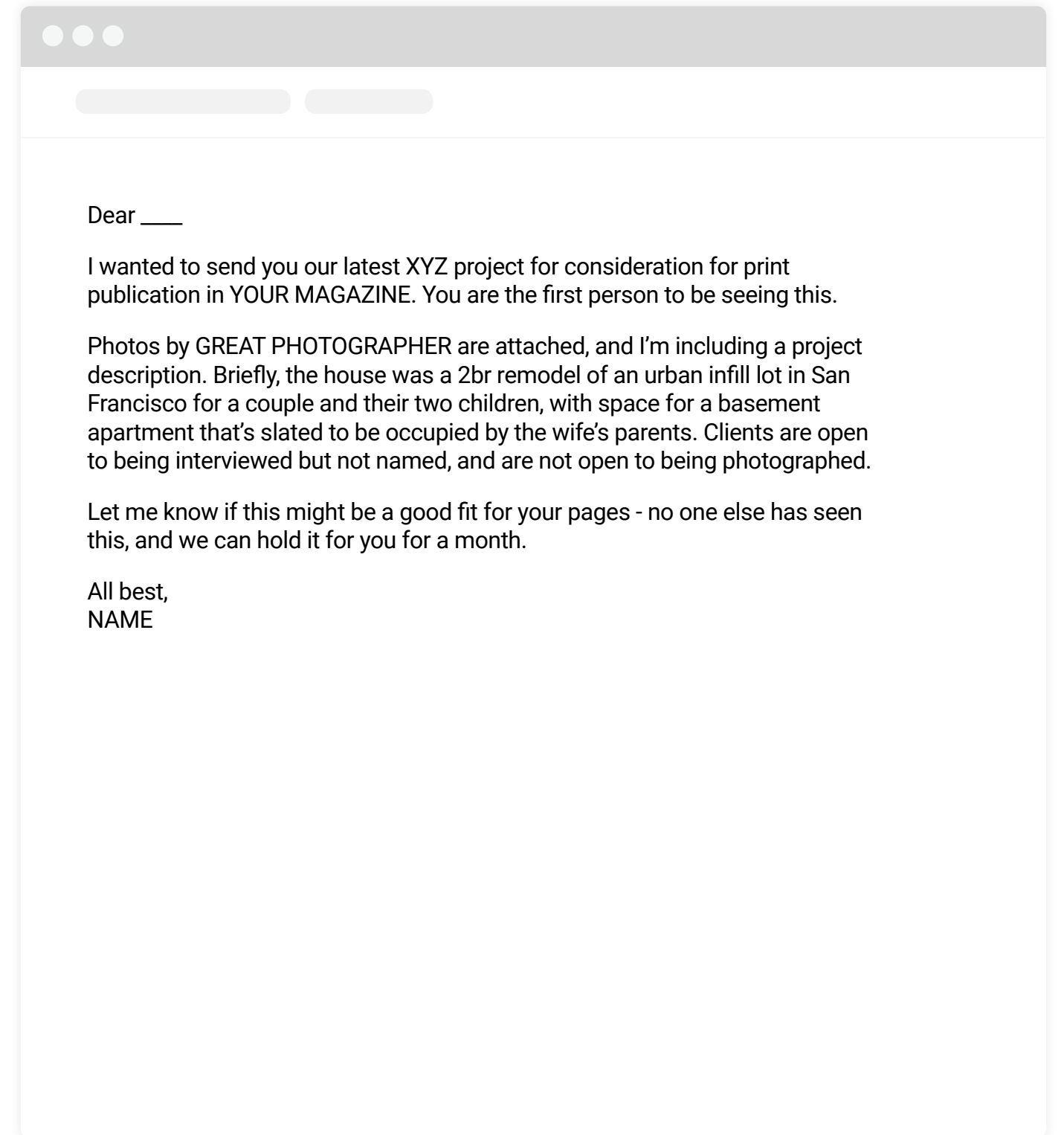
## EXAMPLE EMAIL

# If you do know the writer



## EXAMPLE EMAIL

# To an editor





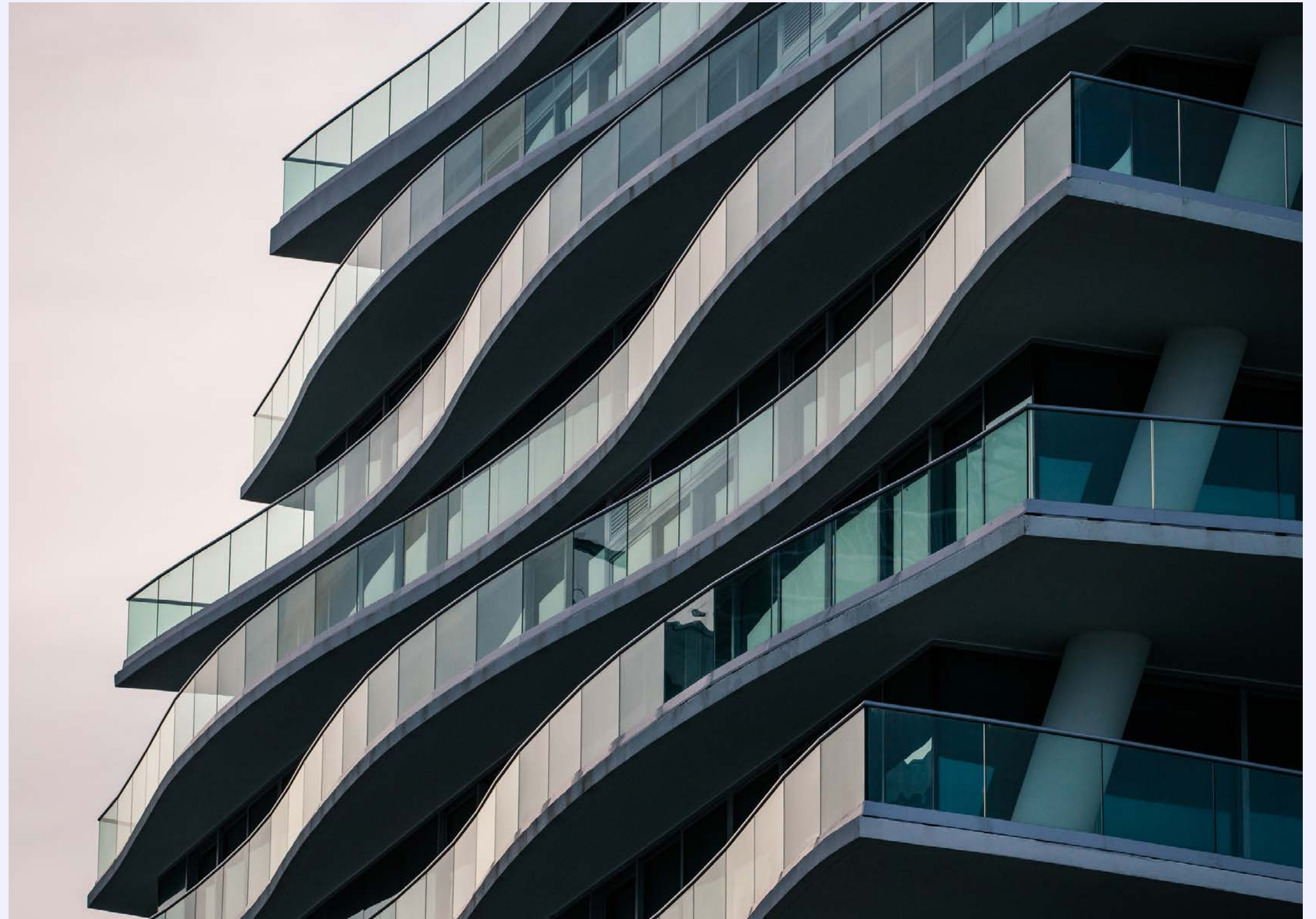
**Once a project  
is published,  
your work is  
not done!**

First, you have to make sure people see that publication. Put it on your website, share it on social media, send it to the clients, and encourage them to share it with their friends.

**POST-PUBLICATION**

**Send a thank you note to the writer, and to the editor, if you had contact with them.** Thank you notes ensure that the writer sees that you appreciate what they brought to the project and will put them in a good mood for the next time you pitch them. If you loved the story, tell them! If you didn't, find something about it that you appreciated, and make an internal note to maybe not pitch this writer again. The thank you note to the editor can have a broader scope: thanking them for highlighting your work in their amazing magazine, which you've read since XYZ, and openly appreciating what they've done for your career. Editors and writers have very little power in this world so sending them thanks will go a long way. Gifts are not necessary or recommended, except during holidays, when you could send a box of chocolates or something similar.

Some firms like to send quarterly newsletters with links to press; others take the opportunity of a major print publication to send a more stand-alone newsletter. It depends on your vibe. Do you like to keep in frequent contact with your clients and friends? Then send something out. Do you like to be a little more elusive? Then don't.





## Social Media

**Always always always tag the writer and say something specific that you liked about the story.** Too many firms say something like, “thanks to XYZ for the write-up.” NEVER use the word “write-up.” The writer has invested significant experience, thought, and effort into writing a *story*, into turning your work into a compelling narrative that holds the interest of readers of a magazine. Pick out a specific element that they picked up on and highlight it. Also thank the photographer, the editor (if you know who they are), and the magazine. It’s okay to do a number of posts about a publication, but you should keep the posts within the ecosystem of the publication: don’t post pictures that weren’t published; and keep referring back to the publication, rather than your own firm/website. The publication invested resources into the story, so you want your posts to keep sending traffic to *them*, not to you. Your traffic will come.

Instagram is the best for design media, so stick with that. You can also post on LinkedIn but stay away from Facebook and Twitter.

Most publications will ask you not to send the project for a certain period of time. This is called an “embargo.” Usually that’s a few weeks for online, up to a few months for print. After the embargo period is over, then comes second- and third-round pitching.

**You want to take it to domestic online publications like the following list first:**

- [Dwell Online](#)
- [Dezeen](#)
- [Designboom](#)
- [Yatzer](#)
- [Archdigest.com](#)
- [ArchDaily](#)

Because online publications don’t need exclusives, you can pitch multiple online outlets at the same time.

Then, take the project to international publications. International publications will want exclusives, so you should pitch them one at a time.

**Some good international publications are:**

- [Artravel \(France\)](#)
- [Casa Vogue \(Brazil\)](#)
- [Elle Decor UK](#)
- [Elle Decor Germany](#)
- [Architectural Digest Russia](#)

**It's up to you to keep up with the magazines.**

We have too frequently encountered architects who hire us to get published, and then say that they don't read "the design rags." This is not a good attitude to have, and it will not help you. Just read them. Pay attention to the mastheads: it's good to generally approach senior editors instead of the editor-in-chief, who is busy with lots of different things, not just assigning stories. And pay attention to writers, particularly front-of-book writers, who often tend to be earlier in their careers and potentially hungrier for new projects/stories to cover.

**You should be reading, every month:**

[Wallpaper\\*](#)

[Elle Decor](#)

[Architectural Digest](#)

[Architectural Record](#)

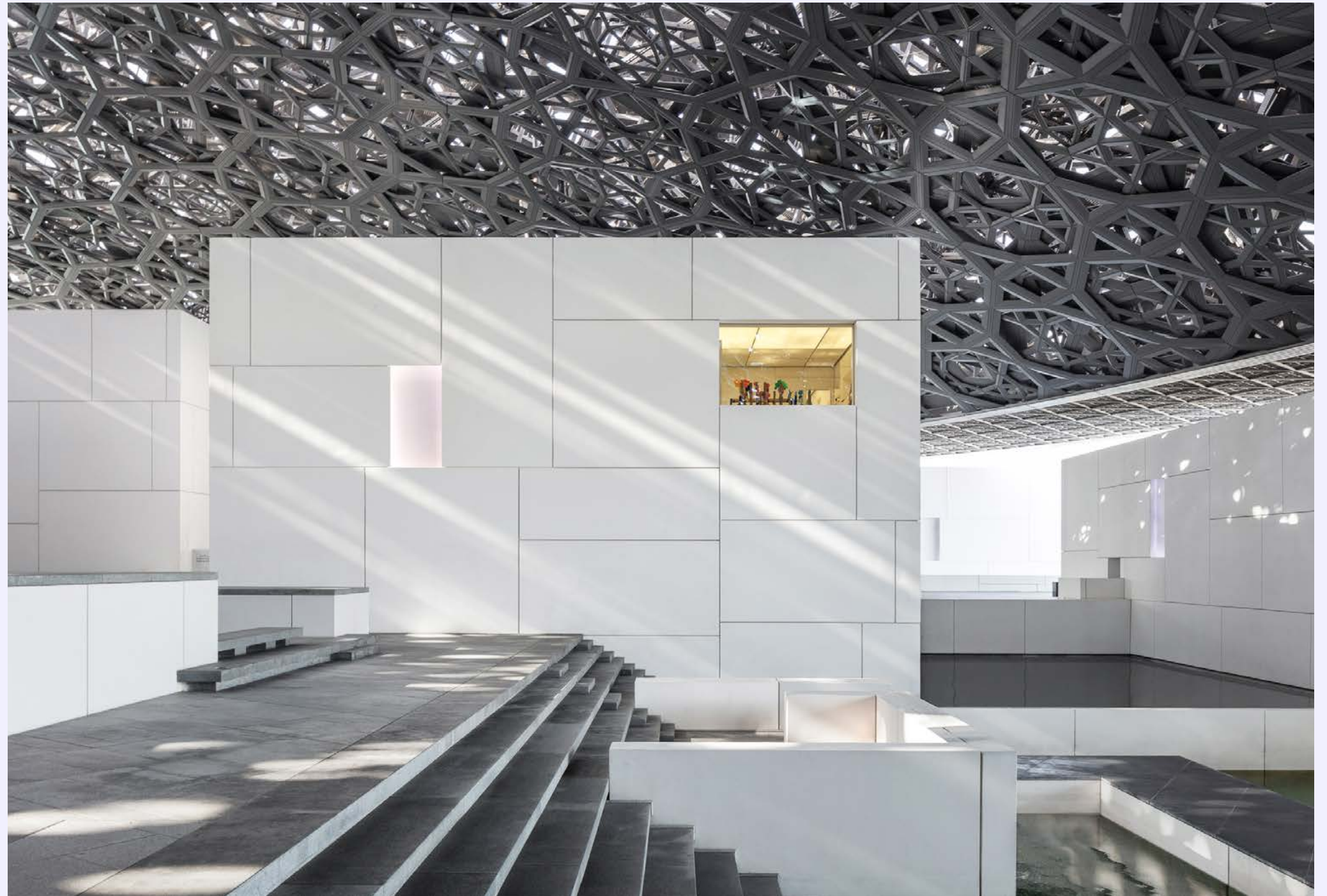
[Departures](#)

[Metropolis](#)

[Interior Design](#)

[Curbed \(New York Magazine\)](#)

This will require paying some money for print or digital subscriptions (we recommend print), but it will all come back to you in the form of successful pitches.



# Publishing is a major way for firms of all sizes to get recognition.

Publishing is a major way for firms of all sizes to get recognition from their peers, colleagues, and the wider community of potential clients. For decades, publicity has been in the hands of a few boutique firms that charge piles of money for the information we have just given you.

Publicity has been kept mysterious on purpose, but it is not rocket science. It is not that complicated. If someone in your firm spends one day a half a day per week on this, you will be able to get published. It might not always be in your top choice, but here's the secret: even people who hire top publicists almost never get published in their top choices, and certainly not every time. It's a game with very set rules, and we've just given them to you.

**CONCLUSION**

# **That said, should you want a little bit more support, we are selectively available. Here is what we offer.**

Explanatory phone call, one hour	\$500
One month of support	\$4000
Narrative / text production	\$2000
Introductions to photographers	Price on request

# Do's



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Be succinct and courteous in all correspondence



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Read all the design publications



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Guard photography with your life



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Respond to emails from editors and writers as soon as you can



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Pitch often and with confidence

# Don'ts



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Send press releases



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Break an embargo



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Get discouraged by rejections



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Pull a project once you've sent it to a publication



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Post photography of a project before it's published

For more information visit  
[arch-pr.com](http://arch-pr.com) or email  
[guide@arch-pr.com](mailto:guide@arch-pr.com)

**Thanks!**