

Artist Statement Guidelines

What Is an Artist's Statement?

1. A general introduction to your work, a body of work, or a specific project.
2. It should open with the work's basic ideas in an overview of two or three sentences or a short paragraph.
3. The second paragraph should go into detail about how these issues or ideas are presented in the work.
4. If writing a full-page statement, you can include some of the following points:
 - Why you have created the work and its history.
 - Your overall vision.
 - What you expect from your audience and how they will react.
 - How your current work relates to your previous work.
 - Where your work fits in with current contemporary art.
 - How your work fits in with the history of art practice.
 - How your work fits into a group exhibition, or a series of projects you have done.
 - Sources and inspiration for your images.
 - Artists you have been influenced by or how your work relates to other artists' work. Other influences.
 - How this work fits into a series or longer body of work.
 - How a certain technique is important to the work.
 - Your philosophy of art making or of the work's origin.
5. The final paragraph should recapitulate the most important points in the statement.

What an Artist's Statement is NOT:

1. Pomposity, writing a statement about your role in the world.
2. Grandiose and empty expressions and clichés about your work and views.
3. Technical and full of jargon.
4. Long dissertations or explanations.
5. Discourses on the materials and techniques you have employed.
6. Poems or prosy writing.
7. Folksy anecdotes about some important event in your life.
8. Nothing about your childhood or family unless it is very relevant to your work.
9. Not a brag fest or a press release.

Why Write an Artist's Statement?

1. Writing an artist's statement can be a good way to clarify your own ideas about your work.
2. A gallery dealer, curator, docent, or the public can have access to your description of your work, in your own words. This can be good for a reviewer as well.
3. Useful in writing a proposal for an exhibition or project.
4. It is often required when applying for funding.
5. It is often required when applying to graduate school.
6. It can be a good idea to include an artist's statement when your slides are requested for review or your work is included in the slide library of a college or university.
7. Good to refer to when you are preparing a visiting artist lecture, or someone else is lecturing or writing about your work.
8. Useful when you are applying for a teaching position.
9. Good idea when a press release is being written.
10. Useful when someone is writing about your work in a catalog or magazine.
11. Useful when someone else is writing a bio for a program brochure.
12. It is a good way to introduce your work to a buying public. Often the more a buyer knows about your work the more they become interested in what you do, and in purchasing a work.

Types of Artist's Statements You Might Need.

1. Full-Page Statement: This statement you will use most often; it speaks generally about your work, the methods you may have used, the history of your work, etc. It may also include specific examples of your current work or project.
2. Short Statement: A shorter statement that includes the above in an abbreviated way, or is specific to the project at hand.
3. Short Project Statement: A very short statement about the specific project you are presenting.
4. Bio: Often a short description of your career as an artist and your major accomplishments.

How Should I Write It?

1. This most often depends on the context where it will appear. Who is your reader? What assumptions can you make about their knowledge?
2. Ask yourself "What are you trying to say in the work?" "What influences my work?" "How do my methods of working (techniques, style, formal decisions) support the content of my work?" "What are specific examples of this in my work?" "Does this statement conjure up any images?"
3. Use a word processor so that you can make changes and update it often. You should keep older copies so that you can refer to them if you should need to write or talk about your older work or if you have a retrospective.
4. Refer to yourself in the first person, not as "the artist". Make it come from you. Make it singular, not general, and reflective of yourself and your work.
5. Make it clear and direct, concise and to the point.
6. It should not be longer than one page.
7. Use no smaller than 10 – 12 point type. Some people have trouble reading very small type.
8. Artist's statements are usually single-spaced.
9. Do not use fancy fonts or tricky formatting. The information should wow them, not the graphic design.