

Why Artist statements are essential.

- People look at your art and take away whatever experiences they will. Your artist statement is about *facts*, a *basic introduction* to your art.
- Visitors who come into contact with your art and want to know more will have questions. When you're present, they ask you directly. When you're not there, your artist statement answers for you.
- The process of creating your Artist's Statement helps you focus on your work from a different perspective, one which can review where you've been, and give you direction/inspiration for where you want to go.
- You are your own best "marketeer" in promoting your art, providing subsequent sales and popularity. The Artist's Statement is one of your "guiding documents" in this endeavor.

Most artists want as many people as possible to appreciate their art. A good artist statement works towards this end, and the most important ingredient of a good statement is its language.

- WRITE YOUR STATEMENT IN LANGUAGE THAT ANYONE CAN UNDERSTAND: everyday language you use with everyday people.
- An effective statement reaches out and welcomes people to your art, no matter how little or how much they already know about art; it never excludes.
- Like an introduction to a book, your statement presents the fundamental underpinnings of your art; write it for people who like what they see and want to know more.
- In three to five paragraphs of three to five sentences each, provide basic information like WHY YOU MAKE YOUR ART, WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO MAKE IT, WHAT IT SIGNIFIES OR REPRESENTS, WHAT'S UNIQUE OR SPECIAL ABOUT HOW YOU MAKE IT, and briefly, WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU. Don't bog readers down, but rather entice them to want to know more. As with any good first impression, your statement should hook and invite further inquiry, like a really good story is about to unfold. Give too little, not too much.
- People have short attention spans. When you overload readers with details, you risk drowning them in minutia, and discouraging those who might otherwise persevere if you keep it simple.
- Plus this... your statement is about you, so personalize it. Write it in the first person, not like you're talking about yourself in the abstract. Infuse it with your unique perspective.
- Avoid comparative or evaluative comments that have been made about your art by third parties such as gallery owners, critics, collectors, or curators. These belong in your bio, resume or curriculum vitae. In your statement, they're name-dropping; in your curriculum vitae, they're testimonials.
- You don't have to be a writer to create one, but before you go public with your statement, get feedback. Show your art and statement to friends, friends' friends, and maybe even a stranger or two. Make sure they get it, that they understand what you want them to understand. When they don't, or you have to explain yourself, do a rewrite and eliminate the confusion.

When writing your artist statement, DO:

- **Write in the first person.** It is a statement, after all.
- **Be brief,** 3-5 paragraphs at most. Always err on the side of brevity. You can write more, but why would you want to? People have short attention spans these days. Load as much punch into the delivery as you can. Combine sentences and delete ones that aren't vital.
- **Describe the current direction of your work** and your approach, particularly what is unique about your methods and materials.
- **Sit on it for a few days and come back to it with a fresh mindset.** Most artists, in my opinion, hate their statements because they rushed them in preparation for an exhibit and didn't care to spend any more time on them. How do you expect it to be any good if you don't work at it?

- **Consider more than one statement if you are trying to discuss more than one body of work.** If you try to get too much into a single statement, you run the risk of saying nothing and trying to be everything to all people. This is bad marketing/bad promotions.
- **Allow your artist statement to grow, change, and mature along with your work.** Don't let it sit on a shelf and collect dust. It should be organic and you shouldn't be afraid to change it and make it better.
- **Make sure your statement passes the litmus test. Above all, viewers should be compelled to put the statement away and look back at the work.** Your statement isn't successful if people read the words on the page, and then put them down and go on to the next artist.

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When writing your artist statement, DO NOT:

- **Use too many personal pronouns.** Yes, I said to write in first person, but try to severely limit the number of "I"s, "me"s and "my"s that are used. You'll be amazed at how many other ways there are to phrase things. You want people to relate to your words and to your art. Too many personal pronouns will put up an unnecessary barrier.
- **Tell your life story.** You can keep that for your bio (as long as it's interesting). Your artist statement is only about the current direction of your work.
- **Quote or refer to anyone else by name.** Keep the focus on you and your art. Mentioning another name shifts the readers' attention from your art to the other person.
- **Forget to use spell check and ask someone else to read it over for you.**

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View the time to write your artist statement as an opportunity to clarify your thoughts.

A well-written statement, approached deliberately and thoughtfully, can be a boon to your self-promotion efforts. You'll use the language on your Web site and in grant applications, press releases, brochures, and much more.

From a Marketing Perspective:

The typical artist's statement is devoid of benefits to the buyer.

But just explaining your creative process and or your inspiration alone is not going to trigger someone to buy.

Bottom line, an artist's statement is all about YOU.

Marketing copy needs to be about THEM; the benefit's to your target market.

Very Worst Artist's Statement

1. Obscure language
2. Reaching for meaning that no one else can see or even imagine
3. Self-involved
4. Use of platitudes or clichés
5. Length, the longer the better

"The Very Best Artist's Statement

1. Relatable language
2. Clear benefits
3. Customer focused
4. Brand focused
5. Concise copy