

Writing Your Artist Statement

Dougherty Arts Center

Artist Resource Center Professional Development Workshop Series



Ugh...

Why do I have to write an
artist statement?

Can't my work just speak
for itself?

When you
need an artist
statement.

“A clear and concise artist statement will operate as a stand-in for your own voice during those times you can’t be there to share or talk about your work in person.”

*-Getting Your Sh*t Together*

What will I use my artist statement for?

- Applying to Galleries
- Gallery Exhibitions
- Applying to Grants/Funding
- Writing a Press Releases
- Applying to Grad School
- Preparing for a Lecture
- Creating a Teaching Philosophy
- Introducing Yourself to a Buyer

Who is going to read my statement?

The general public may scan your artist statement, but most will not read it in its entirety.

Who will fully read my statement?

- Curators
- Teachers
- Critics
- Employers
- Grant Panelists
- Colleagues
- Historians
- Students

You should consider your audience when writing your statement. A statement the public views at a gallery show will be very different than what is needed for a statement for a grant.

When and how should I write my artist statement?

Your artist statement will be an ever-changing document that should be re-written with any new change in your work.

Your statement should outline your:

- Artist's practice
- Ideas
- Intent
- Materials
- Methods

Types of Artist Statements

You will need different kinds of artist statements, depending on the use and changes in your work.

- Full-Page Statement
- Short Statement
- Short Project Statement

Full Page Artist Statement

“This is the statement you will use most often. It speaks generally about your work, your intent, the methods you have used, the history of your work, and where you see your work going. It may also include specific examples of your current work or project.”

- *Getting Your Sh*t Together*

Short Artist Statement

“A one- to three-sentence statement that includes the most important aspects of your practice to talk about the specific project at hand.”

- *Getting Your Sh*t Together*

Short Project Statement

“This is a very short statement about the specific project you are presenting.”

- *Getting Your Sh*t Together*

Where do I start?

It can be daunting even knowing where to start with your artist statement. Try creating a word list!

What your artwork is...

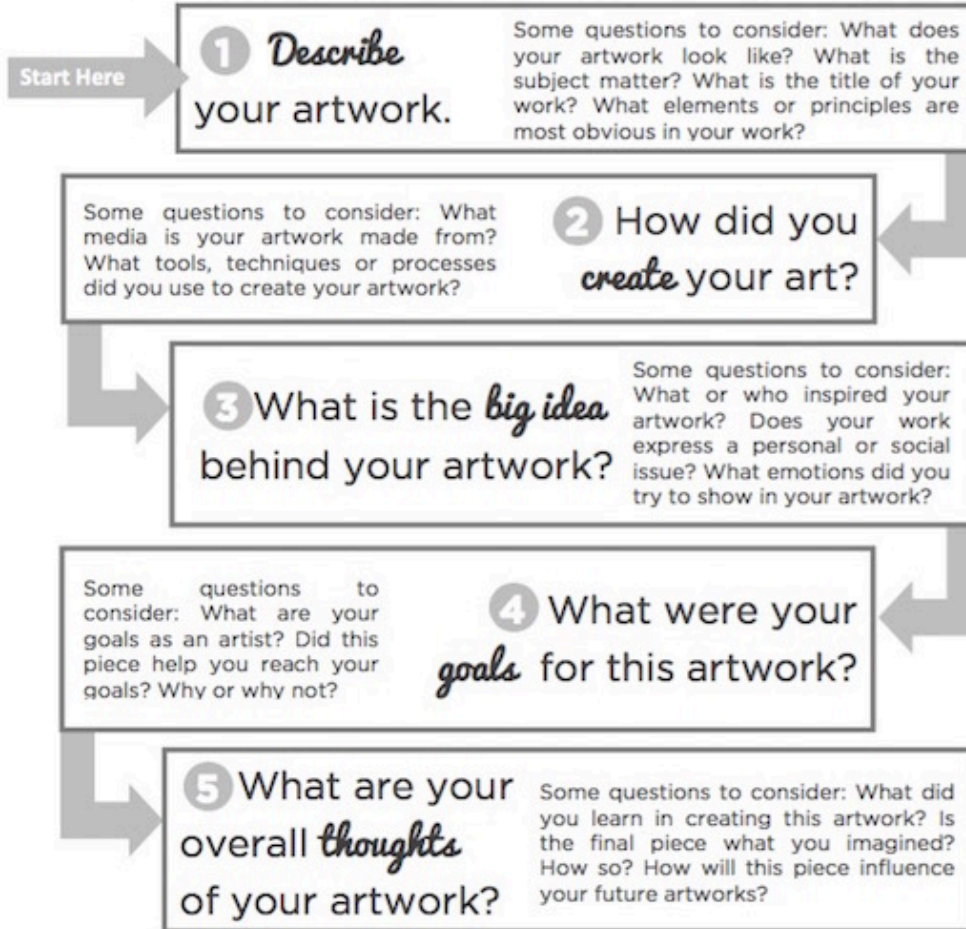
What your artwork is not...

Then use these words to create sentences about your work.

Questions to consider

Artist Statement Flow Chart

Use this chart to help you construct an artist statement about your artwork.



Way to go! You just wrote a reflective artist statement.
Please edit your statement for spelling and grammar.
Ask a friend to read it through and share their thoughts on your artist statement.

More to
consider

ARTIST'S STATEMENT GUIDELINES

SAIC

What is an Artist's Statement?

An artist's statement is piece of writing by you, that helps to explain your artistic work.

When is an Artist's Statement used?

Exhibition purposes, grant applications, teaching position applications, fellowships, and more.

It directs your audience to the concerns you consider to be important in the work, and helps publicists, curators, and critics write about the work.

Writing about your work may also be integral to your creative process.

You may be writing about a specific work, group of works or your body of work developed over a considerable period of time.

WRITING AN ARTIST'S STATEMENT

Begin by considering the following in relation to your work

- What are the key ideas, issues, struggles, goals within your work or studio practice?
- Thematic focus of work (goal, purpose, intention, exploration).
- Content of work (themes, ideas, subject matter).
- Influences (cultural, historical, theoretical, art historical, personal, biographical).
- Form of work (materials, processes, tradition of work –e.g. abstract, figurative, etc.) Describe your process and what the work looks/sounds like, etc..
- Who is your audience? It helps to have someone in mind when you are writing.
- How can you clarify what your work is about, how can you make your work easier to understand?
- Remember. If you are unsure of what your work is about, your readers will be as well.
- If you are, exploring, uncertain, struggling to find the meaning of your work, suitable media, a focus, etc. then SAY IT!

You may want to create lists!

One approach is to list the nouns, verbs and adjectives that relate to your work. Then create sentences. This will refresh the way to talk about your work and open up your vocabulary.

After creating these lists or notes, formalize and organize your material.

Begin with a thesis statement and continue to build statement. Most statements are no longer than one page, 1-3 paragraphs long.

Other brainstorming ideas

- Set a timer and write for 3 minutes about your work. Repeat this several times, writing to different people each time (stranger, family, friend)
- Find inspiration from sketchbook notes.
- Record a conversation with a friend about your work.
- Look at what other artists have written, but be careful not to plagiarize.

How should I structure my statement?

Start with an Outline...

Introduction – first paragraph, an general introduction to your body of work or specific project.

Following Paragraphs – details of work such as:

- Conceptualization/Overall Vision
- Sources/Inspiration
- Media/Technical Concerns
- Subject Matter/Content
- Formal Concerns

Conclusion – recap the most important points of your statement.

Leave the reader wanting to experience the work and learn more.

Artist Statement Don'ts

- Arrogant/Bragging Language
- Cliché Expressions
- Technical Jargon
- Long Explanations
- Discourses on the Materials
- Poems or Prose
- Anecdotes
- Autobiographic
- Focus on what the work is not...

Formatting

- Refer to yourself in the first person. This way there is no doubt that the ideas are yours.
- Look for redundant words, make sure you didn't repeat yourself.
- No smaller than 10-12 point font.
- Single spaced
- No fancy fonts
- Be sure to include your name and date at the top

Review your statement

- Check for grammar and spelling
- Have multiple people review it for you
 - Review for understanding of content, structure, grammar and spelling
- Review on a regular basis to make sure it's still accurate to your work.