

*Here are several ways to think about Statements. You will write 3-5 solid, well edited pages. You should have some of the background information listed here. You will discuss each piece carefully within the context of the body of work. You will include information from your proposal, especially the research pertinent to the work.*

<http://hyperallergic.com/67670/the-anti-artist-statement-statement/>

<http://hyperallergic.com/69378/in-defense-of-the-artist-statement/>

## **Version 1:**

### **What is an Artist's Statement?**

An artist's statement is a short document written by the artist which provides a window into the artist's world. It offers insight into a single piece or an entire body of work and by describing the artist's creative process, philosophy, vision, and passion. It enlightens and engages while at the same time giving the audience - potential buyers, exhibition curators, critics, fellow artists, or casual browsers - the freedom to draw their own conclusions. An artist's statement reads easily, is informative, and adds to the understanding of the artist.

### **What *isn't* an Artist's Statement?**

An artist's statement is not a résumé, a biography, a list of accomplishments and awards, a summary of exhibitions, or a catalogue of works. It is not insignificant and should not be hastily written. It is not difficult to understand, pretentious, irritating, or (gasp!) laughter-provoking. It is not a description of your working process, i.e. First I painted the background, then I added some fish, then I put some rocks...bla bla bla.

### **Why should I write an Artist's Statement?**

People who love an artist's work generally want to know more about the artist. The artist's statement is a way of building a bridge between artist and audience. But the artist's statement isn't just for them. In putting your art into words, you might find that

ideas and thoughts you once had become more concrete. Your writing may open new channels in your mind and take you in new artistic directions. You might discover more about yourself.

### **What information should be included?**

Well, this is really a matter of personal choice, but there are a few questions you might choose to answer:

Why did you create this work and what does it mean to you? Don't be sappy.

What emotions or ideas do you wish to convey?

If the statement refers to a specific piece, why did you choose to represent this piece in this way? What do you call the piece and why? What materials did you use? What are the dimensions of the piece?

What inspires you? How are your inspirations expressed in your work?

How much time is spent creating your pieces? Only if this is appropriate.

How is your work a reflection of you?

What artists (living or dead) have influenced you?

What is your vision/philosophy?

What are your goals for the future? Mostly this refers to future work.

What are your techniques and style and how do these relate to the medium?

How do your techniques and style relate to your vision/philosophy?

### **How long should it be?**

While several sources recommend an artist's statement be around three paragraphs (total of 100 words), and others say that a statement of up to one page is acceptable, I am looking for an expanded statement of 3-5 well written, well edited pages.

### **What kind of language should I use?**

Keep your statement clear and concise. Avoid flowery language and "artspeak". This only lengthens and weakens your statement. Some specific terms you may wish to mention in your statement are the elements of art (line, colour, shape, value, space, form,

and texture), and the principles of design (balance, emphasis, movement, harmony/unity, pattern, rhythm, proportion, and variety). But mostly you will talk about your choice of subject, the style and how these things relate to the meaning you are intending. Avoid saying over and over, “in my work I”. Avoid passive language. Avoid using colons and semi-colons (since hardly anyone uses them correctly).

## **Second Explanation Artist Statements:**

**Start with the “Why?”** Why did you choose your particular subject matter or imagery? You can mention influences (artistic or otherwise), inspirations, and past experiences that led you to your subject. Some artists often refer to the work of other artists that inspired them. Others might be influenced by media or popular culture. Still others might have been traumatized by clowns... It doesn't really matter how you came to your subject matter, but the viewer will be interested in knowing why you chose it. **Then talk about the “How?”** Most viewers will want to know something about your materials or your process, especially if the materials or processes are unusual. It's not necessary to write a step-by-step guide to the watercolor process, or list every chemical that you used to process your photographs. You might just mention that you use watercolors and that you were drawn to them for their unpredictable nature and their transparency. Or you could briefly describe the process used to create cyanotypes and what made you love it. And if there's an unusual technique or material, mention that. And seriously, what **is** that brown thing? **Act like you know what you're doing** Avoid phrases like, “I want to...” or, “I'm trying to...” or, “My intention is...” Just say what you're doing: “I expose the gritty underbelly of urban life...” or, “These paintings explore the wonders of nature and the beauty of our world...” Don't be wishy-washy about it. **Not so much “me,” “my,” and “I”** It's hard to do, but try to avoid using the words “me, my, and I,” repeatedly. It's annoying to read a whole page of sentences that start with “I.”

**Update it** If you're a working artist (creating new work often) then you'll need to look at your statement every now and then to make sure that it still reflects your current work. A good rule of thumb is to update it every time you ship work off to a show. This keeps the statement fresh and helps you to prepare to talk about your work.

**Multiple statements** Most artists only have one statement that they update every few months or as their work changes. You might have multiple bodies of work that require different statements, especially if you work in different mediums. **It's so useful** Once you have a good artist's statement, it will come in **so** handy in **so many** different ways: 1. Writing it will prepare you to talk about your work in formal or informal settings. 2. Frame it and hang it on the wall near your artwork to explain the work when you're not there. 3. Use it as a basis for a press release when you're promoting your show. 4. A reporter might use it to write a story about your show (if that's all they have to go by). 5. Send it along with slides when you approach galleries. 6. Post it on your website along with images of your work. 7. Make your mom read it so she will **finally** understand.

### **Third Option to consider:**

**26 Quick Tips** 1. It is important to find your own voice and not to copy that of another artist. 2. Write the Artist's Statement in the first person (I, not she or he.) 3. Keep your length to one, double-spaced, typewritten page. 4. Use "picture words" to express yourself in the most articulate manner. 5. Explain the motivation behind your process. 6. Explain how your work develops and evolves during the creative process. 7. Describe your medium and your style. 8. Relate your technique and style to your medium and your vision and philosophy. 9. Avoid self-doubt statements such as "I try to..." 10. Avoid the use of jargon and cliché. What may be understood to Americans may have a different connotation to a European audience. 10. Avoid the use of jargon and cliché. 11. Discuss the way(s) in which your work, medium, technique or vision is unique. 12. If appropriate mention your use of ancient or modern symbols or historical influences. 13. If you work in series, explain how they are connected – if they are. 14. If you work in series but they are dissimilar write a different artist's statement for each series of work. 15. Write honestly and avoid writing in a tone that speaks down to your reader. 16. Avoid grandiose and empty expressions. 17. Avoid simplification. 18. Avoid being overly technical. 19. Avoid self-doubt statements such as "I try to... or I hope..." 20. Avoid repetition. 21. Vary sentence structure and length. 22. Adjust the length of your sentence to relate to the complexity of the idea. 23. After you write your artist's statement, try it out on someone who is not involved in the art world to ensure its clarity.

24. Use spell check. Have someone who is good with grammar proofread it for you to check for misspelled words and typographical errors. 25. If you find the task extremely difficult, don't hesitate to obtain some coaching or editing from a professional art writer. 26. To help you get started keep a journal to record your ideas, before, during and after a creative session in the studio