

ARTIST STATEMENT

HOW DO I WRITE SUCCESSFULLY ABOUT MY ART PRACTICE?

INITIAL QUESTIONS

What is an Artist Statement?

An artist statement is piece of writing by you that helps the audience access or understand your artistic work. It is written in the first person, while artist bios are written in the third person. Both represent you as an artist, even while you are not there. Both are not meant to come to you right away and it will take some time, revisions, and fine tuning to have a finished written product. They may include sources, ideas, and materials in your current practice.

When is an Artist Statement Used?

Exhibition purposes, grant applications, teaching position applications, fellowships, and more. Also sometimes used on websites. 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 as specific work, group of works or your body of work developed over a considerable period of time.

WRITING AN ARTIST STATEMENT

Consider the Following:

- What are the key ideas, issues, struggles, goals within your work or studio practice?
 - Thematic focus of work (goal, purpose, intention, exploration).
- Really important to give the reader a visual and to set your work in time and space.
- 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

Side Note: Keep your artist statement on file to update as you go. It will evolve over time.

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- 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?
- If you are exploring, uncertain, or struggling to find the meaning of your work, suitable media, a focus, etc. then SAY IT!

REMEMBER: If you are unsure of what your work is about, your readers will be as well.

Throughout the Process Remember

In the Beginning...

- Have a friend interview you and ask questions about your work. Answer the questions, audio record the conversation or take notes.
- Have someone who doesn't know your work ask you questions.
- Read the statements or writings of artists with whom you have an affinity. It's easy to find these on line.
- Read what has been written about artists with whom you have an affinity.

LISTS! A possible approach

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.

While you're writing...

- Write in the first person and avoid "art speak" and jargon.
- Avoid editorializing or over-explaining.
- Keep your statement concise, succinct, straightforward and to the point. One page is more than enough.
- Speak as honestly and straight forward as you can. Be authentic!
- Edit out phrases that are not specific to your work. There are experiences that are common to almost every artist that, although they may be powerful and profound for each individual come across as ordinary or common to the viewer. Make the reader want to look at, and know more about your work.
- Your statement should be more than just a description of your process.
- Use quotes ONLY when they are absolutely relevant to your work.

When you're finished...

- Have a faculty member read your statement while looking at the work.
- Write! Not just statements about your work. Keep a journal. Keep notes. Observations. Thoughts. Reflections. Critiques. Take notes at lectures. Take notes of what you see at exhibitions or presentations of work. Keep the writing going and integrate it into your life and practice. This will make all of this so much easier!

Enjoy the process!

Side Note: Writing an artist statement often will prompt your mind to other ideas or think about your work in new ways.

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WRITING YOUR ARTIST STATEMENT PRACTICE GUIDE

Step One: 15 Minutes of Free Writing

- The goal of this exercise is to keep you pen moving. Don't get held up with correct sentences or spelling.
- Don't reread during this time and keep the editor off your shoulder as you write.
- Approach this step by thinking about your overall body of work as you write. Consider how you would describe it, ideas that run through your work, the forms or materials you use, the subject of your work, artistic influences (whether that be other artists, scientists, food, etc) and questions that come up as you write.

Step Two: 2 Minutes of Free Writing

- Reread the section you wrote quickly. As you go underline or highlight the gems - the key words or phrases that leap out to you and really capture what your creative practice.
- These words and phrases become the bank you can pull from as you write your artist statement.

Step Three: Follow "The Recipe" for a First Draft

The Recipe:

- Paragraph One:

This is your thesis statement. In the opening lines (1-3 lines of writing) you should incorporate the what and why (sometimes also how) of your work. Define the central line of inquiry. Example: "My body of work combines (the how) photography and original writing (the what) to investigate themes of time and memory (the why)."

Side Note: Struggling to come up with words? Use your word bank from earlier that you created during Step One: 15 Minutes of Free Writing exercise.

- Paragraph Two:

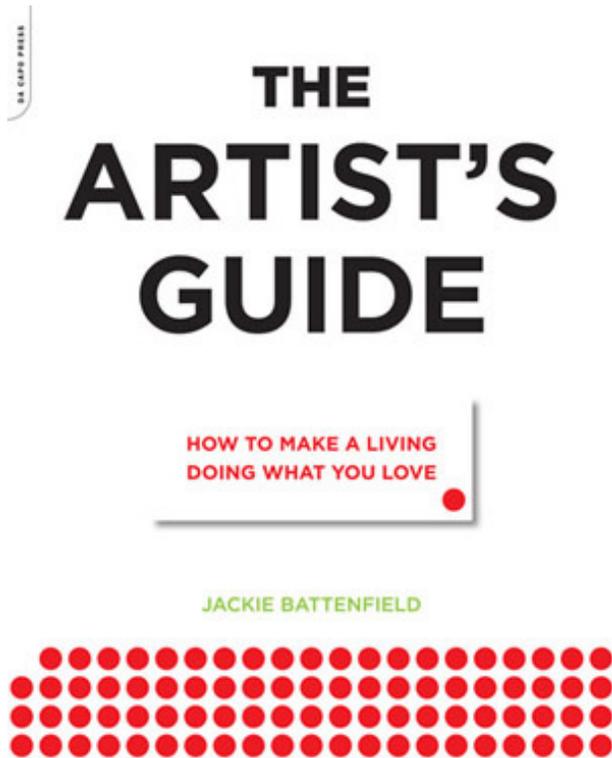
Start off describing the materials and/or forms you use in your work. This should be only a few lines. Next, briefly mention artistic influences (1-2 sentences). These influences can be a scientist, artist, religion, etc. The influence you mention should be what best corresponds with your work too. When you mention your artistic influence, talk about why it inspires you. Lastly, take 1-3 lines to describe an example of your work and how it encompasses your thesis statement from earlier. You should also choose a work to talk about that fits nicely into the points you have mentioned, like materials you use and artistic influence.

- Paragraph Three:

Conclusion. Tie your artist statement together from the previous paragraphs and highlight events on the horizon. You can mention current or in progress work/projects. You could also mention upcoming projects or exhibitions. Remember your artist's statement should stay within 3-4 paragraphs and 1 page maximum.

Step Four: Revise, Rewrite, Repeat

- As mentioned earlier, this is a process. It may be helpful to have others take a look at your artist's statement in progress and help make revision suggestions. CAPX is available to help Monday - Friday during walk-in hours 12-1 p.m. No need to make an appointment, just swing on by and we'd be glad to help.



Revision Hints

1. Read out loud as you go. It will help you catch mistakes easier.
2. Use The Recipe to make sure all of the elements are there.
3. Look at the language line for line. You will need to include specific words that fit your practice. See your word bank.
4. Make sure you are using proactive language. Avoid phrases like, “I think...”, “Sometimes”, “I guess...”, “Usually”
5. Use spell check and proof read one more time than you think you need to.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

1. [“The Edit: Photographer Rosy Torres. Writing yourself out of your statement” By Andi Crist](#)
Rosy wanted to revamp her website to better showcase her work; she visited Chicago Artist Resource to get advice on writing an artist statement to match.

2. [“Just ‘Between You & Me,’ Here Are Some Handy Grammar Tips” By NPR Staff](#)

In radio, we don’t punctuate — at least, not on the air. Nevertheless, we’re honored to meet a woman who is at the pinnacle of punctuation. Mary Norris is a copy editor at The New Yorker, a magazine justly famous for the care it takes with words.

3. [“The Artist’s Guide: How to Make a Living Doing What You Love Lecture Series, Artist’s Statements” By Jackie Battenfield](#)

A comprehensive handbook that provides the information, tools, and techniques, for developing and sustaining a successful art career. (See above image, it will take you to the book’s website for more resources)