

Artist Statements

WHAT IS IT?

An artist (or “artist’s”) statement is a written description of a piece or collection of art. Professional and amateur artists may write artist statements for various contexts including art competitions, exhibition catalogs, grant proposals, press releases, websites, or class assignments. An artist statement supports an artist's work: it enhances the audience’s understanding by discussing context and key art concepts along with the artist's main objectives. This handout will help you write a successful artist statement. For one-on-one help improving and polishing your statement, make an appointment with the KSU Writing Center.

GETTING STARTED

Consider your audience:

- Your audience may include curators, grant committees, the general public, gallery owners, employers, clients, collectors, colleagues, or instructors.
- What will this audience want/expect to read in your artist statement?

Carefully read any guidelines you have been provided to determine the following:

- Specific elements you are required to address
- Formatting and length requirements
- Due date

For more tips on using guidelines effectively, see our handout “Decoding Assignment Guidelines.”

CONSIDER WHAT THE ART MEANS TO YOU

Above all, an artist statement is a *personal statement* about the meaning of the art for the artist who created it.

Consider your *why*:

- What was your motivation to create this art?
- What was your inspiration? Artistic? Personal? Political? Other?
- Key phrases often used in artist statements include
 - *My intention is...*
 - *I have accomplished the goal of [art title] by...*

Consider your *how*:

- What was your artistic process, and why did you select the materials and method you implemented?
- What special techniques did you utilize, if any, and why did you select them?
- What unusual materials did you incorporate, if any, and what is their significance?

Additional questions to ask yourself:

- What would you say if a friend asked you what your work was about?
- What message do you want your art to convey?
- What choices did you consciously make as you created your art, and why did you choose as you did?
- What is your favorite part of the piece (or body) or art? Why?
- How does this art build on or differ from your previous work?

WHAT TO AVOID

- Do not explain every detail and nuance of the art.
- Do not describe every step you took to create the art.
- Do not share your life story; the artist statement's focus is the art, not the artist.

SAMPLE FORMAT

Paragraph 1

Share your *why*: Begin with a statement of why you create art. Briefly describe your goals and provide an overview of your art. Consider your influences, medium, theme, subject matter, and goals.

Paragraph 2

Share your *how*: Describe the way you make decisions in the course of your work. How and why do you select materials, techniques, themes? Describe your style and discuss any unique or unusual processes or materials.

Paragraph 3

Describe your current work. What was your inspiration? What are you exploring, attempting, or challenging? Explain how this art relates back to your work in general, particularly as it relates to your goals as an artist.

FINAL TIPS

- Be concise: Use as few words as possible.
- Be clear: Use simple language; avoid jargon.
- Maintain active voice: State "I achieved this goal by..." instead of "~~the goal is achieved by...~~"
- Use positive verbs: State "This work represents..." instead of "~~This work does not represent...~~"