An artist statement should provide insight into the artist's concept and motivation behind making the work.
WHAT IS AN ARTIST'S STATEMENT?

- An artist's statement is a short written piece accompanying your artwork that describes what you do as an artist.

- Artist's statements are used to help communicate the artist's ideas, concepts and motivations to the viewer.

- Writing an artist's statement can be very difficult and can be as much of a learning experience for the artist as it is an informative experience for the viewer.
WHAT IS AN ARTIST'S STATEMENT?

- They are an important aspect of an artist's professional life because they are used to promote their work to gallery owners, museum curators, photo editors, publications and the general public.

- A clear and intelligent artist's statement will make you stand out and will show people that you are a thoughtful and deliberate artist.
WHAT IS AN ARTIST'S STATEMENT?

- As visual artists we rely on our art to communicate our ideas, but visual art communicates much differently than written language.

- It is not expected that the artist's statement explain every detail and nuance of the artwork. If it did, we wouldn't need the artwork.

- It should provide insight into the artist's concept and motivation behind making the work.
Your artist's statement should be one to two paragraphs and no longer than a page. Brevity and efficiency of language are key. Your statement should deal primarily with the ideas and concepts you are concerned with as an artist.

Begin your statement with one or two sentences that broadly describe your concept. Think of it as a thesis statement. Flannery Jones (°1982, Jacksonville, FL, United States) is an artist who builds sculptures out of found materials.

Use the rest of the statement to fill in the details and background information as needed.

Be direct and confident with your lead-in, get the viewer interested, then back up your idea with details, or story and background information.

A wishy washy intro will give the impression that you don't really know what you're doing. Don’t be vague! Have you ever read a piece of nonfiction that is improved my vagueness.
THINGS TO CONSIDER

▸ • What is your motivation for making the work? (personal connection, social/political awareness, etc.)

▸ • What issues or ideas are most important to you (be specific)?

▸ • What do you want the viewer to learn or come away with after viewing your images?

▸ • How are you different from other photographers dealing with similar subject matter (be specific)?

▸ • What kinds of questions does your work raise?

▸ • Who is your audience? This idea may be important to you but is it interesting to the audience and why?

▸ • How do your techniques work to best communicate your ideas?

▸ • What photographers have inspired or influenced your work?
GENERALIZATIONS

▸ Be as specific as possible and avoid all-encompassing terms that could be applied to many photographers.

▸ “Capturing a moment in time,”

▸ “documenting the world”

▸ “exploring issues that are important to me” are statements that apply to most photographers.

▸ What specifically makes you different?
FLOWERY LANGUAGE

- Write in a style you are comfortable with and use your own words.

- Often, large words are a way to cover up a lack of understanding about what you are doing.

- Unless is very well written a poem does not serve you well as an artist statement.
Lots of people like to quote philosophers, writers or artists in their statements. Some of them do it very well but most of the time the quotations end up getting in the way. If you insist on using a quotation, make it short. Never use more than one quotation. If you quote a famous philosopher, make sure you really know what that philosopher is talking about and their ideas actually relate to your work.
Your statement is intended to accompany your work, not stand in for it.

You do not need to explain the technical details of your work that people can see for themselves in your pictures.

It is important to address technical issues only if they have unusual conceptual significance or if they dramatically affect the way people interact with your work.

For example: If you use sea water to wash your photographs that is interesting. If you shoot with a Nikon D800, that is not interesting.

Put it in layman’s terms or people will loose interest.
ARTIST'S STATEMENT

WHAT SHOULD IT INCLUDE?

- Insight into intention, process, influences
- Why you make your art?
- What do you make?
- What inspires/influences you to make your art?
- Why have you chosen the medium/material you use?
- I want to make art that....
- Do not tell people what to feel or see but where it comes from—make it personal not theoretical
WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO MAKE YOUR ART?

▸ Hans Holbein brought an enormous amount of dignity to his work along with rich color and saturation. There was an equality to his paintings—they weren’t demigod portraits, they were just incredibly detailed and real. When I saw that, I realized that I wanted to mirror his work with members of my own community. It seemed like a good conversation to have, especially in relationship to the s/m community, which was thought of—and still is thought of, to an extent—as predatory or perverted.

▸ Catherine Opie
Consider telling a story

In 2003 an all night exposure of the stars made during a camping trip was lost due to the effects of whiskey. Unable to wake up to close the shutter before sunrise, all the information of the night’s exposure was destroyed. The intense light of the rising sun was so focused and powerful that it physically changed the film, creating a new way for me to think about photography.

In this process the sun burns its path onto the light sensitive negative. After hours of exposure, the sky, as a result of the extremely intense light exposure, reacts in an effect called solarization- a natural reversal of tonality through over exposure. The resulting negative literally has a burnt hole in it with the landscape in complete reversal. The subject of the photograph (the sun) has transcended the idea that a photograph is simple a representation of reality, and has physically come through the lens and put it’s hand onto the final piece. This is a process of creation and destruction, all happening within the the camera.

In the beginning, after that first experience in 2003, I began experimenting with burning film and printing the resulting burnt negative in the platinum palladium process. The results were very interesting yet very confusing. The film negative has solarized into a positive and I then printed that into a final print with a negative image, and a generation loss of the burn(see below).

CHRIS MCCAW
MAKE IT PERSONAL

I use my own constructed image as a vehicle for questioning ideas about the role of tradition, the nature of family, monogamy, polygamy, relationships between men and women, between women and their children, and between women and other women—underscoring the critical problems and the possible resolves. In one way or another, my work endlessly explodes the limits of tradition.

Carrie Mae Weems
ARTIST'S STATEMENT

HOW?

- Sit down, and write
- Use simple adult language that is welcoming (no jargon)
- 2-3 paragraphs of 3 to 4 sentences each
- Clarity is best. Brevity is good.
- Put it away. Show it to someone you trust and who reads or writes.
- Rewrite.
THREE QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE WRITING

▸ Who are you really writing for?
  ▸ Tailor your statement to different audiences: jurors, exhibition visitors, grant reviewers all have different needs and expectations of your statement.

▸ Which words to you use?
  ▸ It’s okay to use words that are less common, but avoid jargon. Make sure the words you use really mean something in relationship to your art.

▸ How do you structure your sentences?
  ▸ Keep them short, active, and to the point.
RESOURCES: ARTIST’S STATEMENTS

- http://www.cgu.edu/pages/7483.asp