ARTIST'S STATEMENT

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.

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

Do not begin the statement with background info or detailed explanations, and definitely do not wax philosophical in your first sentence.

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

A wishy washy intro will give the impression that you don't really know what you're doing.
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?
LONG LEAD INS

• Get to the point in the first sentence or two.

• Don’t begin your statement with background information and detail or people will lose interest before they get to your ideas.

• Get them interested from the start so they will want to read the details and background information that back up your ideas.
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 be straight.

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

• 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 and don’t lead with it.

• Never use more than one quotation.

• If you quote a famous philosopher, make sure you really know what that philosopher is talking about.
TECH TALK

• 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 are creating a book, if there is a specific style of installation, if your images are particularly large or small, or it may be important to say what kind of camera you are using (view camera, Holga).

• Put it in layman’s terms or you will put people to sleep.
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
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.
Bean Finneran works with one simple elemental form, a hand rolled curve of clay, repeated and grouped into primary geometric constructions. The clay is a connection to time, to the earth and to human culture. The curve is a meditation on multiplicity in nature like individual blades of grass in a field.

Following rhythms of renewal and transformation in nature the composition of the sculptures is transitory. Each one of a thousand individual curves is physically independent from the next so that when a sculpture is moved it must be disassembled and then reconstructed curve-by-curve. The curves are reinterpreted every time a sculpture is assembled; ever similar and always unique. The process of creating the sculptures has no beginning or end.
Address intention without telling

My work invites confusion on several levels, and that ‘meaning’ is generated in the process of sorting things out. On the most obvious level, we all expect photographs to be pictures of something. We assume that the photographer observed a place, a person, an event in the world and wanted to record it....the problem with my work is that these images are really not of anything in that sense, they register only that which is incidental.

Uta Barth
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
My paintings are part of a visual dialogue running the length and breadth of human history. The search for excellence in this Art and Craft has led me to explore the natural world and the human events that inhabit it, constructing narratives that celebrate and question our presence in the world.

Although representational, I seek a way of painting that is richly traditional, yet radically and surprisingly new. I attempt to articulate more than the surfaces and dimensions of reality, summoning the wordless meanings and sensations that only visual art can.

Chester Arnold
I explore science through art. By layering acrylic paint, pumice, plaster, and various mediums, I seek to emulate earth patterns, where form and function are intertwined. My mixtures on canvas create organic images that speak of weathering, dripping water, tangled reeds—providing a continuous reminder of the complexity and wonder of the natural world. …

Making art allows me to reach deep within. Increasingly embracing the physical act and process of painting—rather than focusing on predetermined outcomes—helps me move beyond the analytical to tap into a place of inexplicable energy, life force, and emotion. When I am able to access this well, art works flow forth in mystical pulses. On occasion, the strength of this energy surprises me. This is when painting = bliss.

Wendy Pabich
Resources: Artist’s Statements

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