

### A good artist statement will support your professional practice. For example:

- Giving brief information to support an exhibition or catalogue.
- Submitting a proposal.
- Applying for a grant.

### It should be:

- Concise.
- Effective in communicating the details you wish to emphasize.
- Written in the first person.
- Written primarily in the present tense.

### It should be adaptable in order to take into account:

- Your audience.
- Your purpose or motivation for writing it.

### It might contain information on...

- What your motivation is for the work you do
- The techniques and materials you use
- Your background
- How you contextualise your work

From <<https://www.uca.ac.uk/library/academic-support/study-guides/artist-statement/>>

]helps clarify to us [student] what exactly it is that we are attempting to do...]"-- I think that this is central. It (the [student]artist's statement) is a learning tool, a way of making the student really reflect on their practice, and this will allow the tutor the opportunity of seeing whether and with what success, the student really does have any idea about what they are doing, how much they think about it and whether they can write *succinctly* about it.

From <<https://discuss.oca-student.com/t/fortnightly-discussion-topic-artist-s-statements-a-pretextuous-load-of-oid-bull/1744/2?>>

Just about all artists want as many people as possible to appreciate their art. A good artist statement works towards this end, and the most important ingredient of a good statement is its language. WRITE YOUR STATEMENT IN LANGUAGE THAT ANYONE CAN UNDERSTAND, not language that you understand, not language that you and your friends understand, not language that you learn in art school, but everyday language that you use with everyday people to accomplish everyday things. An effective statement reaches out and welcomes people to your art, no matter how little or how much they know about art to begin with; it never excludes. Rest assured that those who read your statement and want to know more will provide you with ample opportunities to get technical, metaphysical, philosophical, personal, emotional, moralistic, socially relevant, historical, environmentally responsible, political, autobiographical, anecdotal, or twisty with jargon-- LATER, NOT NOW.

Like an introduction to a good book, your statement presents and conveys the fundamental underpinnings of your art, aspects that people should be aware of. Write it for people who like what they see and want to know more, not those who already know you and everything your art is about. In three to five paragraphs of three to five sentences each, provide basic information like WHY YOU MAKE YOUR ART, WHAT INSPIRES OR DRIVES YOU TO MAKE IT, WHY PEOPLE SHOULD CARE, WHAT IT SIGNIFIES OR REPRESENTS, WHAT IT COMMUNICATES, WHAT'S UNIQUE OR SPECIAL ABOUT HOW YOU MAKE IT, and briefly, WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU. Don't bog readers down, but rather entice them to want to know more. As with any good first impression, your statement should hook and invite further inquiry, like a really good story is about to unfold. Give too little, not too much.

From <<https://www.artbusiness.com/artstate.html>>

It is okay to use adjectives that are less common in everyday conversation. Mellifluous is a good adjective and it means flowing, which is how your artist statement should read. A thesaurus is your friend. As Evelyn Waugh once said: "One forgets words as one forgets names. One's vocabulary needs constant fertilising or it will die."

From <<https://www.theguardian.com/culture-professionals-network/culture-professionals-blog/2013/apr/15/writing-artist-statement-tips-language>>

\* Make "I" statements rather than "you" statements. Talk about what your art does for you, not what it's supposed to do for the viewers. This doesn't mean you start every sentence with "I," but rather that you respect people's autonomy and allow them to respond to your art however they wish.

\* At all times, give readers the option to agree or disagree with you. Never pressure them or attempt to dictate outcomes. Your statement begins the narrative, your viewers take it from there.

\* Avoid comparative or evaluative comments that have been made about your art by third parties such as gallery owners, critics, collectors, or curators. These belong in your bio, resume or curriculum vitae (CV). In your statement, they're name-dropping; in your CV, they're testimonials.

\* Connect what your art expresses with the medium you're expressing it in. For example, if your art is about world peace, and it consists of twigs protruding from pieces of clay, briefly explain the connection. Arbitrarily stating that twig/clay protrusions represent world peace leaves people wondering. If, of course, the object of your art or your statement is to leave people wondering, then that's OK. In art everything is OK, but in order to succeed as an artist, someone beside yourself generally has to get the point of what you're doing and why you're doing it.

\* Be specific, not vague. For example, if your art is "inspired by assessments of the fundamentals of the natural world," tell which fundamentals you're assessing and how they inspire you.

\* Avoid obscure references to music, art, literature, history, or anything else that requires detailed explanations, research or gobs of previous knowledge. If you have to make such a reference, explain it fast so people can get a quick grip and move on. Better yet, instead of a reference, say the same basic thing in your own words. If you can't do it fast, save it for later.

\* Tell the story about what led up to your art ONLY if it's short (no more than two or three sentences), compelling, and really really relevant. People are generally not interested in progressions of antecedent events. Something leads up to everything; we all know that. Unless something in the past is integral to understanding your art, keep it in the present.

From <<https://www.artbusiness.com/artstate.html>>

### • What your motivation is for the work you do

- What issues are you exploring and why?
- What concepts, themes or convictions underpin your work?
- How do your life experiences influence your work?

### • How does your personality influence your work?

- How have your ideas developed?

### • The techniques and materials you use

- How and why did you choose them?
- What scale do you work in?
- Do you have a particular process of working?
- Do you intend to explore other techniques or materials?

### • Your background

- Are you a student or a practicing artist?
- Details of your educational history if you feel it appropriate.
- Have you contributed to any prestigious shows or events?

### • How you contextualise your work

- Where do you feel you fit into the Contemporary Art World?
- Does your work challenge the work of others?
- Have you appropriated or referred to the work of others?
- Your goals and aspirations and to what extent you have realised them.
- Personal reflections on your work.

From <<https://www.uca.ac.uk/library/academic-support/study-guides/artist-statement/>>

## Artist Statement

My work explores the relationship between emerging sexualities and daytime TV. With influences as diverse as Derrida and Andy Warhol, new tensions are distilled from both orderly and random discourse.

Ever since I was a child I have been fascinated by the endless oscillation of the zeitgeist. What starts out as vision soon becomes corrupted into a hegemony of lust, leaving only a sense of dread and the prospect of a new reality.

As subtle forms become frozen through diligent and personal practice, the viewer is left with an epitaph for the limits of our existence.

From <<http://artvbollocks.com/>>

However, in the same way that there are different language issues and so on depending on audience, so there are different kinds of statement, some dealing with the work in question in relation to the artist's overall practice and some dealing with the practice rather than any particular work. Again it depends on the when, where and why of the statement.

From <<https://discuss.oca-student.com/t/fortnightly-discussion-topic-artist-s-statements-a-pretextuous-load-of-oid-bull/1744/4?>>

### ANTHONY WHISHAW RA

#### APRIL 2013

#### Open Studios - April 26-28th 2013

I work in two studios: my home/studio and my Acme studio in Bethnal Green, where I have worked for over 30 years and which I mainly use to make larger works.

My paintings vary in scale from only 20cm to nearly 7 metres in length. The work is concerned with differing series of subject matter and language, often worked on concurrently. These can overlap to produce unexpected hybrids, with some paintings being worked on over many years.

Most paintings are far too large and numerous to include in this showing, so I have hung a few works each representing a different series, some dating back to the early 1960's-80's.

I am involved with both depiction and abstraction, illusion/allusion and especially the idea of images micro seconds before perception.

I belong to no group or school, each painting and work on paper makes its own separate demands, from maverick impishness to the solemnity of Nature and its forces, and can range from the attempt to depict the depth of celestial space down to the microscopic mini space of electro-chemical activity in the brain.

I use acrylic/collage on canvas, board, paper often with sand, soil, ash, metal, etc to help play and explore unexpected visual language.

From <<http://www.anthonwhishaw.com/as-april-2013.html>>

#### 4 Tips for Writing a Good Artist Statement

Writing an artist statement can be a daunting task. The prospect of composing a concise summary of your art practice to help others understand your work is understandably intimidating. However, having a clear, direct artist statement is essential, particularly on applications for grants, art schools, open-call exhibitions, residencies, and other career-advancing opportunities.

While some artists use this text to exercise their creative writing skills or to stretch their philosophical muscles, others take the opposite route, employing staid, generic formulas to guide their writing. However you go about it, it's important to set forth a statement that can be easily understood and does your work justice. To help, we spoke to two writing experts on steps you can take to develop a strong artist statement.

##### 1. Map out your ideas

Often, artists are instructed to write a three-paragraph statement that begins with a broad overview of their ideas, then gives an explanation of their materials, and ends with a description of their personal philosophies. While there is nothing wrong with giving a formal description of your art, discussing your material choices, or offering context you deem important to your practice, a formulaic artist statement will not help you stand out from the competition.

"So many artist statements sound the same," warns Jennifer Liese, director of the Rhode Island School of Design's Center for Arts & Language, and editor of *Social Medium: Artists Writing, 2000–2015*. "My top tip would be to not follow a model or formula." Instead, try brainstorming specific content that will help your audience—be it a viewer, juror, or critic—understand *your* work better.

If you're not working from a traditional artist statement formula, however, getting started can be tricky. Instead of jumping straight into writing, Jeff Edwards, a writing instructor at the School of Visual Arts, recommends organizing your ideas before you begin. One way to do this is by jotting down keywords and concepts on index cards and spreading them out on a table, or by using a large sheet of drawing paper to create a diagram of what you're planning to write about. Some subjects to get you started include your artistic influences, your process, the formal qualities of your work, an origin story, or a quote that connects to your work.

Similarly, Liese recommends giving yourself prompts to help yourself start writing. Some of her favorites to give students include "Write down five questions you would want an interviewer to ask you" and "Create a family tree of your artistic influences."

##### 2. Start with free writing

Next, you can start free writing—getting your ideas on paper continuously, without fretting over things like grammar and style. When you begin, you might feel stuck or insecure about your ideas, but try to resist these impulses. "Don't sit down and just expect to have the perfect sentences and prose come out," Liese advises. If your artist statement needs to be around 200 words long (as some applications require), try writing three times that amount; you can cut it down later. The more you write, the more likely you are to raise pertinent questions and connections in your work.

If you have difficulty jumping into the writing process, try setting a timer for 15 minutes. The pressure of the clock may help you forgo anxieties that are holding you back, and can force you to work through the initial ideas that come to mind.

Another great way to start free writing is to use a prompt; Liese often starts writing workshops by asking participants to describe a memory that aligns with their work. One of her students, an artist who creates rooftop planters, found a connection between her art and the blueberry bush she would tend to outside of her childhood home. Another artist remembered the influential experience of seeing

[Laurie Anderson](#)

's *O Superman* (1981) as a child. This prompt encourages you to re-enter a moment when you first had a spark of discovery or inspiration; from there, you can work towards communicating that idea to your reader. "We all have this kind of authentic knowledge of who we are and how that comes into the work," Liese says. "So when you share that with someone, they're often very grateful to have heard from you."

##### 3. Edit your piece

Free writing can often leave you with a long or messy draft; it's extremely important that you put as much energy into editing as you do writing. This process may seem intimidating, but Liese assures that "learning how to revise your own prose *is* accessible." A good place to start is by reading up on some simple editing techniques; Liese recommends learning about the [Paramedic Method](#), which helps people focus on editing one part of a sentence at a time. In similar fashion, Edwards advises that you focus on removing clichés, art jargon, pointless repetitions, and irrelevant tangents. "When you first go back to edit it down, you'll find yourself eliminating a lot of material that seemed important initially, but is actually superfluous," he says. "Deciding what to cut can be painful at first, but it always improves the writing."

In addition to revising your own writing, ask someone who knows your work well to take a look at your statement. If you're not in an academic setting where you can ask a professor or writing advisor to read over your writing, try swapping statements with a fellow artist.

When you're requesting feedback from someone, Liese recommends asking them "What isn't working?" as well as "What *is* working?" Asking these questions can help isolate the parts of your statement that are working, and those that aren't.

##### 4. Write another draft

When you break the process of writing an artist statement into small steps—brainstorming, free writing, and editing—the task becomes less daunting. But, as Liese explains, "the benefits of writing a single artist statement are limiting." If you tell yourself that the statement you're working on is going to be the sole, definitive statement for all of your art, you may well send yourself into an existential crisis.

Instead, it's best to acknowledge that artist statements are ephemeral texts; while the statement you write today may perfectly capture your artwork now, it may not work next week or next year. To help free yourself of the "single artist statement" mentality, Liese suggests putting a date on your statement and returning to it regularly; your artist statement should be a living document that you're consistently working on. In addition, Edwards suggests having multiple versions of your statement that can fit different parameters, like length and specificity to different bodies of work.

However, no matter the version you're working on, your writing skills, or the level of frustration you're experiencing, it's important to remember the benefits of an artist statement. As Edwards says, "Committing your ideas to paper helps you understand your artistic practice on a deeper level, and allows you to explain it to others more effectively."

Eli Hill

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