WRITING AN ARTIST STATEMENT WITH IMPACT

SARATOGA ARTS’ PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
THE WHOLE PACKAGE

- Artwork
- Artist Statement
- Artist Bio
- Resume or CV
WHEN ASKED, ARTISTS OFTEN SAY THAT WRITING AN ARTIST STATEMENT IS SOMETHING THEY HAVE TROUBLE WITH.

What are some of the issues you’ve faced when writing your artist statement?

“As my artist’s statement explains, my work is utterly incomprehensible and is therefore full of deep significance”
- Calvin
**ARTIST STATEMENT**

- written in the first person
- should be about your artwork
- speaks to process, inspiration, meaning, research - why you do what you do!

**ARTIST BIOGRAPHY**

- written in the third person (ex. Jane Doe received her degree…)
- speaks about your education, exhibition, travel, awards, etc…
- should enhance how the audience understands you

What’s the difference?
DIFFERENT TYPES OF ARTIST STATEMENTS

• Short (one or two paragraphs)

• Long (a full page or more)

A good artist statement supplements the visual information in a portfolio or an exhibition so that the reader/viewer can better understand it.
THE BASICS

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

• Is your statement going to be read by visitors to your website, visitors to a gallery or museum, is it going to be considered as part of an application / submission process?

AS MY ARTIST'S STATEMENT EXPLAINS, MY WORK IS UTTERLY INCOMPREHENSIBLE AND IS THEREFORE FULL OF DEEP SIGNIFICANCE.
THE BASICS

DESIGN FOR THAT AUDIENCE

• just like with a job application, your artist statement should be reviewed and revised based on where it is going and what it is for!
THE BASICS

DESIGN FOR THAT AUDIENCE CONT...

- Will the general public be reading it?
- Will it be read mostly by other artists or academicians?
- How is it going to be used?
Visitors to galleries (and to websites) don’t (and don’t want to) spend a lot of time reading!
THE BASICS

BE ACCESSIBLE

• Can a wide range of people understand what you’re saying?

• Readers shouldn’t need a thesaurus to understand your statement

• Don’t worry about dumbing it down!
THE BASICS

BE ACCESSIBLE

BUT HOW?

- Don’t use jargon
- Write for everybody - imagine a 5th grader reading your statement
- Be clear and concise
- KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE
THE BASICS

RECAP

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE
DESIGN FOR THAT AUDIENCE
KEEP IT SHORT
BE ACCESSIBLE

Don’t use jargon
Write for everybody
Be clear and concise

Painting by Greta Waller
WHAT TO INCLUDE

THE HOW, WHAT AND WHY OF YOUR ART!

- Your process
- Your inspiration
- Why you do what you do
WHAT TO INCLUDE

HOW?

• How – how do you create your work? What mediums do you use, and which colors do you prefer to work in (if any)? What is your signature style that lets people know that the work is yours?
WHAT TO INCLUDE

WHAT?

• Do you paint landscapes? Are your sculptures abstract? What do you photograph? Give your audience an idea of what your work consists of, so they can know straight away whether your content fits with what they’re looking for.
WHAT TO INCLUDE

WHY?

• Why – explain the meaning behind your work, and tell your audience why you do what you do. Does your art reflect your life in some way, or were you influenced by another artist? Show some passion here with the hope of igniting passion in your audience.
WHAT TO INCLUDE

RECAP

HOW you do what you do

WHAT you do

WHY you do what you do
ARTIST STATEMENT

“I want to express my feelings rather than illustrate them. It doesn’t matter how the paint is put on, as long as something is said. On the floor I am more at ease. I feel nearer, more part of the painting, since this way I can walk around it, work from the four sides and literally be in the painting. When I’m painting, I’m not aware of what I’m doing. It’s only after a get acquainted period that I see what I’ve been about. I’ve no fears about making changes for the painting has a life of its own.”

WHO?

GOOD OR BAD?
“I want to express my feelings rather than illustrate them. It doesn’t matter how the paint is put on, as long as something is said. On the floor I am more at ease. I feel nearer, more part of the painting, since this way I can walk around it, work from the four sides and literally be in the painting. When I’m painting, I’m not aware of what I’m doing. It’s only after a get acquainted period that I see what I’ve been about. I’ve no fears about making changes for the painting has a life of its own.”

Jackson Pollock
SAM DURANT
My artwork takes a critical view of social, political and cultural issues. Often referencing American history, my work explores the varying relationships between popular culture and fine art. Having engaged subjects as diverse as the civil rights movement, southern rock music and modernist architecture, my work reproduces familiar visual and aural signs, arranging them into new conceptually layered installations. While I use a variety of materials and processes in each project my methodology is consistent. Although there may not always be material similarities between the different projects they are linked by recurring formal concerns and through the subject matter. The subject matter of each body of work determines the materials and the forms of the work. Each project often consists of multiple works, often in a range of different media, grouped around specific themes and meanings. During research and production new areas of interest arise and lead to the next body of work.

Another Example

why what how short accessible
These images represent the juxtaposition of the timeless and majestic elegance of nature’s sensory-surpassing miracles with the entangled and growing tensions of our time in culturally reconnecting with the shift away from the human condition of love. In developing my visual perspective, I’ve discerned the fleeting significance from the invariable through emphasizing the growing collective disdain for the socially underdeveloped that has come to define our generation and crystallized over the last decade. Through highlighting this generational discontent in honing its cultural responsibility of deconstructing traditional understanding of social roles against the unrefined purity of the emotionally captivating cycles of nature, my work serves as a middle ground to visually level and gauge the social progress of man by means of extremities occurring in class stratification. In giving careful attention to the mediating filters that propagates socially-constructed irreverence, I aim to address the necessity of breaking down the symbolic paradigms of understanding to revisit the overlooked empathy for humanity and its greater accountability to each other.”

NO why what how NOT accessible what is this person even saying?
STILL STUCK?

Interview yourself?
Use your answers to help you develop your statement

- What inspired your work
- Talk about the work from a conceptual, thematic, and/or emotional point of view.
- Is there a central or guiding image or idea?
- What are its different elements and how do they affect each other or interact?
- What kind of materials did you use/are you using to create the work? Why?
- What was the process of development for the work?

- What materials, elements, surfaces, processes, methods, equipment do you use? Why?
- Where does your inspiration come from?
- What moves you to work?
- What is your favorite part of the process?

- What words would you use to describe your work as an artist?
- What sources guide or influence your work? Physical, intellectual, emotional, conceptual?
- Whose work or what work do you admire? Why?
- Who do you think your work is for? Who would you like to reach with it or who would most want to see it?
- How would you describe your background, and how has it influenced you?
WRITE IT DOWN

• Who is your audience?
• What work are you talking about?
• What is your process?
• Why you do what you do?
• What inspires you? Why do you make art?
• The answers to your “interview”

PUT THE PIECES TOGETHER

DO

Use an active voice
Have somebody look at it
Match your writing to your work
Change your statement based on the opportunity

DON’T

Use jargon
Use a passive or inconsistent voice
Include unnecessary or pretentious references
Use statements starting with “I hope to…” , “I will…” or “I am trying to…” instead tell say what you do with confidence!
SOURCES

- https://www.gyst-ink.com/sample-artist-statements
- https://www.artistsnetwork.com/art-business/10-powerful-tips/
- https://www.format.com/magazine/resources/art/how-to-write-artist-statement
MORE Opportunities for Artists at Saratoga Arts

Art in Public Places
Saratoga Arts hosts monthly and bimonthly exhibitions of member artists’ work at various public locations throughout the region.

The Gallery Shop
Member artists can sell their hand made works in the Gallery Shop in The Arts Center Gallery at Saratoga Arts.

10x10 Show
June 27 - September 5, 2020
open to ANYONE and EVERYONE who wants to submit work (limited to 3 pieces per artist)
Artwork drop off dates
June 15 and 16 9am-6pm

The Annual Members’ Show
featuring artwork by our member artists
November 7 - January 2, 2021

Work by Robin Rosenthal