



The Writing Center

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO
DENVER | ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

Writing an Artist Statement

Artist statements can take many forms depending on their intended use. Most commonly, statements introduce a specific collection of art; introduce or explain an artist's methods, inspirations, subject matter, and/or themes; or serve as an "About" or "Mission" page for an artist's website. Like resumes and CVs, an artist statement is a living document that should change and grow with new/evolving projects, web sites, gallery shows, etc.

General Considerations

Know your audience: An "About" page for a web site will sound different than the introductory information that precedes a gallery show. How you need to appeal to buyers, galleries, strangers, other artists, etc. will dictate what the statement sounds like.

Show instead of tell:

- Ineffective sample: I use paint to create
- Effective sample: The thick layers of oil paint create shadows on the canvas that become part of the composition's meaning.

Be specific:

- Ineffective sample: I have always enjoyed creating art to express my ideas.
- Effective sample: Watercolors on newspaper is a new form for my art and is the perfect medium for my upcoming collection about the end of the printing press in the digital age.

Compose both a long and short form statement: long form versions can be up to 500 words, while the shorter version will most likely be fewer than 200 words.

Format and Length

Generally, an artist statement will have two to three concise paragraphs. Depending on whether you are introducing a specific piece, show, collection, or your entire body of work, the paragraphs may differ.

Paragraph 1: Introduce yourself as an artist and some general ideas about your art and your process, materials, methods, tools, etc.

- What is the audience about to see? Photography, painting, knitting, sculpting, video, animation?
- Use a creative beginning that describes your art visually so your audience will be able to picture something specific as they read. For this type of introduction, consider giving a detailed description of one of your pieces.

Paragraph 2: In this paragraph, you might describe your artistic process, be it mixing materials and media or finding the perfect location to photograph. It might address the following information:

- How much time do you spend on your work?
- What is the inspiration for your work?

Paragraph 3: Depending on the purpose for the statement, you might focus this paragraph on one of the following:

- A specific project that you are in the midst of creating and a description of your most recent work, process, or use of materials.
- A specific description of the gallery show that the statement is introducing.

Additional Considerations

Write in the present tense: Use “I do” or “I am” instead of “I did” or “I was.”

Avoid analyzing your own work: instead, describe your inspirations, medium, and subject matter. The critics can challenge you on your interpretation, but they cannot challenge you on the reasons and methods behind your work.

- Ineffective sample, inviting argument: The materials in my work, taken from abandoned instruments, offer a critique of modern music’s obsession with new technology.
- Effective example, describing inspiration and materials: Having seen so many old instruments abandoned in alleyways, I was inspired to bring them back in front of audiences in my sculptures.

Don’t write a biography: there should be no stories without lessons and no lessons (or abstract virtues) without a concrete application. Only include a story about the first time you painted when you were a child if somehow that story directly relates to your current work (perhaps you are using those old paintings and repurposing them into a new medium).