

Writing an Artist Statement

Purpose:

- To will enhance the viewer's understanding and enjoyment of your work.
- To describe the body and meaning of your work. It should be enlightening and informative.
- It is not the same as a resume or a biographical sketch
- An artist statement can be written regarding a body of work as well as an individual piece of work.

Length:

A suggested guideline is to keep the length of your artist statement to one page of double-spaced type. However, the length of a statement can vary. For example, a statement regarding an individual piece of work would likely be shorter than a statement about a body of work.

Voice:

Most artists' statements are written in the first person.

Writing Guidelines:

- First, focus on the content of what you would like to say. You might find it helpful to answer the questions on the attached sheet "The Artist in You."
- Second, get *something* down on the page. It is not important that what you initially write be the end or final product—it just needs to be a starting point.
- The final steps are editing and editing again (and sometimes even again!). It is relatively easy to cut redundant, repetitive, and overly technical or flowery language once you have content on your page. Keep only what is meaningful to explaining your work. look for places where you can add additional, meaningful descriptors.
- Use vivid and descriptive words that evoke the senses.
- Avoid repetition, stereotypical phrases, clichés, and empty phrases—every word counts.
- Vary your sentence length and structure.
- Avoid tentative phrases and those that might communicate self-doubt, such as "I try to..."
- When you have a finished product, read your statement aloud, even if only to yourself. This will help you make sure that your sentences are clear and that they flow nicely when read by others.
- Have another person (or two or three) read your statement and provide you with honest feedback.

The Artist in You

Questions to Aid in the Development of Your Artist Statement

1. What is your philosophy about the creative process?

2. Why do you create and what does it mean to you?

3. What inspires you? How are your inspirations expressed in your work?

4. Why did you choose glass as your medium?

5. What are your techniques and style and how do these relate to the medium of glass?

6. What are your goals for your work? What is your vision for your future work?

7. How do your techniques and style relate to your vision and philosophy?

8. How is your work a reflection of you?

9. What do you want to convey to the viewer of your art?

Examples taken from:

<http://www.mollygordon.com/resources/marketingresources/artstatemt/sample.html>

Knitting is my key to the secret garden, my way down the rabbit hole, my looking glass.

Handknitting started it. Transforming string into clothing without expensive and cumbersome equipment has always struck me as magical. Over the years, handknitting has filled me with a sense of accomplishment and integrity, and it has proven a most amenable vehicle for translating inner vision to outer reality.

I love the creative power which knitting gives me, and I've studied it avidly.

I started to exhibit and sell my work as an experiment in justifying my passions for the process and for fiber. Now those passions have transformed me and - look, Ma! - I'm a fiber artist.

I knit from the inside out. Though I work as deliberately as I can, consciously employing knitting lore and traditional techniques, my unconscious is project manager. The concreteness of the activity frees my imagination and it "sees" each piece into existence.

A lifelong word junkie and reader of literature great and small, I've a storehouse of associations vying for expression. I work in bemused contemplation of the battle between reverence and irreverence which occurs in every piece. Perhaps that is what it is really all about.

Molly Gordon
Bainbridge Island, WA
April 1990

Revised Artist's Statement

Knitting is my key to the secret garden, my way down the rabbit hole, my looking glass.

Hand knitting started it. From the beginning the process of transforming string into cloth has struck me as magical. And, over the years, that magical process has had its way with me, leading me from hobby to art. Knitting fills me with a sense of accomplishment and integrity, and has proven a most amenable vehicle for translating inner vision to outer reality.

I knit from the inside out. Though I work quite deliberately, consciously employing both traditional and innovative techniques, my unconscious is the undisputed project manager.

The concrete, repetitive nature of this work frees my imagination and provides many opportunities for happy accident and grace to influence the finished product.

Recently I discovered some childhood drawings: simple, crayoned patchworks that resonate deeply with my fiber work. Inspired and invigorated by a renewed sense of continuity, and awed by the mystery of how creation occurs, I am now knitting richly varied fabrics exploring many patterns, textures and colors. Once knit, the fabrics are pieced to form an always new patchwork from which I make my garments and accessories.

Molly Gordon, Mollycoddles
Bainbridge Island, WA
November 1993

Example:

Artists Statement by Martin Langford, Artist
<http://www.martinlangford.com/statement.php>

I don't set out to produce art about one subject or another. I'm never without a sketchbook to hand so I am constantly drawing and sometimes the drawings are left in the sketchbook and other times they develop into more in-depth ideas and detailed images.

I didn't set out to be an environmental artist or to create artwork relating to social commentary but as my portfolio developed and people started to review my work, the descriptions started to emerge and I began to notice a pattern I hadn't intended but am now please with.

My work tends to focus on the environment, the evolution of man and his material wealth, the development of bigger and bigger cities, more and more people, cars and industry on the planet and the consequences this has on nature. Some reviews have labelled my work as 'black humour' but I always try to depict a positive message too - the persistence of nature in recapturing what once belonged to the earth.

At school, the only class I really paid any attention in was art. I simply wasn't interested in anything else and I think my obsession with depicting the monotony of the work place and work force started there...

Some of my subject matter is about people's daily routines and a comment on human nature. And since I've always been a fan of mafia films - a new strand of work seems to have emerged depicting a very 'human' and 'school playground' side to mob life.

None of it was intentional - it all developed and evolved over time. People always ask for my artist statement so I needed to do one but I've never liked to explain a certain piece of work - if you've made a picture and that's how you wanted it to be - hopefully it can speak for itself and whatever it says to the viewer - it's the right message because there isn't a wrong and a right message. Each person takes something a little different from the same picture and I'm happy with that.

Influences

My influences are first and foremost everything I see, feel and experience, but I've always loved comic books particularly work by Harvey Pekar and Robert Crumb. I love architecture particularly Art Deco. The artists I most admire are John Martin, a mezzotint artist from the 1800's, Winsor McCay a cartoonist and animator who created Little Nemo, Escher and Lyonel Feininger creator of Kinder Kids. I grew up watching films such as Metropolis, Flash Gordon, Star Wars and Brazil.

Example:

Carmen Ward-Hagains
<http://www.jafraindustries.com/statement.html>

My work is designed to be deeply evocative of a more elemental, elegant era. I find myself drawn to the human form and the mythology that gives us a societal context. We are all part of a rich cultural tapestry, and my series of culturally referential pieces and my portrait work exist to draw a parallel between the universality of human experience, as represented in the pantheons of fiction and history, and its modern relevance to all of us. This universality is in contrast to the deep uniqueness of every life, and the common thread that ties our deeply personal experience to a common cultural consciousness is art.

I believe art is a part of all people, and I try to help the subjects of my work express their own personal experiences through it. Everyone follows a unique path through life, and I find too many people feel closed off from exploring their feelings through creative expression, and I wish to open the doors of creation to anyone who wants to have a piece of art to call their own. Having a piece of unique portraiture gives people a persistent link to their past and a reminder of what they want for their future."