

The Artist's Statement

After the resume, this is the next most frequently requested document for artists and designers. Think of the statement as something to represent you when you are not there. What do you want your audience to know? What do they need to know about the visual material they are looking at? What can the statement add to the viewer's experience of the work?

It helps to distinguish between statements serving a variety of functions.

1. Have a general, up-to-date ONE PAGE version prepared at all times. You may also provide an artist's statement for each body of work, which is what is being requested in this instance.

Basically it should include:

- a **short description of your work; (what are we looking at)**
- the **conceptual basis** of your work, what you are interested in, the ideas;
- the way in which you employ **techniques and materials** as relevant to concepts;
- the way you place yourself in the **context of contemporary and/or historical art.**

Jordan Banks--Artist's Statement

Every time I sit down at the wheel to throw a pot, I imagine the finished piece sitting on someone's kitchen counter—nesting their favorite fruits or holding a bouquet of fresh cut spring flowers. I am driven to create simplistic forms that people will use daily. I want my cup to be the first one chosen out of the cupboard for their morning cup of coffee. I want the individual to feel safe when holding the pot—knowing it was made by a soul who cares about the quality of life- the little things do matter.

This body of work explores the simplicity of form. I have chosen to work with a white clay body that is glazed white with limited ornamentation. Using a clean white surface, I am inviting the user to appreciate the beauty of the form itself. In a world centered on the notion that more is better, I feel these minimalist forms become a haven for people to escape from their hectic lives and savor this moment in time.

Being clear, unpretentious and straightforward are definitely your best bets. Avoid trendy artspeak. Don't use words or say anything you don't completely understand! Don't burden us with confessionals unless they are profoundly relevant to the work. Try to resist starting out by telling us how early in life you became an artist. Otherwise, assuming it is poetic, perverse or truly interesting, it's OK to use a story or assertion about your childhood.* When you go to galleries and museums, pick up the artist statement or press release (often based on the artist statement) and read it. Note what is cliché, pretentious, boring, obscure or nauseating so that you can avoid it.

2. Be ready to tailor your basic statement to specific situations, shows, bodies of work, grant applications, proposals, etc. Don't be lazy about this. Often last year's basic statement is just not going to do the job. At times you will be asked to send some written statement for the publicity of a given show. Think about this from a public relations point of view. If you really care, find out how much text they are actually going to use and be your own editor. If you send them a page and they only use two lines, you would do better sending two lines rather than having them choose for you. If your work is complicated, e.g., multi media installation, you may need to do some simple explaining of what the hell they are looking at. Sometimes this can be accomplished in the Slide List or Notes to the Slides, etc. (do provide a slide list whenever slides are requested), which is separate from the statement. Sometimes, in more restrictive application forms, this information needs to be included in the statement.

3. Be prepared to create the kind of statement that will accompany your work in an exhibition situation. This is a different set of circumstances; the viewer has access to the experience first hand. Many things that may need to be explained for the viewer of slides or the reader of a press release are self-explanatory here. This is a place for information not otherwise available in the work. This could be considered part of the art work. Remember that you can assert your right not to have a statement at all, if any kind of statement runs counter to your concept of the viewer's experience. In such a case, if the hosting institution still insists on some kind of statement, offer to help them write a press release.