

Developing Artist Statements

A good Artist Statement supplements the visual information in a portfolio so that the reader/viewer can better understand the work.

Compose your statement with a sympathetic friend in mind, one who is genuinely interested in the work and wants to know the answers to questions which may come up when viewing it. To get started with the writing of a statement, begin by describing the type of creative work that you wish to do i.e. video - fictional narrative or social documentary, animation, video games, interactive installation, illustration, graphic novel... What do you want the reader to know about the work that you wish to engage in?

Some Do's and Don'ts

- DO write a strong, compelling statement without art and media jargon.
- DON'T imitate the writing often used in art or film magazines. Avoid artspeak and overly flowery or pretentious language. If your statement is difficult to read, it will not be read.
- DO develop a strong first sentence. Explain clearly and precisely why you wish to be a media maker, what it means to you and what materials you may use. Or give us a story about something that moved you into making specific work. Draw the reader into your world.
- DON'T try to impress the reader with your extensive knowledge of art, film or media criticism or vocabulary.
- DO keep it as short as possible – 250 words, approximately 2 paragraphs. No more than one typed page, double spaced. It is an introduction and a supplement to the visual information, not your life story.
- DO clearly express what you have or wish to accomplish.
- DO focus on topics that may not be apparent from viewing documentation of your work, such as, influences in your work: themes and issues. The techniques, materials used, or scale of the work can also be important information to include.

Your statement should stand on its own: so that the reader can imagine what your work looks like even if they haven't seen it. Make the reader want to see your work after reading the statement.

Tips to help formulate an artist statement:

- Invite a friend to discuss your work and record the conversation. You can also take notes, but often the best phrases get lost in the heat of the moment. Make a note of what kind of questions come up during these sessions. Is there a pattern? If there is, it is definitely information needed in your statement.
- Have several friends who know your work, (especially those who are not artists) read your artist statement and respond. They may have good points to add or can catch phrases that don't seem to make sense. Your non-artist friends will be best at finding the "art speak" which you may want to rewrite.
- Ask a strong writer to proofread your written materials to check for grammatical errors and those of syntax. They may also delete repetitive or extraneous phrases and may straightening out, twisted, run-on sentences.

REMEMBER: Artist statements must be coherent and to the point to retain reader interest!

An artists statement is never finished for long. Like your resume, it will undergo revision frequently, as your work changes and as you find new ways of expressing what you are doing.

Uses:

- No longer than half a page.
- This statement contains the central idea of your work to catch the reader/listeners' attention.
- Addresses the most pertinent information about the work, a particular series or media.
- Can be incorporated into the heading of a portfolio, grant application, etc.
- Used as reference for: promoting, describing, selling writing about your work by festivals, gallerists, curators, publicists, critics, journalists, etc.
- Can be the lead-in to a longer project description.

Example Artist Statement: Scott Snibbe

<http://www.snibbe.com/>

My work explores how seemingly independent phenomena are, upon analysis, actually interdependent with their environments. I portray this interdependence by creating works that do not function unless viewers actively engage with them—by touching, breathing, moving, etc.—so that viewers are essential to the work's existence as art. Furthermore, although the works involve significant technological infrastructure, viewers' experiences typically occur in the realm of human-to-human interactions.

My aesthetic practice is a combination of minimalism with the principles of phenomenology – the philosophy of how the body “thinks” through unmediated perception, rather than through reason and language. This approach rewards viewers with an immediate, visceral sense of presence, while simultaneously inducing them to understand the conceptual motivation and meaning behind the work.

My interests in phenomenology and minimalism reflect several of my artistic influences. Foremost are experimental filmmakers like Len Lye, who create direct cinema by scratching and marking celluloid film directly with his body. Second are minimalist environmental artists such as Robert Irwin and James Turrell, who explore how subtle changes in an environment can make deep impressions on the viewer. My work continues in these traditions by constructing environments that directly and meaningfully react to viewers' presence and engagement.

Examples Works:

<http://www.snibbe.com/projects/interactive/fallinggirl>

<http://www.snibbe.com/projects/installation/transit>