

## Writing the Artist Statement

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### What is an artist statement?

An artist statement serves as a bridge connecting you and your work to your audience. Its purpose is to help others understand your work on a deeper level. It is *not* meant to interpret or analyze your work; instead, it should add to the viewer's experience by providing the what, why, and how of your art making from your own perspective.

### What is it used for?

It is meant to be a living document—one that you will revise as you and your artwork evolve. Not only is it an opportunity for you to revisit your practice on an ongoing basis, but on a practical level, you will tailor it for specific opportunities, such as residencies and fellowships, graduate school, grant applications, gallery representation, and exhibitions of your work.

### What should you include?

A general artist statement will talk about what you create, why you create it, and how—including the materials you use and why. It might include influences, if these inform your work; and it might include what others have said about your work. An artist statement about a specific body of work will discuss the what, why, and how related to that specific work.

### What tone should I use?

Above all, your statement should sound authentic and enthusiastic. Your statement will most often be written in first person but should remain professional in tone. Don't use art jargon (for example, *interrogate*, *subvert*, *juxtaposition*, *radical*, *liminal*, *visceral*). You can avoid this by writing in **clear, direct, specific, and concrete** language.

### How long should it be?

As a baseline, consider writing a 100- to 150-word version, which is roughly one long paragraph, and a longer version, which is around 250-300 words. It helps to write the longer one first and then revise it into a shorter version, keeping only what you feel is essential for the reader to understand your work.

### Where do I begin?

*Turn the page to find out...*

**MONTSERRAT COLLEGE OF ART  
WRITING STUDIO TIP SHEET**

**Write Your Artist Statement in Five Steps**

Step 1: Brainstorm your ideas. Try freewriting from the following prompts, setting a timer for around 5 minutes for each one (these prompts can be applied to your work in general or to a specific body of work):

- Describe your current body of work (don't overthink it; just write!)
- Why did you make this work?
- What inspires you to make art? What (or who) are your influences?
- What concerns or ideas drove you to make this art?
- What materials did you use, and how did you use them?
- Did the materials or methods you used have special significance, or did they support the ideas behind your work in any way? Explain.

Step 2: Create an outline.

Read over your writing and see if you can put it into an order or a structure by using an outline. Your outline does not have to be in complete sentences. You don't need to include everything you wrote, as you might find there's some repetition of ideas. Tip: Imagine your reader knows nothing about your work. What do they need to know first? How can you organize your ideas so your reader knows **what, why, and how** you are making your current work?

Step 3: Shape the outline into a draft.

Take your outline and turn it into a draft with complete sentences and paragraphs. Don't worry about how everything flows or connects at this point; just shape it as naturally as you can, and don't think about length.

Step 4: Revise and edit.

Now you can work on connecting the dots, smoothing out the tone, and taking out anything extraneous. Remember that your purpose is to write **a direct, authentic, and thoughtful statement** that leaves your readers feeling like they understand more about you and your work than they did before. Try reading your statement out loud either to yourself or to someone else who can tell you if your writing is clear, colorful, and communicative—and if it sounds like *you*.

Step 5: Polish and proofread.

Try setting aside your draft to let it breathe and come back to it when you have fresh eyes. This will help you to see anything you might have missed so you can make your statement even more polished and concise. You can also further revise for word count: one short version (100-150 words) and one longer version (250-300 words). It's always helpful to have someone else look it over for you. Consider making an appointment with the Writing Studio at any point in the process!