

Writing an Artist Statement

Purpose & Value:

- A response to a specific inquiry by a gallery or collector
- A response to a particular grant proposal
- In conjunction with a curatorial statement or exhibition

- Helps you talk intelligently about your work
- Helps you articulate your influences, the sources for their imagery
- Addresses questions about your technique

Before you begin writing:

Take five minutes and think about why you do what you do. How did you get into this work? How do you feel when work is going well? What are your favorite things about your work? Jot down short phrases that capture your thoughts. Don't worry about making sense or connections. Brainstorm!

Next: Make a list of words and phrases that communicate your feelings about your work and your values. Include words you like, words that make you feel good, and words that communicate your values or fascinations. Be loose. Be happy. Be real. Generate ideas!

Answer these questions as simply as you can.

- What is your favorite tool? Why?
- What is your favorite material? Why?
- What do you like best about what you do?
- What do you mean when you say that a piece has turned out really well?
- What patterns emerge in your work? Is there a pattern in the way you select materials? In the way you use color, texture or light?
- What do you do differently from the way you were taught? Why?
- What is your favorite color? List three qualities of the color. Consider that these qualities apply to your work.

Look at your word list. Add new words suggested by your answers to the questions above.

Choose two key words from your word list. They can be related or entirely different. Look them up in a dictionary. Read all the definitions listed for your words. What notions do they have in common? Look your words up in a Thesaurus. Read the entries related to your words. Are there any new words that should be added to your word list?

Let the Writing Begin!

Write five sentences that tell the truth about your connection to your work. If you are stuck, start by filling in the blanks below.

- When I work with _____ I am reminded that _____.
- I begin a piece by _____.
- I know a piece is done when _____.
- When my work is going well, I am filled with a sense of _____.
- When people see my work, I'd like them to _____.

First paragraph. Begin with a simple statement of why you do the work you do. Support that statement, telling the reader more about your goals and aspirations.

Second paragraph. Tell the reader how you make decisions in the course of your work. How and why do you select materials, techniques, themes? Keep it simple and tell the truth.

Third paragraph. Tell the reader a little more about your current work. How it grew out of prior work or life experiences. What are you exploring, attempting, challenging by doing this.

More Tips:

- If you find that you falter, write three paragraphs about an artist whose work you admire and write about yourself as though you were an admiring colleague.
- Use the present tense ("I am, I do.") As a rule, your artist's statement should be written in the first person.
- Keep your sentences authentic and direct Educate, but don't preach. Imagine what you would like said if someone was explaining your work.
- Mention important influences, artists as well as writers, which may set a context for your work.
- Be sure to keep your statement down to one page.
- It's best to only give out your artist statement when it is requested, not as part of an unsolicited package. This alleviates the problem of telling someone more than they want to know, allowing for questions and interaction, and offers the opportunity for follow up.