

Artist statements and artist biographies are a crucial element for people to understand you and your practice, and are required in funding applications. Spend time articulating your practice so that assessors and the audience can understand your intention.

What is an Artist Statement?

An artist statement is a short, personalised piece of writing that describes the key concerns of your practice and/or project. You may think of it as a link between you and your work.

The term artist statement can apply to a generalised text about your practice or a summary text for a particular artwork/project.

You'll find you need to tailor your artist statement for different contexts and requirements. It is useful however, to identify the key elements of your practice in a general text (such as might appear on your website) that can then be modified to highlight key areas as specific to a particular project or funding opportunity.

Tips for writing an artist statement

- Think about who your reader is. Although intelligent, and well-versed in art, your reader may not be aware of technological jargon (eg. computer generated imagery not CGI) or recent philosophical arguments or artspeak (eg. not everyone knows about Bourriaud's relational aesthetics). So, write appropriately and explain anything that is too esoteric.
- Use active language, taking out all adverbs and the bulk of adjectives. Make your verbs work for you.
- Say it out loud before you write, and read it out loud after you have written it. This helps you to find language that 'speaks' with your voice, and weeds out pretension.
- What elements of your work have been strongest so far? What themes or concepts are you developing? Focus on what makes your work distinctive, rather than what makes it similar to other established work.
- Less can be better. Sometimes 5 or 6 strong sentences are better than a meandering, grandiose piece of writing.
- Write with clear, concise, descriptive language and keep the voice of your artwork in mind- if your

- work is light and humorous, for example, reflect that somewhat in your language
- How will you do it - what is the method/process of your practice?
- Focus on saying what the work is, not how great it is.
- Get outside opinions. Test your statement by sharing it with a non-specialist reader. Does it make sense to your mum/ neighbour/ friend from high school?
- Allow yourself plenty of time for re-writes!

Structuring Your Artist Statement

Your artist statement in the context of a grant application is a future-focused vision of the artist you are aiming to become. It should focus on the content and objectives of your art practice.

What are you all about as an artist? As you grow confidence in your writing, you may choose to try different structures out, but it may be helpful to start with something along the lines of this sample structure.

As example, you may consider addressing the following :

Paragraph 1. (50 words)

- What is your current practice all about? What/ how/when/where?
- What are your main concerns/interests as an artist what do you really care about in relation your work? Why does it matter to you?

Paragraph 2. (50 words)

- Aims: how will you consolidate past work and develop your future practice?

Paragraph 3. (50 words)

- Outcomes: how will it contribute to the art field? This sets your work in a context and also shows originality.

What is an Artist Bio?

On some occasions, you may be asked to provide an Artist Bio (short for biography). This is a text that outlines important biographical data and key achievements in your practice to date.

The Bio serves as a summary of your curriculum vitae and is used to highlight only the most impressive details of your education/prior experience, accolades and activities as a professional artist.

Tips for writing a short Biography:

- Tailor to any specific requirements/ eligibility outlined by funding body.
- Choose your most significant professional experiences and develop the really good ones.
- Don't try and pad your experience, as this will only undermine your legitimate achievements.
- If you've had 2 solo shows and 20 group shows, expand the solo shows a little and cluster the group ones.
- Don't say you're the expert, rather demonstrate your experience and expertise by evidencing and highlighting it in your bio.

How to Structure Your Artist Bio

Sample Structure:

Paragraph 1. (50 words)

- Include training, studies or research.
- Where you studied or worked.
- Where you currently lecture/teach/work

Paragraph 2. (50 words)

- Your exhibition / performance history
- Representation in major public or private collections

Paragraph 3. (50 words)

- Awards, residencies, scholarships and prizes, or any you have judged
- Mentorships
- Articles published
- Workshops, lectures, public appearances, television or radio broadcasts

