

Artist Statement Guide

An Artist's Statement is an essay written by the artist that is descriptive of the visual work s/he creates. Statements provide viewers who are unfamiliar with the artist (such as gallery owners, museum curators, journalists, and exhibit viewers) an introduction to the work. Equally important, the Statement can serve as a tool for the artist to learn more about where his/her work comes from and where it might lead. Through the process of writing, you might be surprised what you learn about your ideas about *your* work!

Your Assignment

Type a one-page, single-spaced Artist's Statement that describes your work and your intentions in creating it. It is a good idea to read it out loud to your peers to refine it. Drafts of your statement will be due when you present work in critiques, at your final presentation, and in your portfolio.

Week 4 critique	Draft I due
Week 8 critique	Draft II due
Week 10 presentation	Final artist's statement due

Central Questions

Curators and viewers will read your statement to get answers to the questions they might have about your work. Here are some questions to consider addressing in your statement:

- Why do you use the medium, scale, process, etc. you use?
- How does your choice of medium, scale, process, etc. draw on historical forms or otherwise inform the content of your work?
- Is there a central theme or inquiry or interest from which you generate your work?
- What formal aspects interest you? Color? Line? Value? Shape? Form? Movement?
- Are there contemporary or historical images that you are influenced by?
- How should a viewer engage your work, intellectually or emotionally? How do you anticipate that the viewer will attend to your work?
- What associations do you hope viewers make when viewing your work?
- How do you contextualize your process or images in the greater context of artists throughout history?
- Is there symbolism you employ that would be useful to point out or clarify for viewers?

One note: one of the fundamental characteristics that draw us to art, is its visual mystery or poetry. While it is important to help viewers understand your work, it is equally important to determine what not to tell them, so that the ambiguous qualities of the visual language remain compelling and evocative.

A Statement Format

Here is *one* format for an Artist's Statement. You are not obligated to use this style – it's provided only as one (of many) models.

Paragraph #1

A general physical description of the work and theme or subject you are dealing with. This is an introductory paragraph that also serves as an informal 'thesis' for your statement. You will be developing these ideas later in the statement.

Paragraph #2, 3

This is the body of your thesis and is your opportunity to expound on the general concepts in your work. For instance, if size is important to understanding your work, you might explain why you choose to work on a large scale – how 'bigness' is integral to a reading of your work. Other things to consider writing about: medium choice, historical context of your work or genre or working, influences (these may be personal or artistic or natural – anything). You might explain in words the ideas you are grappling with through visual language. You may organize certain ideas into paragraphs: perhaps address formal aspects of the work in one paragraph and the expressive aspects in another paragraph.

Paragraph #4

In closing your statement, you may reiterate your original thesis and discuss lingering issues pertaining to it that have not been dealt with in the body of the paper. This paragraph may also serve as a summary or conclusion.