

How to write the Artist's Statement

As an artist, there are three documents which are always required for any submission, either to a gallery, educational institution or competition. These are your biography, CV and artist's statement. It is important to differentiate between the types of documents, and their functions. This fact sheet focusses on the Artist's Statement.

What is the Artist's Statement?

The Artist's Statement, sometimes called the Conceptual Statement or Synopsis, contains information which assists the viewer with understanding and interpreting the artwork/s. This document will differ for each body of work.

How to approach your writing:

- Ask yourself "what does my artwork mean?" Write this down.
- Based on this information, decide on what additional information is required by the viewer to provide insights into and an understanding of your work, e.g. a translation of specific terms or words, explanation of symbolism used, etc.
- Rewrite your text, ensuring that you adapt your statement to suit the purpose (e.g. a statement for a competition submission will differ from a full exhibition statement).
- Ensure that the text corresponds with the visual language of the artwork.

What to include:

- Details of the artwork, including title, date, size, medium, and edition if relevant.
- If the title is given in a language other than English, provide a translation.
- Introductory sentence or two describing your artistic approach in general.
- If the work forms part of a larger body of work, give an overview of the thematic concerns dealt with in the series, and explain how the specific work fits into the larger body of work.
- Explain the broader relevance of the work for contemporary society, then unpack the specific message the work.
- Explain any significant symbolism or metaphors contained in the work.
- Include a discussion of your processes only if these are vastly different to traditional approaches.
- Specific influences, e.g. works by other artists, books, events, etc.

What to exclude:

- Images, decorative borders and effects.
- Biographical information. Use the biography and CV for this purpose.
- Personal anecdotes, stories or irrelevant information etc., unless this pertains to the artwork itself and aids the understanding of the work.

Tips:

- The Artist's Statement is not just a description of the artwork or the process used to produce the work. It should provide the viewer with essential information for understanding the artwork.
- Ensure that the visual imagery and the text correspond, in other words the text must give a relevant explanation of the visual imagery, and vice versa.
- The statement should be short, concise and adapted for each instance or project it is connected to.
- Ensure that your text is properly edited and that any art terms are used in their correct context. Spelling and grammar mistakes should be avoided.