

On Writing an Artist Statement by Christy Olsen

Every artist dreads the thought of writing an artist statement. Think about it, we are “visual artists” not literal ones! If we wanted to write text, we would have been in literary arts! That said you still need to have an artist statement listed on your web site and this is also the document that any artist who is selling work must have whether you are self represented or showing in multiple galleries.

Anyone who looks at or buys your artwork is probably not going to be a visual artist themselves so they want to know in plain English what you are doing, especially if they are going to display your work. An “Artist Statement” helps buyers and your collectors to articulate why they connect with your work on an emotional level, especially after they’ve bought a piece and are showing it off to their friends. A good “Artist Statement” will connect the artist and their work to the audience which promotes more sales.

Artist’s statements are just as subjective as your artwork. Everyone has a different opinion on how to write them and what they should focus on. Your statement should be is clear, concise and informative. It can be either written in the first or third person. Don’t use too many big words or you will lose your audience or even worse make them feel inadequate. It can be one sentence or three paragraphs but limit the statement to no more than a half of a page.

Always have your friend or neighbor proof read your statement to see if it actually connects the artwork with the audience and or course have them check for grammatical errors. If you have need more help with writing or grammar, you can go to grammarly.com to check your grammar or you can even have a professional editor correct it for you for a small fee within a 24 hour turn around at gramlee.com

So here’s how to get started writing your statement.

What does it all MEAN?

It’s all about you and should be similar to your “*Mission Statement*”. If you don’t know what your mission statement is then you will have to flush it out! This is the toughest part and for most of us it takes years to figure out so you get frustrated by this at first however, the first thing you need to do is ask yourself “*Why am I doing what I’m doing?*”

What does your artwork mean to you? Is there a specific subject or theme that you are drawn to? What is fundamentally driving you to create what you are creating? Remember this is NOT about your technique or how you are making artwork; this is WHY you are creating.

Examples: I want to share the beauty of...or my goal as an artist is to make pretty pictures... or I create whimsical pieces to brighten up the day...or I abstract forms in order to make balanced designs... etc.

Start of Part 2

What’s your INSPIRATION, SUBJECT or THEME?

A good statement goes beyond the basics of what a single piece of artwork is all about and includes a little about the artist and their inspiration for creating. What about your subject or themes has inspired

you to create and what is it that you wish others to take away from your art? Beware this may change or if you like to work in multiple genres like still life, landscapes, etc.

Example: I love flowers because I played in the garden when I was little...or I love to paint landscapes because I want to be outside and to carry on the traditions of “en plein air” ...or I paint horses because I own a ranch...or I paint abstracts because I love modern art...etc.

What’s your STYLE and MEDIUM?

Besides the meaning and your inspiration, include your style and medium, especially if you work in a medium that enhances your style.

Example: I am a representational artist who works in pastel. I love the vibrant colors that it brings to my flowers... or I am a surrealist who works in pastel because it allows me to make soft edges when I paint my dreams...etc.

Putting it All Together!

Now put all the components together (Meaning, inspiration subject or theme, style and medium).

Example:

I am a representational artist who paints florals from life in pastel. I played in the garden when I was little so I want to share the beauty of flowers with others. I love the vibrant colors that it brings to my floral pieces and I paint the flowers that were picked from my own garden.

Example Two:

I paint abstracts because I love modern art. I abstract forms to make balanced designs and I love to work in pastel because the square sticks help me produce the perfect geometric forms that I am looking for.

Am I finished?

No you are never done writing your artist statement. Your statement will evolve as your artwork does. It needs to be tweaked or updated at least once every year or even every six months depending on how much artwork you are producing or showing. Some galleries even recommend that you should have one for each body of work or each genre, however if you are getting into galleries don’t worry they will ask you for exactly what they need because it will help them sell.