

The Working Artists'
Guide to Writing

ARTIST STATEMENTS



Introduction by Crista Cloutier

Artist statements are really, really scary. I've never met an artist yet who didn't shiver in fear when they heard the two words "artist" and "statement" placed next to one another.

But no matter how frightening they may be, a well-written artist's statement is vital. In fact, it can be the best sales tool you've got.

That's why it's such an important skill to learn.

Our community of Working Artists has created this eBook of tips + strategies to stop fearing the page and start crafting your best artist statement.

This is their advice to you
– from one artist to another.



Kym O'Donnell

Always keep a folder with your gallery submissions, grant proposals, statements, etc regardless of whether you receive the grants or are accepted to the shows. Keep every piece of writing you do about your work.

Writing statements and project descriptions can be daunting but it becomes so much easier when you can pull segments you've written before and liked, then rework them into new proposals.

www.kymodonnell.com

“One of my favorite aspects of The Working Artist is the way Crista managed to reintroduce so many bits of information that I'd forgotten or never properly learned in the first place. It was incredibly helpful to be reminded about studio visit etiquette, how to mirror language back in a grant proposal, and the most effective ways to approach galleries. Her information about pricing was invaluable.

I made notes during the sessions and kept them in one section of a sketchbook; this may be more valuable to me than the workbooks themselves.

I applied for and received a grant shortly after taking the course and the grant writing process was so much easier when I could refer back to my notes. It gave me a lot of confidence.”

Kym O'Donnell
www.kymodonnell.com





Michael Pierre Price

Writing an artist statement is a process.

The blank page is like a blank canvas. Start with a loose sketch of the big ideas that are essential to describing yourself or your work. Write down key words or phrases that are important elements that need to be included. These are the broad brush strokes of the artist statement.

Walk away for a bit and let things percolate.

Review the key ideas and see if anything needs to be added, subtracted, or modified. Then take a look at structure and figure an order in which you want to address the key points. Start writing sentences and see how it flows.

Just like in a painting, each step is the adding of details. Once the statement is written, go back and review to make sure that the key ideas have been addressed and that it is clear and coherent.

The artist statement does not write itself – don't be afraid to make mistakes!

www.michaelpierreprice.com

“The Working Artist Masterclass is highly valuable because it is systematic, hands-on, understandable, practical, and specifically tailored to artists seeking to navigate the larger art world.”

Crista's professional experience in the art world gives her the insights and credibility to provide the Masterclass its substance and quality. Crista's giving personality adds both encouragement and useful feedback that is often needed when personal challenges arise during the course.

The hands-on lessons require participation, so the course is not just an intellectual exercise. The lessons spur commitment and progress to moving forward. Also, having other artists to interact with online and in weekly phone conferences allows for camaraderie and a wider perspective of what others might be working on in their careers.

The ongoing nature of The Working Artist may be one of the most valuable aspects of Crista's vision, because those who participate become part of a greater community of artists.”

Michael Pierre Price
www.michaelpierreprice.com

Jane Zamost

Like Nike says, "just do it!" And then, show it around as everyone will make a comment or ask a query that makes you think a little bit differently.

I thought my Artist Statement was finalized but Crista pushed me to dig deeper. Didn't think it was possible, but through Crista's encouragement, the outcome felt so right.

www.JaneZamost.com

“The artist's road is easy because we are so passionate about creating -- yet quite trying as the business side is not necessarily where we want to reside. Crista's process mandates we work in both worlds and beyond that, she is kind, generous and intelligent.

For our one-on-one meeting, Crista read all of my materials and synthesized everything provided. She truly understood me and I was deeply impressed.

Crista gave me ideas that have marched me in the right career direction. ”

Jane Zamost
www.JaneZamost.com



Carmella Jarvi

Start a conversation with someone who knows your work and then jot down thoughts – like an outline. Take those thoughts and put into a written form.

Most importantly, quit procrastinating. Quit telling yourself you're bad at it.

Break the task into steps and get working!

www.carmellajarvi.com

I've been a self employed artist for a decade. I do love the business of art, but like most artists, it's tough to juggle so much.

Often, I'd put others ahead of myself. Until I finally realized this was not helping me or my art business!

“Over the years, I've experienced lots of business of art trainings. The Working Artist series is a great program because the online sessions are varied, visually interesting, and not too long. There are tasks in-between to use what you're learning.

For me, it was a great reminder AND I learned some brand new information and approaches!”



Carmella Jarvi
www.carmellajarvi.com

Beverley Johnson

To write a statement, it does help if you can write fluently and are in touch with your intentions and ideas. A good way to stimulate both of these is to develop the practice of writing for at least 15 minutes a day. It can help to set a timer and write whatever comes into your head as quickly as you can for those 15 minutes without worrying about content.

Once you've practiced this a few times, you could try giving yourself 15 minutes to write quickly about something specific, such as, "Why do I make the work I do?" or "How do I make my work?"

Another way of getting in touch with yourself is to sit at your table with paper and pen in front of you, close your eyes and sit quietly. When thoughts come to you, jot them on the pad. Then repeat the cycle. This is very calming and I find it a good way to start my daily practice as an artist.

When you do write your statement, imagine you're telling a good friend about your work and just write down what you would say. A friendly tone is better than trying to appear clever.

If you're not good at writing, you could ask a writer friend to do it for you. You would then need to talk about your work to the writer, so it will still help to have done the above practices.



www.beverleyjohnson.com

“I have definitely become more confident about introducing myself as an artist since following The Working Artist.

I have more clarity about the materials I need to present my work in a professional context. I have become more organised. I've branched out in social media. I've also gained insight into new markets for my work

I want to stress that perfecting the tools required as a working artist is an on-going process. It's not something that will be all done and dusted in the four weeks. As your work develops, your materials will develop too. But it's easy to access Crista's advice on each topic, so the support continues to be there once the course is completed. ”

Beverley Johnson

www.beverleyjohnson.com



Lynne Forrester

Write your cv and bio first, this gets you used to thinking about your art career in factual terms.

Take a deep breath, see in your minds eye how you want people to see you when they've read it. Watch the Working Artist module video on artist statements.

Write! Write anything and then leave it for three days. Then rewrite and repeat as needed.

www.lynneforester.com

“It took a long while for me to make the decision to sign up for the Working Artist. The course helps you think about where you'd like to exhibit, what kind of artist you'd like to be. With that in mind, I've been more selective with the people and spaces I've approached - and more successful in the outcomes as a result.”

Personally and professionally, I'm delighted I took the Working Artist course and look forward to retaining contact as one of its many alumni in the future.”

Lynne Forrester
www.lynneforester.com

Cyndy Carstens

Writing an artist statement can be a difficult chore for many artists. Over the years I have most likely written at least 40. As I and my art mature and change, the artist statement needs to reflect those movements.

I start an artist statement by handwriting, rather than typing it. Handwriting forces one to slow down and think. Once I put it into the computer, I adjust, add, subtract and then read it aloud.

Artist statements should never ever be more than a page – and the whole page does not need to be filled up.

The most important thing to remember is to write from a genuine place sticking to what is in my heart and not what I “think” someone wants to read or hear. This is a vulnerable place – but so is putting our art out there.



www.cyndycarstens.com

“ I have personally taken more courses and read more books on being an artist and/or marketing for artists than I care to count.

The Working Artist has been by far the most informative from the perspective of actual advice and helping me see my own art career from a different perspective.

This change of outlook has given me more confidence to move forward. Any artist who says they have no fear of being judged or rejected are fooling themselves or lying. You cannot make sincere work without allowing yourself the vulnerability of being repudiated. On the other hand, making art from the depths of your soul will touch many people who connect with your work and delight in it.

The Working Artist will help any artist to think independently and creatively about their art career, where you would like it go, helping you see problems or challenges that sometimes feel insurmountable, and help you think of solutions to overcome hurdles and help get you where you want to be. It is not a quick fix – there is no such thing when it comes to constructing an art business career.

But I can attest the work is worth it, if you are truly committed to yourself and your art.”

Cyndy Carstens

www.cyndycarstens.com

Bob Gherardi

Write down what you feel about your art, just the first few few words that come to mind. What thoughts came to mind when you were creating it? Why did you create it? How do you feel when you look at the finished piece?

Read about artists you admire for direction as a place to start; artists whose work that speaks similarly to yours.

www.gherardi.com

“ I ran from my art for years... like 10 years.

Terrified what it would mean if I gave it my all and never got "successful." How could I face myself? How could I explain that "failure" to anyone?

I slowly crept out of the dark, painting more and more, developing a consistent body of work, I entered juried exhibitions, showed in galleries. But I knew I needed guidance and direction so I signed up for The Working Artist Masterclass.

Now, I am more ready and polished for opportunities. I am more confident.

Where are you in your career? If you're are not ready to talk about your art or you lack direction and goals – then take this class. ”



Bob Gherardi
www.gherardi.com

Sarah Bernikoff

The important thing is to write something. It doesn't have to be good, and it doesn't matter if it's not good. The point is to get something on the paper, because the more you write the more you'll know who you are and what your deeper self wants to express.

It can be as simple as writing 'Art is fun, I like art' as a starting point. You can then try answering the questions: Why do I make art? What does my art say about me? What do I want to say?

Facing a blank page is never easy. Writing is hard work, don't let anyone tell you differently. It is especially hard when writing about yourself. It can be emotionally and physically draining; allow yourself to be tired, own it, take a nap and start again.

www.SavataPhotography.com

“To tell you how far I have come after taking the 'The Working Artist' let me first tell you how it started.

A year ago I starting toying with the idea of monetizing my photography. I had been told that I had a good eye and could be a professional photographer.

I am the consummate planner so when I decided to switch careers I knew exactly where to start – research. That in brought me a Huffington Post interview with Crista Cloutier, the founder of The Working Artist. I was so impressed that I her emailed her.

She was welcoming and generous with advice and invited me to join the program. Her encouragement during the program and even after it was finished was just as profound, enlightening, and important as the vast amounts of information that I gained from The Working Artist Masterclass.

I can call myself an artist now. I am no longer uncertain, I am confident.”

Sarah Bernikoff

www.SavataPhotography.com



Jeannie Motherwell

I update my statement fairly regularly as my work changes. I am often intrigued by what reviewers or artist friends say about my work and I try to glean ideas from them. It helps put a more objective perspective on my work so that the viewer can understand what I'm talking about.

It is important to show how personally invested you are in your work, but also important to explain process and anything else that might be relevant.

I also have separate statements: one for the serious curator or critic, and another for the more novice audience.

My audience is very curious about how I make my paintings because they're large and because of the process I use. It's a great starting point for me and then I can move into the more visceral description.

Remember that shorter is better too. The idea is to get someone to be interested in what and why you are making your art. That shouldn't take a whole epistle.

www.jeanniemotherwell.com

“When I took The Working Artist Masterclass with Crista, I was about to retire from my full time job.

I was a 'night painter' for many years. Now I had my days free! I wanted to figure out the best way to utilize and structure my time to be most productive.

I also knew I wanted to actively pursue gallery representation as the gallery I had been with for more than 10 years had recently closed.

The Working Artist enabled me to feel more confident about my goals and how to achieve them. I am happy to report I am now represented by two commercial galleries, an art consultant, and an interior designer.”

Jeannie Motherwell

www.jeanniemotherwell.com





Jennifer Harris

Start somewhere -
anywhere is my advice for a blank page.

Use humour, for example try typing 'the cat sat on the mat and this is what he saw in my work' and keep going until words about your work pop out without anxiety.

From feeling like you have nothing to say about it, there will soon be plenty to cull.

Start your statement sooner than the last minute!
Let it percolate in the shower and before going to sleep.
As advised by Crista, have your work in front of you if possible because it will give you more clarity in your language.

Don't be offended by having to explain your work – be excited to be able to do the work in the first place and relish the opportunity to let someone see your vision.

www.artofjenniferharris.net

“Even before doing the Working Artist course, I found resonance in, and hope from Crista's weekly blog emails. Here was someone with an authentic voice, who knew what she was talking about as an art world advisor, yet wryly fallible as a fellow life traveller. A good human with hard-earned cred.

I was nervous of spending so much money on the unknown, but I can reassure you about that expenditure 100%. The content and experience more than lived up to what I'd hoped to achieve from participating.

Above and beyond that, having ongoing access to the course materials is reassuring and makes me feel valued.

I can also assure you that Crista's voice is authentic, genuine and ongoing. Not one misstep have I experienced; from her patience and professionalism with the broad spectrum of participants on coaching calls, through to implementing suggestions from feedback at the end of the course.

I must tell you that this course (nor any other you might be contemplating) is not a magic access card that will make 'success' appear – poof – in front of you... You have to do the work, then you have to keep doing the work.”

Jennifer Harris
www.artofjenniferharris.net

Ann Osgood

Crista's advice about finding the story behind the work has been most valuable for me. Stories about the work give people the insight to appreciate what they are viewing even more. People are interested in artists and how the work is made.

Thinking about telling the story instead of writing an artist statement makes it easier to approach. We all tell stories so it isn't that difficult when you realize that is what a statement is.

www.annosgood.com

“I think success snowballs. I've had several opportunities all at the same time since taking The Working Artist.”

Ann Osgood

www.annosgood.com



Lynne Tinley

I have been writing artist statements for around 50 years - but I'm still not sure I am saying exactly what I want to say! It is difficult.

I think the most important thing is to come from the heart. Write down everything you want to say about your art and your mission - write it from the heart and from your emotions. Forget about what you feel you should say - there is no right or wrong, each person's statement is different. Put in something about your process and the artists who inspired you. Then edit - distill it down to a few paragraphs.

For me the Working Artist course reinforced the value of the Artist's Statement as a selling tool. More importantly, it gave me the confidence I needed to look more deeply into my relationship with my art and to tell it as I feel it.

www.boranupgallery.com

“I've been creating and marketing art for over 50 years. I used to do quite well. I made a name for myself painting wild animals, birds and landscapes. As I got older my work changed and no longer appealed to previous buyers. Not only that, but being nomadic, I no longer lived amongst my previous market. I was finding it increasingly difficult to sell my work. I knew I had to change the way I was thinking and marketing my work!!

I signed up for the Working Artist Masterclass and Crista's magic started to work on me even before I completed the course.

My husband and I received a community arts commission for two organisations that focus on rehabilitating natural areas and biodiversity in Western Australia. It was an outstanding success and has been exhibited twice already.

Then I approached a gallery to represent me. The gallerist loved my work and we signed a contract for me to work 2 days a week in the gallery in exchange for hanging space and 10% commission for any works by other artists that I may sell.

I enjoy working in the gallery and it's helped me talk about my own work as well as about art in general. Crista is right - marketing is all about making relationships with people! I've become a good sales person!

Recently, my husband and I were accepted by Sustainable Housing for Artists and Creatives. We have a brand new apartment with working space plus a communal studio/gallery where I can exhibit and give workshops at low cost. Our housing and future art careers are secured! ”



Lynne Tinley

www.boranupgallery.com

*To learn when the next session of
The Working Artist Masterclass is scheduled,
be sure you are signed up for our mailing list.*



www.theworkingartist.com

the
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