

What is an Artist's Statement?

Artist's Statements serve a variety of purposes; they let your reader know the intent, context, and process behind your work. They can be written in a number of formats but should always be clear and concise about what the work accomplishes. A statement should give the reader a sense of what your work is like before they see it. You should tailor your statement to its specific purpose. Here are some examples of when you would use an artist statement:

Class Assignment

Artist's statements are sometimes written for the purpose of presenting a project to class. In this capacity, it is a tool for critique and should contain relevant detail, describing intent and execution

Gallery Solicitation

When submitting slides to a gallery you should include an artist's statement that articulates the nature of your work. This statement should "match" the work and contain relevant and useful description.

Grant/Fellowship Application

Often, grant applications require the submission of an artist's statement. This statement should directly relate to the images or slides that are submitted with the application and should provide some details about the content or form of the work.

Graduate School Application

Graduate schools often request artist's statements from prospective students, asking them to describe their work and their understanding of their 'place' in contemporary art. These statements should also include goals you intend to pursue in graduate school.

Content

Process/Technique

What kind of techniques are significant to your work? How do you make decisions about the progress of a piece?

One Piece, a Series, or Several Projects

A statement can explain and describe a single piece, the development and execution of an entire series, or can discuss the connections between several projects.

Sources

What are the sources for the imagery or ideas in your work? Are there other artists who do work in the same vein?

Medium

What materials do you use and why are they significant?

Personal Experience

Are there experiences in your life that are relevant to your subject matter?

Subject/Content

Are there consistent themes or subjects in your work? What are your goals for an individual piece or series? What do you want the viewer to experience?

Format

Philosophy/Manifesto

A statement can serve as a manifesto for your work. What defines successful art-making in your medium?

Proposal

A statement can be written before the execution of a project, highlighting your goals and plan for progress.

Biographical or Narrative

A statement can combine traditional prose with the discussion of methodology and process.

SAMPLE ARTIST'S STATEMENT

by Nicola Lopez

Taken from <http://www.artistsspace.org/webpace/2005/Sept05/lopez.html>

The landscape that we live in has become saturated with signs of the easy mobility, speed, constant communication, imposition of structure, insistence on growth and glorification of technology that have come to be so characteristic of our society today. My work incorporates these signs, exaggerating and reconfiguring them in order to build maps that convey the sense of wonder and vertigo that is inevitable as we face the landscape of today's world. I draw on the visual language of cartography in order to evoke the idea of mapping, although my maps do not refer to actual places. Neither are they depictions of utopias or dystopias; they are maps that represent how our actual world is structured, not on a literally geographical, but on an experiential level.

The physical process of building each piece reflects the evolution that urban landscape undergoes. In the accretion of imagery and physical material, a history and structure are built in my work that reflect the layers of architecture, history, technology and topography that make up the world depicted.

I use the language of printmaking to address the processes of automation and mass production that have brought today's world into existence. The specific media of intaglio, woodblock and drawing that I choose to work with, however, are still closely linked to the artist's hand and allow the work to be about my own attempt as an individual to come up with a system of navigating this overwhelming landscape instead of simply consuming one of the pre-fabricated, mass-produced and -marketed versions, of which there are so many.

As with the evolution of the human-built landscape, there are moments in the construction of my world where the building proceeds according to plans that have already been laid and there are moments when the building precedes its own planning, expanding unpredictably and organically towards an order of a very different sort. Our world is full of the tension between just this order and disorder and my work focuses on that tension, creating images of landscapes that struggle against themselves, that strive towards order and beauty as they verge on the edge of spinning beyond control or comprehension. The maps and images that I create do not propose a clearly navigable territory or a clear destination, but ask the question of where we really are and where we might be going.

Nicola Lopez