

CONGRATULATIONS!

You've declare yourself an artist.

Now explain yourself.

Don't confuse these

- **Artist Bio:** answers who are you. A description of one's life.
- **Curriculum Vitae (CV):** answers what you've done. A resume'.
- **Work Statement:** this has become interchangeable with Artist Statement. But not here, not tonight. Work Statements describe a project: What you made, how you made it, why you made it and what you made it with.
- **Artist Statement:** In my opinion, this is the toughest to answer because it will state what you stand for, what your work represents, what animates your work, what's behind your entire catalog of work and how serious you are.
 - This is what we're working on tonight.

Artist Statements are Stupid

Stop griping and get it done

- My work is enough to define me.
 - Rubbish.
 - What if you are a rich, white girl taking pictures of the ghetto, or a poor black kid making images in Green Hills,
 - doesn't that carry some significance or insight?
 - You bet it does.
- An artist statement provides insights and context into you and your work
- Besides, writing a statement allows you to get that swirl of elusive ideas and ideas that only makes sense to you, out of your head and organized in a concrete, meaningful way.

Why You Need an Artist Statement

- To enter competitions
- To put on your website/social media
- To apply for Grants
- To apply for Artist-in-Residence Programs
- To audition for Galleries
- To explain to your Kids
- And...to sell your work!

But most importantly, to understand yourself

– We'll get to that later on

Elements of an Artist Statement

- An artist statement provides insights and context
 - Why you make art
 - What inspires or drives you to make art
 - Why people should care
 - What your art signifies or represents
 - What it communicates
 - What's unique or special about how you make it
 - (and briefly) what it means to you

But first, Let's Look at Some Examples

Of a couple of good ones...

Bio

RODNEY SMITH is a modest man. With eclectic sensibilities. He can wear an ascot without appearing pretentious. He proclaims himself to be a closet optimist. He believes Modernism took a wrong turn at the wrong time. He thinks Freud saved his life. He graduated Yale. He lives in a wooded enclave in Snedens Landing, just close enough to Manhattan to meet an editor for lunch at a moment's notice, but far enough away to mollify his disdain for city living. He loves books. Paper. And printed matter. *He wrestles with Big Ideas and references Wittgenstein and Plato as if he saw them just yesterday.* He's tweedy. Never needy. Proud. Not loud. He's a perfectionist. Workaholic. Worry wart and fuss budget. He won't stop what he's doing until he's satisfied that it couldn't be done any better. He's adamantly analog. *Only shoots film.* Never uses special effects. And knows the darkroom like the back of his hand. His work is outside of time. He creates worlds whose logic is his own. *He's old school with a twist.* A landscape photographer. Who places people in landscapes. A realist who puts dreams onto paper. A man who is kind, generous and humorous. Who has a great wife. A lovely daughter. A successful son who's made Rodney a proud grandfather. A thinking man's man in a bespoke suit with an eye that sees the world in a way you or I will only see it if it's in the form of one of his photographs.

Rodney Smith



So it comes as no surprise that he makes pictures like this..



Christopher Wilson / artist statement

After 15 years in the advertising world as a writer and art director Christopher jumped off the cliff to start Christopher Wilson Photography. Now Christopher is bringing all that experience and passion to his photography – and it shows.

Before that he was a ballet dancer. He danced 8 hrs. a day, made no money, survived on bread and coffee, lost 20 lbs. he didn't have, looked like hell and broke his ankle, twice. What an idiot.

Before that he was at Dartmouth College where he studied ancient Greek, Latin and Italian Literature. Good stuff to know, he says, if you ever want to work at the Vatican.

He is an obsessed mountain biker and enters races whenever he can, which is never because he is too busy working and taking care of his two beautiful daughters, Celia and Raney, by far the best things he has ever created.

His wife Cathy lives in the center of his heart.

Christopher Wilson is forever looking to create work that is as inspiring as his children are, and is as moving and powerful as his wife is.

Christopher Wilson



So it comes as no surprise that he makes pictures like this..



My current Artist Statement

I am a child and a product of the Sixties who has had the good fortune of a successful, thirty-year career as a creative professional and artist. My work is influenced by the music, message and events of that generation:

Love is the most powerful force in the universe.

I make photographs that attempt spiritual depth and meaning, challenging an age of scientific materialism, nihilism and spiritual bankruptcy.

I make photographs as a quest for authenticity and a plea for the rediscovery of connection.

I make photographs in pursuit of love and the Divine Source of Love.

Let's get to it. Who Are You?

- Four critical questions to answer

1. Briefly (as in one or two sentences), **Who Are You?**

Remember, Rodney was a modest man. Tweedy, not needy.

Chris was a broke, ballet dancer.

Let's try this together. I'll start. You can grab a piece of paper and pen and give it a shot.

Helpful hint: Be specific. Avoid sweeping generalizations (e.g. I'm a Landscape Photographer). Say exactly what you mean. And sound like yourself (ref: Rodney) but succinct.

Me: I'm a hippy. And have been a creative professional for a long-time.

I am a child and a product of the Sixties who has had the good fortune of a successful, thirty-year career as a creative professional and artist.

What are you trying to say?

- Four critical questions to answer

2. What are you trying to say with your work?

This is more than just what you are photographing. It's more about what you are trying to communicate to the viewer.

Helpful hint: Avoid reticence. Be direct and confident. This is THE THING that animates your art. If you don't have this you are screwed in so many ways.

Me: After all these years, there is only one worthwhile message to communicate:

Love is the most powerful force in the universe.

Why are you making this art?

- Four critical questions to answer

3. Why are you making this art?

How did you come to create this art?

Why do you feel the need make this art in this particular way?

What has inspired you to make this art?

Helpful hint: Dig deep for this one. And be honest. It's OK to say, "I'm recently retired and looking for something to do." This part of the Statement will explain a lot.

Me: Are you kidding me? I grew up with the music, films, books and arts of the counter-culture. American culture has shifted greatly since then. And it is an artist's job to express point(s) of view. I make art as a challenge.

I make photographs that attempt spiritual depth and meaning, challenging an age of scientific materialism, nihilism and spiritual bankruptcy.

Why should the viewer care?

- Four critical questions to answer

4. Why should the viewer care?

Why is what you are saying significant and valuable ?

How are you making me see something in a way I wouldn't see it otherwise?

How are you making me feel something unique or important?

Why is your voice the best to transmit this information?

Helpful hint: Waking up each morning and making art is hard. Answering this question extends purpose beyond yourself allowing for added motivation.

Me: Americans revere the stoic, adamantly independent and self-reliant cowboy. I say, *Hooey!!* to all that. It is an unnatural myth that engenders divisiveness and aloneness. It devalues the elderly and those in need and creates an excuse to let them fend for themselves and wash our hands of them. So, you ask, why? I'll tell you why, WE NEED EACH OTHER!

I make photographs as a quest for authenticity and a plea for the rediscovery of connection.

Whew! There you have it.

Take another read and see if notice anything odd...

I am a child and a product of the Sixties who has had the good fortune of a successful, thirty-year career as a creative professional and artist. My work is influenced by the music, message and events of that generation:

Love is the most powerful force in the universe.

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It's written for me. It's what I read when I question why I want to be an artist. I don't give a hoot what gallery owners, grant administrators, etc. think. Coincidentally, and in my opinion, it's what anyone interested in my work would be interested in. It's not too different from Rodney's Statement, is it?

Some examples of my work



Some examples of my work



Some examples of my work



Some examples of my work



Review & Do's and Don'ts

Nick' elements of an Artists Statement:

- 1.A brief Who Are You
- 2.What you stand for
- 3.What your work represents
- 4.What animates your work
- 5.What's behind your entire catalog of work
- 6.How serious you are.

- Have a clear intention
- Be brief
- Be specific
- Write in the first person, present tense
- Come across as confident
- Be honest
- Have someone critique/edit it
- Allow it to evolve

- Don't be grandiose or pompous
- Avoid art speak. Say it in plain English.
- Don't be too technical
- No folksy anecdotes
- Don't tell your life's story
- No obtuse references
- Don't brag
- Don't ever think you're done, because then you are.

Artist Statement Generator

http://500letters.org/form_15php

- That's right, if you really stink at this, or are just plain lazy, have a machine do it for you.
- I've taken the liberty to fill out the form for US...
- Let's see what we get.

1. Personal Data

Gender: Male Female

First name:

Surname:

Date of birth: Birthplace City:

Country:

Workplace City:

2. Media

I mainly work with:
(select 1 medium)

Painting
 Photography
 Drawing
 Sculpture
 Performance
 Media art
 Installation art
 Film
 Mixed media
 Conceptual
 I work in a variety of media

I also work with:
(not required, select multiple)

Painting
 Photography
 Drawing
 Sculpture
 Performance
 Media art
 Installation art
 Film
 Mixed media
 Conceptual

3. My main themes are . . .

pick three (each theme generates 100 words or 500 letters)

<input type="checkbox"/> Abstraction	<input type="checkbox"/> Form	<input type="checkbox"/> Post-modern
<input type="checkbox"/> Aesthetics	<input type="checkbox"/> Interpretation	<input type="checkbox"/> Presentation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alienation	<input type="checkbox"/> Irony	<input type="checkbox"/> Referential
<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriation	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape	<input type="checkbox"/> Representation
<input type="checkbox"/> Archive	<input type="checkbox"/> Language	<input type="checkbox"/> Romanticism
<input type="checkbox"/> Chance	<input type="checkbox"/> Memory	<input type="checkbox"/> Semiotics
<input type="checkbox"/> Concept	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimalism	<input type="checkbox"/> Situation
<input type="checkbox"/> Confusion	<input type="checkbox"/> Movement	<input type="checkbox"/> Social criticism
<input type="checkbox"/> Craftsmanship	<input type="checkbox"/> Poetics	<input type="checkbox"/> Strategy
<input type="checkbox"/> Everyday	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pop-culture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Urbanity
		<input type="checkbox"/> Utopia

Artist Statement Generator

http://500letters.org/form_15php

- If you can't write your own statement, then you can have an algorithm create one for you and you can become that person.
- My point is, your artist statement is for you. Use it when you can't think of what to create, or why you should bother.
- Write it because it's a personal manifesto. It is the gas in your tank.
- If nothing else gallery owners, grant administrators, etc. will recognize it's honesty and authenticity and perhaps pique their interest.
- Let's use the Nicky algorithm to create one.

Francis Bacon

Francis Bacon (°1960, Paris, France) is an artist who mainly works with photography. In a search for new methods to 'read the city', Bacon tries to create works in which the actual event still has to take place or just has ended: moments evocative of atmosphere and suspense that are not part of a narrative thread. The drama unfolds elsewhere while the build-up of tension is frozen to become the memory of an event that will never take place.

His photos often refers to pop and mass culture. Using written and drawn symbols, a world where light-heartedness rules and where rules are undermined is created. By using popular themes such as sexuality, family structure and violence, he touches various overlapping themes and strategies. Several reoccurring subject matter can be recognised, such as the relation with popular culture and media, working with repetition, provocation and the investigation of the process of expectations.

His works are given improper functions: significations are inverted and form and content merge. Shapes are dissociated from their original meaning, by which the system in which they normally function is exposed. Initially unambiguous meanings are shattered and disseminate endlessly. By putting the viewer on the wrong track, he focuses on the idea of 'public space' and more specifically on spaces where anyone can do anything at any given moment: the non-private space, the non-privately owned space, space that is economically uninteresting.

His works are often about contact with architecture and basic living elements. Energy (heat, light, water), space and landscape are examined in less obvious ways and sometimes developed in absurd ways. Francis Bacon currently lives and works in Guayaquil.

Save your bio to the sites gallery

Here's one I made up in 2 minutes.

Exercise 1

I am a soccer mom with a Nursing Degree. I've come to believe that nurturing isn't all it's cracked up to be. In fact, the lack of reciprocation from my husband, kids and patients has made me angry enough to pick up a camera without even knowing how use it. What has emerged is a body of work that turns resentment into pretty, fuzzy pictures that my husband, kids and patients love. This makes me crazy. Each series of photographs I make drives me deeper into a need for self-absorption. This becomes visually apparent as symbols of violence and isolation... (who wants finish this?)

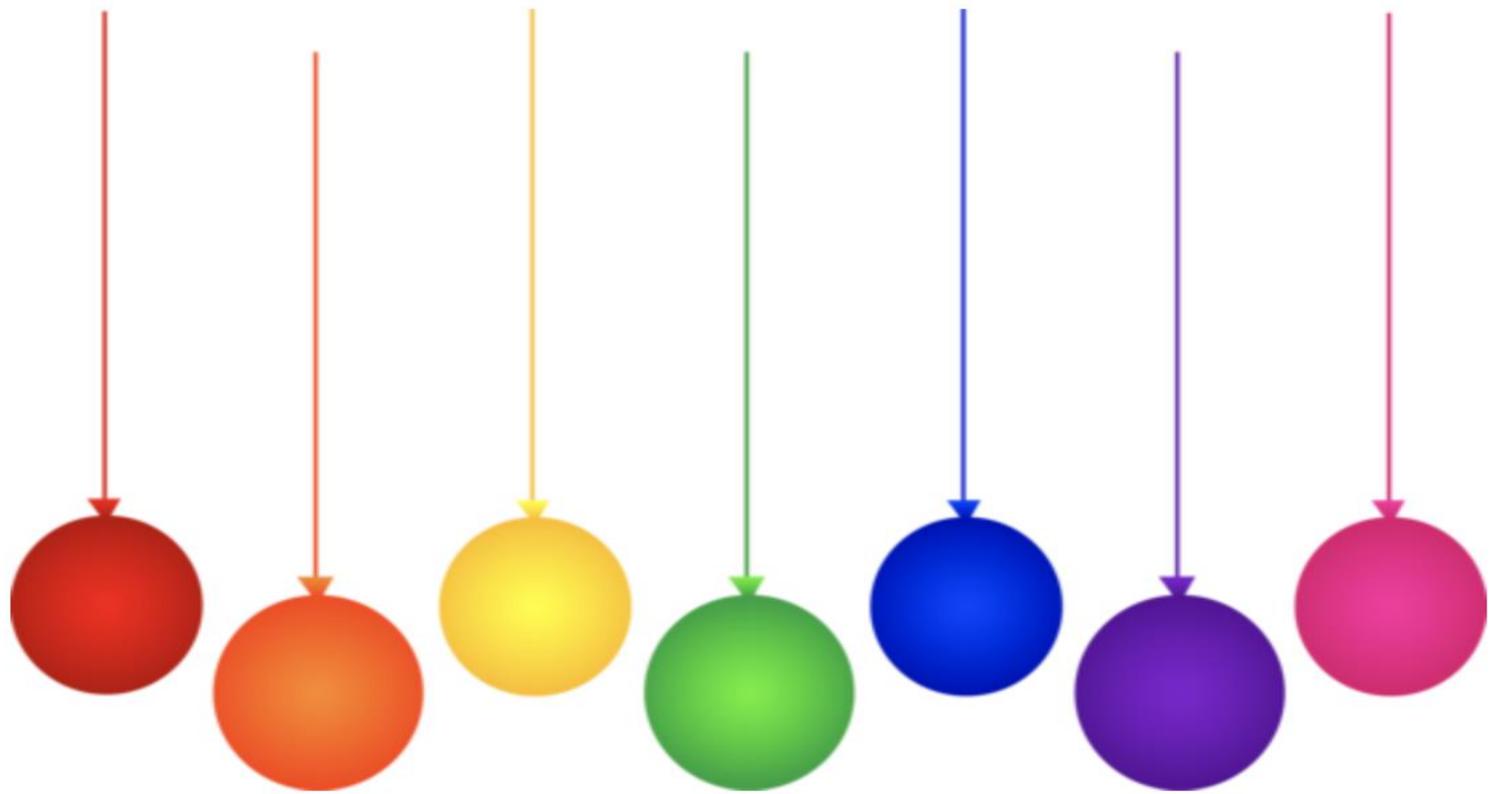
Exercise 2

I am evolving from a hobbyist to an artist. I know this because I take pictures of clichés, like pictures of decay, like old barns and old pianos. I even went to Cuba to take pictures of old cars. Decay and old things come with their own narrative. I don't have to work real hard to have a point of view. They also are very graphic and have very interesting colors. I don't have to over think composition. I use the Auto setting on my camera as a way of relinquishing control...(anyone want to finish this one?)

Exercise 3

I am a sunny person. I make pretty pictures as a way to fight the ugliness in this world. I am also too old and too scared to go into conflict areas. Leave that for the young. I'd much rather go to Sedona and discover my inner light.

(anyone want finish this one?)



Good Luck!

You've declare yourself an artist.

Now explain yourself.

Resources

- Crusade for Your Art – by Jennifer Yoffy Schwartz
- GYST.com
 - www.gyst-ink.com/artist-statement-guidelines/
- ArtBusiness.com
 - <http://www.artbusiness.com/artstate.html>