



How to Write an Artist Statement Buyers Can Understand

Artist & Gallery Resources

By Mark Shapiro | The Art Fair Advantage

One of the most important marketing tools an artist can create is an artist statement.

Unfortunately, it is also one of the most misunderstood.

After more than 40 years in the art world, I have read artist statements that were beautifully written, and I have read artist statements that required a dictionary, an art historian, and perhaps a translator to understand.

Here is my advice:

Write for the collector, not the committee.

The goal of an artist statement is not to impress people with complicated language.

The goal is to help people connect with your artwork.

What Is an Artist Statement?

An artist statement answers a simple question:

“What am I looking at, and why did you create it?”

When collectors walk into your booth, they are often curious.

They want to understand:

What inspired the work
Why you chose the subject matter
What the collection means
What motivates you as an artist
What you hope people feel

They do not need a university lecture.

They need a conversation.

Keep It Short

One of the biggest mistakes artists make is writing too much.

My recommendation is simple:

150 to 250 words.

That is enough to explain your ideas without overwhelming the reader.

Remember, people are standing in a booth, not sitting in a classroom.

Your statement should invite them in, not wear them out.

Use Everyday Language

Imagine you are speaking to a collector who has just stopped in front of your artwork.

What would you say?

Your artist statement should sound like that conversation.

Avoid:

Excessive art jargon
Academic language
Complex theories
Long technical explanations
Words you would not normally say out loud

Instead, focus on:

Inspiration
Process
Purpose

Emotion
Connection

Collectors respond to clarity.

They respond to honesty.

They respond to language that feels human.

A Simple Formula That Works

I recommend using three simple parts.

The Inspiration

What inspired this body of work?

Was it a place, memory, emotion, material, personal experience, or visual idea?

The Process

How do you create the work?

Briefly explain your materials, method, technique, or approach.

The Meaning

What do you hope viewers experience?

What feeling, question, or connection do you want the work to create?

That is it.

Three simple sections.

Connect It to the Collection

Your artist statement should support the artwork hanging in your booth.

I like to see consistency and a theme that resonates with viewers and collectors.

If your statement talks about nature, your artwork should reinforce that story.

If your collection explores memory, color, movement, identity, history, or abstraction, your statement should help explain that connection.

Everything should work together.

Your artwork.

Your booth.

Your website.

Your social media.

Your statement.

Your collector should feel like they are entering one clear world.

Where Should You Use It?

Your artist statement belongs in many places.

Use it:

In your booth

On your website

In exhibition catalogs

On your social media profiles

In email marketing

In collector packets

On your price list

Through a QR code displayed in your booth

The more consistent the message, the stronger your brand becomes.

My Final Thought

Collectors buy artwork because it speaks to them emotionally.

A strong artist statement helps them understand why.

Keep it clear.

Keep it honest.

Keep it human.

And most importantly, write it so real people want to read it.

See you on the show floor.

— **Mark Shapiro**

The Art Fair Advantage