

Writing an Artist's Statement

At the Hope Arts Festival, the artist's statements will be displayed for all to read, in order to engage the viewers more in the art experience.

The written statement has long been valued as an idea-provoking addition to the artist's visual images and objects. For the viewing public, it provides insight into the artist's purpose, motivations, relationship to the media, and influences. The purpose of a statement is NOT to explain the work; let people enjoy your art and draw their own conclusions. The key purpose is to briefly give a introduction to your work.

Artists go about creating a statement in many ways using a myriad of writing styles. Remembering that the statement is meant to communicate clearly; write it in a clear and concise way using vocabulary that is readily understood. Many artists gain valuable insights into their own objectives while working on this kind of statement.

Additional pointers:

- Be brief. Two three-sentence paragraphs are a good length for an introductory statement.
- Tell why you create your art and what it means to you.
- Appeal to the emotions. Convey feeling about your art.
- Avoid complex explanations, obscure references, and "artspeak."
- Try not to categorize your work or compare yourself to others.
- Use language that everyone can understand.
- Do not "explain" each piece — write more generally about your work as a whole.

On the next page are samples of statements by Hope artists. Start by looking at the following questions and writing descriptive phrases about each. Then read other artists' statements to get a feel for this kind of writing.

- How would you describe the subject matter, if any?
- What is a major objective in creating the work?
- Why did you choose to use the materials that you used and in the way you did to create the work?
- How do you want the viewer to approach the work — their attitude, their role as viewer?

In regards to his own creative gift, writer Henri Nouwen said, "Writing is a process in which we discover what lives in us. The writing itself reveals to us what is alive in us." This process, discovery, and revelation is certainly found in the visual arts as well. It is a mystery that fascinates me, lures me, and sings to me.

My work is abstract, yet nonobjective. I work abstractly because the spiritual issues that I wrestle with are not visually tangible; they are abstract: expressing a quality apart from an object, having only intrinsic form with little or no pictorial representation. Although my work is abstract, it contains definite symbolism. Symbol is the language of the soul. Color, line, shape, and texture are my parts of speech.

My images are thought, feeling, lessons learned, and truth revealed come to visual life. They come from the experiences (struggles, pains, and joys) of relating to and understanding God, people, and myself; these are the archetypal metaphors such as arches, doors, windows, vessels, eggs, and other common objects (like hourglasses and seesaws) to deal with these matters.

An idea gives life to shapes, color, and arrangement. Then the intuitive process and result reciprocate to show something previously unknown, new, and life-giving.

Laura Jennings

Clay is therapy for me. Monsters usually emerge in response.

For years, I made no two pieces alike, until my heart and hands turned to making masks. A series of faces has grown.

Most of my pieces go out to the garden. They are usually too intense to live with in the house every day. Most take on life, and I watch them hide as the summer garden grows and reemerge when winter returns the garden to bones.

My masks are inside-out faces. Do you recognize any of them?

Rick Van Dyke