What does artist statement mean?

An artist's statement (or artist statement) is an artist's written description of their work. The brief verbal representation is for, and in support of, his or her own work to give the viewer understanding.

What is an Artist's Statement?

1. A general introduction to your work, a body of work, or a specific project.
2. It should open with the work's basic ideas in an overview of two or three sentences or a short paragraph.
3. The second paragraph should go into detail about how these issues or ideas are presented in the work.

How should I write it?

1. Ask yourself
   - Why did you choose this building or structure?
   - What is it? Name/fame?
   - Where is it located?
   - How does it relate to you?
   - Your feelings and understandings about the structure?
   - What are you trying to say in the work?
   - What materials have you used?
   - What surface handling technique have you used?
   - How do your methods of working (techniques, style, formal decisions) support the content of your work?
   - What are specific examples of this in your work
   - Does this statement conjure up any images?
2. Refer to yourself in the first person, not as “the artist”. Make it come from you. Make it singular, not general, and reflective of yourself and your work.
3. Make it clear and direct, concise and to the point.
4. It should not be longer than one page.
5. It should be typed
6. Use no smaller than 10 – 12 point type.
7. Artist's statements are usually single-spaced.
8. Do not use fancy fonts or tricky formatting. The information should wow them, not the graphic design.
Considerations:

1. Who is your audience? What level are you writing for?
2. What will your statement be used for?
3. What does your statement say about you as an artist and a professional?

Style:

1. Be honest.
2. Try to capture your own speaking voice.
3. Write it in formal speech.
4. Avoid repetition of phrases and words. Look for sentences that say the same thing you said before, but in a different way. Choose the better of the two.
5. Vary sentence structure and length. The length of a sentence should relate to the complexity of the idea.
6. Organization of detail is important. Significant ideas should be at the end of each sentence for emphasis.

Where should it go?

1. A copy should go in your sketchbook.
2. A copy will be posted on the exhibition panel, next to your drawing.

Word count:

200-350
It’s a sentiment you don’t hear very often, and yet it’s what we found ourselves saying after reading the statements below. Artist statements don’t have to be a source of fear (for the writer) and boredom (for the reader)! See a few examples of strong artist statements below, and below that, a discussion of what makes them good.

Bruce Pashak-Artist Statement, Mixed media painter:

My art forms are intended as playgrounds for the viewer’s imagination. Riddles that you might try to puzzle out but never need to solve. I’m a sensualist, not an ideologist. Viewers must feel their way through the work. Formalism – the long history of artistic seduction – is used as a lure but is offered without an agenda. I select imagery, words, colour, technology and material elements to spark a response and then another one and on and on until you feel contained within this cacophony of creative release. Consumed by experience as with a Mahler symphony.

Technology has changed our linear narrative vision. There are more voices to be heard now coming at us from all angles. Art should propagate those possibilities. Still, perception is the hard rock of history and requires some provocation to jostle it free.

Andy Yoder, sculptor:

“Many people take great comfort in the bathroom towels being the same color as the soap, toilet paper, and tiles. It means there is a connection between them, and an environment of order. Home is a place not only of comfort, but of control. This sense of order, in whatever form it takes, acts as a shield against the unpredictability and lurking chaos of the outside world.

My work is an examination of the different forms this shield takes, and the thinking that lies behind it. I use domestic objects as the common denominators of our personal environment. Altering them is a way of questioning the attitudes, fears and unwritten rules which have formed that environment and our behavior within it.”
Nancy McIntyre, printmaker:

I like it when a place has been around long enough that there is a kind of tension between the way it was originally designed to look and the way it looks now, as well as a tension between the way it looks to whoever is caring for it and the way it looks to me. Trouble is, the kinds of places I find most appealing keep getting closed or torn down.

What do I want to say with my art?

Celebrate the human, the marks people make on the world. Treasure the local, the small-scale, the eccentric, the ordinary: whatever is made out of caring. Respect what people have built for themselves. Find the beauty in some battered old porch or cluttered, human-scale storefront, while it still stands.

So what makes these artist statements work?

What these artist statements do

- keep it short
- grab the reader’s interest with the first sentence
- introduce the author’s personality and enthusiasm
- give a hint about the why of the artwork
- use the first person (I, me, mine — this is not a strict rule, but it does seem to help the author write a more straightforward, readable statement)

What these artist statements don’t do

- summarize the resume found elsewhere on the website
- give a physical description of artwork photographed elsewhere on the website
- sound generic
- use “art speak”