1st Written Assignment: Artist Statement

Fall Semester

The purpose of the artist's statement is to succinctly encapsulate your entire body of work or to briefly cover an area of research/unit/project that you intend to present in your thesis among other occasions. The writing of an artist statement that you are assigned, is limited to one page of up to 500 words. If, however, there are particular reasons for which you would like to ignore these suggestions and you would like to use your own approach to the task, go for it! Some of the following observations may help you in your drafting but you are not obliged to follow all the guidelines. Each of us has different needs and you know better what your priorities are at the time for writing your artist’s statement, which should be updated in line with the development of your work or project.

It is important to consider who you are addressing with your artist’s statement. Do not necessarily think of me as the addressee but the person you are interested in sending the artist’s statement to in the context of an application, an open invitation to participate in an exhibition, project etc. There is a difference between writing an artist’s statement in an exhibition catalogue and writing an artist's statement for a competition, a fellowship or a residency.

Points to consider when writing your artist’s statement:

1. Specify which medium (or combination of media) you are using.

2. Describe your methodology, the ways you handle your material. How a particular technique is important to your work. Highlight it without excessive details.

3. Central concepts that are central to your project. How do you justify what you do? How does your recent work relate to your previous work? It is always useful to think about this point since it will lead you to some key concepts around your entire project.

4. Your references to contemporary or historical trends or movements must be valid and justify the connection to your work, otherwise you might give the impression of a sterile encyclopaedic reference. It goes without saying that in a one-page artist's statement, it is unnecessary to quote quotations. The development of critical and analytical thinking is done through your work itself in relation to its context.

5. Avoid an overly academic or pompous, ambiguous style. The same applies to texts that are politically charged or have a didactic style. I am also available to accept material that is currently in progress or material that is important to you but unusual to include in a typical artist's statement.

6. Common weaknesses in writing artists’ statements include references to childhood and topics popular in journalism such as the recent pandemic phenomenon. In several cases, I notice that they might tend to fill in a gap of reasoning that has not been found. But if they are genuine or integral elements of your work, then feel free to include them.

7. Be careful with your spelling and grammar. I mention this mainly to those who intend to share their artist’s statement with third parties or to publish it.