

## HOW TO WRITE AN ARTIST BIO

### What is an Artist's Bio?

An artist's bio is a **short** statement which focuses on pertinent personal, professional and artistic information. A bio is a brief, but hopefully tantalizing, **introduction into who you are**, where you come from (artistically or geographically), what kind of art you create, how long you've been creating, and possibly, a little about your training and a few of your accomplishments. Simply: It introduces you to your viewer and is your chance to make both a connection and a good first impression.

### What *isn't* an Artist's Bio?

An artist's bio is not a resume. It is not the detailed history of your life and career to date. It does not list your every accomplishment, award, exhibition, workshop, art class, nor does it list dates back to the Magna Carta. In contrast, the Artist Statement is specifically about your art: your subject, materials, process, and/or vision, for example.

### Why should I write an Artist's Bio?

An Artist's bio can be a helpful tool in promoting you and your work. People are curious about who you are, not just about what you create. Sharing personal information can create a bridge of connection between you and a possible buyer/collector. Write about yourself in a way that will draw attention and support your position as the creator of spectacular art. A finely crafted, knowledgeable bio will compel people to buy.

**STICK TO BASICS:** Answer these questions as simply as you can. Then pick the most honest and compelling answers as the basis for writing your bio.

#### WHO ARE YOU?

1. Where were you born and raised?
2. What influenced you to become an artist? Were any of your family artists?
3. Where have you lived (that might have influenced your art)?

#### WHAT IS YOUR BACKGROUND? WHAT ARE YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS?

1. Where have you studied and with whom?
2. What are the most important/exciting/ exhibitions you've shown at?
3. Have you won awards? What is the most important/favorite award you've won?
4. Is your work collected?

**WHAT IS YOUR ART ABOUT?** (Tell a little bit about your art IN GENERAL. The Artist Statement is the place to be more specific about the art work that you are showing.)

1. What media do you prefer (enjoy)(employ)?
2. What is distinctive about your style?
3. What is your process?
4. Where do you exhibit?
5. Do you collaborate with other artists?

## TIPS for writing a Bio:

When writing a bio, remember the difference between *bio* and *biography*.

Bio = short. Biography = long. Limit your bio to three or four sentences.

Most guidelines suggest that you write in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person, however, this is YOUR bio. Write in a way that is authentic to who you are.

Generally, it is suggested that you use your full name (first and last) only the first time. After that, be consistent with your choice.

- first names are friendly and informal, while last names are more conservative and formal
- use your first name if you are trying to develop a relationship with your reader (e.g. you want them to buy your art)
- use your last name if you want your reader to be impressed by you

Briefly highlight your main achievements. Cover only the “high points” of your career.

Personal information is optional, but remember that you are trying to create a connection with your viewer, and people will want to know more about you personally.

Your bio should reflect the real you (even though it might be written in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person). If you're a down-to-earth person, use unpretentious language and consider using the 1<sup>st</sup> person. If you have a particular passion, let the reader know. If you love to joke around, include some humor in your bio (but be careful, humor can be tricky).

If you choose to write a longer bio, make sure you break it into short paragraphs (no more than three sentences in each paragraph). By making your paragraphs nice and short, you'll increase the likelihood that people will actually read your bio.

Born in Los Angeles, California and raised in a large creative family,  
Chris Mathis has pursued a lifelong interest in the arts,  
expressed through many mediums, including assemblage, painting,  
music and photography. Self taught by studying the works of others,  
reading, watching and practicing, Chris' work has won awards,  
been published, commissioned and collected.  
Chris often collaborates with other Los Angeles area artists.

**Adapted and edited, in part, from:**

*eHow.com*

*howtowritebio.com*

*thebusinessofdanceandmusic.com*

Thanks to Chris Mathis for a fine bio.

## HOW TO WRITE AN ARTIST STATEMENT

### What is an Artist's Statement?

An artist's statement is a short document written by the artist which provides a window into the artist's world. It offers insight by describing the artist's creative process, philosophy, and vision. An artist's statement reads easily, is informative, and adds to the understanding of the artist's work.

**In contrast**, the Artist Bio is a brief introduction into who the artist is: where they come from, what kind of art they create (generally speaking), their training, and maybe a nod to who collects them or where they've shown. (See the example in "How to Write an Artist Bio".)

### What *isn't* an Artist's Statement?

An artist's statement is not a résumé, a biography, a list of accomplishments and awards, a summary of exhibitions, or a catalogue of works. It should not be difficult to understand, pretentious, or overly flowery.

### Why should I write an Artist's Statement?

The artist's statement builds a bridge between artist and audience. People who love an artist's work generally want to know more about the artist. Your statement will help your viewers answer questions they may have about your art, and reveal deeper themes and subtext that will enhance their awareness of your work.

### What information should be included?

**STICK TO BASICS.** ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS AS SIMPLY AS YOU CAN. *Then pick the most honest and compelling answers as the basis for writing your artist's statement.*

### WHAT IS YOUR WORK ABOUT? CONTENT: THEMES, MESSAGES:

1. What message/emotion/theme/issues are you trying to convey to the viewer?
2. What is your vision/philosophy? What are your ideals? And what does your art say about your vision/philosophy/ideals?
3. Does emotional, social or political content play a part in your work? If so, this may bring out a subtext, non-obvious element that makes your work more interesting.
4. Why have you chosen to create your particular imagery?
5. Is there something that people don't understand about your work that you want to address?
6. If your artist statement refers to a specific piece, why did you choose to represent this piece in this way? What do you call the piece and why?

### WHY DO YOU CREATE? HOW DO YOU FEEL?

1. Why do you create art and what does it mean to you?
2. How does the creation of art make you feel?
3. What inspires you? How are your inspirations expressed in your work?
4. What artists have influenced you?
5. How is your work a reflection of you?

### PROCESS: MATERIALS & TECHNIQUES

1. What is your favorite medium/material? Why? Is there anything unusual about the way you employ it? What are your techniques and style and how do these relate to the medium?
2. What is the role of color, texture and/or motion in your work?
3. How do your techniques and style relate to your vision/philosophy?
4. What patterns emerge in your work? Is there a pattern in the way you select materials? In the way you use color, texture or light?

## How long should an artist's statement be?

Write three SHORT paragraphs. (250 WORDS is a good target.) KEEP IT BRIEF! People have short attention spans. They want to look at the art, not read pages of written material. Keep your sentences authentic and direct. Use the present tense and, as a rule, write in the first person.

**1st paragraph.** Begin with a simple statement of why you create your work. Support that statement, telling the reader more about your goals (conveying a message, a theme, an emotion, etc.). MAKE IT COMPELLING.

**2nd paragraph.** Give an insight into your creative process. How and why do you select themes? How do you use materials and techniques? KEEP IT SIMPLE and tell the truth.

**3rd paragraph.** Tell the reader a little more about your current work - how it grew out of prior work or life experiences. What are you exploring, attempting, or challenging by doing this work?

Instead of using non-descriptive verbs such as “do”, “make”, try:

achieve	administer	advise	complete
coordinate	critique	develop	direct
establish	execute	formulate	gather
generate	improve	implement	initiate
instruct	introduce	invent	launch
lecture	manage	plan	research
review	select	solve	utilize

### TIPS:

- Keep your statement direct, clear, concise and BRIEF.
- KEEP IT SIMPLE – no poetic flights of fancy.
- Use words and phrases that communicate clearly. Be specific, not vague. Take each sentence and try to explain it more clearly.
- AVOID flowery language and "art-speak". Non-artists will be reading this so don't use technical jargon and cliché. Terms that have the advantage of being art-related without being esoteric and pretentious are the elements of art (line, color, shape, value, space, form, and texture), and the principles of design (balance, emphasis, movement, harmony/unity, pattern, rhythm, proportion, and variety).
- Avoid obscure references to music, art, literature, history, or anything else that requires detailed explanation.
- Address and answer commonly asked questions about your art. Save the complicated explanations for those who progress to the next level.
- Talk about what your art does for you, not what it's supposed to do for the readers. Don't instruct people on how to see, feel, behave, respond, or otherwise relate to your art. Nobody likes being told what to do. Instead of saying "You will experience angst when you see my art," say "I express my angst through my art."
- Avoid comparative or evaluative comments that have been made about your art by third parties such as gallery owners, critics, collectors, or curators. These belong in your curriculum vitae.
- Tell the story about what led up to your art ONLY if it's short, compelling, and extremely relevant to the themes in your work. No one really cares that you picked up your first crayon at age 2.
- Read your statement out loud. Get feedback. Show your art and statement to others and make sure they understand what you want them to understand. When they don't, or you have to explain yourself, do a rewrite and eliminate the confusion.

*Adapted and edited – with gratitude - from:*

Art Marketing 101, by Constance Smith

ArtBusiness.com

MollyGordon.com