**Tip sheet**

***Present Yourself* : Artist statement with Laurena Finéus**

**What is an artist statement?**

An artist statement is a statement about your practice . It presents the essence of your work and contains an explanation of how and why you create your art. It reads easily, is informative, and provides the reader with access and insight into your artistic practice. Also, you can use it over and over again but remember to update it and modify it just as often as your CV. Because your practice is always in evolution. Even when you don’t realize it!

**Biography vs. Artist statement**

A biography is not the same as your statement, it goes more in details about your life/career path and could include your education, major accomplishments , exhibition history or media features . While your statement focuses solely on your artistic practice.

**Types of statements**

1. **Standard artist statement**
   1. **Long version :** 350 to 500 words.
   2. **Shorter version :** Under 250 words.
2. **Personalized artist statement :** Residencies, grants, exhibitions, etc.

**How to adapt a statement based on specific examples:**

* **Exhibition proposal :**
* Look at their mandates and their past exhibitions history
* **Ask yourself these questions -** Who is their audience? How does your work appeal to them ? Their social media history ? Have you attended any of their events-exhibitions before and what is your personal relationship to their institution ? Did they have any impact on your practice ? The timing of your proposal, , why is it important now to present?
* **Residencies, fellowship:** Usually they ask you to submit a project proposal based on a theme. How does your practice best fits that theme, make links also to their mandates.. Acknowledge your own experience in other fields that could come of use in your residency.
* **Grants:** Look for **keywords** in applications as a way to include them into your statement. Juries tend to look for those key words and won’t always have the time to review in full detail your statement.
* Any skills that you have earned in other parts of your life should be included ie. budgeting , administration, time management etc..

**Structure of statement (interchangeable)**

**Core (3)**

* What is your work (What): subject, themes, inspirations, quotes, who (if relevant to the practice. Ie. if your work is rooted in your cultural identity.)
* Your Process (How) : materiality, research, references..
* Your Objectives (Why) : audience, viewer..

**Extra**

* *Example: Describe a past body of work, exhibition etc..*

**Do’s and Don'ts**

1. Respond to What, Why and How
2. Keep it simple
   1. Keep your sentences short and to the point. It is not a story or time for an anecdote. Shorter is always better.
   2. Don't spend all your time DESCRIBING your work (appearance). Let the reader know what your work is, but concentrate on the ideas, sources, materials, processes, and thoughts that are behind the work.
3. Write from a first-person P.O.V
4. Avoid complicated language, too poetic, flowery , academic , long etc.
   1. Use only words whose meaning you understand.
5. Be genuine and clear to your audience . Not just art critics and curators will see your work.
6. Spelling and grammar should be perfect.
   1. Avoid empty words, such as 'really' and 'very'
   2. Avoid repetition and clichés
7. Recognize your readers. An artist statement intended for the general public will be different from one intended for a grant application, art related job, etc.
8. Using quotes or referring to the work of others (art historical, contemporary) is acceptable. But always acknowledge the source; and, although there may be similarities between your work and someone else's, be careful about highlighting their work over your own.
9. Don't use statements starting with “I hope to…” , “I will…” or “I am trying to…" instead tell say what you do with confidence
10. Translate your statement in another language if it is of interest to your practice and your audience.

**Exercises at home**

* Read your statement out loud
* Have peer editors/mentors to review your statement
* Try explaining your practice to your family and friend, incorporate those discussions into your statement
* Find artists you love and watch them speak about their work. What themes do they approach that you might have been exploring yourself?