

Guidelines for written and oral presentations in the Visual Arts for Art Majors at Kenyon

(claudia's point of view)

This document will seek to answer questions about what is required in various types of documents and presentations for senior majors. These include: Titles, the abstract, an oral presentation, an artist's statement, a wall statement, a curatorial statement, a tombstone, a bio, , ,

Title: Coming up with a title for your work can be difficult. Some are tempted to say "untitled.". This maybe appropriate at times when you don't want to tell the viewer anything about the piece (if it would ruin the experience) but often a title can be an art form in itself. It can amplify or complicate or hint at meaning.

The Abstract: The department used to have students write an abstract instead of an artist's statement that would be shared with all faculty before orals. Whether or not we return to this, the abstract contains information that you will use in other documents as well, so writing about these topics will be helpful to you. The following is adapted from our previous guidelines:

This document, broadly speaking, should address the following questions:

- What are your concepts in this work and how have you developed them?
- Describe the physical aspects of the work
- How does the form / media /technique support the content of your work?
- How do you describe the growth of your work?
- As the work for your show developed, what changes have taken place and why have you made those changes?
- What criteria do you use to judge your own work?
- Who or what has influenced your work? (your personal history, cultural concerns, other artists, poets, etc.)
- How does your work fit into contemporary art practice?

Writing this abstract is a means for you to better understand what you are doing and why you are doing it. When prepared thoroughly, this document also serves as the foundation for the oral defense of your work, which is part of the Senior Exercise. The audience for this document is the faculty.

The Oral Examination: When your work is mounted in the gallery, you will have a 30 minute meeting with each professor in the gallery. You will use the first 15 minutes make a Powerpoint Presentation to support your oral presentation. In it you will use pertinent, high-quality images that illustrate your main points (titles,dates only text in the PP if desired). Your oral presentation should be clear and concise, yet answer all the questions noted above in the abstract description. You are encouraged to use notes as needed and practice your presentation to achieve clarity and timing. At the end of your presentation the faculty member will have 15 minutes to ask you questions. Use clean design, yet personal.

An Artist's Statement: This is a more public document than the abstract although they have many things in common. The audience for this document is the general public, so you should use language that they can understand. It can be a basis for various venues such as catalogs or interviews. Your goal is to lure the viewer to consider the work more deeply, to prompt their curiosity.

Stylistically you should be honest and not overblown, using your own style of writing, your own voice. Avoid repetition of words and phrases...look for synonyms but choose language that isn't

exclusive to artist's publications. Cut out extraneous text. Don't use run on sentences and be clear about your points.

There are different opinions on how personal these statements should be. They are indeed about YOUR work, not someone else's, so they must be authentically yours. In this way using first person present tense makes sense, however too much "I" in a statement can seem cloying and sentimental. My suggestion is to use "I" when needed, but to avoid it when you can. You should be able to talk about your work somewhat objectively as well as subjectively.

- Optional: Stylistically, you might start with a quote that reflects your concepts. It can come from literature, other classes or interests or artists. It could act as a lure to draw readers in.
- Opening Paragraph: Like an essay, the first sentences should give the gist of your concepts in what might be called a **thesis statement**. (you will then go on to explore this in detail in the rest of the statement.) When you write this sentence think of why you made this work, what are your aspirations, what basic idea are you exploring? "In this project I am exploring the tension between desire and temptation" or "this project exemplifies the confusion presented by conflicting cultural influences"
- If the statement is NOT with the physical work, you should also describe the physical aspects of the work. If it is in a catalog with pictures, you may still need to describe movement or aspect that are not apparent.
- What are your concepts?
(here are examples from Read's document on artist statements: "the irony of making art about war, the struggle to depict such psychological subtleties as 'self-image', how light affects spirituality and ritual, how the formal rigor of building blocks can illuminate conditions of the mind, humor, discipline, etc.")
- Sometimes, artists choose NOT to explain too much because they feel this keeps the viewer from experiencing the work fully for themselves. Because we are in an educational situation, we want you to be able to explain, but you may still choose how MUCH to explain. You might consider asking leading questions.
- How have you developed these concepts in this work?
(Juxtaposing images, appropriating cultural memes and changing them, etc)
- How do these concepts relate to the wider world?
(You can see that the topics are not just your personal story but how your personal interests are broader than yourself.)
- How does the form / media support the content of your work?
(Using particular media relates to this topic because of the history of this media...)
- What are your goals and aspirations for the audience?
- Closing sentences could be related to audience or a conclusion of sorts.

A Wall Statement: the purpose of a wall statement is to tell the audience at the gallery more about the work. It should also make them desire to explore the work further, not give them a literary description that allows them to avoid LOOKING. What information could amplify their experience that they cannot get from looking alone?

Some information from your artist's statement can be used in your wall statement, yet it is often not as revealing as the full artist's statement nor the abstract which is much more personal. Sometimes it is written in a Curatorial style, that is, less personal than an artist's statement and sometimes written by a curator who is explaining why THEY are interested in the work, how it fits a theme, etc.

- You can open with a quote if you like, similar to the artist's statement.
- You can explain your basic concept and how the form supports it
- You can explain the media/ technology if it is helpful to the interpretation
- You can ask the audience questions about the concept
- You can posit the piece in a wider context if this is helpful.

A Tombstone: terrible name...but it does give

- your name,
- sometimes your life dates,
- the name of the piece,
- the materials and the date it was made
- the size of the piece,
- Sometimes the owner of the piece is included at the end, if not you.

Sometimes the wall statement is included on the same form as the tombstone.

A Bio:. As you could imagine, this provides biographical information about you. It can include your full name, dates, education, where you live or are from, significant achievements, etc. It is used in publicity, catalogs, presentations, websites (as desired).

Visual Documentation:

Your portfolio includes examples of your work photographed and videotaped in galleries, or with good lighting from your studio. You should try to have installation shots, overviews, single elements and details. You should shoot these in raw format, or raw and jpg (esp if you don't have Lightroom or photoshop on your computer.) You should keep the originals and copies that are full size color corrected, in ProPhotoRGB or RGB1998 as well as smaller versions in sRGB for the web. Its likely you will have to resize work for various applications and it is always best to go back to the original. If your work is time-based, you should have a short "demo reel" of projects, around 2-3 minutes, to enter festivals or apply for grants.