



THE ART OF THE PROFESSIONAL PACKET

Cover Letter/Letter of Application

You should always create a cover letter when applying for a job opportunity. It is recommended that you create a cover letter (or letter of application) when applying for a residency or see Cover Letter Guide for more details.

Artist Resume or Curriculum Vitae (CV)

Artists should keep a CV and an artist resume. Resumes should be used when applying for jobs, though CVs should be used when applying to academic positions. CVs may also be required when applying for some exhibitions, residencies and grants. The CV is a record of all of your professional activities. The artist resume is an abbreviated document that is used in conjunction with commercial galleries, the search for exhibition opportunities, and certain grant applications. It is typically one to four pages in length. **See our Resume Guide and Curriculum Vitae Guide for more details.**

Keep your resume simple. You should include: Education, Professional Experience, Exhibitions and Honors/Awards.

Some examples of **Professional Experience** you could include are:

- Volunteer Opportunities (galleries and non profits)
- Committee/Board Member
- Internships/Apprenticeships /Assistantships
- Teaching Opportunities
- Workshops
- If you have curated an exhibition or been a juror
- Jobs or freelance experience that is art-related
- Residencies

You may also include **Bibliography** and **Collections** sections. Your **Bibliography** would include any press about your work (reviews, artist features) or publication where your work has been published such as: magazines, catalogues, books etc. If your work is part of a collection (private, public, institutional, corporate, museum, etc.), that should be included in your CV.

See the Resume and CV Guides under Career Guides on Handshake for formatting and examples.

Artist Statement

An artist statement is designed to inform your audience about your ideas and your aesthetic, your influences and your innovations. The statement should be brief and concise, no more than one page (100-150 words is ideal). The language can be simple and uncomplicated even if you are connecting your work to very esoteric concepts. The idea is to invite the reader to understand what motivates and informs your work, deepening their understanding and appreciation of your art.

Start by answering 4 basic questions:

1. Who are you?
2. What do you do?
3. How do you do it?
4. Why do you do it?

If you are having trouble getting started, jot down some notes rather than trying to write out sentences. What inspires your work? What materials do you use and why? What artists or experiences have influenced your work? Once you have some points down, start connecting your thoughts and ideas and start formulating sentences. Remember to use first person (I, me, my). Use descriptive words that will paint a picture in the reader's mind of what you do, how and why.

Proposal

Proposals are like cover letters; instead of convincing an employer to grant you a job interview, you are asking a curator/panel to consider showing your work, award you money or accept you into a residency program. Proposals may be part of the application packet for grants, site-specific projects or exhibitions in independent spaces. Some key things you will need to consider when writing proposals are:

- What is the theme? State your purpose clearly.
- Why should this work be shown? Justify the project.
- Be specific about the details of the project. If you're proposing a group show, how many artists are included and how do the works relate to each other?
- Use supporting materials. Provide high resolution images that effectively support the potential of the project.

Digital Images

Whether you are applying for grants, exhibitions, internships, residencies or employment you will need to photograph your work. Make sure your submission opens on PC and MAC and that your images are saved at a high resolution (300 dpi or higher). Always make sure that the images are sized correctly and are in a format that is easy to scroll through. Make sure the file size is manageable. If you are emailing images, there will often be restrictions on resolution, size of image and file size. Be sure to follow guidelines on formatting images (dpi, image and file size) depending on what you are applying for.

Image List

An image list is always included in your packet. It references each image by number and gives information such as title, date, medium and size. Conceptual artists should include a brief written description of each piece or body of work if the image doesn't fully illustrate the work.

Documentation and Records

Keep track of where your work has been sent, all sales of your work, and any donations you make. The simplest record should have the date of the activity, the title of the work, the current status (sale, donation, exhibition, etc), the name, address, and phone number of the person who has your work and return date if applicable. This will help you during tax season, and for self-promotion.

Mailing List

When you start showing or selling your work it is important to keep track of your contacts. These are potential patrons. This list is invaluable for show invitations and self-promotion when you complete a new series that may be of interest to this audience.

Consignment Form

This form is a written record of where and when your work is on loan. Many galleries may have a consignment form for you to fill out for exhibition purposes. You should complete this form whether your work is at a gallery for an exhibition or at a dealer's office being considered for sale. Include a list of the work on consignment, a description of the work, notes on its condition, selling price, time period of consignment, and to whom and where it is consigned. You should keep a copy of this form for your records.

Invoices

Congratulations! You've sold some work! To officially document this sale for tax purposes, and to get your money, draft an invoice. Even if you have already been paid, or the gallery sold the work for you, you should write an invoice. It is a vital record for your business. The invoice information should include the date, name and address of the person who bought the work, title and description of the piece, price, the total due, and the amount received. If the work was sold at a gallery, indicate this on the invoice. If you ship the work from your studio, note the method of shipping and the cost to ship.

Taxes

Doing taxes are inevitable. If you plan to make and sell your work, then you are engaged in an activity for the purpose of making a profit. As a professional fine artist, you are running your own business. To file taxes for this activity, you would typically fill out a Schedule C- Profit or Loss from a Business or Profession form, in addition to a 1040, claiming a profit or loss. The key thing to do is to maintain clear records and save receipts for any expenses necessary and ordinary to your practice (i.e.: supplies, studio rent, developing slides, etc.). All the work you've been doing already, maintaining an inventory and mailing list, sending out invoices, filling out consignment forms; these are all proof of your profession. It is also a good idea to save exhibition announcements, copies of your applications to galleries, residencies, and grants. File the responses you receive from each as well. All of this is proof of your profession if you should ever face an audit.

Helpful Resources:

www.collegeart.org

www.collegeforcreativestudies.edu/careers/career-development

How to write an Artist Statement

Source: The Artist Foundation

Writing an artist statement sometimes can be harder than making the actual work. When faced with a blank page, the best thing to do is write down words that you would use to describe your work. Do the same for the process(es) you use to make your work- list out the processes you use. The next step is to start to link the words into sentences. After you write the sentences, see if you can put them together into paragraphs. If you have several bodies of work you might do this process for each body of work.

It is best to start with a long version of your artist statement, that way you can edit it down to a manageable size. Be careful not to over use "art speak" terms/language and write for an audience who has never interacted with/seen your work. In other words, keep it simple, clear, and straight forward. It might be best to start with a general paragraph about your work and then get more specific regarding your bodies of work (if you are showing several bodies of work in an exhibition or submitting them for a proposal).

Those reading your statement need to understand it the first time they read it. You should also write in the first person, not in third person (ie I made, My work, etc.) You may also want to review past articles and reviews of your work. This info can help in the writing of your artist statement and might

provide some quotes to include in your statement. If you do include quotes, you must footnote the source!!

An artist statement should not be longer than one page in length (unless you have been asked specifically to write a long one!). Some good artists statements have only been 3 to 4 sentences! Have at least one person proof read your statement. It might be best to have two people read it; one who is familiar with your work and one who is not familiar with your work.

Examples of Artist Statements - #1 explaining all of her bodies of work

Kathleen Bitetti Artist Statement & Explanation of Bodies of work

Since the early 1990s, my work has involved the creation of conceptually based sociopolitical objects and installations. In 1992 I began stenciling text by hand onto objects. Hand stenciled text/language has now become a very prominent feature in my work and I continue to use the same stencil and medium (graphite) that I used in 1992. In my work, I deconstruct the American dream, fairy tales, nursery rhymes, and lullabies that are part of our childhood and adult culture. My work also addresses gender roles/gender assignment, the fragility of family dynamics, domestic violence and the underlying threads of violence and danger that underpin American society. Often times these themes are combined into installations that feature mundane domestic objects, painted pure white and are often embellished with stenciled text. The color white establishes a dream-like surreal quality, suggests notions of purity and safety, and formally unifies the disparate objects in each installation. The texts provide clues to content and interpretation. My "conceptual sculpture weds minimal form with maximal content" (Shawn Hill, "BayWindows" Nov. 14 96 p27).

I usually work on several bodies of work concurrently. I also create site specific temporary installations for indoor sites (I have in the past created temporary outdoor site specific work as well). I often rework a site specific installation into a self contained format that will enable the piece to be shown in a non site specific installation format/ environment. And often times elements from my sculptures, installations, and non site specific work are utilized in my site specific installations. In other words, the various bodies of work inform or cross pollinate each other.

The six specific bodies of work that I am working on concurrently:

"Weary Heads"- a series of ten life size beds. I began the series in late 1994. These beds are beautiful objects, but they are also very dangerous. Both stenciled text/language and pillows with text are prominent elements in the series. These works transform an object, that usually provides comfort, into one that has nightmare qualities.

"Forever Hold Your Peace" In 1992, I began this series of 11 large sculptural components that attempt to reveal the life of a person who is in a battering/ abusive environment. The majority of contemporary art work addressing domestic violence does not show the whole picture of what it is like to live with such violence on a daily basis, nor does it demonstrate the long time line of domestic violence. It is the goal of my work to more fully represent the long nightmare of domestic violence and to show the underlying thread of violence/danger that underlies such relationships.

Lullabies & Fairy Tales are other areas that I am investigating. Several of my works focus on deconstructing these forms of "childhood" entertainment (these themes also make appearances in the other bodies of work).

Pillows Talk- In 1993, I began working with pillows and stenciling text on them. I have created four major pieces that use only pillows (pillows are also an important element in the Weary Heads series).

Site Specific Installation Work- Birds is the most recent example of this work, but Lullaby/Rock A Bye Baby and one version of Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf are also examples.

Works on Paper- My works on paper tend to differ from my 3-D/ installation work. These works are very personal pieces that have been inspired by and made for particular people in my life. Nor are these works minimal in form, color, or content. I often incorporate appropriated images and text into my works on paper and I usually sew these pieces by hand and/or by machine. Like in my 3D/installation works, the text is hand stenciled onto the piece. My works on paper are usually celebratory and often times meant to be humorous.

Example #2 explaining her work in general and specific pieces

(notice the similar introductory paragraph!!)

Kathleen Bitetti Artist Statement

Since the early 1990s, my work has involved the creation of conceptually based sociopolitical objects and installations. In my work, I deconstruct the American dream, fairy tales, nursery rhymes, and lullabies that are part of our childhood and adult culture. My work also addresses gender roles/gender assignment, the fragility of family dynamics, domestic violence and the underlying threads of violence and danger that underpin American society. These themes are often combined with the metaphors commonly used by those in battering relationships into installations that feature mundane domestic objects, painted pure white and embellished with stenciled text. The color white establishes a dream-like surreal quality, suggests notions of purity and safety, and formally unifies the disparate objects in each installation. The texts provide clues to content and interpretation. My "conceptual sculpture weds minimal form with maximal content". (Shawn Hill, "BayWindows" Nov. 14 96 p27).

The two works, both Untitled 1991, are examples of my earlier work that addressed the overlooked issues of class in American society. Those who are in the lower classes are usually the ones who are "watched like goldfish" and must depend on others for their very survival. The monopoly game pieces are also very important clues to understanding the various facets of our so called classless society.

The piece entitled, Porter Crib 1997, is from a series of 10 beds entitled, "Weary Heads". I began the series in late 1994. These life size beds are beautiful objects, but they are also very dangerous. These works transform an object, that usually provides comfort, into one that has nightmare qualities and is incapable of providing comfort. Stenciled text/language is a prominent element in my "Weary Heads" bed series. The Porter Crib text is taken from a "Christianized" Celtic/Pagan childhood prayer. The prayer is stenciled on tracing paper, thus making it impossible for any infant to lie in the crib with out falling through on to the floor. Children are also at the mercy of others. Presently, I am working on completing two more of the beds in the series. I hope to show all 10 beds in a gallery setting in the future.

Example #3 explaining one piece

Kathleen Bitetti Artist Statement

Birds

These plaster birds were cast from two ceramic birds my mother had in our family home. Interestingly, the two original ceramic birds are exactly the same in every detail, except that one was painted blue indicating a Blue Jay, while the other was painted red indicating a cardinal. I chose to keep my birds white. These birds, in my mindscape, symbolize safety, good luck and purity. All the birds in the museum have been cast specifically for this show and I have placed them all in their specific sites within the museum.

I first made these white plaster birds to be elements in a 1996 site specific installation entitled, Lullaby/Rock A Bye Baby. The installation examined the duality of the lullaby: it is an extremely violent song that is considered a cherished "lullaby" that one sings to soothe children to sleep. Ironically, while working on these birds for this show, I found out that many people believe that having any birds in their house, living or in any depiction, is a harbinger/cause of bad luck. Thus these birds, like the majority of my work, have conflicting meanings.