

### Framing your Artist Residency

Student artists can't begin too early preparing to look for that position that blends their artistic practice with the business of art.

### Where to start?

Create an artist statement that combines biographical information to give the reader background on who you are, and briefly provides an overview, of your artistic focus. *In other words, who are you, what do you make and why you make it.*

The Artist Statement is an introduction to you, the artist, talking about your work in a way that adds an understanding of your creative skills and interests as an art maker.

The statement distinguishes from your peers who are also looking for the same career pathway you are looking for. You'll be called upon to submit artist statements when you apply for that first job out of school, residencies, grants, graduate school programs and sometimes, exhibition opportunities.

This one-page document often seems hard to write, but once completed, will be a useful tool to have in your toolbox. The exercise will help you understand your own practice and help you talk about your strengths before you are called on to fill in the blanks on an application, or in an in-person interview.

Because artists typically work alone, putting your thoughts into words to share with the world (or a specific audience) will take some time and thought, so better to get it done before the pressure is on.

Your Artists Statement can make or break an application, and can help you put words to your practice, giving the reader just what they need to agree that what you are amazing.

Example of an Artists Statement and bio for your consideration:

### Biography

Monica Hansel is a native of Palm Beach County, Florida, and learned to knit at the age of 9 from her paternal grandmother. She graduated from the University of Central Texas with a bachelors degree in Fine Arts. She rediscovered her love for fiber art while finishing her undergraduate degree and from there began picking apart patterns, spinning her own yarn, and knitting in the cafeteria on lunch breaks at work. Her fiber art reflects her love of the vibrant colors found in the natural surroundings of her beloved Texas hometown. Monica is committed to passing the traditions of knitting on to young people and is the basis of her teaching fiber art classes in children across her community.

### Artist Statement

I knit, crochet, and spin to ground myself. It is said that these techniques, used over hundreds of years, have become embedded in our DNA. So, through the process of knitting a garment, I connect with my ancestors along with legions of women and men who turned heels, made hats, or elaborately cabled sweaters to identify their loved ones in a shipwreck. Thankfully, my creations help the viewer gain a sense of calm. By using eye pleasing colors, my pieces are attractive to patrons of all ages and social backgrounds, after all most cultures have used the fiber arts to warm themselves, brighten their home environments and even signal family bonds.

Along with a connection to crafters around the world, my work is a way for me to commemorate the memories of my two grandmothers and great grandfather who knitted and continue their legacy. My designs are inspired by family and the importance of heritage and storytelling. Just as we are bounded by family traditions, knitting and crocheting are bound by specific stitch forms. These forms can exact 45-degree angles, produce a circle, or something as simple as a rectangle and are made unique using colors or textures that align with our human experience.

## Cover letters

The Cover Letter is intended to show you off and captivate the attention of the hiring manager. Your letter should keep potential employers reading and be so interested in you that they simply cannot put down your resume. Some of the best cover letters tell interesting stories about you and help connect your interests and skills as being a good fit for the organization.

“Panelists always remember the personal side of cover letters — this is when you become more than just another applicant,” says career expert Heather Huhman. “They connect your experiences with your name because you’re giving them another dimension of you, sharing what makes you unique.” Given the importance of a cover letter, you cannot afford to blow it. Once you’ve got a working draft, it’s time to grab your red pen. Here are 10 words and phrases that are simply dragging your cover letter down. Stay away from them.

### **1. “To Whom It May Concern”**

Generic salutations, while professional, can be a bit sterile. Do a little digging to find the name of the hiring manager or the recruiter.

### **2. “Thinking outside of the box”**

Recruiters read thousands of cover letters and resumes. Be creative instead of using meaningless buzzwords.

### **3. “I’m not sure if you know”**

Phrases like this one underestimate a recruiter’s ability to Google and may come across as naive. HR professionals and recruiters do their due diligence on you. Trust us, they know; and don’t forget that your social media posts often get to the reader before they meet you!

### **4. Claims Without Evidence**

Instead of simply saying you’re good at what you do, take the time to provide factual experience – including volunteer and service projects that you have worked on that demonstrate your ability to work with diverse communities and your flexibility.

### **6. “Love”**

Cut the millennial speak. Share why your experience and skills motivated you to apply for this residency. Talk about any past experiences that are influencing your career decisions.

### **7. Lies**

Embellishing in a cover letter is one way to set yourself up for letting down your future employer. Employers expect that you can do the work you say you can do.

### **8. “Please feel free”**

Close your letter with a clear call-to-action. Indicate that you are available an in-person or phone interview

### **9. “Really, truly, deeply”**

Flowery language and excessive adverbs can come off as insincere. You want to come across as confident not arrogant.

### **10. Don’t apologize**

*Proof Read Everything and ask someone else to look over your work before submitting  
Service description*

### *Framing your project*

*Get started by understanding the valuable resource you as an artist can be to a community organization and in turn to your entire community.*

- *Describe the project work you are considering providing. Be sure to state the challenge that it satisfies in the DeSoto community and discuss the ideas/strategies you have agreed to address. If you are still considering those, indicate any possible contributions you are considering.*
- *Discuss the short term or long-term impact you see the project having on the DeSoto community.*
- *Begin documenting what you foresee as the **impact that your artist service might have on you**. You can discuss knowledge you are gaining about yourself or the community at large.*

*You can also talk about how the intangible skills you are hoping to gain. (Are you more patient now? More understanding of others? Do you have a better idea of the role of the creative thinker in community settings? **Go into depth about this, but be honest.***

- *Think about how you can/will include this experience and the learnings in your work as an artist in residence for future work in DeSoto.*