



NOTES ON: COMPOSING AN ARTIST STATEMENT

There is no standard form for an artist statement. They are very personal, yet very important, documents. Their contents, as, well as form should be carefully considered. It may be one of the most important documents you write! Try to answer the basic question "What is your work about?"

Here are a few tips and points to ponder....

1. Consider the specific function of your statement. You may wish to write several versions of your statement for different situations.

Will the statement be used to:

- Complement your "promotion" information package?
- Explain your slides?
- Accompany a catalogue reproduction?
- Accompany a piece in an exhibition as wall or catalogue text?
- Explain your work without the aid of visuals?
- Clarify your conceptual concerns?
- Explain your process?
- Verbally describe your work?
- Contextualize your work for a theme show, grant, or fellowship?
- Be used as a source material to form a press release?

2. Consider these ideas when composing your statement.

- Does/can/should the statement "reflect" your work in it's form or concept?
- Does/can/should the statement reflect your personality?
- Does it contain a brief physical description of the work?
- Does it outline or explain your process?
- Does it contain your conceptual and theoretical concerns?
- Does it position you in the current "artistic discourse?"
- Should it contain any biographical information?
- Is it longer than it has to be?
- Is it shorter than it needs to be?
- Is it burdened with artspeak?
- What are you trying to communicate through your work?
- How are you trying to affect your audience?
- What is the intention, or intended purpose of your work?
- Is the statement "too" clever?
- Is it READABLE?
- Does it make sense?
- Should it be readable or make sense?
- *What is your work about?*
- *What is your "story"*

Make certain someone proof reads your writing! You may wish to have someone read your statement that is not familiar with you, your work, or your process. Then ask if they understand what you are trying to say?

how to WRITE an Artist's Statement

by Joe Miller

Is there anything more difficult for a person to do than to write about one's self? Perhaps, but it takes a twisted

mindset to conjure up specific examples. Many people cringe at the mere thought of writing even a short cover letter. Magnify that anxiety by a hundred, and you might just begin to have an idea of what artists go through as they craft their personal statements. If you're like most artists, you have difficulty putting your work into words. That is, after all, why you make art—to convey ideas and feelings that are best expressed visually. Nonetheless, an artist's statement is an indispensable component of any artist's portfolio. When written correctly, it can help clarify a body of work and, more importantly, show curators, grant committee members, and collectors that you have clear intentions in your work.

"I use artist's statements as a springboard for us—the staff—to have a dialogue about the work amongst ourselves, or with our clients or with the artists," says Jim Robischon, owner of Robischon Gallery in Denver, Colorado. "For us to try to present the artists' ideas is pretty darn important."

All this doesn't make an artist's statement any easier to write—quite the opposite, in fact. Here are some pointers that you might find helpful as you compose your statement:

1. Don't Sweat It

In the final analysis, an artist's statement is only a small component of your overall presentation as an artist. What's most important is, and always will be, the quality of your work. Worry about your art. Worry about having really good slides. But don't worry about whether or not your statement is a literary masterpiece. Just get it done and move on. Seriously, most curators, critics, and collectors pay only minor attention to an artist's statement when compared to how closely they scrutinize the actual work. Statements are typically turned to when a little more clarity is desired.

"I never make a decision to show an artist based solely upon what is written in an artist's statement," says Susan Krane, Director of the Colorado University Art Galleries in Boulder, Colorado. "I find statements most helpful when they offer some literary point of reference that I might not have considered or, as in the case of installation art, when the slides might not fully convey everything about the work."

2. Keep It Simple

The fact is, if you worry too much about writing your statement, you might over-work it and wind up doing yourself a disservice. If you write something too deep or dense, it's likely that no one will read it anyway. Krane complains that most artists' statements she sees are "impenetrable." "It's art-speak," she says, "but it's not necessarily good writing."

Write your statement using plain, clear language. When you're done, read it out loud to yourself. The words should flow naturally from your tongue. If you find yourself stuttering or staggering on any sentence or phrase, go back and re-write it until it sounds natural. Try to write the way you would talk, only with better grammar.

3. Keep It Short – Here's How

Ideally, you want to contain yourself to three paragraphs. (Think of it this way: unless you weave some wickedly gripping writing, nobody's going to read past the first paragraph anyway. To do more is really just a waste of energy.) That can be tough; if you're like most artists, you experience a veritable tidal wave of ideas whenever you begin to analyze your own work. How do you pour it all into one tiny, little vessel?

Try this. Gather all the materials in your portfolio. Take your slides and lay them out. Next add your resume and any articles or reviews that may have been written about your work. Look carefully through everything. Imagine how you might explain everything to someone if they were there with you. Perhaps there's a specific historic or political event that triggered a whole series of works. Maybe other works have moving parts. Jot all of these ideas down.

Once you've gone through everything, turn to the list and prioritize it. Certain ideas might appear numerous times; naturally, these will gravitate to the top of the list. Other ideas might relate and fit under a broader classification. Move those toward the top of the list. Still more thoughts or ideas might need to be compared side by side in order to ascertain which are more important to you. Once you have a numbered list—a top ten if you will—take the top three and write a paragraph about each. Simple.

4. Be Objective

Try not to get too personal. Remember, all you're trying to do is offer some clarity about your work. This isn't therapy. Rather, it's more like business or job hunting, cold as that sounds. In fact, you're more likely to turn people off if you ramble on and on about your deepest, darkest secrets. If your work addresses deeply personal or psychological issues, then say so in a matter-of-fact manner and let your work do the rest of the talking.

5. Get Help

It's common and perfectly acceptable to acquire editorial help with your statement. In fact, there are no rules stating that you have to write it yourself. You can hand a list of ideas over to someone and have it done for you. Perhaps a friend would be willing to do so as a favor, for money, or in trade for some art. Look around and think of someone you know who regularly writes concise and persuasive documents. In addition to published writers, you might consider people who work in public relations, marketing, sales, human resources, advertising, and even law. Each of these careers requires a lot of writing. You might be surprised with what they come up with.

In the final analysis, however, it's best to write it yourself (a little help notwithstanding). As an artist, you need to be able to verbally express your artistic intentions; a well thought out and carefully written artist's statement helps you do so.

Joe Miller is curator of Gallery Van Go, a 1986 Toyota minivan converted into a fully-mobile installation art gallery based in Boulder, Colorado.

Artists are mission-driven.

We do this work because we have something to give.

We have itches and visions and a drive to offer them up.

It's what makes art-making different from keeping a journal or singing in the shower.

There is a fundamental generosity to making art, a giving.

But many of us get tricked into being career-driven.

The markers of achievement for artists are scattered, few, and sometimes contradictory.

(My company won the biggest award in the dance world for a piece that the New York Times called “the greatest disappointment of the evening.” Yup, contradictory.)

Instead of defining success for ourselves, artists obsess over these inconsistent and ultimately not meaningful markers.

We had enough external success as a dance company to learn that it doesn't save you. I can't tell you how many times I thought:

*"If we can just get _____,
we'll have it made."*

Fill that in with whatever you want: a gig in New York, a grant from X, touring support, a space.

And if we got that thing, guess what happened?

We were still the exact same people, working every day to create our lives as artists.

External markers of success are great, but they won't save you.

In the end, we artists need to save ourselves. And each other.

We need to lead with our mission, our purpose.

We need to tell ourselves and others why we do what we do, what we have to give, and the big generous questions that provoke us into action.

And we need to say it in words, in what I call an artist mission statement.

We need artist statements of different shapes and tones for different purposes: programs, press releases, grant applications, websites. Underlying all of these, we need an *internal* artist statement, one that speaks honestly and passionately without worrying about who it's for.

If an artist says:

"I make experimental dance theater, both site-specific and for the stage."

There is a very small number of people who will connect to that mission, mostly people pre-disposed to care about me or care about "experimental dance theater." This is why many dance audiences consist largely of the artists' friends plus other choreographers.

But if the artist says:

"Americans have bodies when they eat, have sex, and exercise. In between those islands of excess, we are passengers in our bodies, burying sensation with distraction, drugs, and vanity. My dances explore the 24-hour body, recovering the things we have traded for a cycle of numb appetites: our touch, our mortality, our empathy."

Meg Foley

Now there are lots of people and organizations that might connect to her work and her mission. They don't have to care about experimental dance theater, they just have to care about bodies and our increasingly disembodied culture.

The three questions to answer about your work in an artist statement (also in a grant application or press release) are:

What?

Why?

So what?

What is it? You'd be surprised how many artist statements don't clarify what the artist actually creates. Examples help.

Why is it important to you, the artist? What is your passionate connection to the work?

So what? That's a cranky way of saying: why does it matter in the world? Why does it matter beyond your interest? Why might other people connect to it? This can be the hardest one to answer, but also the most important.

It's hard to write about your own work. My friend Asimina said, "It's like trying to see your own face."

So don't do it alone. Get together with another artist (or a few artists) and try this exercise.

The Language

Take turns interviewing each artist. Try to get to the bottom of how each of you became an artist, and why you do what you do. Here are some questions that help:

- When and how did you decide to be an artist?
- Tell me about an early artistic experience that inspired you.
- Are there any teachers or mentors who were formative for you? How?
- Name three artists whose work you admire. What is it about their work and process that you love?
- What is the most meaningful project you've ever created?

- What is the most meaningful connection with an audience/public you've ever had?
- If the whole world saw your work, if it was everywhere and kids studied it in school and towns brought it to the village green, how would the world be different? (This gets at the “so what” question. If answers to this start to feel hokey – people would slow down, there would be more empathy – you are on the right track.)

Everyone takes notes on the answers, especially any phrases that are particularly resonant or eloquent.

Next, working alone, write a list of ten words to describe your work. This is the tiny haiku/ telegram version of your artist statement. Nouns and verbs are especially good. Adjectives are okay, as long as it isn't all adjectives. Read these aloud to each other. Steal words from others that you like.

The Writing

Next, write a one-paragraph artist statement in the first person (“I”). It's easy to transcribe into the third person (“she/he”) later as needed. Use phrases or sentences from the interview that you like. Use some of the ten words from your list (but you don't have to fit all of them in).

Answer the what-why-so what questions with juicy language and total honesty.

Read your paragraph out loud, and discuss it with your artist partner(s).

- What is the strongest language, the words or phrases that linger?
- Does it answer the what-why-so what questions?
- And does it make you want to see the work?

After discussing it, go back and edit.

Start with a clean slate. If you have an existing artist statement, put it out of your mind during this work.

Even if language is not your medium, dive into the particular power of words.

Your artist statement can speak in the same voice as your work. If your work includes collisions, humor, contradiction, or playfulness, your statement can, too. I know too many artists whose work is wild and quirky but whose artist statements are dry dry dry.

Lead with what is most distinctive about your work, not with things that other artists do. A lot of choreographers say their work is “highly physical.” Yeah, that’s dance. Every choreographer could say that. Tell us what distinguishes your work.

Give an example, especially if your work is between genres or hard to pin down.

Strategically simplify. A lot of artists tell me, “Yeah, I do paintings but I also make installation work and digital projects and public art and I might record an album so DON’T PIN ME DOWN, MAN!” No writing will ever capture the full complexity of who you are as an artist. So simplify. And bring the reader close to your work.

For your viewing pleasure, here are a few artist mission statements I particularly like:

I create puppets, masks, piñatas, parades, pageants, clown acts, suitcase theaters, magical lands and other spectacula, on my own, and in collaboration with other humans of all ages, abilities, and persuasions. I use cardboard, science, and the imagination to explore sloths, symbiosis, gentrification, ATMs, Pterodactyls, pregnancy, disaster, and canoeing. I have performed in living rooms, parking lots, and on stages up and down the East Coast and been an artist-in-residence at dozens of schools, senior centers, addiction recovery and mental health programs. I believe in the power of bike helmets, cornstarch, tide pools, emancipatory pedagogy, utopian performatives, and snacks. I fill suitcases with cardboard possibilities, perform words in wigs, and give guided tours to places that don't yet exist.

Beth Nixon

I lived in 21 different houses before I turned 18, in the richest and second-poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere. I have friends in Honduras who live twenty miles from the ocean but will never see it, and friends in the US who will never learn how to cook beans.

In Honduras, I saw the disparity of opportunities given to me and to my Honduran friends. And in California, I saw the emptiness of the material wealth Honduran villagers dreamed of.

When I see a boundary, I try to cross it. Groups that don't speak to each other. Histories that have been paved over. Literally. I discovered train tracks outside a gallery in Philadelphia, and built a train car, to resurrect for a night the erased industrial history of North Philadelphia.

I provoke local rituals of remembering and delight, in a culture that has forgotten how to mourn. You are not alone. You are not the first. To be hated or excluded. To hate or exclude.

Artistic practice matters when it connects us, when it makes us hesitant to kill each other.

Jeb Lewis

I make feminist flamenco. Flamenco has traditionally placed women as seductress, sexual object, love object, and always last in the art form's hierarchy. My work challenges these rules, uncovering the true heart of the tradition—strong women.

Elba Hevia y Vaca

Dancing is the anti-text message, a full-bore, 360-degree telling that has little to do with being productive and everything to do with being alive.

My dances offer the unmediated body, a physicality that is present, accountable, and unplugged. In a culture that values information over sensing, I quietly hoard the body's knowingness, the connectivity that has no wires.

Michelle Stortz

Once you have a strong articulation of your mission, lead with it. Let people know why you do what you do, and more people will connect and partner with you. You don't have to have a "social mission" to have an artistic mission (that last artist statement you just read is from an artist who makes abstract experimental work).

"But I want the work to speak for itself."

We owe it to the work to represent it well in language. More people will see representations of your work (writing, images, work samples) than will see the work in person.

"But I just make my work. I don't know why it's important to me or the world. I just do it."

Bull. You are astonishingly competent, hard-working, and focused. Like most artists, you could probably do whatever you wanted to. You chose to devote your life to creating art, a choice that isn't easy. There are reasons for that. Write them, and tell the world.

Vlad the Impaler (b. 1451, Sighioara, Transylvania) is an artist who paints, works with photographs, and employs that normal solution, his photograph, has a distinct lack of visual drama in a way that echoes his undead soul. In turn, the image approaches an objective gaze where the subject, rather than the photographer's perspective on it, is paramount. Vlad the Impaler currently lives and works in Tampa, Florida. While photography is the foundation of her practice, Larik Reese's pieces incorporate aspects of sculpture, collage, and the concepts from Marie Kondo's self-help book.

I WRITE ARTIST Larik Reese's pieces incorporate aspects of sculpture, collage, and the concepts from Marie Kondo's self-help book. Reese learned to put her hands on every print in her hat and she's read all of what she's read. At the art gallery, she's read all of what she's read. At the art gallery, she's read all of what she's read.

STATEMENTS Reese learned to put her hands on every print in her hat and she's read all of what she's read. Reese learned to put her hands on every print in her hat and she's read all of what she's read. Reese learned to put her hands on every print in her hat and she's read all of what she's read.

These works, the *Robot Pair Spirit* (January 4, 2004–March 22, 2010) and *Opportunity* (b. Janu 25, 2004), are two robots who landed on opposite sides of Mars in 2004 in order to continue the work of master photographer Ansel Adams. Spirit and Opportunity record a range of subject matter, including panoramic images that resemble landscapes of the American West to 3-D images that resemble landscapes of the American West. Like Adams, Spirit and Opportunity, dislike the term "landscape photography" because they are technically remote-controlled, data-gathering robots. However, as the only photographers documenting the red planet from the ground, most critics would agree that, in terms of Martian landscapes, Spirit and Opportunity are in a class by themselves.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) represents the late Spirit's estate and the work of Opportunity, which still lives and works on Mars. In *The Matrix*, Neo has a hollowed-out book where he hides things. The book is titled *Simulacra and Simulation*. This text by French philosopher Jean Baudrillard is the basis for my final project, *American Sheeple*. The philosophy of Baudrillard as discussed in *Simulacra and Simulation* is revealed in *The Matrix*, when Morpheus speaks of the "desert of the real." He basically paraphrases the first chapter on *Simulation and Simulacra*, which is the chapter I read in it. I learned that the world is no longer real; "real" and instead it has become "hyperreal, simulation of reality, that is disconnected from whatever was real before, like *Simulacra*, World... photograph. My images, ironically, photographs themselves, explore the notion of *Simulacra*, World & Utopian paradise. In it I picture tourists in their too-perfect repressed paradise in an effort to hold the mirror up to society and show people that their reality is really a simulacrum; I Morpheus did for Neo, or Baudrillard did for my philosophy 101 class. At first I didn't even want to go to *Simulacra*, World with my stupid parents and annoying sister, but then I realized that I could use the trip to make work about "the American dream" and the nature of reality and *The Matrix* and French philosophy. Photography has never been more important to selling real estate than it is today. Markets are heating up again, and demand for real estate creates demand for photography. Right now your listing during a 12-hour session with one of New York's finest high modernist architects photographer! We here at The Camera Club for High Modern Real Estate Photography. COME! Sell the camera artist should not invent his subjects, so additional lighting will not be used to enhance your listings. Buyers should see your home as it truly is. There is no need to even see your home before we arrive. In documenting your space, your photographer will attempt to represent things as objectively as he can, true to European modernist form. The creative achievement of our camera artists lies in their perspective and composition. Our photographs are of the high technical prowess, and their print.

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Introduction

At some point in their career, an artist will more than likely be involved in the process of writing an artist statement. They will often think this creation to be a simple task until they actually have to do it. The art of describing themselves and their work is not an easy feat. They will panic. They will sweat. They will, as Gene Fowler says, “sit staring at a blank sheet of paper until drops of blood form on [their] forehead.”

Everyone should try to write about their creative work. Writing is just an organized form of thinking, and thinking about your work helps you to make better work. However, many artist statements end up vague, lyrically romantic, verbose, obviously trying to impress with unnecessary vocabulary. Pompous things to avoid include too many quotations from philosophers, writers, or artists and too much technical talk. The point of an artist’s statement is not to provide the audience with a complete education or to highlight in jargon all the complicated aspects of a manual that most folks cannot comprehend. Its challenge is to distill and clarify an artist’s intention in an accessible way through language. Who are you? What did you make? How did you make it? And why is that important to you? People are interested in other people, and their narratives and the statements should be welcoming.

Liz Sales is an artist, and also a go-to person to help navigate this system. She has provided assistance to countless other artists who feel that making work and being able to write concisely and articulately about it are two entirely different skill sets. In this little paperback, Liz uses her understanding of the structure of the artist statement to construct statements for fictional photo-based artists that satirize art school, gallery, and popular photography clichés, as well as describe impossible projects that simply could not exist off the printed page.

—Matthew Carson, head librarian and archivist, International Center of Photography

*Things that don't quite make sense
can be most valuable tools.*

—David Wilson, director, Museum of Jurassic Technology

*Truth may be stranger than fiction,
goes the old saw, but it is never as strange as lies.*

(Or, for that matter, as true.)

—John Hodgman, *The Areas of My Expertise* (2005)

*Beginning a written work with a
succession of semi-obscure quotes
is often a sign of insecurity.*

—Anonymous

The Mad Libs Statement

I am an artist who works with _____. Ever since I was _____,
(medium or material) (number)

I have been interested in subverting the traditional understanding of
_____. My work explores the relationship between _____
(noun) (art movement)

sensibilities and _____ spaces. With influences as diverse as
(adjective)

_____ and _____, my work is both _____ and
(proper noun) (proper noun) (adjective)

_____. As a result, the viewer is left with a testament
(antonym of the previous adjective)

to the _____ of the human condition.
(adjective) (noun)

Martin Shear

Martin Shear is a self-taught artist who works as a custodian at an elementary school in Nashville, Tennessee, by day and paints, from photographs, on small, pre-stretched canvas in acrylic by night. His family's home is filled with dozens and dozens of paintings that measure 8 x 10 inches, as well as a handful of even smaller ones placed on shelves. Some of these paintings are made from postcards depicting the Nashville skyline, because the skyline is pretty and familiar, while other paintings depict his wife's guitars because he likes painting guitars and Betsy owns quite a few.

Like other artists who have chosen to live far from the Chelsea galleries, he regularly posts his paintings on Facebook and Instagram. His paintings are just the right scale for documenting with his Samsung Galaxy 6 and posting on social media sites. Friends and strangers see and like his work: they give him encouragement and, sometimes, they reach out to him about purchasing a piece. Essentially, Shear is happier than you are. You're way too fucking precious about your work.

Untitled Artist Statement

These stunning images of sidewalk litter shot in nature highlight our undeniable impact on the environment, including the urban environment. My interest in repurposing trash in the service of art began on the day I volunteered to chaperone my son's Cub Scouts troop on their community service day, collecting litter. While the boys removed the refuse from the sidewalk, placing it in trash and recycling receptacles, I watched, struck by the beauty of a crushed Fanta can backlit in the gold tones of the early morning light.

I began transforming garbage into art. I shot cigarette butts, straws, latex balloons, Styrofoam cups, used condoms, and an old set of flip-flops, leaving each where I found it. These images bring attention to the environmental issue of trash, beautifully rendered trash. All the items imaged began as useful objects, but as a result of human behavior, negligence, or forgetfulness, they ended up on the street. I transform this trash into art with an important message: I am a special person who sees beauty everywhere.

Fans of my street photography often ask me, "Is that real, or did you use Photoshop?" I do not "mess with nature." I create art. I am a photographer who posts final images straight from my camera to Flack Photo's Facebook page. These images are true in the truest sense and fully express who I am and what I see in the most literal sense. When I take a picture of a seagull soaring over Bay Harbor, I am not speaking about elevated consciousness or self-confidence or whatever else you've written in my comments section; I am taking a great picture of a bird, by panning my camera along in time with this moving subject so that the bird is a relatively sharp subject but the background is blurred. Panning is a technique that can produce amazing results if you perfect it, which I have.

Some say the term "photographer" fails to accurately describe the vast majority of artists working with cameras. These people are wrong. A real photographer is able to perfectly capture the scene in front of him and share it with his online community. If he is honest and open, he will also share his ISO, aperture, and shutter speed. This technical information is the artist's real artist statement. "Artist statements" as the liberal elite are taught to write them, in their nurseries of "higher learning," add nothing to the photographic image, which should speak for itself.

May the light be with you!

Gustav M. Christoffersen

Gustav M. Christoffersen (b. 1992, Oakland) is a space artist who creates photo-based pulp sculptures as an architectural stage for his social practice, which is concerned with the narrative of cyclical realities. Christoffersen urges us to renegotiate physical realities as being part of oppressing themes in our post-contemporary, image-based society. By choosing formal non-solutions, he creates hyper-personal moments born by means of omissions, refusal, and Elmer's glue. He invites the viewer round and round in circles of photographic sculptural matter. He manipulates these structures in order to deconstruct socially defined spaces and their uses and post-possibilities.

Multilayered conceptualism arises in which the fragility and instability of our seemingly real reality is queried. The results are deconstructed so that meaning is soaked in possible interpretations of impossibility. With an under-conceptual approach, he creates with daily, recognizable photographic imagery an unprecedented situation in which the viewer is shown the conditioning of his or her own image space and has to reconsider their own life.

The artist's forms do not follow logical criteria but are constructed through subjective associations and formal realities, which incite the viewer to make new personal associations by rejecting and re-rejecting seemingly objective narratives. His works directly respond to the surrounding environment and frame instances that would go unnoticed outside of his constructed context. By applying anti-abstraction techniques, he tries to approach a broad range of subjects in a multilayered way, likes to involve the viewer in a way that is sometimes physical, and believes in the idea of function following form in an anti-work.

Down and Out in the Bible Belt

Down and Out in the Bible Belt is a photographic project containing 35 portraits of homeless men and women in cities throughout the American South, as shot from the window of my car. For these portraits, I came up with an original approach: to photograph homeless people from the comfort and safety of my vehicle.

My approach necessitated photographing these people in dramatic black-and-white against urban backdrops, framing in the graffiti and empty bottles that complete each picture as quickly as I could. This meant scouting the most picturesquely homeless people I could find in South Carolina, Georgia, and Mississippi, particularly those with beards and hats, and making sure to include their typical paraphernalia, such as shopping carts and sleeping bags. In essence, I am showing the viewer who these people truly are, as seen from a speeding 2008 Jeep Cherokee.

Dear _____,

I am an avid reader of your blog. I particularly enjoyed your post about _____ because _____. I am sending you a press release of my upcoming show, as based on your work, I think it might be of interest to you.

Normal things need my help to be interesting. I photograph the banality of daily life, attuned to the overlooked, romantic details of mundane objects. Through my lens, bottle caps, cocktail umbrellas, and shirt buttons undergo transubstantiation. And by transubstantiation, I mean macro photography. I use extreme close-up photography to photograph very small subjects and then print finished photographs of these subjects at a much, much greater size. Picture a burnt-out light bulb. Interesting? No. Now look at my 72 x 48 inch digital C-print *Burnt-Out Light Bulb*. Better, right?

See, the ratio of the subject size on the film plane to the actual subject size is known as the reproduction ratio. My reproduction ratios are much greater than 1:1, making for much more interesting images. For example, lately I've been producing large-scale mural prints of images of my toenail clippings. As with all of my work, there is also a lugubrious sense of loss that connects my subject with my medium: like toenail clippings, photographs are objects ripped from their original context, serving as a *memento mori*. This is most evident in a very large photograph.

Best wishes,
Janele Pacey

For more information, please Google me.

The Anxiety of Photography

It is predicted that the Earth will support more than 8 billion people by 2019, and about 5 billion of those people will have a mobile phone with a built-in camera. If each of those people takes around 10 photos per day, that's more than 15 trillion photos annually. These images are a type of digital pollution, both figurative and literal. Once shared on social media platforms, these images are housed in data centers. Thousands of data centers, spread over hundreds of thousands of square feet with banks of generators and industrial cooling systems that emit toxic diesel exhaust—all so that millions of idiots can take the exact same photograph of their family crossing Abbey Road.

For this reason, I work exclusively with existing images, found on social media sites like Instagram, Imgur, Flickr, Photobucket, and Shutterfly. I began the project *Vacation Photographs* from Instagram in 2012. Looking for the most photographed subject, I searched the photo-sharing platform under #travel and found 3,655,041 images. I collected the most ubiquitous subjects—the person posing as the Statue of Liberty next to the Statue of Liberty, the family making faces at a member of the Royal Guard, the divorcee meditating at the Taj Mahal, or the man using forced perspective to make it look like he is squishing the Washington Monument. I then printed photographic murals made of thousands of images. To my dismay, I found that viewers most often responded to my work by using it as a background for their selfies, which they posted on social media.

BORGES!

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bestowal Gallery presents Natalie Davin's new work, *Second Generation*

Bestowal Gallery is pleased to present *Second Generation*, a solo exhibition featuring works by Natalie Davin. This will be the artist's seventh exhibition with the gallery in the past seven years. *Second Generation* borrows its name from *The Picture Generation*, which was the name of a landmark exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, as well as the name of the group of appropriation artists from the 1970s and 1980s it featured. By exhibiting existing images from advertisements and news media after making few to no changes, this group of artists explored how images shape our perceptions of ourselves and the world, while they saved the time and resources it would have taken to make their own images.

Similarly, Davin has things to do. She has emails to return and laundry to wash, and she definitely needs to walk Sandy more—dogs should spend between 30 minutes and two hours outside every day. So *Second Generation* just features mural-size prints of profile pictures from Tinder.

Conceptually, this artistic gesture echoes those of image-scavenging artists like Louise Lawler and Sherrie Levine, who occupied the space between the “original” and the “copy” to challenge the distance between objective document and subjective desire and to free up time for weekend trips upstate. Davin's previous work, which referenced *Picture Generation* artists like Cindy Sherman and Laurie Simmons, who worked at the intersection of personal and collective memory, was a lot of work to make. *Second Generation* took much less fuss and freed up time for her to finally learn German. Well, take German. OK, sign up for a German class.

While Davin's influences did work with a sea of images from the media culture of movies and television, popular music, and magazines, they could not have predicted the coming of social media, a mechanism of seduction and desire like no other. This never-before-seen, highly refined means of social construction is a wellspring of content for Davin, who spent hours collecting material on Tinder. Plus, Tinder and art—two birds, one stone, right?

Streetwise

My great-uncle was an Italian street photographer who immigrated to New York City in the 1930s. His work comprised unmediated chance-encounter portraits within public places. Growing up in a house with him, I've developed an acute sensibility for capturing candid photographs. I understand that behind every great street photograph, there is a brilliant photographer bothering a pedestrian.

Early in my career, I saw an older gentleman who had fallen outside the coffee shop below my apartment. It was such an authentic moment. You could taste his humiliation. I ran upstairs to retrieve my camera. However, by the time I returned, I barely had a chance to make my subject feel deeply self-conscious before he got up and left me with no usable shots. I knew I would never make that mistake again.

Now I carry my camera everywhere. It is an extension of my body. I never know when I will catch a glimpse of some pedestrian on the way to work and feel that sudden urge to capture them without their permission as they try to avoid my gaze. There's nothing better than coming across an interesting and easily unnerved subject trapped on the express train with me. I love to stare at them through my viewfinder from three or four feet away, just waiting for what Henri Cartier-Bresson called "the decisive moment." I love switching seats to get a better angle on a commuter who has unfolded a newspaper in an effort to block my view. I love photography.

Aaron Richards

Aaron Richards (American, b. 1984, San Diego, California, based in Los Angeles, California) is known for using a multidisciplinary approach to art-making, incorporating photography, sound, sculpture, and nature itself in his large-scale installations. His works explore the intersection of light, space, and time, as well as his bottomless need for approval. Despite his interdisciplinary approach, his aesthetic is informed by key intellectuals of the Minimalist group. He cites Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, and Dan Flavin as major influences and is terrified to admit there is anything about art or life that he does not already know.

Like a Rube Goldberg machine, Richards includes a chance element in each installation. This element of chance can be anything from the unpredictability of viewer engagement to the weather to swarms of live bees, and is most often chosen in response to the installation site itself. By incorporating chance, his art reflects life's physical circumstances, rather than denying them. Richards explains: "My installations are not only investigating space and time as art forms but also, you like me, right?"

Richards wants his works to exist together in three-dimensional spaces and in relation to each other, rather than representing a fictive space, as with traditional art. He incorporates found materials in his installations, like stock sounds of bird calls, reducing the visible hand of the artist and allowing the viewer to have their own experience and really love him for it.

Outline for My Future Biography:

1. Graduated from mid-level art school with BFA.
2. Moved to Lower East Side with friends.
3. Worked in major artist's studio as assistant and at a Chelsea gallery at
4. the desk.
5. Had a local solo show in Midwest hometown.
6. Produced posters for local sales.
7. Held a related workshop.
8. Entered and won a juried exhibition.
9. Featured in quirky art magazines.
10. Had a show in a more important gallery.
11. Quit gallery job.
12. Increased prices. Attended festivals.
13. Quit studio job.
14. Signed with more important gallery.
15. Solo shows in Europe.
16. Increased prices.
17. Created a catalog.

18. Featured in better magazines.
19. Licensed images for other products.
20. Residency.
21. Regional museum exhibition.
22. Married.
23. Raised prices.
24. Baby.
25. Visiting faculty.
26. Baby.
27. Assistant professor.
28. Mortgage.
29. Associate professor.
30. Baby.
31. Major museum exhibition.
32. Raised prices.
33. Died in a freak accident (picnic, lightning).

Small People

Mary Ellen Mark once said, "I've always felt that children are not 'children,' they're small people. I look at them as little people and I either like them or I don't like them." I'm hoping you "like" my small people, or at least my photographs of them, in my new Instagram series, *Never-ending Family Slideshow from Hell*. By oversharing every moment in my small people's lives, I am examining the role of juvenile bodily autonomy in our culture. Children's-rights advocates believe that small people should have a voice in what information is shared about them. I believe I need the regular spikes in the pleasure centers of my brain that studies show result from obsessive posting.

The more likes I get, the better I feel. And what gets the most likes? Photographs of children... I mean, photographs of small people. My images of small people don't just provide me with the attention I so desperately need; they also open up a dialogue about our addiction-addled culture of overshares. Just look at all the nasty comments in my thread.

My images are good for my small people as well. By posting photos of my son while he is bathing or my daughter on the potty, I am creating bullying fodder that will someday make my future large people stronger. Most small people will never experience problems related to what their parents share, but a tension still exists between my right to share my small people's every waking (and sleeping) moments and their right not to end up on an online child pornography site. Like it or not, this fertile territory is ripe for exploration. But seriously, like it. I need this.

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BIOGRAPHIES

Liz Sales

Liz Sales is an artist, in the sense that “artist” may be defined as someone who engages in the making of art, regardless of its quality of craftsmanship or depth of content. She has a BA from the Evergreen State College (with a focus on getting high in the woods) and an MFA from Bard College (where Becker and Fagen of Steely Dan met). Sales works as an itinerant adjunct professor, teaching concurrently at the City University of New York, the University of Connecticut, and the International Center of Photography (her second home, as well as Google’s second search result for “I.C.P.” after Insane Clown Posse). In an effort to possess as many faculty IDs and skeleton keys as possible, Sales also spends her summers teaching at the Evergreen State College and still knows how to find the woods. Sales has written for photo-based art magazines, such as *Conveyor* and *Foam Magazine*, which has given her the opportunity to get to know some of her favorite artists, in the sense that “artist” may be defined as someone who makes art with quality of craftsmanship and depth of content. In her “spare time,” Sales also has what the kids call a “side hustle”: she writes other artists’ artist statements. These are not they.

Matthew Carson

Matthew Carson is the head librarian and archivist at the International Center of Photography in New York. He is a cofounder of the 10×10 photo-book organization. In 2013, he was a curator of the artist book component of “A Different Kind of Order: The ICP Triennial.” In 2015, he was one of the organizers of “Shashin,” a Japanese photography symposium and festival held in New York. He is a photography enthusiast, writer, and bibliomaniac. In 2017, he edited and published the catalog for “CLAP! Contemporary Latin American Photobooks.” He is a photography enthusiast, writer, and bibliomaniac, and here to provide some much-needed credibility to this project.