

# senior show

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## Thesis Planning

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During the concept process, you may find yourself with false starts. You may choose a path and find out that the technique you chose does not yield the results you expected. Embrace the unexpected, refer to your research frequently, and use critiques and feedback from faculty and peers to shape your final project. It is important to remember that this is your chance to pursue a topic of interest. You should feel free to meander wherever your mind wants to take you, as long as it answers a research question. Discuss your topic with your advisor and any other faculty within your chosen medium. This project should be an enjoyable and stimulating experience. The senior show is an intensive final project that will coalesce your skills with your worldview and artistic vision. The show is uniquely yours and will usually include a research component for you to defend your choices and approaches.

## Types of Sources

There are two types of sources, primary and secondary.

### 1. *Primary Sources*

Primary sources consist of original materials that can be found in documents, letters, diaries, journals, speeches, and maps. They can also include art or artifacts from a time period being studied. Oral, photographed, and filmed eyewitness accounts of events are counted as primary sources. Field research (questionnaires, surveys, observations, and interviews) that you conduct are also included in this category. What primary sources will you use?

### 2. *Secondary Sources*

Secondary sources consist of scholarly materials usually found in libraries: books, journal articles, newspaper articles, government reports, etc. What secondary sources will you use? At the proposal stage, find two or three books (author, title, place of publication, date of publication) that you might use.

Try to include both primary and secondary sources. Journal articles can be found through electronic databases. Will you be using electronic databases for your search? Which ones? (Consult a reference librarian for assistance). Internet materials, especially government (.gov) and university (.edu) websites, can be good sources for primary or secondary information. Avoid using websites which may offer unreliable or biased information unless those biases are in some way relevant to your project.

### *Libraries*

Research often occurs in libraries. What libraries (by name and location) will you use for your primary and/or secondary research? Will your research extend to other places beyond libraries?

### *Personal Background*

What personal background will allow you to complete this project successfully? First, refer to relevant undergraduate coursework, which will allow you to understand material related to your proposed topic. If personal life experiences contribute to your background for this topic, include a discussion of them. Then explain how you developed (or how you will develop) skills in library research, literary criticism, communications (interviewing, design of questionnaires and surveys, etc.), statistics (graphical methods, probability distributions, sampling distributions, confidence intervals, etc.), internet research, and/or other relevant areas which will allow you to complete the necessary research effectively.

## Thesis Statement (one sentence)

Start your proposal by creating a thesis statement, an argument a one sentence statement narrowing your concept. What is the issue?

A good thesis statement will usually include the following four attributes:

1. Take on a subject upon which reasonable people could disagree.
2. Deal with a subject that can be adequately treated given the nature of the assignment.
3. Express one main idea.
4. Assert your conclusions about a subject.

## Brainstorm the Topic

### **Sugar consumption.**

This fragment isn't a thesis statement. Instead, it simply indicates a general subject. Furthermore, your reader doesn't know what you want to say about sugar consumption.

## Narrow the topic

Your readings about the topic have led you to the conclusion that elementary school children are consuming far more sugar than is healthy.

### **Reducing sugar consumption to elementary school children.**

This fragment not only announces your subject, but it focuses on one segment of the population: elementary school children. Furthermore, it raises a subject upon which reasonable people could disagree, because while most people might agree that children consume more sugar than they used to, not everyone would agree on what should be done or who should do it. You should note that this fragment is not a thesis statement because your reader doesn't know your conclusions on the topic.

## Take a position on the topic

After reflecting on the topic a little while longer, you decide that what you really want to say about this topic is that something should be done to reduce the amount of sugar these children consume.

### **More attention should be paid to the food and beverage choices available to elementary school children.**

This statement asserts your position, but the terms "more attention" and "food and beverage choices" are vague.

## Use specific language

You decide to explain what you mean about food and beverage choices.

### **Experts estimate that half of elementary school children consume nine times the recommended daily allowance of sugar.**

This statement is specific, but it isn't a thesis. It merely reports a statistic instead of making an assertion.

## Make an assertion based on clearly stated support

### **Because half of all American elementary school children consume nine times the recommended daily allowance of sugar, schools should be required to replace the beverages in soda machines with healthy alternatives.**

Notice how the thesis answers the question, "What should be done to reduce sugar consumption by children, and who should do it?" When you started thinking about the topic, you may not have had a specific question in mind, but as you became more involved in the topic, your ideas became more specific.

## What Is an Artist's Statement?

A general introduction to your work, a body of work, or a specific project.

1. It should open with the work's basic ideas, the proposed topic in an overview of two or three sentences or a short paragraph. Articulate your concept and define the problem or issue.
2. The second paragraph should go into detail about how these issues or ideas are presented in the work.
3. If writing a full-page statement, you can include some of the following points for the third or fourth paragraph:

Why you have created the work and its history.

What are you exploring, attempting, or challenging through this work?

Your overall vision.

Who is your intended primary audience?  
How could this audience benefit from your research?

What you expect from your audience and how they will react.

How your current work relates to your previous work.

Where your work fits in with contemporary art and design.

How your work fits in with the history of art and design.

How your work fits into a group exhibition, or a series of projects you have done.

Sources and inspiration for your images.

Artists you have been influenced by or how your work relates to other artists' work.

How this work fits into a series or larger body of work.

How a certain technique is important to the work.

Your philosophy of art and design making or of the work's origin.

4. The final paragraph should recapitulate the most important points in the statement.

## What an Artist's Statement is NOT

Writing a statement about your role in the world.

Grandiose and empty expressions and clichés about your work and views.

Technical and full of jargon.

Long dissertations or explanations.

Discourses on the materials and techniques you have employed.

Poems or prosy writing.

Folksy anecdotes about some important event in your life.

Nothing about your childhood or family unless it is very relevant to your work.

Not a brag fest or a press release.

## Why Write an Artist's Statement?

Writing an artist's statement can be a good way to clarify your own ideas about your work.

A gallery dealer, curator, or the public can have access to your description of your work, in your own words. This can be good for a reviewer as well.

Useful in writing a proposal for an exhibition or project.

It is often required when applying for funding.

It is often required when applying to graduate school.

It can be a good idea to include an artist's statement when your slides are requested for review or your work is included in the slide library of a college or university.

Good to refer to when you are preparing a visiting artist lecture, or someone else is lecturing or writing about your work.

Useful when you are applying for a teaching position.

Good idea when a press release is being written.

Useful when someone is writing about your work in a catalog or magazine.

Useful when someone else is writing a bio for a program brochure.

It is a good way to introduce your work to a buying public. Often the more a buyer knows about your work the more they become interested in what you do, and in purchasing a work.

## Types of Artist's Statements

### *Full-Page Statement*

This statement speaks generally about your work, the methods you may have used, the history of your work, etc. It may also include specific examples of your current work or project.

### *Short Statement*

A shorter statement that includes the above in an abbreviated way, or is specific to the project at hand.

### *Short Project Statement*

A very short statement about the specific project you are presenting.

### *Bio*

Often a short description of your career as an artist and your major accomplishments.

## How Should I Write It?

This most often depends on the context where it will appear. Who is your reader? What assumptions can you make about their knowledge?

Ask yourself "What are you trying to say in the work?" "What influences my work?" "How do my methods of working (techniques, style, formal decisions) support the content of my work?" "What are

specific examples of this in my work" "Does this statement conjure up any images?"

Refer to yourself in the first person, not as "the artist". Make it come from you. Make it singular, not general, and reflective of yourself and your work.

Make it clear and direct, concise and to the point.

It should not be longer than one page.

Use no smaller than 10 – 12 point type. Some people have trouble reading very small type.

Artist's statements are usually single-spaced.

Do not use fancy fonts or tricky formatting. The information should wow them, not the graphic design.

## Considerations

Who is your audience?

What will your statement be used for?

What does your statement say about you as an artist and a professional?

## Style

Try to capture your own speaking voice.

Avoid repetition of phrases and words. Look for sentences that say the same thing you said before, but in a different way. Choose the better of the two.

Vary sentence structure and length. The length of a sentence should relate to its complexity.

Organization of detail is important. Significant ideas should be at the end of each sentence.