Once again, I'm transmitted to the urban oasis - the liquor store which I perceive as The Underprivileged Oasis. Notice how each character depicted within this piece seems justified in the role he, she, or they are playing here. Go deeper still, and observe how the soapbox preacher and the NOI (Nation of Islam) representative both occupy the fringe of the scene. Judging by the way not a single character is looking in their direction hints at the woeful ineffectiveness of their outreach attempts. In order to be...
THIS GUIDE IS DESIGNED FOR PRACTICING ARTISTS

It provides essential information on the THREE DOCUMENTS necessary for submitting artwork for exhibition applications. These documents serve as the initial impression for galleries, buyers, and curators, so it is crucial to articulate your thoughts clearly and present yourself effectively. While the artist statement and bio share similarities, they are not interchangeable, and each application will specify whether they require one or both.

**THESE ARTIST DOCUMENTS ARE REQUIRED FOR MOST ART SUBMISSIONS PARTICULARLY IF YOU WANT TO BE INCLUDED IN EXHIBITIONS OUTSIDE OF THE “INCARCERATED ARTIST” LABEL.**

Use these prompts as a guide to write:

**FOR YOUR ARTIST STATEMENT:**

1. What kind of artwork do you create and why?
2. What materials and techniques do you use?
3. How would you describe the style you work in?
4. Who/what influences your current artistic practice?
5. Describe a specific artwork and how it represents who you are as an artist.

**FOR YOUR ARTIST BIOGRAPHY:**

1. What are some of your artistic achievements? (shows, events, collaborations etc..)
2. Where were you born and/or where do you currently live?
3. Who/what influenced you to pursue an artistic life?
4. How has being an artist who is incarcerated influenced your work, if at all?
5. What are some of your artistic achievements (exhibitions, events, collaborations, etc…)

**FOR YOUR ARTWORK STORY:**

1. Can you describe what this artwork is about and what inspired you to create it?
2. Please explain the significance of any key symbols/imagery the audience will see?

**WE ENCOURAGE REVIEWING THE PROVIDED GUIDES TO DEVELOP AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE KEY ELEMENTS ESSENTIAL FOR CRAFTING A WELL-WRITTEN ARTIST STATEMENT, BIOGRAPHY, AND ARTWORK STORY.**
AN ARTIST STATEMENT IS A PERSONAL DOCUMENT

It is crafted to aid the audience in accessing and comprehending your artistic work. It is written in the first person and serves as the primary means of communication between you, the artist, and the public. Artist statements are often shown with your artworks during exhibitions and guides your audience to the aspects you deem important in the work.

Remember, it serves as a representation of you, the artist, providing insights into your work that enhance the viewer’s experience. The artist statement explores the conceptual foundations and aesthetic decisions guiding your work, addressing the how, what, and why.

WHAT TO INCLUDE AND IN WHAT FORMAT:

Paragraph 1, should be brief (1 - 3 lines) and explain what you create and why. Define the central theme or question you explore. For example: “My work blends photography (the how) with original writing (the what) to explore themes of time and memory (the why).”

Paragraph 2 outlines your materials, style, and influences. Provide a brief list of the mediums, techniques, and tools you use, highlighting any unique methods you’ve developed. Keep this section concise. If you’ve crafted your own technique, briefly explain how it’s effective. Mention your current artistic influences briefly (1-2 sentences), such as family, an artist, or religion, including why they inspire you and impact your work.

Paragraph 3, briefly describes a specific work, how it represents ideas described in Paragraph One and incorporates the materials and influences mentioned in Paragraph Two. This conclusion should unify your entire statement. Keep your artist’s statement within 3-4 paragraphs and limit it to one page.

Good Example:

I’m a visual artist who is primarily drawn to painting works that matter. A lot of my work depicts socially charged images which are important not only to myself, but to the masses. Art is the loudest part of my voice, and I am compelled to use it.

I’m currently using acrylic and water soluble oils to create these storytelling works. I learned through years of trial and error that using these mediums while layering in watercolor techniques works the best for me. As a child of seven or eight years of age, art was the happy place that I regularly retreated to. It was my (Momma) that inspired me from the start. She drew images of powerful women in order to cope with her own circumstances. Whether that was fighting with dad, or difficulties at making ends meet, she would draw. When she finished I would grab what she’d drawn and stare in amazement. I can see her influence on my own style with how the clothes have movement with the characters in my works. While I am not shackled to any particular kind of depiction, I do have a certain love for displaying the urban community experience.

As an example of this experience, I’ve embarked on a journey through a series of socially charged paintings I call “Underprivileged Oasis.” In each installment, the oasis is represented by the neighborhood liquor store. With an honest, and sometimes ugly look at the things that tend to occur there. On display are truths that many know of, but few shine light on. These works beg the question, why have these stores become gathering places for urban communities?

-Alvin Smith

Note: update your artist statement frequently as you go. It will evolve over time with your work. Each time you submit your work make sure you review your artist statement — does it still fit with the work you are doing?

**Remember, this is NOT a bio but there are overlaps. See artist bio page for more info.**
AN ARTIST’S BIOGRAPHY INCLUDES FACTUAL

It describes experiences and achievements, such as education, places of residence, awards, and grants. It explores your artistic journey, ideas, inspirations, and, if relevant, the impact of being an incarcerated artist. Connecting life experiences to artwork is essential.

The biography, written in the third person, should be limited to 2 short paragraphs, offering a brief overview of you, your work, and recent accomplishments—intending to generate interest in your creations. The statement guides your audience to the aspects you deem important in your work.

WHAT TO INCLUDE AND IN WHAT FORMAT:

Paragraph 1
- Write in 3rd person, written as if talking to reader (non formal)
- Include where you were born and/or currently reside so people can better connect your location to your work and reach out to you if you’re local.

Paragraph 2
- Who/What/Why inspires your work? Write about your lifetime artistic influences and journey.
- Include some of your biggest achievements: major exhibitions, sales, partnerships, and awards from the past five years. Focus on the highlights, not everything you’ve ever done.

Good Examples:

Sarah Montoya was born and raised in Los Angeles, California with Mexican and Native American roots. From a young age, her artistic interests ranged from piano to various dance styles such as Aztec, Folklorico, tap, jazz and ballet, as well as drawing, painting, tattooing, and silk screening.

At CCWF, she’s drawn posters for COVID awareness, and continues to paint pictures and affirmations on the sidewalks around the facility.

Her portrait of incarcerated writer Elizabeth Hawes is included in the exhibition Return to Sender: Prison as Censorship, fall 2023. Currently, Sarah is illustrating a children’s book for terminally ill and disabled children and she makes stuffed animals and mails them out to children whose mothers are incarcerated. She hopes to continue the craft as a business endeavor when she paroles.

-Sarah Montoya

Elizabeth Lozano is a Latina artist who was born in Torrance, CA and currently resides in Chowchilla, CA. In 2012 Elizabeth received her A.A. in Behavioral and Social Science with Honors from Feather River College.

Elizabeth’s art has been exhibited in Central California Women’s Facility’s visiting store. Most recently the facility requested from Elizabeth to help paint affirmations on the sidewalks to uplift the community.

Her portrait of incarcerated writer Kwaneta Harris is included in the exhibition Return to Sender: Prison as Censorship, fall 2023.

-Elizabeth Lozano
AN ARTWORK STORY EXPLAINS A PIECE OF WORK

It is displayed alongside your artwork during a show, to provide your audience with insights into your artistic intent and the story behind the work.

WHAT TO INCLUDE AND IN WHAT FORMAT:

- First list the factual information about the piece in this format:
  - Artist Name
  - Title of Work
  - Date of Work
  - Size of Work
  - Medium Used
  - Minimum Price

- Next create a short paragraph that details your inspiration behind the piece. Describe key symbols/imagery in a way that expresses your inspiration and intention (such as "I chose yellow for the sky to convey ...")

Good Example:

Once again, I'm transmitted to the urban oasis - the liquor store - which I perceive as The Underprivileged Oasis. Notice how each character depicted within the composition of this piece seems to feel justified in the role he, she, or they are playing here.

Go deeper still, and observe how the soapbox preacher and the NOI (Nation of Islam) representative both occupy the fringes of the scene. Judging by the way that not a single character is looking in their direction hints at the woeful ineffectiveness of their outreach attempts.

In order to be effective, those who wish to have an impact in these communities must move away from the fringes and immerse themselves into the shadows — the culture — in order to have any success at all.

-Alvin Smith

Good Final Design Example:

Alvin Smith

CLASSIFIED, 2021
Acrylic on unstretched canvas
25" x 38 3/4"
600.00

This piece is indicative of the choices we are sometimes faced with; how what we decide impacts others around us. And how, in most cases, there are ample motivations for better choices. Consider a person who sells illegal drugs on the street. Everyday encounters with both living and inanimate objects can serve as guideposts. Take for instance, the stop sign in this composition — the damage of the sign makes it prevalent. It may go unnoticed by many, but to the person who's thinking he/she should "stop" dealing drugs, it could be a source of confirmation. Next thing you know, your eye finds the word "STOP" somewhere else in the piece. What in your own life might you need to STOP? Personally, I did not take heed to these guideposts. So I recognize them now from a position of consequence.