

Analyzing Author's/Artist's Statements

Purpose

The purpose of an Author's/Artist's Statement is for an author (or artist or other composer) to discuss the decisions and choices he or she made in composing a specific text or other work. Let's say you've created an ad or a documentary film for your course. By writing an accompanying Author's/Artist's Statement, you can persuade your readers to see your finished piece in a particular way. A successful Statement reflects your understanding of your chosen genre (and the elements, style, design, and use of sources that characterize it) — and of your specific rhetorical situation (your reasons for composing, your audience, how you use rhetorical appeals, and your choice of mode and medium).

If you're writing an Author's Statement in an academic setting, your main purpose is to inform and persuade readers — your peers, your instructor, your audience — of the critical and creative thought you put into your composition. For example, Michael Kipp explains [Guided Reading: Artist's Statement](#) that he “used striking contrast and positioned the objects in ways the viewers would not expect, thus drawing attention to them.” Knowing that the “striking contrast” in the collage is deliberate and not merely a happy accident helps the reader understand the thought process that went into arranging the images.

Audience

The audience for an Author's/Artist's Statement is usually a particularly engaged and interested reader or viewer. In an academic setting, your audience is made up of invested and critical readers and viewers, such as your professor and peers, who want to confirm that you've made deliberate choices throughout your composing process. In Kipp's statement, available in his full project on LaunchPad for *The Bedford Book of Genres*, he notes his audience as “those who want to be happier and ... are open to developing a different mindset.”

Rhetorical Appeals

In an Author's/Artist's Statement, writers persuade readers by appealing mainly to logos and ethos.

- *Ethos* The author's credibility (ethos) is particularly important because, as with most persuasive pieces, the writer needs to come across as honest and thoughtful.
- *Logos* Authors can establish ethos through the reasoning (logos) they present in their Authors' Statements. When writers logically present evidence to readers about the choices they made in organizing and presenting their work, readers are more likely to accept the claims they make.
- *Pathos* To persuade, composers may sometimes appeal to their audience's emotions. For example, if a composer wrote a piece of music as a memorial and wanted it performed a certain way, that message would appear in the program.

Modes & Media

Authors choose modes and media for their Statements that are appropriate for those of the work they're discussing. An artist showing work online would probably create a digital Artist's Statement, whereas an artist showing work in a brick-and-mortar gallery would probably print out a text-based statement to hang next to his or her masterpieces.