

StART Strong Workshop

with Lucy Latella, NAS Gallery Curator

Communicating your practice to curators, organisations and audiences

Why this matters

Talking and writing about your work amplifies your practice.

It's how you'll connect your work to curators, collaborators, funding assessors, writers, gallerists, and audiences.

It helps you to:

- Reflect critically on your own ideas
- Identify through-lines or themes across different bodies of work
- Communicate with collaborators more effectively
- Advocate for yourself in professional and funding contexts
- Bring professionalism and confidence to your practice
- Reach audiences who might otherwise feel excluded from contemporary art

Common points of engagement with your work

1. **In circulation** – artist statement and bio, artwork images, exhibition promotion and media
2. **In progress** – introductory meetings and studio visits with curators and gallerists, applying for grants and residencies, developing new commissions and exhibitions
3. **On display** – exhibition interpretation, artist talks and exhibition tours

1. In circulation

- Artist statement and bio
- Artwork images
- Exhibition promotion and media

Artist statement

What is an artist statement?

A short, concise text that gives an overview of your practice, providing insight into your themes, methods, materials, and motivations.

Your aim is to help readers understand your work without needing to have seen it yet.

When do I need an artist statement?

- Exhibition applications or open calls — e.g. Firstdraft, Pari ARI, Tiles Lewisham
- Grant applications — e.g. Create NSW, Creative Australia, Copyright Agency, local councils
- Residency submissions — e.g. Parramatta Artists' Studios, Bundanon Art Museum
- Prize entries – e.g. The Churchie Emerging Art Prize, NSW Visual Arts Fellowship (Emerging)
- Degree submissions – particularly for Postgraduate studies

Artist statement

How do I write a strong artist statement?

Three key points to cover:

- 1. What do you make?**
(What forms, media, or materials do you work with?)
- 2. How do you make it?**
(What processes, approaches, or influences shape your work?)
- 3. Why do you make it?**
(What drives your interest in this work — thematically, conceptually, or personally?)

Artist statement

Key tips:

- **Use clear, specific language.** Avoid jargon unless it's essential to your work.
- **Keep it concise.** Aim for around 150–300 words (1–2 paragraphs), unless otherwise specified.
- **Be concrete.** Use examples and details rather than broad generalisations like 'I explore identity and the human condition.'
- **Grammatical person depends on the context.** Generally, write in first person for assignments and proposals, and third person for online and in-gallery interpretation, formal promotion and media.
- **Update it regularly.** Your statement should evolve as your practice evolves. Revisit it at least once or twice a year.

Artist biography

What is an artist bio?

A professional and factual paragraph (approx. 120 words) which briefly outlines an artist's location and practice focus, recent exhibitions, residencies and grants they've been selected for, and their education if relevant. It should be written in the third person.

When do I need an artist bio?

- Your portfolio and website
- Exhibition promotional and press material
- Online and printed publications

Artist biography

Example

Monica Rani Rudhar is an artist working on Gadigal Land across video, performance and sculpture. Born in Sydney to Indian and Romanian migrant parents, her work speaks to longing and loss as she navigates the cultural disconnection that stems from the complexities of her multi-racial ethnicity. Her autobiographical practice attempts to restore familial histories, traditions and rituals that have been dispersed by migration and draws on the labour required to move beyond barriers to reforge these connections.

Rudhar's work has been exhibited in institutions and artist run spaces in Sydney and Melbourne including the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Chau Chak Wing Museum, Firstdraft, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, and Carriageworks. She is represented by Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney and is a 2024 PAS Granville Studio artist.

Artwork photography

High quality documentation of your work is essential for promoting your work and participating in exhibitions, programs and other professional opportunities.

When do I need artwork photography?

- Artist portfolio, website and socials
- Exhibition and grant applications
- Online and printed publications
- Exhibition promotional and press material

Artwork photography

Checklist:

- High-resolution, well-lit images that are suitable for digital viewing and as well as print.
- Multiple views for spatial works
- Video stills plus short preview clips
- Clear filenames e.g. FirstnameLastname_Title_2025.jpg
- Image captions with the artwork title, year, medium, and photography credit

2. In progress

- Introductory meetings and studio visits with curators and gallerists
- Applying for grants and residencies
- Developing new commissions and exhibitions

Intro meetings and studio visits

- Introductory meetings and studio visits with curators are general conversations about your practice, not job interviews.
- Curators to reach out directly for an introductory meeting or studio visit as part of their general research, to hear more about your practice and current projects. Note, they may not have a particular curatorial project in mind or an opportunity to offer.
- If you're part of a group studio such as Parramatta Artist Studios or Artspace, they may facilitate studio tours with various curators and stakeholders.
- Studio visits and meetings are a great way to make professional connections and get comfortable with candidly talking about your practice and sharing about past works as well as present and forthcoming projects as they're evolving.
- You might meet in person or online.

Intro meetings and studio visits

What might I be asked?

- What are you currently working on, and what are the areas of interest and research driving these works?
- What form will the works take and how and where will they be presented?
- How do these works build upon your previous works and fit into the trajectory of your practice? Why now?

Key tips:

- Select 2–4 works to discuss
- Share in-progress pieces and research materials
- Be honest and open—not rehearsed
- Let ideas and conversation emerge naturally—don't over-perform

Applying for grants and residencies

You may apply for a funding grant or residency to support the development of new work.

They are competitive and may be assessed by people of various professional backgrounds who will need to understand your practice and concept quickly and clearly.

It is important that a proposal is concise and compelling.

What do I include?

1. Project summary – what is the work?
2. Conceptual context – why now?
3. Practical requirements – materials, timeline, budget
4. Relationship to your broader practice

Applying for grants and residencies

Key tips:

- Match the tone and language to the organisation's ethos.
- Be clear and specific
- Be realistic about your capacity, budget and timeline and don't overpromise.

Developing new commissions and exhibitions

Developing a new commission or exhibition with a curator or gallerist can be a lengthy process (6–18 months) and will often involve site visits and numerous meetings with various stakeholders.

Who will I need to communicate with and why?

- **Curators (/gallerists) and exhibition teams** – to discuss the conceptual and practical elements of the work; budget and timeline; production, installation and maintenance; packing and freight; and administration involved such as artist and loan agreements, payments, bio, images
- **Collaborators and fabricators** – to discuss the development and production of work
- **Public programs teams** – to discuss direct engagement with audiences such as performances, artist talks, panel discussions, and workshops
- **Marketing teams** – to discuss promotion
- **PR teams** – to discuss media opportunities such as features and interviews

3. On display

- Exhibition interpretation – introductory wall text, wall labels and room sheets
- Artist talks and exhibition tours

Exhibition interpretation

What is exhibition interpretation?

Content that is displayed or made available in an exhibition, to assist audiences with understanding the exhibition and works on display.

It is often written by the exhibition curator, for a broad audience. It may include an audio introduction or tour recorded by the curator or artist.

The content is informed by your written and verbal communication with the curator about your work and practice.

How am I involved?

- Providing notes on your work so it can be written about
- Providing biographical information (Born, Lives and Works)
- Providing artwork details (Title, year, medium, credit line)
- Reviewing and approving written content about you, your practice, and your work on display
- In smaller galleries or ARI's, you may need to write it or assist with drafting it

Exhibition interpretation

How do I write strong exhibition interpretation?

- **Introductory texts** are around 200 words and give an overview of the exhibition, including context, themes, and intention.
- **Extended wall labels** are around 150–200 words and give insight to the work on display.
- **Room sheets** typically list the works on display with thumbnails or a diagram, and with an exhibition text on the back in lieu of an introductory wall text and labels.

Exhibition interpretation

Key tips:

- Make it a comfortable length and size for visitors to stand and read it
- Invite general audiences into the work – make it engaging and bring clarity to complexity
- You can't include everything. Pick 2–3 key, interesting points to make, that a visitor could read then easily relay to a friend.
- If you write an accompanying text that you've printed for visitors, think about whether you intend it to be read in the gallery or afterwards, and format it accordingly.

Artist talks and exhibition tours

In-gallery artist talks and exhibition tours are a great way to animate an exhibition and the works on display to an audience.

They are a special opportunity for visitors and stakeholders to hear directly from the artist behind the work and gain further insight and understanding.

Who are my audience?

- General public
- Peers
- Patrons
- Collectors
- Arts industry including curators and gallerists

Artist talks and exhibition tours

Key tips:

- Be generous – avoid jargon, give context to your practice and work and assume people are encountering it for the first time
- You can't cover everything – be concise and have a good sense of the points you'd like to cover
- Give insight into the how and why
- Be open to questions and conversation

Summary

Key takeaways:

- Communicating your practice clearly — in writing and conversation — leads to professional opportunities.
- It not only helps your audience to engage with your work, but it also helps you understand it better. This skill is central to building a sustainable professional practice.
- Start simple, be specific, revise regularly, and develop your own voice.