Sample 1: Blog post

Spec sample written by Alex Mercer to show style and range. Not published, not client work, and not written for or endorsed by any named company.

Target reader: visual artists selling their own work. Format: blog post, about 600 words. Suggested keyword: how to write an artist statement.

How to Write an Artist Statement Collectors Actually Read

Most artist statements are written for a grant panel that isn't in the room. They're full of words like "liminal" and "interrogates," and they leave the person standing in front of your work knowing less than when they started. That person is usually a potential buyer. Your statement's real job is to help them feel confident saying yes.

Here's a simple way to write one that does that job.

Start with what someone actually sees

Open with a sentence about the work itself, not about you. "I paint large, quiet interiors of rooms after everyone has left" tells a stranger more in twelve words than a paragraph about your influences. If a reader can picture the work from your first line, they'll keep reading.

Answer the question collectors are too polite to ask

Every buyer is silently asking, "Why should I care?" Give them one honest reason. Maybe you paint empty rooms because you grew up moving every year and started noticing what places look like once they stop being yours. That's not a sales pitch. It's a door into the work, and people buy what they can step into.

Name your process in plain words

Collectors love knowing how something was made, because it makes the price make sense. One or two concrete details are enough: "Each canvas takes about six weeks, built up in thin layers of oil so the light seems to come from behind the wall." Skip the jargon. If your grandmother wouldn't understand the sentence, rewrite it.

Keep it short enough to read standing up

Your statement will mostly be read at a show, on a phone, or on the back of a card. Aim for 100 to 150 words. If you need a longer version for applications, write it separately. The short one is the one that sells.

Read it out loud, then cut

Read your draft aloud. Anywhere you stumble, a reader will too. Anywhere you sound like someone else, cut it. The goal isn't to sound like an artist. It's to sound like you, talking to one curious person about something you care about.

A quick before and after

Before: "My practice interrogates the liminality of domestic space through an investigation of absence and presence."

After: "I paint rooms right after the people leave: the dent in the couch, the lamp still on. I want you to feel like you just missed someone."

Same idea. Only one of them makes someone reach for their wallet.

Your next step

Set a timer for twenty minutes and write three sentences: what the work looks like, why you make it, and how you make it. That's your statement. Polish it later, but put it next to your work this week, because the best statement is the one people actually get to read.