

The Reflective Statement:

How this important exercise helps you understanding the process that makes you a great artist!

It's extremely important to be self-aware as an artist. We should always be thinking about our processes, our decisions, our strengths and weaknesses, and our prejudices. Knowing these things will help you learn from your mistakes and use your strengths to their fullest advantage.

When you become aware of the things you're doing intuitively, you will be able to create strategies for yourself to overcome challenges in your art practice. You will also be able to overcome the things you do that might be holding you back artistically.

One great way to become more self-aware is by writing a reflective statement.

What is a reflective statement?

A reflective statement is a *written record* of your artistic process for any individual artwork you've created. A good reflective statement describes step-by-step what you did, and more importantly, why you did it. It can touch on some of the challenges you faced and how you overcame them. It can even mention ideas you have for your next piece.

Why write a reflective statement?

Writing down your thoughts about your own creative process forces you to be aware of your decision-making process *while* you are creating. This includes the conscious decisions you make, as well as the things you do intuitively. It can become a record of your thoughts while you're working and is something to refer to later to remind yourself about issues you want to explore further. A reflective statement is also a good conclusion to an artwork. Rather than setting it aside as done, you get the chance to reflect on what you have learned.

How artists use a reflective statement.

Usually you would be introduced to writing a reflective statement in a college painting class where you might be required to submit one along with every painting that you complete. At first they may seem like a chore but you will see they are actually an important tool that will have you paying a lot more attention to the process. Once you are in the habit, you'll find yourself writing your statements in your head while you work and realize you are more aware of the decisions you will be making. Hopefully this exercise will give you invaluable insight into your creative process and you will want to continue writing reflective statements throughout your career.

How to write a reflective statement.

Think of your reflective statement as a journaling exercise about your creative process. Write for yourself, and don't worry about who will be reading it, just start writing to get the ideas flowing. If you're stuck, here are 10 questions you could ask yourself:

1. What did you start with?
2. What did you do next?
3. Why did you choose that brush (or color)?
4. What were your experiences using that brush (or color)?
5. What problems did you encounter?
6. How did you solve them?
7. Were there any issues you couldn't solve?
8. What worked well and why?
9. What didn't work well and why?
10. What did you learn in this piece that you can apply in the next?