

How to Write an Artist Bio

By Leisa Collins

Having a powerful bio that explains your art and who you as an artist can greatly increase your general recognition, number of art collectors as well as opening the door to unique opportunities.

I have learned many things in writing bio's for myself over the years and in doing so have discovered what works and what doesn't. I stumbled across an article written by Artsy, one of the leading marketplaces to "discover, buy, and sell fine art", which I found very helpful. The article is entitled, "What We Learned from Writing 7,000 Artist Bios". The article validated many of the key points I had isolated that have been successful for me and also in mentoring other artists to create their unique artist bio.

Three basic points that should be central to all good artist bios are as follows:

- It should be around 120 – 150 words (However don't get hung up on this. About 1/3 to 2/3rds of a page is the usual but you can start with a longer version and edit that down, so you have a shorter version of your bio as well.)
- The bio should summarize the artist's practice—including medium(s), themes, techniques, and influences.
- The bio should open with a first line that encapsulates, as far as possible, what is most significant about the artist and his or her work, rather than opening with biographical tidbits, such as where the artist went to school, grew up, etc. For example: "John Chamberlain is best known for his twisting sculptures made from scrap metal and banged up, discarded automobile parts and other industrial detritus."

Of note, Artsy is mainly dealing with known artists. For new artists or those who are building their career as an artist, the art of telling the story is even more important.

Many experts state that telling your story is the best kind of organic marketing you can do to promote your art because people care almost as deeply about how you create, as they do about the end product.

As a visual artist, for example, you rely on the visual element of your work to sell it and captivate viewers. The same applies to other arts, such as music, singing,

writing etc. But while your art does indeed speak for itself, it only tells part of your story. The other, often-overlooked part is “Who is the person behind this amazing painting, book or artistic presentation?” When you communicate your inspiration and efforts behind your art form, you allow viewers to see your art through your eyes. This gives them something tangible to share with others in conversation.

Here are some basic guidelines I have taken from many online sources and broken down into the key points, so they are useful to you. Your objective is to artfully tell your story and ultimately expand your audience reach as a result.

Apply Storytelling Basics

You likely have an “About” profile on your website, but if it’s missing impact and emotion, you need to inject it with life. Start by catching the reader’s attention with a few lines that focus on what is the most unique thing about you and your artistic work.

For example, maybe as a child your aunt took you to her painting class and that experience fostered a love of painting? Perhaps you started singing gospel in your church as a child and this had a lasting spiritual effect on you. Or maybe you have lived all over the world and the different cultures have greatly impacted your design or musical style? The introductory anecdote should be compelling with details.

Building from the intro

Expand the rest of your story around the introduction, by answering how that defining moment led you to the art you create today. This is a good point to add your purpose, i.e. what you are working to achieve with your art and what you want to get across or communicate. This should align with your Artist Admin Scale.

Ending your Bio

End your bio by highlighting your biggest career accomplishments. This can include exhibitions, headline performances, prominent media, awards or artistic projects you have carried out or been a part of which made a difference within your local community or society as a whole. If you are not at this point as yet, or just beginning, include your plans and any upcoming events or activities so you put a future there.

Share Your Process

Once you have completed your bio and know your message as an artist, it can be used very broadly. It can be incorporated into such things as pitch letters, press releases and in social media posts. It can also be incorporated into your explanation of your artistic process.

Artists are sometimes shy about letting people into their sacred creative spaces. This means that viewers see the final artwork, listen to the polished recording, or read the final play or novel, however they have no idea about the painstaking process, and level of detail and research that goes into each artistic creation. Using video clips, photo, and text together, invite the public to get a glimpse of what goes on behind the scenes.

Work out what you need in order to bring your process to life. This could include action shots, a photo of your workspace or recording studio, or any video or still shots which capture you at the beginning, middle, and end of your process.

Conclusion

You can tell your story in on multiple mediums and in different ways. The art of storytelling has been with us since the beginning of time, but today what that looks like can range from the traditional body of text to shorter posts on Instagram and Facebook or descriptions in guest blog posts. There are lots of channels to explore and ways to use the overall story you have compiled about you and your art.

At its core, storytelling is about making an authentic, human connection. When done right, having a good bio and artist story will increase your influence and have existing and new audiences talking about your work.

Furthermore, if you get that story, along with your artistic creations out far and wide it can produce a ripple effect of supporters who want to invest in those creations – and most importantly in you as the artist.

Examples of Bios

The following are a few examples. I have included mine, but by no means do I hold it as a leading example. In terms of sheer volume of accomplishment, the best example of course is the bio I have included regards LRH as a Fiction Writer.

JOHN GRISHAM - AUTHOR

<https://www.jgrisham.com/bio/>

MARIUS NESET – JAZZ MUSICIAN

<http://www.mariusneset.info/bio.html>

LEISA COLLINS – VISUAL ARTIST

<https://leisacollins.com/the-artist/>

ERIN HANSEN – VISUAL ARTIST

<https://www.erinhanson.com/Biography>

About the author of this article:

Leisa Collins is the Director of EMA Artists USA and has made her living from her art since 2010. With a passion for architectural subjects, Leisa successfully launched her career and attributes much of her success to applying the Hubbard Management System. She soon discovered that effective promotion was the make-or-break point of success and implemented a 20-point plan of action. Within two years she was making a stable six-figure income. Today she is one of the most prolific architectural artists in the USA, has a coffee table book that includes her work in all 50 states and has been featured in major media outlets. She has now made it her mission to mentor other artists so they too can succeed.

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