

Writing Your Biography

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Think of a biography as a one-page, fun-to-read story about who you are and what inspires you. Written from a third-person point of view (using *he/she, his/her*), this narrative allows an unnamed source-assumed to be a journalist- to laud your work and note your achievements. Coming from someone other than you, it sounds like praise rather than pompous bragging.

It's important to realize that an artist's biography is distinctly different from an artist's resume or an artist's statement. Each document is written for a different reader in mind. Think of yourself as a newspaper reporter. Even though you are writing about yourself, be objective. Use *he/she, his/her* instead of *I/me*. Write concisely, keeping your bio to one typewritten page. As for the content, use a five-paragraph plan.

Paragraph One: Introduction.

Start by writing down the basics – your name, medium, artistic style and hometown or location of your studio. If you want art dealers to hand out your bio, omit your home address and telephone number. Dealers prefer to keep that information confidential. Next, zero in on what makes your work distinctive and different from all other artist. Is it your subject matter, perspective, colors, shadow treatment or sense of humor? Explain this in one or two sentences.

Paragraph Two: Your background.

Where did you go to school? What degrees have you earned? Do you have special training? Have certain teachers, artists or art movements influenced you? Keep this information to four or five sentences.

Paragraph Three: Your artistic motivation.

Think about what motivates you to run to your easel and pick up a certain tool of your trade. Is it introspection or nostalgia? Does a quirky expression on your pet's face remind you of something human? For example, sculptor Gary Mirabelle believes that watching Saturday morning cartoons while growing up fostered his unusual sense of satire. Analyze your artistic motivations and explain them in one paragraph.

Paragraph Four: Personal Comments.

In your own words, say something significant about your work and inspiration. What should you say? Start off with "I believe...."; "I often wonder..."; or "I look for..." ; and fill in the blank with something relevant to your artwork. If you're stumped, ask your art dealer or art colleague to come up with statement that you can use. Put these comments within quotation marks.

Paragraph Five: Credentials.

Now list the galleries that show your work, awards that you've won, association memberships and where your work is being shown, publicly or privately.

Once your biography is written; then, proofread, proofread. Carefully read your biography, and then set it aside for a week and read it again. Mistakes compromise the objective. Ask a spouse, friend or dealer to critique it and offer suggestions.