

Advice on Submitting Your Application - Juror (Poetry), Rachel Levitsky, on writing the Artist Statement:

"The majority of Artist Statements weaken the application/ submission. Occasionally there is a really good one that tells a compelling story about the compositional method, or conceptual framework, or the overall project of the artist/writer -- either how it relates to the particular submitted work or the person's work as a whole. This occasional statement is the one that strengthens the application. In other words, there are many things one can do wrong in a letter of intent but only a few things that one can do well. Stick to those few things. Although these may be one page, applicants can write less. And the statement may be a case in which, when in doubt, less is more.

Here are some errors from artist statements that I have seen repeatedly:

- a) Comments which seem to attempt to impress by listing accolades, accomplishments and all the places the particular work has already been published. The idea of the blind jury is to level the field and make selections based upon the work and the work only. Submission statements should show that the applicant is willing to work within the spirit of this framework.
- b) Statements of the obvious, for example, that the applicant needs time away from the rigors of contemporary life in order to do the work at hand, that Millay is beautiful and quiet, full of nature, etc.
- c) Vague or cliché statements about the work. For example "new media" isn't uninteresting but lacks discernible meaning without further address. How do you know you are being vague or cliché when you are being heartfelt? Difficult to say; I recommend the applicant have someone who he thinks is a tough critic help them.
- d) The opposite of c) -- being overly specific, for example, only interested in one town, one bird, one story. The singularity by itself isn't a problem, but the applicant needs to articulate why it's bigger than its singularity."