

# Sample Artist Statement

Example #1 explaining all of her bodies of work

**Kathleen Bitetti**

## **Artist Statement & Explanation of Bodies of work**

Since the early 1990s, my work has involved the creation of conceptually based sociopolitical objects and installations. In 1992 I began stenciling text by hand onto objects. Hand stenciled text/language has now become a very prominent feature in my work and I continue to use the same stencil and medium (graphite) that I used in 1992. In my work, I deconstruct the American dream, fairy tales, nursery rhymes, and lullabies that are part of our childhood and adult culture. My work also addresses gender roles/gender assignment, the fragility of family dynamics, domestic violence and the underlying threads of violence and danger that underpin American society. Often times these themes are combined into installations that feature mundane domestic objects, painted pure white and are often embellished with stenciled text. The color white establishes a dream-like surreal quality, suggests notions of purity and safety, and formally unifies the disparate objects in each installation. The texts provide clues to content and interpretation. My "conceptual sculpture weds minimal form with maximal content" (Shawn Hill, "BayWindows" Nov. 14 96 p27).

I usually work on several bodies of work concurrently. I also create site specific temporary installations for indoor sites (I have in the past created temporary outdoor site specific work as well). I often rework a site specific installation into a self contained format that will enable the piece to be shown in a non site specific installation format/ environment. And often times elements from my sculptures, installations, and non site specific work are utilized in my site specific installations. In other words, the various bodies of work inform or cross pollinate each other.

The six specific bodies of work that I am working on concurrently:

"Weary Heads"- a series of ten life size beds. I began the series in late 1994. These beds are beautiful objects, but they are also very dangerous. Both stenciled text/language and pillows with text are prominent elements in the series. These works transform an object, that usually provides comfort, into one that has nightmare qualities.

"Forever Hold Your Peace" In 1992, I began this series of 11 large sculptural components that attempt to reveal the life of a person who is in a battering/ abusive environment. The majority of contemporary art work addressing domestic violence does not show the whole picture of what it is like to live with such violence on a daily basis, nor does it demonstrate the long time line of domestic violence. It is the goal of my work to more fully represent the long nightmare of domestic violence and to show the underlying thread of violence/danger that underlies such relationships.

Lullabies & Fairy Tales are other areas that I am investigating. Several of my works focus on deconstructing these forms of "childhood" entertainment (these themes also make appearances in the other bodies of work).

Pillows Talk- In 1993, I began working with pillows and stenciling text on them. I have created four major pieces that use only pillows (pillows are also an important element in the Weary Heads series).

Site Specific Installation Work- **Birds** is the most recent example of this work, but **Lullaby/Rock A Bye Baby** and one version of **Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf** are also examples.

Works on Paper- My works on paper tend to differ from my 3-D/ installation work. These works are very personal pieces that have been inspired by and made for particular people in my life. Nor are these works minimal in form, color, or content. I often incorporate appropriated images and text into my works on paper and I usually sew these pieces by hand and/or by machine. Like in my 3D/installation works, the text is hand stenciled onto the piece. My works on paper are usually celebratory and often times meant to be humorous.

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Example #2 explaining her work in general and specific pieces- notice the similar introductory paragraph!!

**Kathleen Bitetti**  
**Artist Statement**

Since the early 1990s, my work has involved the creation of conceptually based sociopolitical objects and installations. In my work, I deconstruct the American dream, fairy tales, nursery rhymes, and lullabies that are part of our childhood and adult culture. My work also addresses gender roles/gender assignment, the fragility of family dynamics, domestic violence and the underlying threads of violence and danger that underpin American society. These themes are often combined with the metaphors commonly used by those in battering relationships into installations that feature mundane domestic objects, painted pure white and embellished with stenciled text. The color white establishes a dream-like surreal quality, suggests notions of purity and safety, and formally unifies the disparate objects in each installation. The texts provide clues to content and interpretation. My "conceptual sculpture weds minimal form with maximal content". (Shawn Hill, "BayWindows" Nov. 14 96 p27).

The two works, both **Untitled 1991**, are examples of my earlier work that addressed the overlooked issues of class in American society. Those who are in the lower classes are usually the ones who are "watched like goldfish" and must depend on others for their very survival. The monopoly game pieces are also very important clues to understanding the various facets of our so called classless society.

The piece entitled, **Porter Crib 1997**, is from a series of 10 beds entitled, "**Weary Heads**". I began the series in late 1994. These life size beds are beautiful objects, but they are also very dangerous. These works transform an object, that usually provides comfort, into one that has nightmare qualities and is incapable of providing comfort. Stenciled text/language is a prominent element in my "**Weary Heads**" bed series. The **Porter Crib** text is taken from a "Christianized" Celtic/Pagan childhood prayer. The prayer is stenciled on tracing paper, thus making it impossible for any infant to lie in the crib with out falling through on to the floor. Children are also at the mercy of others. Presently, I am working on completing two more of the beds in the series. I hope to show all 10 beds in a gallery setting in the future.

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Example #3 explaining one piece

**Kathleen Bitetti**  
**Artist Statement**

Birds

These plaster birds were cast from two ceramic birds my mother had in our family home. Interestingly, the two original ceramic birds are exactly the same in every detail, except that one was painted blue indicating a Blue Jay, while the other was painted red indicating a cardinal. I chose to keep my birds white. These birds, in my mindscape, symbolize safety, good luck and purity. All the birds in the museum have been cast specifically for this show and I have placed them all in their specific sites within the museum.

I first made these white plaster birds to be elements in a 1996 site specific installation entitled, ***Lullaby/Rock A Bye Baby***. The installation examined the duality of the lullaby: it is an extremely violent song that is considered a cherished "lullaby" that one sings to soothe children to sleep.

Ironically, while working on these birds for this show, I found out that many people believe that having any birds in their house, living or in any depiction, is a harbinger/cause of bad luck. Thus these birds, like the majority of my work, have conflicting meanings

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# NITA Leland

## To Make a Long Story Short...

My life as an artist began in a suburban YMCA. Unlike Georgia O'Keeffe, I didn't always know I'd be an artist. Like most kids, I liked to draw and paint, but I spent more time with my nose in a book.



1970--Teaching myself to paint

So I was at a loss what to do with a set of watercolor paints my husband gave me for my birthday in 1970, especially when I realized I didn't even know what a wash was. Well, actually, I thought I knew a lot about that, raising four kids, but this was altogether different! So I signed the kids up for swimming lessons at the YMCA, where there was an adult watercolor class going on at the same time. From the first brush stroke I knew this was something I had to do. It wasn't easy fitting classes, workshops and painting in between car pools, but somehow I managed. Early on, I discovered that teaching watercolor painting was a great way to learn and, just incidentally, to help pay for materials.

My instructor said, "If the values are right, the color doesn't matter." But color turned out to be my passion, and after several years of studying color, I wrote my first book, *Exploring Color*. Then I gathered together many of the lessons I used in my classes, researched creativity, and wrote *The Creative Artist*, and finally, collaborated with Virginia Lee Williams on *Creative Collage Techniques*. All three books, published by North Light Books, became bestsellers in art instruction, and in September 1998, *Exploring Color, Revised* was released, completely rewritten, with new art and exercises in color study. In 2000 I self-published *Exploring Color Coloring Book*, a hands-on color journal and reference book for artists.

Eventually I invented a [color wheel](#) and began teaching national workshops, writing magazine articles and making [videos](#) on color. You cannot imagine how much fun this is, meeting so many interesting people in different places. I'm still not sure how all this came about: what turned a stay-at-home mom into an artist, author and traveling workshop teacher? But I do know that just about anything can happen--if you make it happen.

*"You cannot suit everybody, so you had better suit yourself."* William Morris Hunt

## Artist's Statement

The changing light of day and the moods it creates are the foundations of my watercolors. My paintings usually start with a color idea, then evolve into compositions in which color is the primary subject. To me, art is a synthesis of my personal feelings, the subject or colors that inspire me and my materials and techniques. Serenity and simplicity are my primary goals.

## Examples of Artists' Statements:

[The Diane Farris Gallery](#) provides numerous examples of descriptive, didactic and personal statements written by and about the artists who are exhibiting (or have exhibited) their work at this local gallery. [Sam Lam](#), [Monique Fouquet](#), [Chris Woods](#), and [Sam Carter](#) provide a few good examples. And there are plenty more. Just click on any one of the artist's names on the main page or go to [past exhibitions](#) ; most artists supply statements along with images of their work.

The artist's statement that accompanies Chris Woods' [billboard project](#) is quite good as it is accompanied by sketches, and images of the process he went through to complete it.

The [Bau-Xi Gallery](#) provides brief third-person objective statements that accompany the works of artists such as Lisa Burke, Jack Shadbolt, Bobbie Burgers, Karen Yurkovich, Margaretha Bootsma, Stuart Slind, Ken Wallace & Tom Burrows (to name only a few).

[Artspeak](#), a local, artist run gallery, has a web site with good examples of press releases.

The [Agnes Burgera Gallery](#) in Edmonton provides examples of artist's statements, bios, cv's and images. Some of the links are better than others -- but worth perusing.

[TROUT: UVIC's 1996 Graduating Exhibition](#): This site provides over a dozen images accompanied by artists' statements. Some are written by the artists themselves, others are quotes from writers, theorists, and other visual artists.

[Richmond Art Gallery](#) provides artists' statements that are often accompanied by images of the work.

[China: Fifty Years Inside the People's Republic](#): Click on this site and you will get more than 125 photographs, over twenty **artists' statements**, an essay, and a chronology of Chinese history. The artists' statements vary in length from three lines to two pages. Some are very academic in nature; some are written in the form of a didactic panel; others are poetry.

In order to access the artists' statements, you must click on the photo on the main page and then click on the artists' individual names. These include: Antonin Kratochvil (rather formal and didactic), Eve Arnold (a good example of a longer, more personal artist statement and a poem), Lois Conner (longer, more personal) Hiroji Kubota, Xiao-Ming Li, Zhang Hai-er, and Wang Jinsong, Xu Jinyan, Reagan Louie, Mark Leong, Richard Yee, Wu Jialin, Sebastião Salgado, Eve Arnold, David Butow, Macduff Everton, Stuart Franklin, Robert Glenn Ketchum, Liu Heung Shing, Brian Palmer, Wu Jialin, Xu Jinyan. If nothing else, the images are amazing and they are ever changing!

[Artes Magnus Gallery](#) A good place to look if you would like to see examples of short descriptive statements.

[TAETZSCH](#) and [Thomas Paquette](#) provide examples of longer, more personal statements.