

## Artist Statement Sample #1 — Folk & Traditional Arts



I am a traditional craft artist working in the St. Louis area. More specifically, I define my niche as land-based craft. I create primarily in the medium of natural dyes, which I link inextricably to my work as an agriculturalist. These two fields exist more like interwoven threads in a larger tapestry as opposed to overlapping circles in a venn diagram. My definition of traditional, or land-based craft, as informed by Alexander Langland's writing on the subject in *Cræfft*, is any skill or task accomplished using natural materials to promote, enhance, or add beauty or pleasure to our survival. This work is not only a vehicle for creating functional objects, but also for exploration and healing around themes of human tradition and identity. I learn about myself as a human being through creating in this way and through the sharing of it with others. Land-based craft has shown me a desire in myself and others to connect to these most basic, shared primal parts of our human identities. To quote Langlands directly, craft is "not just a knowledge of making, but a knowledge of being."

My work combines bold, graphic imagery with traditional materials. Connection to material is of the utmost importance in my work. The history of indigo, an ancient plant-based pigment, tells a story about humankind, trade, industrialization, colonization, and slavery. The strong, graphic imagery of the chain link in "Chain" created using the very traditional process of stitched resist and indigo vat dyeing is a small narration of this history. The true passion of my work at this point, however, is education. The video link in my work samples is a brief documentation of a dye workshop held at my agricultural plot. It is primarily these educational offerings that I wish to further develop in 2025. I hope to expand my offerings into the utilization and processing of other natural materials, such as flax, cotton, and wool for fiber production, the harvest of willow and reed for basketry, and the use of broomcorn in traditional broom craft. I am inspired by the work of other artists and organizations pursuing this connection between land and craft, like Bluelight Junction in Baltimore, MD, Kudzu Culture in Asheville, NC, traditional folk schools of the Southeast and Great Lakes regions, and the Fibershed movement.

I am making this request for grant funding to diversify my work as a craft artist and bolster educational opportunities around land-based craft in St. Louis. Already occupying this rather unpopulated niche locally, I have a platform from which to reach the audience with whom I want to work (young, queer, BIPOC, low-income folks). Receiving this funding would be a gift to my personal practice and the greater St. Louis community.

## Artist Statement Sample #2 — Music

### ARTIST STATEMENT

My name is [REDACTED] and I am an [REDACTED] based in St. Louis City. My work fuses traditional Ethiopian Jazz with the diverse musical influences of St. Louis, including soul, hip-hop, and jazz. This unique blend of styles not only reflects my personal heritage and upbringing but also contributes to a broader understanding of the African diaspora experience through music.

#### *Artistic Significance*

My upcoming project, [REDACTED] holds profound artistic significance as it bridges cultural gaps and brings together distinct musical traditions. [REDACTED] will be 10 tracks long, each instrumental currently done. This album will feature collaborations with esteemed St. Louis musicians, such as [REDACTED] [REDACTED] not only my musical influences, but also friends that have agreed to contribute to the project. By combining the improvisational and traditional essences of Ethio-Jazz with the rhythmic and melodic elements of St. Louis music, the project aims to create a new, innovative soundscape that honors both traditions.

#### *Relevance to the Artistic Field and Arts & Culture Sector*

In recent years, Ethiopian jazz has seen a resurgence in popularity, particularly through social media and the republishing of 70's vinyls. This project will capitalize on this growing interest, introducing new audiences to the genre while celebrating the rich cultural heritage of the Ethiopian diaspora in St. Louis. The album will not only showcase the talent of local artists but also highlight the historical contributions of Ethiopian musicians I have been lucky enough to work with in recent years who have influenced global jazz movements.

Growing up, I was deeply inspired by the stories of Ethiopian musicians who toured the United States with my father, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Legends like Mahmoud Ahmed, Tilahun Gessesse, and Aster Aweke performed for the diaspora community, creating moments of cultural connection and joy. This project aims to recreate that sense of home and belonging for today's audiences everywhere between Saint Louis and Addis Ababa, emphasizing the importance of inclusion, representation, and cultural exchange.

Through this album, I hope to demonstrate how the Ethiopian and St. Louis musical landscapes intersect and influence one another, offering a fresh perspective on what it means to be part of the African diaspora.

By capturing the complexities of cultural identity and the transformative power of music, [REDACTED] will contribute to the ongoing dialogue within the arts and culture sector about diversity, innovation, and the celebration of heritage



## Artist Statement Sample #3 — Visual Arts



Artist Statement

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My work explores uncanny intersections of material, body, and identity through morphing sculptural bodies, video monsters, and drawn surrogates. Flapping over, tucking in, and spilling out, their voluptuous forms flex, sag, and flinch. The work performs for viewers, it provokes questions about our physical and metaphysical selves.

My practice is deeply rooted in St. Louis, where I engage with the community to create empathy, celebrate identity, and dissolve divisive boundaries that isolate individuals. It spans many mediums, including sculpture, video, installation, collage, and digital arts, fueled by risk-taking and experimentation alongside community dialogue and engagement. The [REDACTED] which I created and manage, promotes accessibility and engagement within the local art scene. This free resource highlights diverse visual arts events and fosters a sense of community among local artists and art enthusiasts.

Collaboration is integral to my practice. Working with other artists in two-person and three-person shows transforms meaningful relationships into public exhibitions. These relationships challenge me to explore new mediums, processes, and concepts, pushing the boundaries of my art and enhancing its impact. My work, centered around the body, uses voluptuous velvet sculptures, undulating motorized video, and chaotically layered collage to evoke a sense of one-ness with humanity. By challenging perceptions of our physical forms, I aim to erase the solitude of our mortal coil and bridge conversations through sensory experiences.

I have exhibited my work both locally and internationally, with pieces collected around the globe. This international presence elevates the profile of St. Louis art within a global context, while my strong online presence emphasizes local reach and engagement. With the support of this grant, I will build on these accomplishments by enhancing the [REDACTED] and realizing the [REDACTED] exhibition. These projects will allow me to continue contributing to the cultural and artistic landscape of St. Louis, fostering empathy, identity, and awareness within my community.