

A Step-by-Step Guide to Creating Your Own Artist Manifesto

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Your artist manifesto is like your personal or professional values statement as an artist. It's a set of guiding principles to live your creative life by. When you feel lost in your creative journey, you can always come back to it, and it'll help you make a decision that is best for *you*.

Materials: Something to write with/on. Chart paper or post-it notes work great for brainstorming, but you can use whatever you have on hand. If you're a visual artist, feel free to use any medium to make your artist manifesto pretty!

Time Required: It depends. It can take anywhere between 2 to 6+ hours. You want to spend a good amount of time for the exercise to be meaningful but try not to overthink it. You can do it in one chunk or break up the process and complete this challenge over several days.

Ideal Environment: I recommend you move away from an environment where you're constantly interrupted or distracted by your day-to-day stuff. Go to a coffee shop for a couple of hours. Book a study room at a library. Go away and have a quiet retreat in the mountains for the weekend! If you have kids, try to arrange for a childcare. No matter where you end up, you want to create a space where you can focus and be able to shift your mind from your everyday work. If you have a big table to spread out or a white board to write on, even better. And don't forget to take a break!

STEP 1 - Brainstorm your values.

Spend about 20 minutes writing down things you value in life. I used sticky notes for this exercise so I could move them around later, but you can use anything. It also doesn't have to be just about creativity either. It could be feelings, things, or kinds of people you want to be around. Don't overthink it. Just write down whatever comes to mind. It's ok if your list is not complete. Stop when the time is up.

These questions might help you get started:

- What makes you happy?
- What do you need to thrive as a person, not just survive?
- What do you value when working with people?
- What strengths and skills do you bring to the world?
- How do you describe your artistic style?
- How does your creativity help you and other people?
- How do you feel when you're being creative?
- What inspires you?

STEP 2 - Find themes in your values and categorize them.

Take a short break once you're done brainstorming. Then come back to the amazing list of things you value!

We're always so busy taking care of the everyday to-dos and hardly ever stop to just take an inventory of what's really important to us. Isn't it so refreshing?

So, now review the list you just created. Do you see any themes emerging? Let's group our values into 4-6 categories.

This process is quite personal, so you more or less want to follow your own feelings to guide it.

But in case you're stuck and need some ideas, here are some categories I came up with in my process: Internal Resources (i.e. What I already have inside to help myself), Big Picture Values, My Foundation (i.e. I can't be happily creating without these things.), and Self-Care.

This process can take anywhere between half an hour to 1 hour. Again, don't overthink it or force something to come through. If you feel stuck, walk away for a few minutes or do something else for a while, and then come back again.

STEP 3 - Create your values statements.

By now, what you want and who you want to be have become much clearer to you. It's time to translate those ideas into your values statements!

You're going to be writing down a bunch of draft statements at first. Don't worry about how many statements you have at this stage. I started out with too many and paired them down as I went.

First, I'd suggest coming up with at least one statement about why you create or how your creativity makes your life better. To me, that is the most important and fundamental thing to have on my manifesto. My first statement was "I make art because it makes my heart happy." If the act of creating stops making me happy, I need to seriously reevaluate my life.

Now come up with other values statements that support your core value. In order for you to protect your most important creative value, what else can you do? As this is a representation of your personal belief, start your statements with "I will..." or "I value..."

Depending on your comfort level with writing or thinking style, this process can take anywhere between half an hour to 1.5 hours.

STEP 4 - Revise, edit, combine, or simplify your draft statements to come up with 5-12 final statements.

I'll leave this up to your personal preference, but ideally your artist manifesto should be a one-pager you can review as often as necessary, and not an epic novel you have to sit down to read.

You might need to go back to STEP 2 again to see the themes and categories. Try to make your artist manifesto sound like *you* and use the language that resonate with you. You're not doing this to impress other people. Your manifesto should serve you and guide you in your unique creative journey.

If you're like me, and writing/editing doesn't come as easily, this step might take a while. Take as long or as little as you feel comfortable. Be OK with ending the process even if you don't think it's perfect.

STEP 5 - Make it nice!

OK, the hard part is over! Now you get to have fun :)

Make your artist manifesto into something you like to look at every day. Make a collage, draw, or create a nice hand-lettered piece! If you don't want the fluff, you can simply type them up on a nice paper using a font that fits your personality. It's entirely up to you!

Once it's done, put it up somewhere you can see every day. Maybe in your art studio or by your dresser? Or make it your wall paper on your laptop. Use your creativity however you like. And be proud of your accomplishment!

Check out my artist manifesto in the next page in case you're looking for a visual example!

Enjoy :)

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