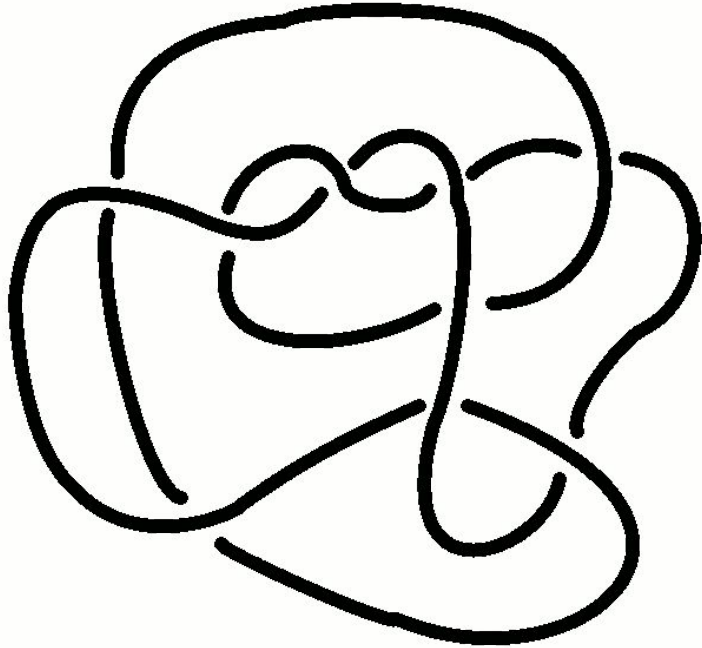
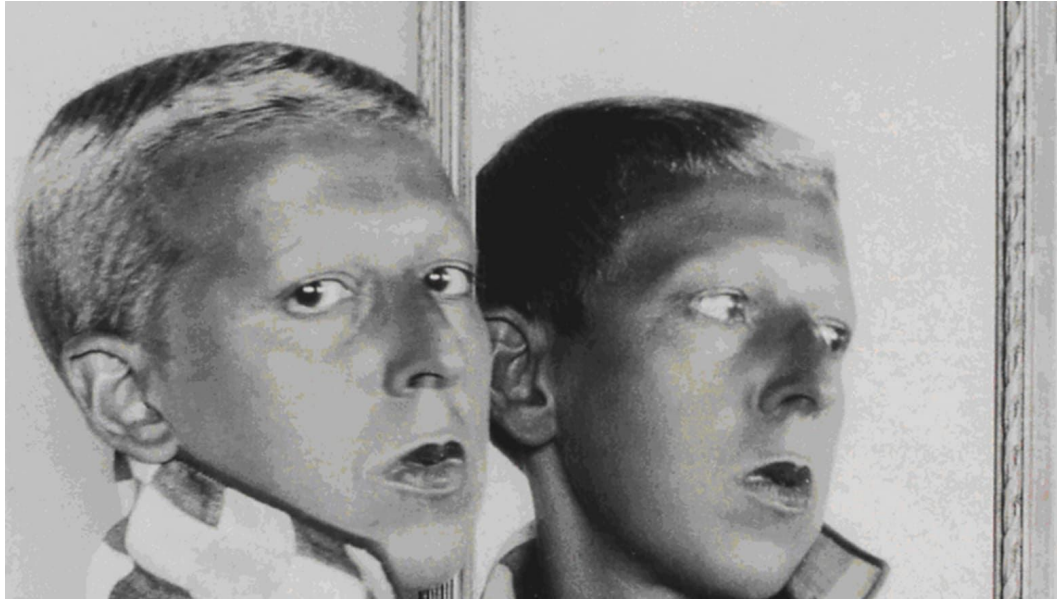


How to talk about your work





ARTIST BIOS & ARTIST STATEMENTS
ARTIST CV'S
ARTIST TALKS

"Self-Portrait" – Claude Cahun was one of the earliest experimenters of gender, using her lens as a window of exploration during the early 1900s
Photography Claude Cahun, courtesy of Photography Visionaires

Emma Fitts is a New Zealand based artist whose practice moves across the disciplines of painting, photography, and sculpture. Fitts studied Fine Art at the University of Canterbury, Ōtautahi, prior to Masters study at the Glasgow School of Art, Scotland. Her recent exhibitions include *Touching Sight*, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū (2021); *Paint etc*, Corbans Art Centre, (2020); *Softly Spoken*, Hastings Art Gallery, (2019); *Bright Cave*, Blue Oyster Art Project Space (2018); and *Necessary Distraction: A Painting Show*, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki (2016).

Major solo presentations include *In the Rough: Parts 1, 2 & 3*, Te Uru (2019) and *From Pressure to Vibration: The Event of a Thread*, The Dowse (2017). Fitts returned to Ōtautahi in 2014 as the Olivia Spencer Bower recipient, was a McCahon House resident for winter 2018 and recently completed the Fulbright-Wallace residency at The Headlands Center for the Arts, California, USA in 2019. She currently lives in Ōtautahi and is represented by Melanie Roger Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau.

WHAT IS AN ARTIST BIO AND STATEMENT?

The Bio - is a biography of the artist covering career highlights, education and a summary of their work to the present day.

The Statement - An artist statement is a general introduction or overview of your work, a body of work, or a specific project.

Both the bio and statement are the first introductions to your work and it's often without images. They are really important.

You'll be asked by most applications – a residency, an exhibition, CNZ funding, a teaching position – need an artist statement and or bio. It's an important part of developing your artist practice, being able to articulate the conceptual underpinnings of your work gives selection panels a context for looking at your work. It also is a way for you to distinguish your work from that of other applicants. It's a really helpful thing to have on hand, you can fire it off when someone enquires about your work, wants to write about it or wants to buy it.

WHY DO I NEED ONE?

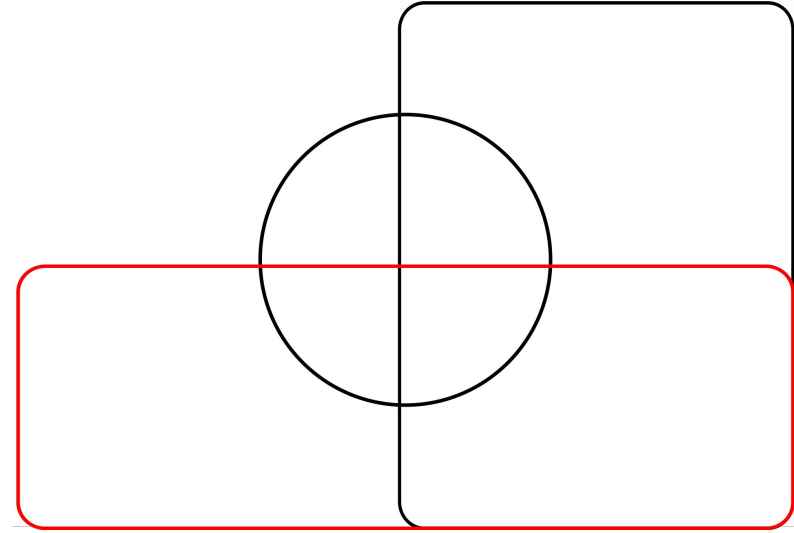


Claude Cahun, *Autoportrait*, ca. 1939,

- FOR APPLICATIONS
- TO ARTICULATE THE UNDERPINNINGS OF YOUR WORK
- TO ADD DIFFERENCE

WHAT SHOULD MY BIO INCLUDE?

- Where you live and what you make
- Where you studied / what you are studying
- Outline your recent achievements – recent exhibitions, residencies, awards
- Always include the dates of your achievements and generally I don't think you need to go back further than 5 years.



HOW LONG SHOULD THE BIO / STATEMENT BE?

Generally speaking between 1 paragraph and one page. It varies. You need to look at the application.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Your artist statement should give the reader a clear picture of your process without needing a visual frame of reference.

The statement should give the reader a clear and concise idea of:

WHY you work. Address major or recurring themes in your work.

HOW you work. Expose how my processes or materials inform your work.

WHERE you situate your work culturally or historically.

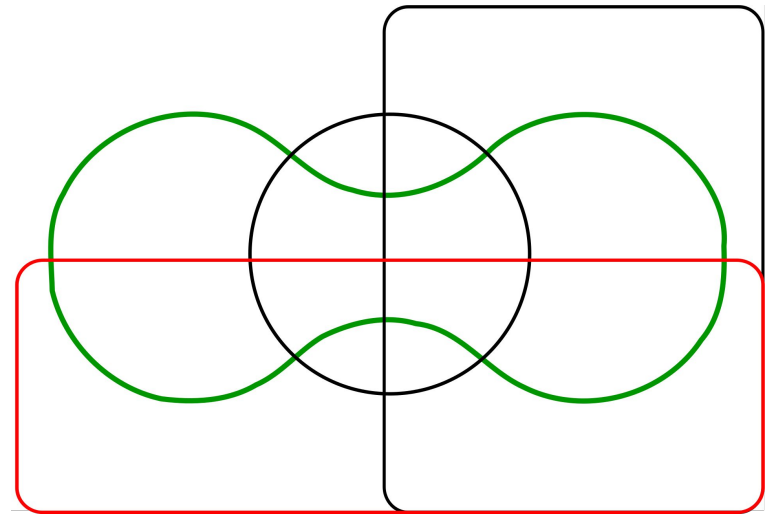
If appropriate try to frame your work as part of a larger cultural, political, or historical discussion.

All of these need to give an idea of **WHAT** my work looks like.

YOU ARE TRYING TO CONJURE AN IMAGE

Everyone's Statement is Different

Each artist will include different material in their statement tailored to their specific practice.
There really is no one size fits all answer to this question.



1) **Artist statement generating interview (you need a scribe or a recorder):**

- What kinds of things do you make art about?
- How do your interests come through in your work?
- What materials/processes do you usually use in your work?
- What have you been working on recently?
- Describe your studio to me

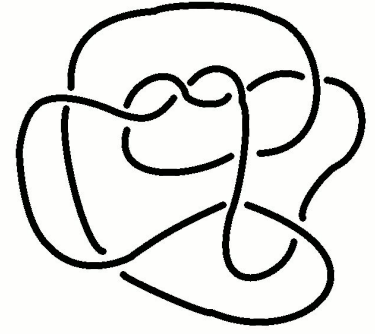
THEN...

- Immediately after the interview try to write a 250 word statement. And try again.
- Get lots of feedback - especially from non-artists.
Get them to underline things that they don't understand, and have them ask you questions to clarify particular things you are saying. non - artist friends are the best and seeking real clarity and pulling you up on any jargon!
- Get a writer to help you, get their feedback.
- Be honest! Cut out phrases and sections that just aren't making sense. This doesn't mean that you are losing work, this means you are gaining clarity.

SOME TIPS

- Be sure you are aware of what you are applying for.
- Use appropriate language - use the Thesaurus
- You want the statement to be a reflection and extension of you and your practice. Find a structure that suits you. If you're work is very academic then more complex language could be appropriate. If your work is more shonky or informal, then a more casual tone could really suit.
- Read Articles, Reviews, Gallery Bios. Familiarise yourself with how others write about their work. Build your vocabulary from established contemporary texts. Don't plagiarise but get an idea of how others are writing about their work.

WHAT TO AVOID



1. Jargon or empty expressions that lack specificity.
2. Getting too personal, unless specifically relevant to your work.
 - Identifying yourself as an “artist” in your statement; this should be a given
 - Calling yourself a creative person or art lover
 - Saying you’ve loved art since you were a child or emerged from the womb creating
 - Using broad generalities that could apply to anyone like, “I’m inspired by nature.” What about nature inspires you? Be specific and give the reader a reason to keep reading.

ELEVATOR PITCH What do you do?

This can be really useful - if you can answer this question then you're well on your way to making a great statement. A statement that answers the following questions:

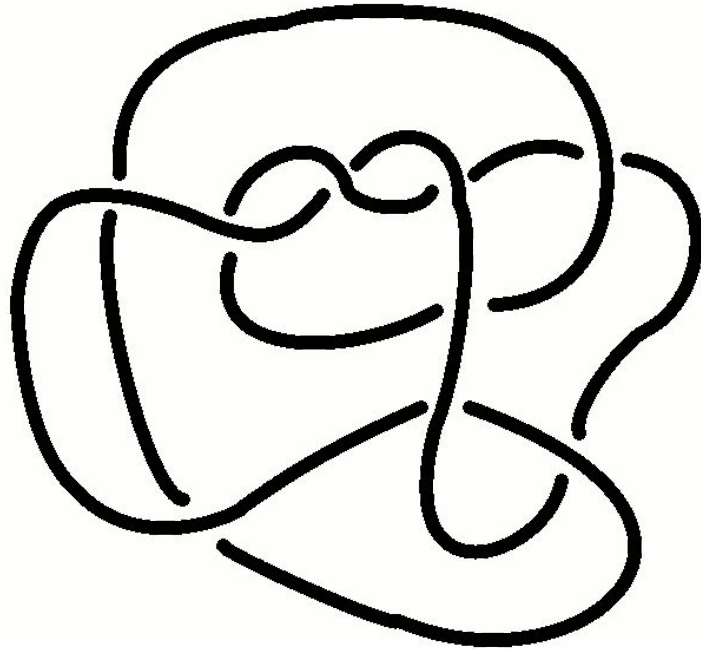
What ? you make *A statement to give them a visual in their mind of what you make.*

Why? Address major or recurring themes in my work.

How ? do you make it (if time) Expose how my processes or materials inform my work

Where ? does it fit within larger culture

Keep it light - you just want the basics to provide a hook for the conversation



Your statement needs to grow and change like your practice.

Turn to the person next to you and get a bio and elevator pitch from them by asking them the following questions:

For the Bio:

- Where do you live and what do you make?
- Where did you study? / What you are studying?
- What are your most recent art affiliated achievements? recent exhibitions, residencies, awards.

For the Artist Statement:

- · What kinds of things do you make art about?
- · How do your interests come through in your work?
- · What materials/processes do you usually use in your work?
- · What have you been working on recently?
- · Describe your studio to me

ARTIST CVS / RESUME

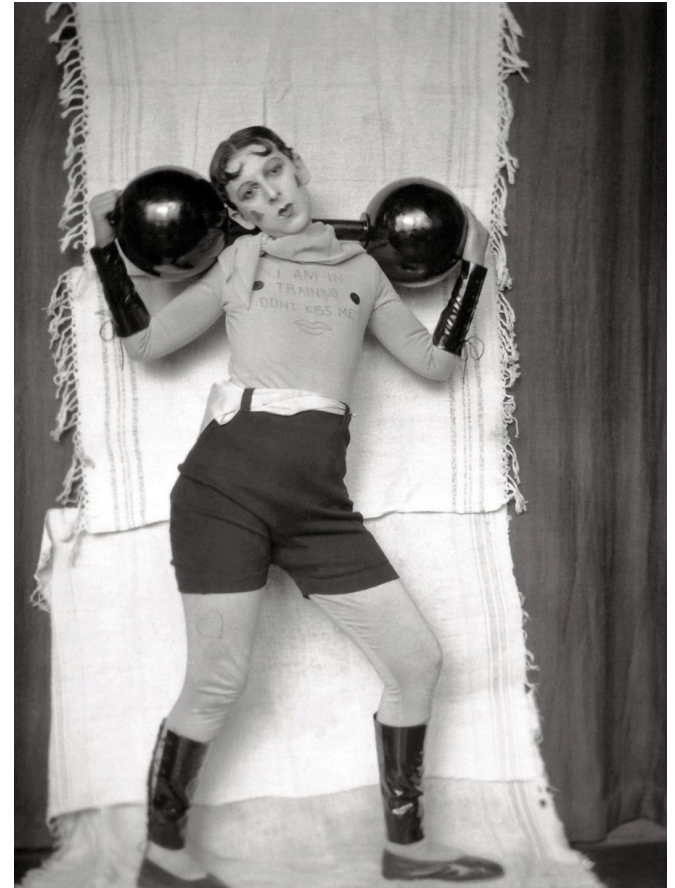
This is usually 2-4 pages, reflecting a specific rather than an entire artist career.

Tailor is like you would a regular CV - You have to gauge where you are submitting it

Have a Full-length master copy CV at hand that you can work from, making shorter more succinct resumes from that are tailored to the specific opportunity.

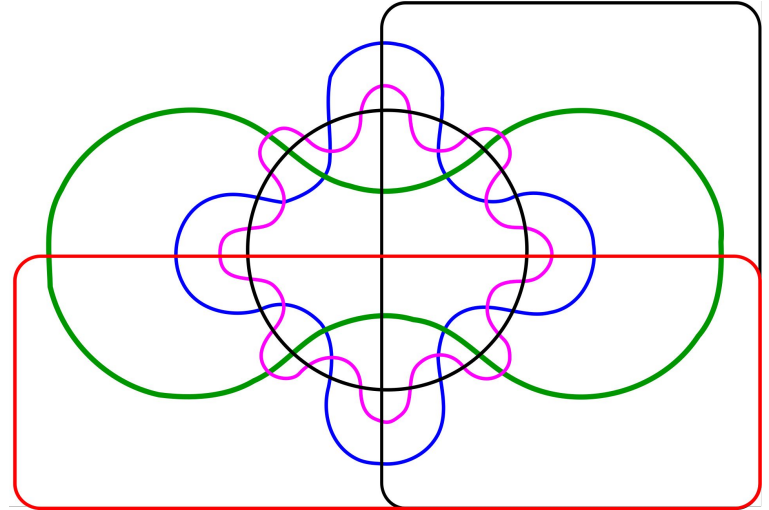
Save word and PDF versions.

Make it work for you and the opportunity you are applying for. You don't need to provide ALL the information every time. Adapt it.



Claude Cahun (French, 1894-1954)
Autoportrait
1927

1. **Name and Contact Information**
2. **Education**
3. **Grants / Awards (Grants / Fellowships, Awards / Honors, Residencies, etc.)**
4. **Solo Exhibitions**
5. **Group Exhibitions**
6. **Collaborative Projects**
7. **Collections**
8. **Bibliography**
9. **Related Professional Experience**
10. **Lectures, ArtistTalks, Workshops**
11. **Curatorial Experience or Shows Curated**
12. **Gallery Affiliation(s)**
13. **References**



ARTIST TALKS

- Panel discussions
- Lectures
- In Conversation With...
- Interviews

Go to as many talks as you can!

Listening / watching / experiencing is all good research!

Decide for yourself what talks you like and what format suits you best.

Artist talk presentation styles will vary as widely as the artists who deliver them. Again, this is an opportunity for your individual personality to shine. Tone, pacing, and what type of visual material you chose to include can all work together in a way that will make your talk a genuine reflection of what you do and why you do it.



Claude Cahun, *Autoportrait*, 1927, black-and-white photograph, 7 x 5".

ARTIST TALKS - SOLO

LENGTH

The length depends on the host – If more than one artist is speaking you may only have 10 minutes, or in a more formal setting they could be up to an hour, with time also put aside for questions.

FORM

The great thing about Artist talks is they are highly individualised – it's up to you how you present. Performative. Research based. Formal. Conversational.

tone

Formal in setting, with opportunity for more casual presentation.

I like talks that really extend the artists practice, where somehow the form and structure of their work, is also present in the presentation. If you are a performance artist you can use this as another way to make work. I'm a research fan, so that's what I love hearing about in talks.

An artist talk out of all the talks is the most flexible – it really can be what you want it to be.

I think the best artist talks are often accompanied by lots of visual materials – make sure it's relevant.

Be open to their constructive feedback but be sure to retain your own voice in your talk.

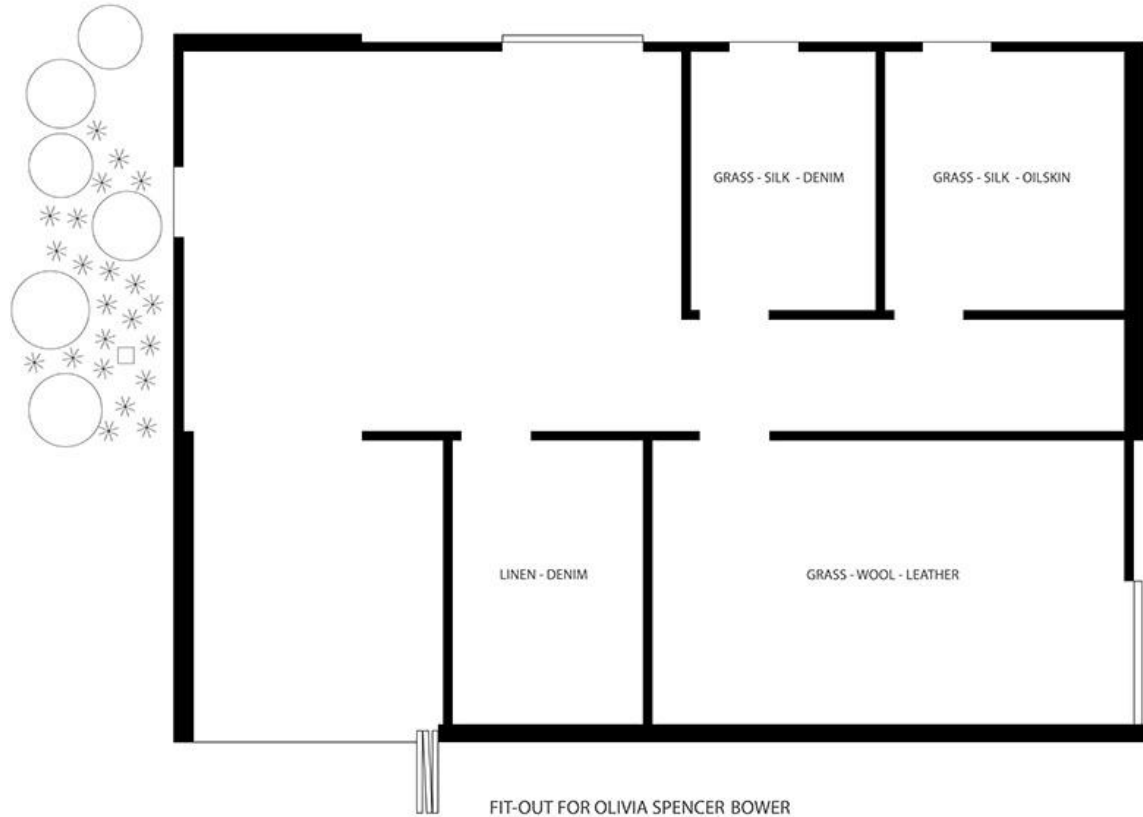
1) INTRODUCTION:

- Talk about yourself and the WHAT & WHY parts of your artist statement.

WHY you work

WHAT you make

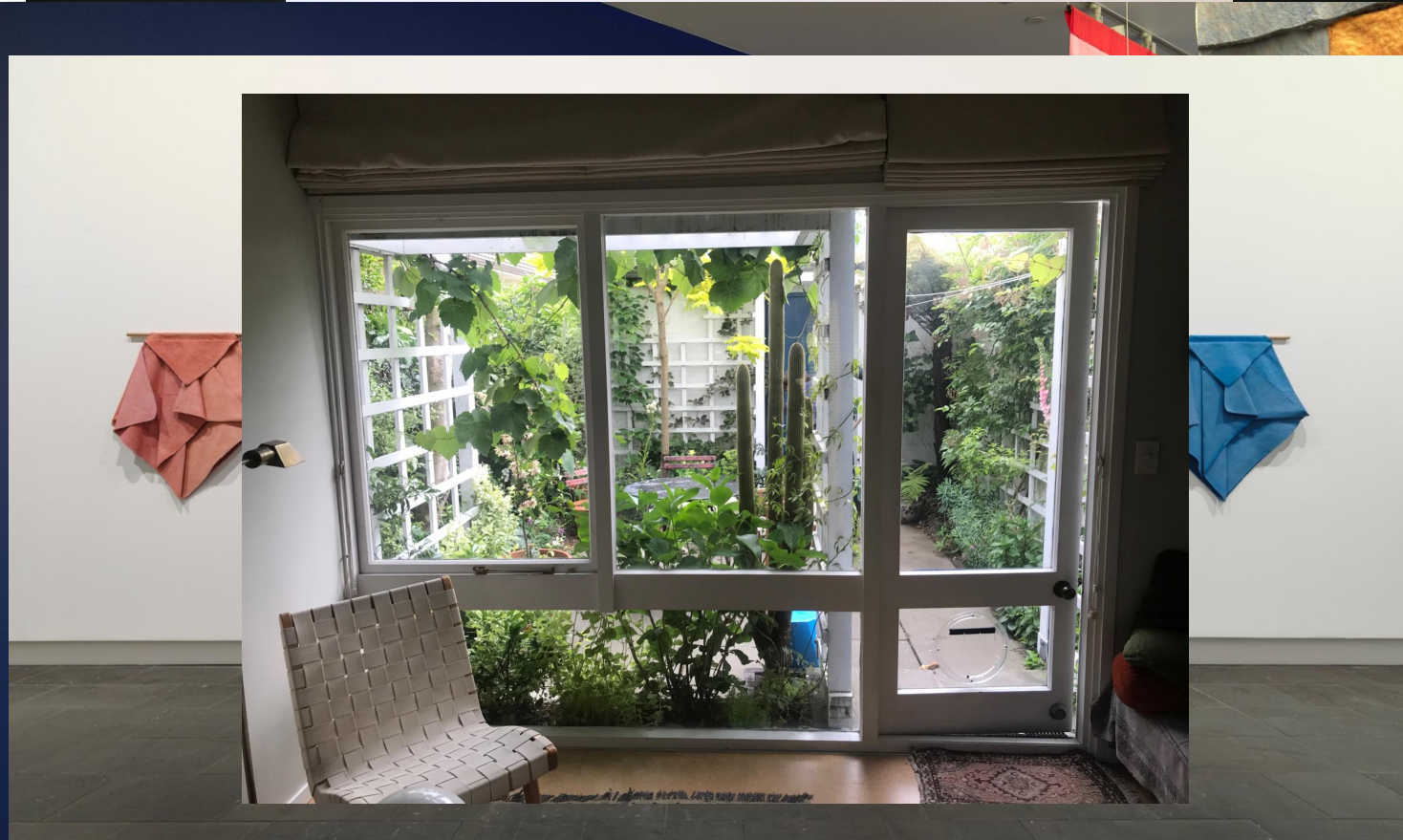
Talk about the broad, overarching concepts that influence your work with a few key images



2) THE BODY OF THE TALK:

- Show visuals of work and research material to build context around your work and to flesh out the points that you've made in the intro.

Research
Failures
Current works



3. Conclusion - How to wrap up.

Can you loop back to initial ideas in your intro?

Expose your current questions?

Finish with strong images

Try to finish with some final thoughts that might encourage questions from the audience

(don't worry if there aren't any)



THINGS TO REMEMBER

You are the authority

Practice

It's a vulnerable place to be

Make yourself available

You decide on the format

Know your talking points. Don't just describe the work

Resolve technical problems before hand. It is often up to you.

Be critical and honest with yourself - is it necessary. What is most interesting?

Prepare for questions

Get feedback



<https://www.amplifyarts.org/resources-applications>

<https://www.theguardian.com/culture-professionals-network/culture-professionals-blog/2013/apr/15/writing-artist-statement-tips-language>

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/claude-cahun-10611>

