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Artist's statements, 'how to guides' and the conceptualisation of creative practice

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ABSTRACT

The artist's statement is a unique genre that provides a written description of an artist's creative work. Usually produced by the artists themselves, the artist's statement accompanies exhibitions, funding applications, or more recently the work presented on an artist's website. In the educational context, it provides important support for the assessment of student work. In order to find out more about the artist's statement, this study provides a corpus-based analysis of the genre, focusing, in particular, on its characteristic rhetorical functions and associated lexical features. The study reveals five rhetorical functions; i) expressing identity, ii) conceptualising function, iii) specifying motivation, iv) identifying effect on the viewer, and v) identifying creative processes and materials, each of which is realised by a set of frequently occurring lexical items. However, rather than simply providing conduits for conveying information that describes the artist's work, these rhetorical and lexical features are identified as performing a constitutive role that brings the artist's work into being. The study concludes by examining the contents of 25 'how to write an artist's statement' websites, and argues that their inability to accurately reflect what occurs in practice is a consequence of neglecting the genre's complex functionality and constitutive nature.

1. Introduction

The artist's statement is a short text that typically provides a written description of an artist's creative intentions and the themes that inform their work. Artist's statements are usually written by artists themselves and often produced to accompany an exhibition, however they are also attached to funding applications or a portfolio of works sent to a gallery when canvassing for an exhibition. Given their importance in the professional world, learning to write an artist's statement is also a crucial part of art education. Ruitenberg (2009), for instance, points out that "an artists' primary concern is to make art, yet most art academies also teach their students to communicate about their work through the medium of the artist's statement" (p. 318). Similarly, Garrett-Petts and Nash (2008) state that approximately 90 percent of all North American art schools and universities teach their students to write artist's statements, and Adamson and Goddard (2012) acknowledge that the artist's statement "is recognized to be such a crucial aspect of artistic practice that students frequently receive training in how to write them (often creatively) as part of a fine-arts degree" (p. 372).

While the artist's statement is a widely used genre within both the educational and professional contexts, the consensus is that they are difficult to write for both art students and professional practitioners. Liese (2013), for example, states that the

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requirement to write an artist's statement "inspires cringes and groans among artists" (para. 5), and in the educational context Garrett-Petts and Nash (2008) have found that students find writing artist's statements a complex and daunting practice, with many art majors struggling to understand why such writing is required in a visual arts curriculum. Nevertheless, for many visual artists, the statement is also one of the few times when they are required to write explicitly about their creative practice, and the process often helps to clarify objectives, identify what is essential in a work, or expose new concepts and creative threads. As such, the artist's statement can play a constitutive or generative role in the artist's practice (Liese, 2013; Garrett-Petts & Nash, 2008).

More recently, with the growth of the artist's website and the trend for independent artists to market and sell their work online (Fleming, 2014; Woo Lee & Hee Lee, 2017), the artist's statement has become a burgeoning online genre. One consequence of this is the increasing emergence of 'how-to' websites that provide guidelines for writing the artist's statement. There are currently over a hundred websites claiming to offer such advice, however a closer inspection of these sites indicates that few provide information that has been developed from a detailed linguistic, structural or rhetorical analysis of actual artist's statements.

In order to find out more about the artist's statement, and to address the absence of any linguistic examination of a relatively pervasive, yet overlooked genre, this paper provides an analysis of its rhetorical functions and associated lexical features. In doing so, it considers the relationship between the artist's statement and creative practice. Furthermore, in light of the analysis, the study will also examine the content of 25 'how-to' websites that provide guidelines for writing the artist's statements in order to establish whether the information provided on these websites accurately reflects what occurs in practice.

The study has a number of outcomes. Firstly, it provides art students, their educators, and professional visual art practitioners with detailed evidence-based information about the rhetorical functions of the artist's statement genre and the characteristic lexical features employed to realise these functions. This knowledge can assist students and creative professionals involved in the writing of the artist's statement. Secondly, it identifies whether the online guides usefully reflect this knowledge. Thirdly, the study will contribute more broadly to the ESP literature by providing an explicit example of a genre whose rhetorical functions and associated lexis not only convey information to its intended audience about a particular phenomenon, but are reflexively constitutive of the phenomenon discussed (Bawarshi, 2000). That is, it is through the writing of the artist's statement, and the choice of lexis drawn upon to accomplish this process, that the artworks discussed in the statement are - at least in part - constructed or legitimised as works of art. The study indicates that this constitutive process is problematically overlooked in the online 'how-to' guides for writing the artist's statement; an observation that may have implications for other genre-specific writing guidelines.

2. Literature review

2.1. The emergence of the artist's statement genre

Although artists' ideas about their work have been expressed in a variety of generic forms, including journals, letters, interviews and manifestos, the contemporary artist's statement is seen as having its origins in mid-twentieth century America, when abstractionists such as Jackson Pollock began to use the many emerging art magazines of the time, for example, *Possibilities* and *The Tiger's Eye*, to present brief first-person expressions of ideas about their own art to the public (Alloway, 1984; Belshaw, 2011; Liese, 2013). These statements, which originated from the voice of the artist, were seen by the wider public as providing a more authentic description and explanation of the artist's work than those of the critics (Alloway, 1984). At first, the type of statements produced by established artists and published in art magazines and exhibition catalogues were quite varied and experimental (Liese, 2013). However, nowadays the artist's statement, as commonly found within educational, funding, exhibition and promotional contexts (including the artist's website), is often viewed as generically mundane and formulaic (Adamson & Goddard, 2012; Liese, 2013).

Perhaps contributing to the view of the artist's statement as formulaic is its tendency to be written in a distinctive register frequently referred to as *artspeak*. This register is seen as influenced by twentieth century French literary theory which was introduced into Western art education in the late 1970s (Kester, 2011; Rule & Levine, 2012). As a result, the kind of post-structural tropes central to the works of Foucault, Baudrillard, or Deleuze and Guattari have increasingly provided visual artists not only with a catalyst for their creative practices, but also an approach for describing their work in written form (Kester, 2011). Despite its prevalence, artspeak is often referred to disparagingly. Rule and Levine (2012), for example, following their examination of press announcements in the online arts magazine *e-flux*, negatively characterise the language in these announcements as International Art English (IAE). They suggest that IAE involves the overuse, or misuse, of a number of linguistic forms including certain lexical items such as *space*, *proposition*, *tension*, *interrogates*, *encodes*, *transforms*, *visuality* or *globality*. The characteristic use of artspeak (or IAE) in the artist's statement is also widely criticised, with Blight (2013), for example, describing it as a pompous dialect of the privileged or educated elite. Nevertheless, he contends that its use by artists to discuss their work is essential if they wish to successfully participate in the art world.

2.2. The purposes of the artist's statement genre

According to Daichendt (2012), the artist's statement functions to explain, justify or contextualise an artist's work to the viewer, although he states that it often falls short of communicating the works' richness or the complexity of process involved.

For Nolan (1976) artist's statements function to enhance the appreciation of the works they describe, while Shiner and Kriskovets (2007) see the artist's statement as enabling the viewer to understand and interpret more difficult works. Accordingly, a number of empirical studies have examined the effect that a written statement accompanying an artwork has on the audience's reception of the work. Temme (1992) found that 85% of museum visitors stated that their enjoyment in looking at paintings increased when the paintings were accompanied by written information, although only when the paintings were perceived as "artistically ambiguous" (p. 35). Similarly, Specht (2010) found that participants who read an artist's statement prior to viewing a work were more positive about the work, particularly if the work was representational. Indeed, viewers are habitually drawn to statements which they often believe will mediate their understanding of an artwork. A case in point is Parsons' (1994) description of a newspaper photograph of the Russian artist Malevich's *Black Square* in an exhibition, which shows a dozen people "none of them looking at the Black Square but all of them looking at the verbal material that hung opposite" (p. 7).

For many, however, the artist's statement is more than a simple explanatory document offering insights into the artist's work for their viewers, and has a more reflective purpose. Daichendt (2012), for example, states that the writing of texts such as the artist's statement is a positive exercise for artists as it "forces the artist to make decisions and aids their own understanding of the choices made in the studio" (p. 63). Similarly, Nolan (1976) has suggested that artist's statements are an attempt by artists to conceptualise "what they are doing in their work" (p. 234). Alternatively, Belshaw (2011) views the statement as a performative act through which artists shape their identities as they engage in constructing first-person accounts of themselves and their work.

2.3. Lexis and the rhetorical functions of the artist's statement genre

As with most genres, the artist's statement consists of a number of characteristic rhetorical units of text, each of which performs a particular rhetorical function, and which together contribute to the overall communicative purpose, or multiple purposes, of the genre (Pho, 2009; Swales, 2004). Furthermore, and as shown by a number of studies (e.g. Thurston & Candlin, 1998; Chen & Ge, 2007; Cortes, 2013; Le & Harrington, 2015), these individual rhetorical functions, frequently referred to as 'moves' (Swales, 2004), are often realised through specific lexical signals, patterns or bundles. As such, the identification of a genre's rhetorical functions and associated lexical items can be assisted by the use of corpus analytical tools (Biber et al., 2007; Moreno & Swales, 2018). These tools can quickly and reliably identify frequently occurring or key lexical items in a corpus of texts that represent a particular genre and can also support findings by providing statistical information. Increasingly, a more complex conceptualisaton of genre, rhetorical function and lexis is emerging, which shows, for example, that a single rhetorical unit of text can simultaneously perform multiple rhetorical functions (Pho, 2013), or that that the rhetorical conventions of a genre can be exploited for private intentions, often resulting in the projection of different discourses to different stakeholders (Bhatia, 2017). Moreover, rhetoric and composition studies have suggested that genres have generative power because they carry with them social motives which are internalised by their users and enacted rhetorically as social practices (Bawarshi, 2000). That is, a genre can constitute an activity "by making it possible through its ideological and rhetorical conventions" (p. 340).

It is the rhetorical multifunctionality of certain frequently occurring lexical signals in the artist's statement genre that emerges as being of interest in this study; in particular how they function not only to explain or contextualise an artist's work to the viewer, but exhibit constitutive power by contributing to the construction and legitimisation of the artist's work.

The paper will first examine the lexical keyness and typicality of the artist's statement in the corpus. Following that, it will discuss five key rhetorical functions of the artist's statement and their associated lexis, specifically pointing out the multifunctionality of the lexis, and how in many instances, rather than simply acting as a conduit (Prior, 1998) for conveying the particular rhetorical function, certain lexical choices are constitutive of the visual artist's creative practice. Finally, the paper will examine the 'how to write an artist's statement' websites and conclude that advice for writing the genre tends to neglect the crucial role played by lexis in performing its constitutive role.

3. Materials and methods

The methods for the study involved two stages. The first involved an analysis of the rhetorical functions of the corpus of 100 artist's statements using corpus analytical resources, such as keyword, frequency and concordance analysis (Baker, 2006; McEnery, Xiao and Tono, 2006). The second involved a content analysis of the advice in 25 'how to write an artist's statement' websites to establish whether the information provided on these websites reflects the findings from the analysis of the corpus of artist's statements.

3.1. Data

To collect data for the compilation of the artist's statement corpus (hereafter the AS Corpus), a Google search using the term 'artist statement' was carried out. This search term provided results that linked directly to the artist's statement found on the websites of visual artists. The artist's statements located on these websites were used for the AS Corpus as they provided accessible, machine-readable and representative exemplars of the type of artist's statement typically produced by contemporary visual artists. The first 100 artists statements found in this way, irrespective of country or region, or whether

the artist was alive or not at the time, that met the following two conditions were selected. Firstly, they were required to be in English, whether produced by native, or non-native speakers. As such, the AS Corpus included 26 statements by artists who identified themselves as being born or raised in non-English speaking countries, and therefore may have been translated into English from another language. Nevertheless, a preliminary reading of these statements did not indicate any evident generic divergence from the other statements in the corpus. The AS Corpus also represented artists currently living in 19 different countries. Secondly, the artist's statements selected were required to be those of practising visual artists, for example, sculptors, painters, installation artists, or photographers. Statements from commercial photography practices, musicians or students, were not included. In the unusual case that more than one statement was found on an artist's webpage, then the most recent version was selected. No time frame was stipulated, but because the artist's webpage is a relatively recent online phenomenon, the statements were all produced within the last twenty years. It was also determined that 100 artist's statements would provide a suitable number of texts for the AS Corpus. This is because, firstly, given the relatively small average size of the artist's statement (approximately 350 words) and the strong lexical typicality of the genre (see Section 4.1), the 100 statements selected provided "sufficient examples of frequent linguistic features" (McEnery et al., 2006, p. 72) to carry out the analysis of the genre's rhetorical functions and associated lexis. Secondly, small and accessible context-specific corpora are frequently found to have many advantages over larger corpora for the analysis of specialised language. This is largely because the researcher is more likely to be acquainted with both the original texts and the wider context from which the texts originate, a familiarity which provides greater opportunities for the interrogation and interpretation of findings (Bowker & Pearson, 2002; McEnery et al., 2006; Vaughan & Clancy, 2013). The corpus tool AntConc (Anthony, 2018) indicated that the AS Corpus contained 32,493 word tokens and 5,526 word types, resulting in a type/token ratio of 58.8%, which suggests that the AS Corpus has a slightly higher than average level of lexical complexity; similar, for example, to that of a broadsheet editorial.

Following the approach described above for collecting the artist's statements, the 'how to write an artist statement' advice analysed for this study was collected from the first 25 'how to write an artist statement' websites located on the Internet using the search term 'artist's statements'. This provided a representative range of 'how to write an artist statement' advice that might be viewed by an artist carrying out a similar search. The websites included blogs written by those with some knowledge of the visual arts field, as well as monetized websites designed to attract readers for revenue. The advice from one website was presented as a formal .pdf document that required downloading. The only condition that the 'how-to' websites were required to meet to be included in the study was that they had to explicitly provide direct advice to artists about the writing of the artist's statement.

3.2. Methods

The first stage of the analysis involved identifying the keywords, lexical typicality and primary rhetorical functions of the artist's statements, along with the recurring lexical items and patterns frequently used to realise these functions.

Keywords are words in a target corpus whose frequencies are unusually high, when compared with the frequencies of the same words in a larger reference corpus (McEnery et al., 2006). They were analysed in this study in order to capture the overall "aboutness" (Scott & Tribble, 2006, p. 55) of the artist's statement genre, and because they could help signal the presence of the characteristic rhetorical functions of the genre. For the keyword analysis, the BE06 corpus (Baker, 2009) was used as a reference corpus. The AntConc format of the BE06 wordlist (Baker, 2020), extracted from the BE06 corpus, indicates that the BE06 contains 1,007,769 word tokens and 43,370 word types. This represents a type/token ratio of 23.24% which is considerably lower than the AS Corpus. The BE06 was selected as a reference corpus because it is a methodically developed and balanced corpus of general written English. It can also be easily accessed and examined using Lancaster University's CQP system.

The lexical typicality of the AS Corpus was established by comparing the correlation between the number of key tokens and number of total tokens for each text in the corpus (Anthony & Baker, 2015). Given the connection between rhetorical function and lexis, a high level of lexical typicality in the AS Corpus is likely to indicate a corpus of texts exhibiting homogeneity of rhetorical function.

The primary rhetorical functions of the AS Corpus were identified through a close reading of all artist's statements in the corpus, and were further examined through the use of corpus based tools, such as frequency analysis and concordance analysis (McEnery et al., 2006). In some cases, the analysis of the primary rhetorical functions also involved identifying whether certain lexical items or lemmas used to realise a primary rhetorical function of the artist's statement were especially salient to the AS Corpus. To establish salience, the relative frequencies of these items in the AS Corpus were compared with their relative frequencies in the BE06 corpus to calculate whether they were statistically significant. Further details of the analytical processes and criteria for identifying statistical significance will be mentioned in the context of the analysis in the sections below. Both AntConc (Anthony, 2018) and Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff, Baisa, Bušta et al., 2014) corpus analytical software were used for this first stage of the analysis.

The second stage of the analysis focused on identifying the range of advice offered on the 25 'how-to' websites. This process firstly involved the examination of every sentence on each website, and the subsequent listing of those sentences that offered artists direct advice about the writing of their artist's statement. Direct advice typically contained an infinitive form (e.g. *Keep it to one page or less*), or a modal form (e.g. *You shouldn't mention influences and inspirations*). As the focus was specifically on the writing of the artist's statement, advice for actions that would take place prior to the writing of the

statement (e.g. *Think about a painting you loved*), or after the writing of the statement (e.g. *Post it on your website*) were not included on the list. Comments that provided reasons for the advice offered (e.g. *This keeps the statement fresh*), or actual examples of advice were also not included on the list. Where multiple different pieces of advice were combined in a single sentence these were separated before being included on the list. Each individual piece of listed advice was then placed into one of two groups; 'do advice' and 'don't advice'. Once this procedure was complete, semantically related individual instances of advice listed within each of the two groups were clustered into broader categories that captured their commonalities. As an example, *Use simple language* and *Use everyday or conversational language* were combined into the broader category, *Use simple, everyday or conversational language*. The final component of this analysis involved tallying the number of individual pieces of advice within each broader category. If an identical piece of advice occurred twice in a category, it was counted twice, and so on.

4. Results

The results section will begin with a brief focus on the keyness and typicality of the artist's statement corpus. This will be followed by an examination of each of the key rhetorical functions of the artist's statement; i) expressing identity, ii) conceptualising function, iii) specifying motivation, iv) identifying effect on the viewer and v) identifying creative processes and materials. The final stage of the results will discuss the analysis of the advice offered on 'how to write an artist statement' websites.

4.1. Keyness and typicality

Table 1 indicates the top 30 of 148 keywords in the AS Corpus. These were established using the log-likelihood statistical measure of keyness and a p value threshold of 0.0001 which included the Bonferroni correction (Brezina, 2018).

Table 1
Top 30 Keywords in the Artist's Statement Corpus (BE06 as reference corpus).

Rank	Raw Freq.	Keyness	Keyword	Rank	Raw Freq.	Keyness	Keyword
1	676	1608.39	my	16	43	179.05	artist
2	847	770.64	I	17	69	156.6	process
3	175	760.45	art	18	129	155.15	through
4	244	536.13	work	19	38	148.46	creating
5	1581	410.46	and	20	48	144.45	forms
6	78	312.22	create	21	55	136.58	practice
7	54	281.99	painting	22	27	131.45	layers
8	112	273.92	am	23	51	126.56	space
9	42	264.29	viewer	24	33	126.42	materials
10	58	260.75	visual	25	19	123.85	installations
11	46	215.38	paint	26	22	118.24	sculpture
12	57	199.28	images	27	32	118.2	explore
13	42	197.02	paintings	28	42	106.77	works
14	38	190.02	artistic	29	29	103.9	artists
15	29	186.36	artwork	30	33	101.96	objects

The highest two keywords in Table 1 are the pronouns *my* and *I,* which is perhaps not surprising given that an artist's statement is characteristically, although not always, written in the first person by the artist themselves. It is also perhaps not surprising that other keywords in the list include those identifying the type of work produced (*painting*, *paintings*, *installations*, *sculpture*), synonyms of artwork (*art*, *work*, *artwork*, *works*, *practice*), creative content (*images*, *forms*, *objects*, *layers*), creative identities (*viewer*, *artist*, *artists*) and creative processes and materials (*paint*, *create*, *creating*, *processes*, *materials*). The keyword *explore* could be viewed as referring to function of the work (e.g. my work explores some phenomenon). These keywords clearly capture the "aboutness" (Scott & Tribble, 2006, p. 55) of the artist's statement, but they also signal the presence of a number of the characteristic rhetorical functions of the genre, as identified in the sections below.

Interestingly, the connective *and* was the 5th highest keyword, perhaps supporting Rule and Levine's (2012) finding that the pairing of like terms is repeatedly used in IAE. Examples of this feature found in the corpus, for example, include *abstract and accessible* and *subtractive and additive*. Rule and Levine also argue that *space* (27th place in the keyword list) is an "especially important word in IAE" (para. 11), which they suggest is rife with spatial metaphors. The other keyword of interest is *through.* In the AS Corpus, the artist's creative practice is very often conceptualised metaphorically as a portal or conduit through which a particular concept or phenomena can be realised (e.g. through my sculptures I transform spaces into sacred objects).

According to Anthony and Baker (2015), the concept of keywords can also be used to establish whether the texts in a corpus representing a specific genre (e.g. the artist's statement) have an overall degree of lexical typicality, or if the genre itself tends to involve texts that are quite distinct from one another. This can be achieved by comparing the correlation between the

number of key tokens (total number of keywords occurring in a text) and number of total tokens (total number of words occurring in a text) of each text in the corpus. The key token/total token comparison of the texts in the AS Corpus can be seen in the scatterplot diagram in Figure 1. The scatterplot in Figure 1 shows a strong, positive linear association ($r^2 = 0.794$) between the number of key tokens and the number of overall tokens in the texts, suggesting that the artist's statements in the AS Corpus exhibit an overall strong degree of lexical typicality. This generic similarity is of interest, given that the genre, as a description of creative practice, is typically associated with inventiveness and originality, and therefore the corpus might be expected to contain quite divergent texts. It also supports the observation that the statements on the websites of the 26 artists who identified themselves as being born or raised in non-English speaking countries do not show any obvious generic or lexical divergence from the other statements. Of interest in Figure 1 are the two potential outliers on the far right of the figure, both of which have a much higher than average word count. One of these contains a fewer number of key tokens than might be expected, and an examination of this particular text indicates that besides discussing their own creative practice, the writer repeatedly refers to the practices of a number of other artists and professions. The other, which contains a high number of key tokens, includes an additional brief history of the artist's upbringing in order to contextualise a thorough discussion of their creative work. Both appear to be written by L1 speakers of English.

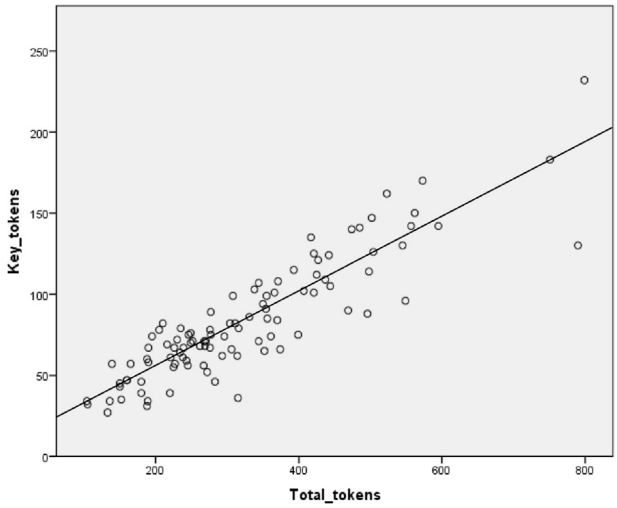

Figure 1. Scatterplot diagram showing relationship between key tokens and total tokens in the Artist's Statement Corpus.

Overall, the evidence of strong lexical typicality in the AS Corpus is particularly relevant to the following sections, which look more closely at the characteristic rhetorical functions of the artist's statement genre and suggest that the frequently occurring lexical items which realise these functions, may also provide the creative inspirations, aims and perceived effects of the visual artist's creative practices.

4.2. Expressing identity

A key rhetorical function of the artist's statement is the artist's expression of their identity. Examples i and ii illustrate the kinds of expressions found in the AS Corpus that perform this function[1]:

i. As a transgender, non-binary artist my art is concerned with liminality and ambiguity.
ii. I have been a full-time studio artist for over thirty years.

Identity is also the 32nd highest keyword in the AS corpus. It occurs 32 times, while *identities* occurs 7 times. Both have a significantly higher relative frequency than in the BE06 ($p < 0.0001$).

Table 2 provides a list of the various identities occurring in the AS Corpus. As can be seen in the table, the types of identities expressed by the writers of artist's statements are multifaceted and can be arranged into a number of distinct categories. The ASC Texts column identifies the number of texts from the corpus in which each identity category is represented, although it should also be noted that multiple identities are often invoked in a single artist's statement. In total, 53 percent of all artist's statements in the AS Corpus draw explicit attention to the artist's identity.

Table 2
Identity categories and identity lexis in the AS Corpus.

Identity category	ASC texts	Examples of identity lexis from the AS Corpus
Disciplinary	20	ceramist, designer, drawing based, expressionist, figurative, fine artist, glassworker, illustration, illustrator, installation, interdisciplinary, landscape painter, lens-based, multidisciplinary, painter, performance, photographer, printmaker, visual, watercolourist
Regional or ethnic	19	Afghan, African, African American, American, Anishinaabe, Canadian, Canadian immigrant, Danish-born, Indian, Kenyan-Indian Canadian, Korean, New York based, Nigerian, based in Chicago, born in Lebanon, child of Korean immigrants, fair-skinned Native woman, familial home Greece, foreigner, growing up in Japan, living in New York city, mixed-race Indonesian-American, raised in Sierra Leone, second generation Indonesian Citizen
Commitment	12	after 30 years of practice, committed, contemporary, for more than 35 years, full-time for over a decade, full-time studio, job, last 40 years of my career, living, practicing, working
Occupational	12	DJ, alchemist, archaeologist, artist, author, choreographer, craftsperson, curator, dancer, dancer, designer, ecologist, educator, engineer, entrepreneur, experimenter, explorer, investigator, scientist, teacher, technical director, weaver
Gender and sexuality	9	female, fluid gender, homosexual, matriarch, non-binary, queer, transgender, woman
Status	6	award recipient, master, self-taught, trained
Religious	1	Jewish
Other	11	activist, competitor, insider, outsider, researcher, storyteller, survivor

The identity categories include *disciplinary*, *regional or ethnic, commitment, occupational*, *gender and sexuality*, *status* and *religious*, and as in example i above, the expression of identity is typically linked to a particular creative focus. For instance, the identification of working in (or having previously worked in) a particular occupation is used to rationalise the deployment of certain techniques or processes in the artist's creative practice, or to explain the artist's particular creative, thematic or theoretical focus. An example from the corpus is an engineer whose interest in the process, rather than the outcome of engineering projects, has facilitated their concern with the unforeseen nature of creative procedures. Similarly, an artist's orientation towards multiple regional identities can be used to account for their work's focus on themes such as cultural displacement, the intersection of cultures, or the notion of identity itself. Furthermore, some artists also identify as having a particular level of professional commitment to their practice. Expressions such as, “full-time studio artist” constitute the writer's identity as a serious and committed artist, rather than a hobbyist, thus potentially enhancing the perceived gravitas and significance of their creative practice. The most frequent expression of identity in the artist's statement involves disciplinary identity. The artist will identify, for example, as an installation artist, a performance artist or a landscape painter, in order to convey the nature of their work.

By communicating their identity in the artist statement, however, the artist is also providing an interpretative frame for the viewer who has read the statement. The creative work of an artist who explicitly identifies as a storyteller, for instance, may be examined for evidence of its visual narratives, or the work of an artist who explicitly identifies in their artist's statement as queer may be examined for issues involving sexuality or gender identity. The provision of an interpretative frame endows the work with meaning for the viewer and can contribute to its legitimation as art. However, at the same time, by categorising as a particular identity, for example, as an *expressionist*, or a *foreigner*, the artist has afforded themselves a set of resources and actions, both material and discursive which are constitutive of their creative processes. In the case of an expressionist, the resources might involve vibrant mark making and emotional effect, and in the case of the foreigner, visual representations of diversity and difference. Hence *expressing identity* does not simply function to describe the artist's identity, but it simultaneously evokes a legitimating interpretative frame for their audience and the resources constitutive of their creative processes.

4.3. Conceptualising function

Perhaps the most important rhetorical goal of the artist's statement is to identify the function of the artist's practice; that is, the actions that the artist's work carries out, or how it acts upon the world in some way. This is primarily achieved through the use of process verbs. For example:

iii. My interest in photography is to explore the possibilities of imagined environments.
iv. I paint to give expression to our experiences of vulnerability.
v. I strive to engage my viewers in a dialogue …
vi. My photographs capture the complexities of time.

Table 3 identifies the lemmas of the 15 most frequent types of process verbs used by the artists in the corpus to describe the different functions of their practices. It also compares the relative frequency of the lemmas in the AS Corpus with those in the BE06, and the significance of the comparison, using log-likelihood (Brezina, 2018). The table shows that, with the exception of *give*, *continue*, *speak*, and *address*, the lemmas are all statistically significant, which suggests that these words occur in the statements of artists much more frequently than they do in general language use, and are therefore salient to the genre. Nevertheless, the p values of *continue*, *speak*, and *address* are either only slightly less than, or extremely close to 0.05 and suggest that the use of these process verbs may also be salient to the genre.

Table 3
Frequency of process verbs used in the artist's statements to conceptualise the function of the artists' creative practices.

Rank	Process lemma	ASC Raw Freq.	ASC Texts	ASC Norm.	BE06 Raw Freq.	BE06 Norm.	LL	Significance (p-value)
1	explore	57	43	0.18	118	0.01	181.6	0.0000
2	give	32	22	0.10	1117	0.11	- 0.45	- 0.502
3	engage	28	22	0.09	93	0.01	69.08	0.0000
4	capture	22	16	0.07	58	0.01	62.07	0.0000
5	reflect	20	18	0.06	134	0.01	28.21	0.0000
6	investigate	20	18	0.06	95	0.01	38.40	0.0000
7	reveal	19	16	0.06	157	0.02	21.21	0.0000
8	continue	16	13	0.05	239	0.02	6.510	0.0107
9	challenge	16	11	0.05	64	0.01	34.91	0.0000
10	serve	15	10	0.05	162	0.02	11.53	0.0007
11	examine	15	11	0.05	141	0.01	14.17	0.0002
12	speak	14	11	0.04	244	0.02	3.720	0.0536
13	encourage	14	13	0.04	125	0.01	14.17	0.0002
14	evolve	13	10	0.04	8	0.00	62.71	0.0000
15	address	8	7	0.02	113	0.01	3.710	0.0540

Again, the process verbs listed in Table 3, which are widely distributed through the texts in the AS Corpus, provide some insights into the discursive facilitation of the artist's practice. Given their frequency, widespread occurrence throughout the individual texts of the corpus, and statistical significance, it could be argued that these process verbs, among others, have over time become entrenched in the lexicon of contemporary artists as processes that represent the legitimate functions of contemporary art practice. For example, the visual 'exploration' of some phenomenon has gradually come to be understood as a legitimate artistic practice. As such, these processes facilitate the practices of artists by providing an inventory of motives for carrying out certain actions and conceptualising these as art. At the same time, these processes enable artists to rationalise their work to their audiences through texts such as the artist's statement. Some of the objects of 'explorations' in the AS Corpus include the ability to coexist with nature, play as a form of resistance, the possibilities of computing technologies, and the boundaries of time.

To place the concept that process verbs can facilitate and legitimate creative practice into a more accessible historical perspective, the use of *explore* to conceptualise and rationalise contemporary creative practice is not unlike the frequent, and widely acknowledged, use of the verb *study* by early twentieth century artists and their late nineteenth-century predecessors (Hocking, 2018). This can be seen in extracts vii and viii where Van Gogh, in his letters to friends and family, repeatedly used the verb *study* (studeren in Dutch) to refer to his creative processes.

vii. But for my own study I prefer to work in a somewhat larger size, so that I can study the hands, feet, head in more detail (letter 419, in Van Gogh, 2009).
viii. I keep working as hard as I can, and I believe for my part that I'll stay on course just by constantly studying the model. (letter 480, in Van Gogh, 2009).

Furthermore, as seen in extract vii, Van Gogh and his contemporaries also routinely used the noun *study* to describe their work, and similarly, contemporary artists are more likely to refer to their work as an *exploration*. *Exploration*/*explorations* occurs 13 times in the AS Corpus for this purpose, while *study*/*studies* is found only twice.

In brief, then, the rhetorical goal *conceptualising function* does more than simply communicate to an artist's audience what their creative practice seeks to achieve. As indicated in this section, an artist's conceptualisation of the function of a visual work, for example, *I intend to explore the boundaries of time*, can both facilitate the creative process, and legitimate the work in the artist's and their audience's mind.

4.4. Specifying motivation

The artist's statement also routinely specifies the artist's motivation for producing their works. The corpus shows that artists conceptualise their creative practice as driven by an interest, desire, intrigue, fascination, a sense of urgency, an inspiration or some phenomenon that they are uniquely or naturally drawn towards. Examples ix to xii illustrate the kinds of expressions found in the corpus that perform this function:

ix. I am fascinated with the influence of memory on representations of narrative.
x. I love the process of drawing with technology.
xi. A strong interest in site-specificity has led me to explore working in parks.
xii. What drives my practice is …

Table 4 provides a frequency list of the 15 most prominent motivating lemmas employed in the corpus. Through a detailed examination of individual concordances only those inflected forms of a lemma that clearly functioned in the artist's statements to identify the motivation for the artists' creative practices were included in the frequency count. In a comparison of the relative frequency of each group of inflected forms in the AS Corpus and the BE06 corpus using log likelihood, the p value of the lemmas shown in the table for *interest [in]*, *inspire [by]*, *love [to]*, *inform [by]*, *fascinate [by]*, *passion [for]*, and *intrigued [by/with]* is less than, or extremely close to 0.0001, suggesting that their use to describe motivation is a particularly salient feature of the artist's statement genre.

Table 4
Motivating lemmas in the artist statement corpus.

Rank	Motivating lemmas found in the AS Corpus	RawFreq.	ASC Texts
1	interested [in] (adj) 26; interest [in] (n) 13; interesting (adj) 3; interests (v) 2	44	30
2	inspiration (n) 14; inspired [by] (v) 7; inspire (v) 3	24	21
3	love [to] 14 (v)	14	11
4	led [to] (v) 7; lead [to] (v) 3; leads [to] (v) 3; leading (v) 1	14	11
5	informed [by] (v) 5; inform (v) 4; informs (v) 4	13	12
6	influenced [by] (v) 7; influences (v) 2 influences (n) 1; influence (n) 1; influencing (v) 1	12	11
7	fascinated [with/by] (v) 6; fascination [with] (n) 3; fascinate (v) 1; fascinates (v) 1; fascinating (adj) 1	12	9
8	concerns (n) 4; concern [in/with] (n) 4; concerned [with] (v) 2	10	8
9	passion [for] (n) 8; passionate [about] (adj) 1	9	8
10	driven [by] (v) 2; drives (v) 2; drive (v, n) 2	6	5
11	intrigued [by/with] (v) 3; intriguing (adj) 2; intrigues (v) 1	6	5
12	drawn [to] (v) 4	4	4
13	motivates (v) 1; motivation (n) 1; motivating (adj) 1	3	3
14	obsessed [with] (adj) 2; obsession [for] (n) 1	3	3
15	desire [to/for] (n) 3	3	3

The construction of creative practice as a love, fascination, or obsession and so on, arguably also functions to legitimate the creative work by endowing it with a sense of authenticity and value in the eyes of the viewer. As Davis (2008) has stated "obsession has become collectable. Indeed, the value of an artist increases if the work is seen as the product of obsessive, sometimes life-destroying, angst" (p. 187). He also points out that rather than being historically commonplace, the link between obsession and art has its origins in the end of the nineteenth century, and can be seen most prominently in the work of twentieth century visual artists whose oeuvres most often had a singular focus; conceptually, visually or technically. Davis (2008) argues that the deployment by visual artists of obsession as the motivation for their practice was facilitated by the introduction of the psychological condition 'monomania' in the early eighteenth century, and its notion of the idée fixe, which he shows was widely embraced as something culturally relevant and interesting by intellectuals, novelists, as well as the general public. Davis also links monomania (later referred to as obsession) to the rise of specialisation and professionalism, stating that "obsession becomes a distinct category of existence, and one often linked to being an artist, a writer, a scientist - in short, a specialist" (p. 78). It might also be argued that the rise of love, obsession or fascination as a motivating factor in creative practice at the end of the nineteenth century aligned with the decrease in the arts patronage and institutional authority of the Académie des Beaux-Arts, both of which had been largely responsible for shaping artistic standards and the specific foci of artists' creative works in western Europe (FitzGerald, 1995).

4.5. Identifying effect on the viewer

The artist's statement also explains how the artist believes that their work will affect their viewers, spectators or audience. Examples xiii - xvi illustrate the type of statements found in the AS Corpus that perform this function.

xiii. I hope to inspire viewers towards greater critical reflection.
xiv. My work actively engages the viewer in their own consciousness.
xv. I allow the viewer to determine the works' meaning.
xvi. I have created work in order to confront the viewer.

These kinds of viewer effect statements are not unlike those that conceptualise the functions of art discussed above, in that, by constructing their work as having some meaningful impact on the viewer, or the viewer's world, the artist's practice is again provided with a sense of legitimacy. Such statements, if read by the viewer, may also function to shape the way the viewer interprets the artist's practice, by orienting them towards a particular way of engaging with the work.

Table 5 lists the types of verbal clauses which collocate with *viewer(s)*, *spectator(s)* and *audience(s)* in the AS Corpus to indicate how the artist's visual work is conceptualised by the artists as affecting the viewer. As seen in the table, the verbs can also be semantically grouped into categories, which are listed in order of frequency. *Viewer(s)* occurred 54 times in the AS Corpus, *audience(s)* 9 times and *spectator(s)* 3 times.

Table 5
Viewer effect statements.

Effect on viewer, audience or spectator	Verbal process used to construct effect	Raw Freq.	ASC Texts
Motivating: The work motivates the viewer to do something	encourages (4), invites (2), inspires (2), prompts (2), leads (1), convinces (1), evokes (1)	13	11
Transforming: The work transforms the viewer or their world	turns [into] (3), alters (1), changes (1), stirs (1), transforms (1), translates (1), expands (1)	9	7
Contributing: The work contributes something to the viewer or their world	creates [for] (3), gives [to] (2), offers (1), delivers [to] (1), builds [for] (1), shares [with] (1)	9	9

(*continued on next page*)

Table 5 (*continued*)

Effect on viewer, audience or spectator	Verbal process used to construct effect	Raw Freq.	ASC Texts
Confronting: The work confronts the viewer	provokes (3), confronts (2), challenges (2), confounds (1)	8	5
Engaging: The work engages the viewer in an activity	engages (6)	6	6
Connecting: The work connects the viewer with, or in something	connects (2), grounds (1), includes (1)	4	4
Enabling: The work enables the viewer to do something	allows (4)	4	4
Desiring: The work desires that the viewer do something	wants (3)	3	3
Communicating: The work communicates with the viewer	questions (1), speaks (1),	2	2
Obliging: The work obliges the viewer to do something	makes (1)	1	1

As can been seen in Table 5, in their statements, contemporary artists often conceptualise their creative works as providing a stimulus that motivates their viewers into some kind of action, or acts upon the viewer in some way. Examples from the AS Corpus include inspiring viewers to look at forms of nature, encouraging dialogue with the creative work, or prompting reflection on identity. Artists also frequently conceptualise their work as transformational, for example, turning the viewer into a co-artist, or altering the viewer's experience of the world. Furthermore, they also conceptualise their work as contributing something to the viewer, for example, offering the viewer the opportunity to see an idea in a new way. Their works are also frequently conceptualised as confronting or challenging their viewers. The rhetorical functions *identifying effect on the viewer* and *conceptualising function* often include hedges using desiderative verbs such as *hope*, or *intend* as in example xiii), or adverbs such as *hopefully*.

4.6. Identifying creative processes and materials

A final characteristic rhetorical function of the artist's statement is the identification of the creative processes and materials, including technologies, employed by the artist. This is a less explicit function of the genre and is often embedded within the other rhetorical functions discussed above. Examples xvii - xix illustrate the type of expressions found in the AS Corpus that perform this function.

xvii. I create my paintings by slowly pouring layers.
xviii. My process combines found and hand drawn images.
xix. I resort to using red and blue tones.

Table 6 identifies the most frequently used lemmas found in the AS Corpus to mark a clause's function as identifying creative processes and/or materials. There are also instances in the AS Corpus where material verbs (e.g. I layer paint on the canvas) are used to identify processes. In Table 6, the frequency count only refers to those uses of the lemma which involve specific reference to the artist's deployment of certain creative processes or materials in their work. Not included in the frequency counts, for example, are more general comments that make reference to materials or processes habitually employed by other artists.

Table 6
Most frequent lemmas used to discuss creative processes and materials.

Lemma	Raw Freq.	ASC texts	Example
create [v]	133	62	I create my work by transforming symbols.
use [v]	84	47	I use colours on my canvas.
process [n]	68	40	My process combines found and hand drawn images.
work [v]	45	33	I work on many sketches at once.
make [v]	42	28	The drawings are made in reverse.
material [n]	39	22	The materials come from industrial sites.
technique [n]	27	19	The technique involves sketching in ink.
approach [v, n]	21	18	My approach incorporates dance.
start [v]	15	11	I start by layering paint.
begin [v]	10	9	Every object I create begins with a photograph.
employ [v]	7	7	I employ a range of qualities.
utilise [v]	6	6	My most recent work utilises textiles.

4.7. 'How to write an artist's statement' websites

As mentioned in the introduction, there is now a growing number of 'how-to' websites that provide instructions and guidelines for writing artist's statements. Their emergence is, in the first instance, a response to the difficulty that artists are widely acknowledged as having with the writing of the genre (Liese, 2013). However, the increase in the availability of

accessible cloud-based web development platforms which enable artists to easily and cheaply create promotional webpages, all of which include an artist's statement, has most probably also contributed to the rise of these online 'how-to' websites. Furthermore, there is also an increasing trend for independent artists to market their work through the use of photo sharing sites such as Instagram. *Vogue* magazine, for example, has referred to Instagram as the 'world's most talked about new art dealer' (Fleming, 2014). Again, these Instagram accounts often provide links to artist's statements.

Table 7 provides a list of the areas that artists were most frequently advised to include in their artist's statements, or the stylistic approaches they were advised to take. This 'do' advice is ranked in order of frequency of occurrence, and it would appear that all of the rhetorical functions identified as occurring in the AS Corpus have an equivalent in Table 7. For example, 1 *State your influences and inspirations*, equates to the rhetorical function *Specifying motivation*, 2 *Discuss why you make art*, equates to *Conceptualising function*, 17 *Describe what you expect from your audience*, equates to the function *Identifying effect on the viewer*, and so on. Of the advice in Table 7, 11 *Grab your reader's interest with the first sentence*, and 18 *Say how your current work relates to your previous work*, were not strongly evident in the AS Corpus, and due to the particular poetic or metaphorical stylistic characteristics of the artist's statement found in the corpus, neither was the advice 3 *Be specific, concise, straight to the point or direct*, or 4 *Use simple, everyday or conversational language*. This latter advice was often identified in the 'how-to' websites as resulting from the author's dislike of the abstruse nature of visual arts-based writing.

Table 7
Areas that "how-to" websites recommend are included in an artist's statement.

Rank	Areas to be include in an artist's statement ('do' advice)	Raw Freq.	%
1	State your influences and inspirations.	17	68
2	Discuss why you make art (your hopes, goals, intent, purposes or aims).	16	64
3	Be specific, concise, straight to the point or direct.	14	56
4	Describe your work is created.	14	56
5	Keep your artist's statement short and sweet.	13	52
6	Use the first person, active voice, or I statements.	13	52
7	Describe your tools and materials.	10	40
8	Use simple, everyday or conversational language.	10	40
9	Tell a personal narrative, give a sense of your story as an artist	10	40
10	Consider your audience or reader.	9	36
11	Grab your reader's interest with the first sentence.	9	36
12	Match your writing to your work.	9	36
13	Focus on your work's themes, topics, concepts, meanings or issues.	9	36
14	State the medium or media of your work.	7	28
15	Describe what your art means to you, or says about you as an artist.	7	28
16	Be clear.	7	28
17	Describe what you expect from your audience, or what your audience should take away from your work.	7	28
18	Say how your current work relates to your previous work.	6	24

Besides reference to the use of the first-person pronoun, only 12 websites included any reference to the lexical features of the artist's statement. Instead, the main focus of these 12 websites was on what not to include, for example, *Avoid phrases like, 'I'm trying to…' or 'My intention is…'*, with only four of the websites offering any suitable alternatives. Furthermore, only two of the websites included extended lists of specific lexical items, and these were not related to the genre's functions. The first (Abrams, 2017), was explicitly influenced by the sentiments of Rule and Levine (2012), and simply stated that the following words should be avoided when writing artist's statements: *juxtapose* (8), *humanity* (5), *human condition* (5), *concerns* (16), *chaos* (5), *uncanny* (0), *notions* (14), *speculative* (1), *explores* (74), *rupture* (0), *troubled* (1), *liminal* (4), *controversial* (1), *and deconstructs* (6). The numbers in parenthesis indicate the frequency of these items and related infected forms in the AS Corpus, indicating that with the exception of *uncanny*, *rupture*, *speculative* and *controversial,* they are all frequently found in the corpus. The other website (Ober, 2009) unusually identified a number of words recommended for use in artist's statements. These were *explore* (74), *analyse* (3), *question* (25), *test* (0), *search* (8), *devise* (2), *discover* (11), *balance* (11), *connect* (16), *experiment* (6), *juxtapose* (8) and *construct* (18). The numbers in parenthesis indicate the frequency of these verbs, their lemmas, and associated noun forms (e.g. *explore*/*exploration*) in the AS Corpus.

Table 8 provides a list of the areas or stylistic approaches that the 'how-to' websites most frequently advised the writer of the artist's statement to avoid. In contrast to Table 7, all of the areas or stylistic approaches that the websites recommended avoiding in Table 8, with the exception of 10 *Make comparisons to other artists*, 12 *Repeat words*, 13 *Brag*, and 14 *Summarise the bio* were, in contrast, often evident in the texts of the AS Corpus. Table 9 identifies contradictory advice most frequently provided by the 'how-to' websites.

Table 8
Areas or stylistic approaches that "how-to" websites advised should be avoided.

Rank	Areas to avoid in an artist's statement ('don't' advice)	RawFreq.	%
1	Use artspeak, artsy talk, jargon, international art language or an intellectualised style of writing.	16	64
2	Use clichés, flowery or, over-flourished language.	10	40
3	Include (auto) biographical information.	7	28

(*continued on next page*)

Table 8 (*continued*)

Rank	Areas to avoid in an artist's statement ('don't' advice)	RawFreq.	%
4	Refer to art theory, criticism, history or philosophy.	5	20
5	Generalise or use general phrases	5	20
6	Use hyperbole, superlatives, grandiose language or exaggerated statements.	5	20
7	Use statements starting with: 'I hope to…', 'I will…', 'I am trying to…', 'I would like to', 'I want to', or 'My intention is …'	5	20
8	Include unnecessary, pretentious or obscure references (to art, literature or history)	4	16
9	Use long dissertations or explanations	4	16
10	Make comparisons to other artists	3	12
11	Indicate what the art does to the viewers, or how they should feel, behave or respond.	3	12
12	Repeat words	3	12
13	Brag, say your art is interesting, identify awards and honours	3	12
14	Summarise the bio found elsewhere on your website	3	12
15	Use complex grammatical structures or language	3	12
16	Use poems or prosy writing	3	12

Table 9
A comparison of the 'do' and 'don't' 'how to' advice for writing artist's statements.

	Do	Raw Freq.	Don't	Raw Freq.
1	Discuss why you make art (your hopes, goals, intent, purposes or aims).	16	Discuss future goals or what you're trying to do	2
2	Use the first person, active voice, or I statements.	13	Use I, me or my	2
3	Describe your tools and materials.	10	Explain the materials and techniques employed	2
4	Describe what you expect from your audience or what your audience should take away from your work.	7	Indicate what the art does to the viewers, or how they should feel, behave or respond.	3
5	Describe theories that have informed or contextualised your work within art history.	4	Refer to art theory, criticism, history or philosophy.	5
6	Introduce your personality, passion and enthusiasm	4	Be emotional	1
7	Use fascinating verbiage, captivating or grandiose language.	3	Use hyperbole, superlatives, grandiose language or exaggerated statements.	5
8	Include (auto) biographical details	3	Include (auto) biographical information.	7
9	Brag about your work, technical or creative skills.	2	Brag, say your art is interesting, identify awards and honours	3
10	Use a great quote	1	Use quotes	1

In brief, the analysis of the 'how to write artist's statement' websites suggests that many of these websites do provide appropriate recommendations regarding the type of information that should be communicated in the statement. Nevertheless, they rarely mention the types of lexical items that could be successfully used to construct these areas, and in contrast, with the exception of one website, the lexical items they recommend avoiding are frequently found in the AS Corpus. The advice stating what to avoid also largely focuses on stylistic features, and is motivated by a dislike for what is referred to as artspeak, artsy talk, international art English or intellectual writing. Interestingly, the 'don't' advice also suggests that mention of the effect that the artist's work has on the viewer should be avoided, however as seen above, this is a key component of the genre. It also suggests avoiding references to art, art theory, art history, art criticism, or literature, yet such content regularly occurs in the AS Corpus. Ultimately, and as seen in Table 9, the advice on one 'how-to' website will often contradict the advice on another, suggesting that these websites should all be treated with some degree of caution.

5. Discussion

Bawarshi (2000) has argued that genres are often constitutive of the (con)texts in which they are found, stating that they help structure the way individuals conceptualise and experience certain situations and activities, largely by providing the conventions required for enacting these situations and activities. With this in mind, an important focus of this paper was to explore how the artist's statement provides an explicit example of a genre that, rather than being simply "a conduit for achieving or identifying an already existing communicative purpose" (p. 340), is, in part, constitutive of the phenomenon that it references, and how this occurs through the specific lexical choices that have developed socially and culturally to realise its rhetorical functions. In the case of the artist's statement, this involves the frequently recurring lexical items related to the aims, purposes, motivations and effects of visual art, and identities of its creators. Indeed, art and design studies have hinted at the generative capacity of the artist's statement, with one describing it as "a genre where critical reflection and creation meet—a kind of writing that exists at "the same level as, even as part of . . . the art" (Garrett-Petts & Nash, 2008, para. 8). Nevertheless, there are no prior studies that have explicitly explored the lexical realisations of the artist's statement's rhetorical functions as achieving this process.

As mentioned in the introduction, the artist's statement is also widely viewed by art students, their educators and practicing artists as a difficult genre to produce (Adamson & Goddard, 2012; Garrett-Petts & Nash, 2008; Liese, 2013). Hence, another focus of this paper was to provide art students, art educators, and visual art practitioners with information about the

lexical features and functions of the artist's statement to assist with the writing of the genre (Bhatia, 1993). In doing so, the paper also sought to compare this information with websites that offer guidelines for writing the artist's statement. It found that these sites are of variable quality, provide contradictory information, and offer general and ambiguous advice which often lacks any useful linguistic detail. Perhaps one reason for this is that these 'how-to' websites overlook the constitutive nature of the artist's statement, and instead offer advice governed by stylistic bias. As a result, a process verb, such as *explore*, which frequently facilitates creative activity, or a noun such as *concern,* which often provides the motivation for an artistic work, are mistakenly described as lexical items to avoid (Abrams, 2017). It could be argued that to accurately reflect what occurs in practice, genre-specific writing guides, handbooks, and even journalistic commentaries on a genre, need to consider the communicative complexity of the genre, including the constitutive role of its rhetorical functions and associated lexical features, rather than simply focusing on stylistic preferences.

Finally, while small and accessible context-specific corpora can offer advantages over larger corpora (e.g. McEnery et al., 2006), especially for the analysis of specialised language, the findings of this study into the rhetorical functions and associated lexical features of the contemporary artist's statement would be more generalisable if both the AS Corpus was larger, and if a greater number of 'how to write an artist's statement' websites were examined. Furthermore, only one quarter of the AS Corpus included statements by artists who identified, either on their websites or in their statements, as being born or raised in non-English speaking countries. This imbalance perhaps limits the overall representativeness of the corpus, especially given the possibility that this particular demographic is responsible for a higher percentage of the total number of artist's statements published online.

Notes:

1. Due to copyright concerns, all examples provided are representative of the AS Corpus, rather than actual extracts. In most cases, they are composites of the language used by two or more artists' statements in the corpus.

Appendix

The wordlist for the AS Corpus examined for this study can be found at http://dx.doi.org/10.17632/s2y697y74k.1

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