
Writing an Artist's CV (Curriculum Vitae)

A Curriculum Vitae is a document that provides a record of your relevant experience and qualifications. There are a number of different situations in which you may be called upon to provide a CV, such as applying for grants and certain types of jobs, or applying to galleries and grad school.

Is there is difference between a CV and a resume?

Yes! It's a fairly significant difference. A CV does not usually outline "objectives" at the top and rarely do you see a professional CV that includes personal interests (such as skiing, windsurfing, and weightlifting) or job experience that is unrelated to the position being applied for (such as serving at Earls). Descriptions of duties performed are also completely omitted or kept to a minimum.

If you're applying to a gallery, they're interested in your education, exhibition history, curatorial experience, bibliography (reviews, articles, catalogues, interviews), publications, professional experience and the awards and grants you have received.

An academic institution will expect similar information, but what you choose to emphasize may differ.

What to Consider

As with any genre-specific writing, producing a comprehensive and effective CV means that you must consider audience, situation, convention and form. If you are putting in a proposal to a gallery, your CV will look slightly different than if you are applying to graduate school or for a job. If you are applying to an academic program, the CV you submit will look different depending on whether you're applying for an MFA or a Design program.

Although you might be tempted to use whatever design skills you have learned, a complicated and dramatically laid out CV is usually unnecessary and can take away from the information provided. Your readers may be pouring over a hundred different CVs and they will want to glean all important information as quickly as possible.

Don't Forget!

When a student is first putting together a CV they often leave out crucial information, such as committees they've worked on, community work, small group shows, a small grant or scholarship they received, or an exchange program they took part in. As your career progresses, selection becomes more and more important. No one wants to read a ten page CV. A two page CV is a typical length for most young artists who are applying to grad school directly out of a BFA program, or for their first grants or first exhibitions.

More Information

The Practical Art World provides step-by-step instructions for composing an Artist's CV (and lots of other great tips for making it the business!):

<http://thepracticalartworld.com/2011/02/12/how-to-write-an-artists-cv-in-10-steps/>

Guardian Careers also has some helpful hints:

<http://careers.guardian.co.uk/writing-an-arts-cv>

To see some examples of professional Artist's CVs, take a look at the artists' pages on the Catriona Jeffries and Equinox Gallery websites ("About the Artist" on Equinox; "Download CV" on Catriona Jeffries):

<http://www.equinoxgallery.com/artists/>

<http://catrionajeffries.com/artists/>