

How to write a press release :

(from How to write about contemporary art by Gilda Williams)

Truly, the saga of the contemporary art press release deserves a chapter unto itself. In most other sectors, this modest sheet of A4 serves merely to :

- + inform the industry, an editor, or a reporter of a newsworthy item, usually bearing a banner-line header for instant communication, in the hope of media coverage ;
- provide journalists with the bare-bones, plain language from which to pen a news item.
- + offer full contact info details ('for further information, please contact') ; a decent copyright-free picture, and a pertinent quote or two. Job done.

The press release is structured as a no-frills 'inverted triangle' (top-heavy, with a summary of the main facts as the opener, then working its way down in increasing detail. Headline, the lead, who/what/where/when/how, wind down and 'end with a sting') : an infomercial that prioritizes news in order of importance. Once upon a time, art-world exhibition press releases were likewise fairly normal, useful one-pagers where a journalist would find straightforward information.

Here are the key elements extracted from two relatively sober examples (by art-world standards) : one announcing the recipient of a notable art prize 'Stan Douglas wins the 2013 Scotiabank Photography Award' ; the second about a private gallery solo exhibition, artist Harun Farocki on view at Raven Row, London, 2009.

Scotiabank is thrilled to announce that Vancouver's Stan Douglas has been named winner of the third annual Scotiabank Photography Award [1] (...) The prestigious prize provides the winner with \$ 50,000 in cash, a primary Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival exhibition in 2014 and book to be published worldwide by international art publisher Steidl [2].

'Stan Douglas has helped define and enrich the Canadian art and photography landscape with his outstanding art work', said Edward Burzynsky, Chair of the Scotiabank Photography Award Jury and co-founder of the Award [3] (...) Based in Vancouver, Stan Douglas has created films, photographs, and installations that reexamine particular locations or past events [4]. (...)

Stan Douglas was selected from a group of three finalists, which included Angela Grauerholz and Robert Walker, by a jury of some of photography's most respected experts/ William Ewing, Director of Curatorial Projects, Thames & Hudson (...) ; Karen Love, Independent Curator and Writer, Director of Foundation and Government Grants, Vancouver Art Gallery ; Ann Thomas, Curator, Photographs Collection, National Gallery of Canada [5].

Unsigned 2013, Scotiabank Website.

(Raven Row announces) the first UK exhibition of the two-screen and multi-screen works of revered German filmmaker Harun Farocki [1]. (...) The survey comprises nine video installations from his first two-screen project Interface in 1995 to Immersion, 2009, about the use of virtual reality in the treatment of traumatized US soldiers following the occupation of Iraq [2].

Since the sixties, Farocki (born in 1944, living in Berlin) has reinvented what can be described as the film essay. (...) In the mid-nineties, Farocki began making films for two, and occasionally more, screens [4]. (...)

The exhibition is curated by Alex Sainsbury. It is linked to 'Harun Farocki. 22 Films 1968-2009', a season of Farocki's single-screen films and events at Tate Moderne, 13 November – 6 December 2009, curated by Stuart Comer, Antje Ehmann and the Otolith Group [5].

Unsigned, 2009, Raven Row website

[1] **A one-line header**, or short paragraph, with the main announcement

[2] **Information about the immediate event** or exhibition (up to four lines) – what is the award ; which works are on view.

[3] **A pertinent (jargonless) quote**

[4] **Essential background on the artist** (up to four lines)

[5] **A short final paragraph with the fine print**

In addition, include the Gallery's details : address, opening hours, website / email, phone number ; name press contact. (Separately), send a directly relevant, good quality picture (minimum resolution 300dpi), available for usage, with all caption info : artist, title, date, medium, dimensions, venue, name of photographer.

If you follow the above basic model, do not explain a dense, abstract idea with another dense abstract idea.