

Titling an Artwork

There are many approaches to titling an artwork. Some are clever or ironic. Some are straightforward. There's no right or wrong way to go about it, but since titling is one of an artist's regular tasks, I wanted to learn more about various strategies.

"I often have a title in mind at the start and compose the painting to uphold my title and narrative. Other times, a title comes later and can be inspired by almost anything: location, color harmony, the model's name or even a podcast or piece of music I happen to be listening to while painting." —Anna Rose Bain

"More often than not, my titles come ahead of my work. I keep a journal with working titles and color stories and sometimes a simple composition concept. My titles lean toward the poetic and I allow it to lead me in a creative direction visually." — Vicki Clarkson

"Creating a title for artwork can be simple yet impactful. A title should focus on the theme. What is the artwork about? It might highlight a key element, using subjects or symbols in the piece. The title should match the mood, reflecting the tone. Keep the title concise. One or two words often work best." —Norma Ruffinelli

"When a piece is finished, or when I think it is for now, anyway, I sit in front of it and wait for words to appear. I think about what's been going on, what I'm worried about, what brings joy, or what the piece makes me think of. An anchor word emerges, and then I think of how I can engage my viewer using that word as a silent bridge. The title may be a sentence, question or phrase—or sometimes just the anchor word itself works." — Gretchen Warren

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