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LAYERS OF PAINT

Always ambitious and looking to try new things, I started writing a blog and made it available on my website www.fdp-artworks.com.

My initial intention was to write each week, or twice a week. It turned out to be more difficult than I anticipated. I write when I can. I have too much to say and then not enough to say.

Through my writings, I try to present a different perspective, sometimes humorous, and quite frequently, a bit harsh. Not mean, per se, but I don't have a lot of patience for those who will not learn from their mistakes.

I like to improvise and try new techniques, styles, and mediums. I will share my insight quite happily with anyone who will listen or read.

Say, what?

May 10, 2022

There are a few things I want to cover in this session.

- Titling your painting
- The story behind the painting
- Labelling your painting

Let's dig in...

What's in a name?

My opinion:

It's important to have a title for your painting. This goes for any piece of artwork, be it a drawing, sculpture, collage, or traditional oil painting. Titles matter. Why is that? A good title tells the viewer something about what he or she is looking at. A good title should intrigue the viewer. Why did you name it that? What is its significance?

If I am looking at a painting and see the title, I like to be able to say, ah, yes, that makes sense! A good title will make me want to talk to the artist and find out more about the piece. What I'm about to say may upset some readers.

Remember, this is just my opinion.

It really bugs me when I see titles like Yellow Barn in the Field, Blue Ball on the Beach, Brown House Next Door...A literal description of what I am looking at. I can see what is there (unless it is hidden or so abstract as to be unrecognizable) and I don't need to be told its a yellow barn or blue ball. Tell me something I don't know! Where did the blue ball come from? What is important about the brown house next door? Do you get what I am saying?

Here are some examples of titles I have chosen.



"Lean on Me"

This could have been titled Ladder Leaning on Barn. It would be true.

The reason I called it Lean on Me is because it struck me that the barn and ladder were old friends. Both weathered and not in peak shape. Relics from the past days of farming.

The barn is offering itself to the ladder as a support. Lean on Me, old friend. Likewise, the ladder is acting like a crutch for the barn. These two friends have been positioned like this for years and years. I know, because they are out back at our farm.

"Ghost of the Past"

The title could have been Old Barn and House. It would have been accurate! Anyone looking at this would see a barn and house (hopefully). But is that what I'm trying to portray? Not really.

I used a different technique for this painting for a reason. I had found an old photograph that my dad had laying around. It was a black and white photo.



When I thought about how I would represent the scene, I was thinking how it was a piece of history. Old barns and old houses like this won't be very prevalent in our current landscape for that much longer.

I started with black and white paint and a palette knife. A rough representation of the picture before me. Although leaving it black and white would have made sense, I decided to add some very transparent color. The buildings would have had color in the past. The colors may have faded over time but the ghost of color that I added represents the color of past days. Hence, the title Ghost of the Past. This barn and house are probably non-existent today. They really are ghosts.

What about abstract paintings?

Do you really have to name them? Absolutely! I have heard some artists say that they don't name their painting because they want the viewer to determine for themselves what they see. Okay, that's fair. However, it can also be seen as lazy or uninspiring. The artist should at least be able to put into some word or words what the piece means to them, or how it is meant to inspire the viewer. I plan to do another session on how to go about picking good names for abstract and less subject oriented artwork. Stay tuned!

What's the story behind this?

I never thought that my husband would teach me a lesson in art. He told me one day, as he was standing there at one of my early shows, that I need to have a story behind my paintings. Everyone loves a good story.

At the same show, a gentleman wanted to purchase a painting I did in black and white with an old truck painted in blue. He asked me why I painted it. I was surprised. Why would he want to know that? So, I proceeded to tell him that I used to visit my uncle's farm as a child. We would walk up the hill and he had a small field of old vehicles. It was great fun walking around and discovering what may be hiding there.

My experience with old vehicles led me to paint a few. To really bring attention to the vehicle itself, I did the rest of the painting in black and white, saving the color for only the vehicle.

Is it true that I visited the farm and wandered through the field of old cars and trucks? Yes. Is that the reason I did the painting of the old truck? Maybe not, but it sounded good. My past experiences will always influence my artwork. One way or another. My husband taught me the importance of drawing on those experiences to weave a tale behind each painting. To this day, he always tells me "Make sure you have a good story to go with that painting!"

It is so true! A good story gives you an opening to start a conversation with a possible buyer! Intrigue them and the story will stick in their mind. You may not get a sale today, but you may get a call one day. Someone maybe could relate to your story and now they would like the painting in front of the story!

Be proud and put your name on it!

Sign your work! You created it, be proud of it, put your name to it!

Write the title on the back of the painting. I usually do this on the top, outer canvas part on the back of the painting. Not on the wood (although sometimes I do this). I just feel that if you put the name on the canvas itself, if someone takes it off the frame, the title is still attached to the painting.

Put your full name on the back of the painting. Your signature may be your complete name but may not be all that legible. Print it on the back of the painting. Right where the title is.

I also include my website along with name and title. That way, if the owner wants to see more of my work, they don't have to go searching for my business card that they lost a few months ago.

What about if you paper the back of your work? When I have a framed canvas, I put a dust cover over the back (basically a piece of brown paper). In this case I put title, my name and my website in 2 places: on the canvas itself, even though it will be covered up. On the paper backing, so that it can be seen at first glance. I put it on the canvas because if the paper backing comes off for some reason, the information may be lost if it is not also on the canvas.

Conclusion

Be memorable! Let your artwork come from within you and don't be afraid to share the experiences that led to your piece of art. Be proud and sign your work. Give it a title and record as much information as you want on the back of the painting.

Happy creating!