

BUSINESS ADVICE + RESOURCES + EDUCATION + TUTORIALS + ART NEWS

# PROFESSIONAL ARTIST

**MEET YOUR FOUR  
INNER GUIDES  
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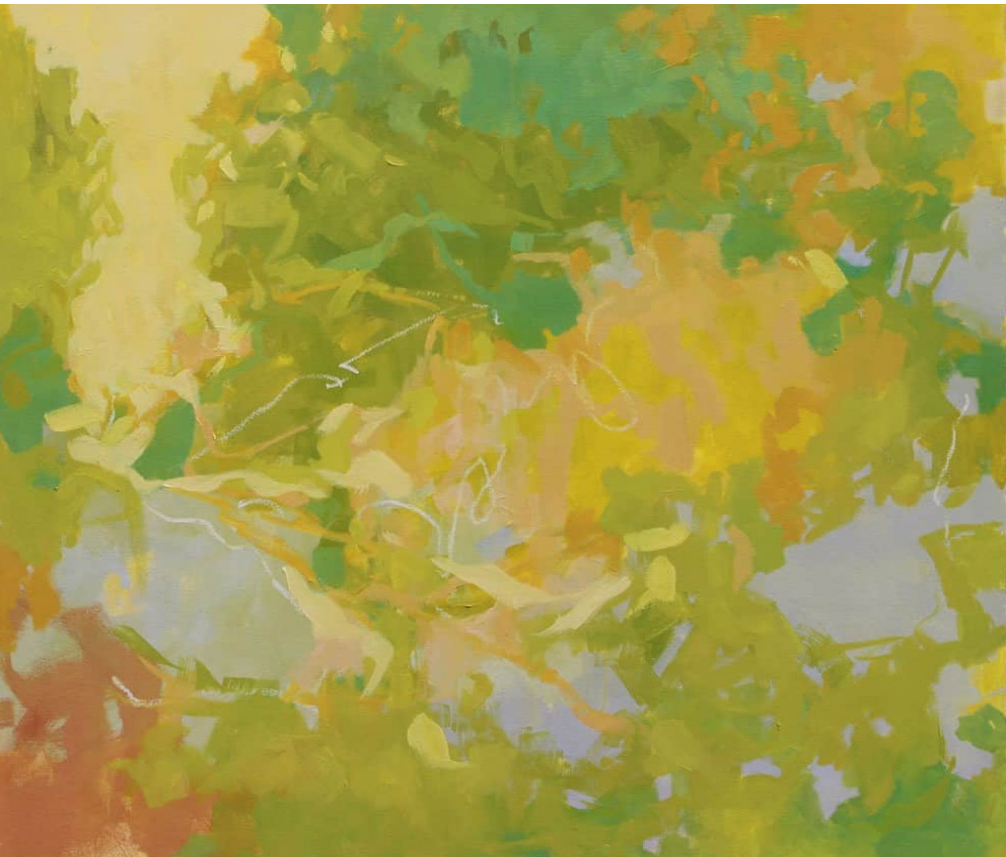
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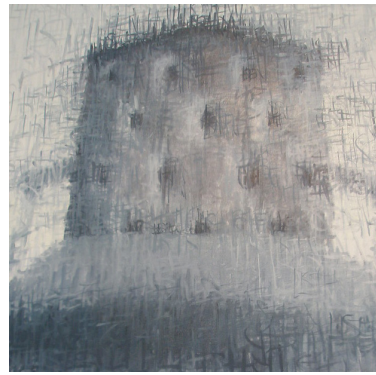
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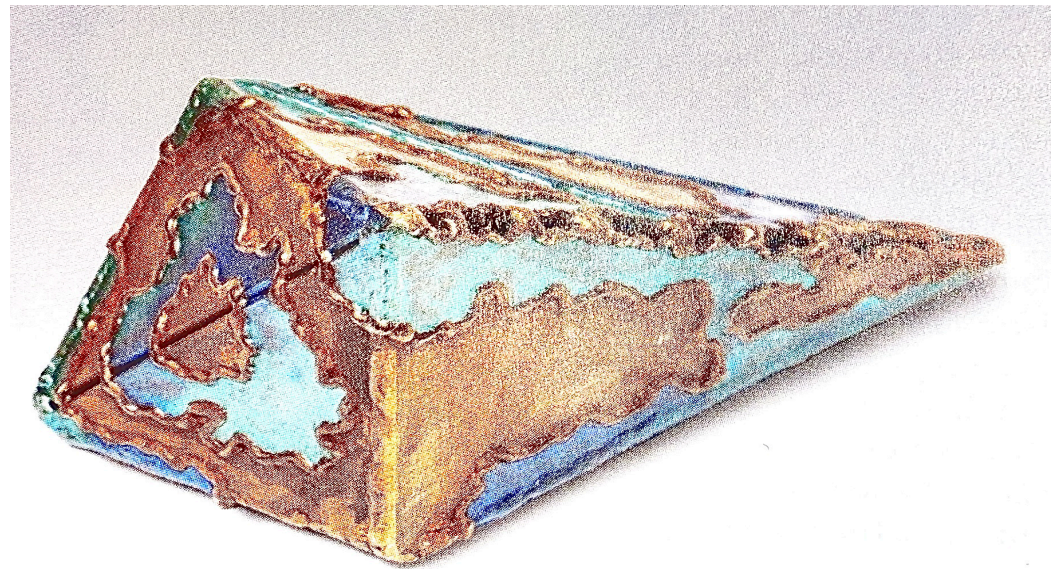
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## AN ARTIST'S FOUR INNER GUIDES: MAPPING HOW THEY INFLUENCE THE CREATIVE PROCESS

BY JOHN ROMAN

All creative people have invisible forces working within them, far below perception. Conscious, internal mindsets shape a person's life and work, for better or for worse. Being attentive to the subtle influences these powers have on thoughts, words and actions opens an entry point toward becoming an active partner in the creative process. Recognizing these impulses is the first step to gaining control.





**“By shining a light into the abyss of our hidden sources of inspiration, passion and commitment, artists can better access and understand the guidance and wisdom their inner selves provide” John Roman**

**T**HERE ARE FOUR self-contained, intuitive channels that operate independently from our waking selves. These are primal, autonomous natures that sometimes behave like individual personalities living under one roof. Revealing how those deep-rooted entities function separately, and how they interact collectively, allows us to trace the route of our creative process. A distinct subliminal pathway is followed in every inventive act, and when creators discover this in themselves, they shift from being a passenger in their personal vehicle of expression to taking the driver's seat. At that point, it's not only possible to steer the direction of one's art, but to initiate, motivate and supervise those endeavors as well. It's certainly achievable to produce magnificent work without knowledge of this instinctive stem, as artists have done through centuries. But every creator can identify with a vague awareness that while they are working, something is stirring below the surface.

**“Being attentive to the subtle influences these powers have on thoughts, words, and actions opens an entry point toward becoming an active partner in the creative process.”**

"When an artist is at work on a painting, images he or she had never thought of arrive ... instead of the images the artist had planned to set down," wrote poet Robert Bly in his book *Iron John: A Book About Men*. Artists often feel like conduits in the act of production, as if in some way, while in a state of deep concentration, ideas, melodies, colors, designs and the like are being fed through them. By shining a light into the abyss of our hidden sources of inspiration, passion and commitment, artists can better access and understand the guidance and wisdom their inner selves provide.

#### **THE FOUR CREATIVE FORCES AS INDEPENDENT GUIDES**

There's an enormous intelligence that operates throughout your body," Eckhardt Tolle explains in his book *The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment*. Hundreds of bodily functions are active day and night without our attention to them. Therefore, it shouldn't be difficult for you to acknowledge emotional and intellectual impulses going on as well. Just like those biological activities, four cognitive drives are also performing without your awareness, and all four stimulate your life independently and in different ways. This might sound bizarre, but actually it's no more eccentric than saying my hair and fingernails are growing all by themselves.

Throughout history, humans have relied on a "mental game" when trying to comprehend abstract ideas. For concepts beyond its grasp, the mind personifies the abstraction. The brain can more effectively relate to any unseen reality by visualizing it as another "person" not unlike itself. The notion of impersonal drives or ethereal, creative forces existing inside of us might be challenging for some to accept, so I'll personify these concealed energies and refer to them as our inner "guides." Your four guides operate below-grade and can be identified by their specific roles: 1) a channel of inspiration, 2) the fire of passion, 3) an engine of commitment, and 4) our seat of focus. Each system is a specialist at its exclusive task as each has been perfecting its craft for tens of thousands of years alongside the slow evolution of its human hosts. Their patterns of activity are similar from one person to the next, yet their particular behaviors within each individual can be totally unique.



Making things even more interesting, all four guides can display dark or negative traits as well, which is why some very talented artists have difficulty achieving their goals. Try to spot any strong or weak attributes of these guides in your own life as they are defined here:

#### **THE GUIDE OF INSPIRATION**

Of the four guides, our Guide of Inspiration is the least connected to the physical body. The heart carries your passions, physical stamina gets the job done, and your head focuses on navigating the journey. The "gut instincts" we experience, however, are triggered not only by internal impulses but by external stimuli as well. Outside of your day-to-day thinking, conscious, subconscious and subliminal material are all received and stored in this part of your psyche. The guide of inspiration is a receptor able to make quick connections and comparisons between divergent sources, and it carries the potential for ingenious innovations, solutions and ideas. This is where flashes of insight originate. The messages and concepts channeled through this guide have the ability to relate with viewers and connect them to whatever we create. But the guide of inspiration cannot act alone in the creative process. For any of its concepts to see the light of day, its visions are committed to a team effort with the other guides.

**“Inspirations reach into the collective unconscious, but your fires of passion are exclusively linked to the private affections of your heart.”**

#### **THE GUIDE OF PASSION**

The Guide of Passion is exactly what it sounds like; it's the home for all that you are fond of in our world and life. Inspirations reach into the collective unconscious, but your fires of passion are exclusively linked to the private affections of your heart. While the passion guide exudes love and light, this base can't operate on its own either because it lacks a filter for adapting subjective feelings into objective art that transcends emotions. The passion guide must submit its material for consideration to the guide of inspiration, then, united, the guide of passion with the guide of inspiration work out a deal for how to best present material in a way that satisfies both artist and audience.

#### **THE GUIDE OF COMMITMENT**

The Guide of Commitment is your interior workhorse, the one who, upon getting word from the passion and inspiration guides

about a new project, rolls up its sleeves and gets to work. In his book *The King Within: Accessing the King in the Male Psyche*, psychologist Robert Moore refers to this energy as the inner "warrior," the part of us that, despite hardship or discomfort, is able to withstand long hours and maintain the dedication and perseverance needed to see our ideas come to fruition. Once our engine of commitment is tuned-in with our other two guides, we can brave whatever is required to execute the final product. Without this guide's commitment to our efforts, however, nothing can be accomplished.

#### **THE GUIDE OF FOCUS**

Of the four guides, The Guide of Focus is most closely associated with the "self." This guide is "you" at the center of your psyche; it's your personal conductor of a great, creative symphony within. When the guides of inspiration, passion and commitment have decided on a particular course of action, it's your responsibility to focus on keeping the machine running smoothly. A properly functioning focus guide will take command of the domain it inhabits and sit as king or queen over its private world. From this internal throne, you have the authority to take full control of your creative output.

#### **WHEN GUIDES ARE DYSFUNCTIONAL**

If any of your internal guides try to run the show single-handedly, the imbalance results in failure to produce, or art that doesn't "speak" to an audience. Your guide of inspiration is too far removed from human life and your guide of passion too self-absorbed with its own interests. A guide of commitment working alone, without the input of passion and inspiration, produces art that's uncreative and lacks soul. This will be art merely for the sake of production, not for expression of the self. Conversely, you can have overflowing passion and inspiration, but if your commitment guide is lazy, a procrastinator, or is easily distracted, the whole creative process collapses. The person with a weak focus guide encounters the biggest roadblock of all at achieving goals. Low self-esteem, a lack of confidence, impatience, or a reliance on copycat art without aim are just a few of the examples of this dysfunction. Such individuals may not be able to get anything started, or may be all over the place with numerous ideas and creations but are unable to stay with one thing too long. Numerous disruptive potentials can wreak havoc in an artist's life and career. It's essential that all four guides work in partnership for the highest good.



## INTERACTIONS BETWEEN GUIDES

The best way to witness the four guides operating in unison during an artist's process is to analyze how and why a particular work was developed. In 1930, artist Georgia O'Keeffe created a series of floral paintings of a Jack-in-the-pulpit. Her first attempt was almost photographic in technique. Subsequent paintings grew larger and more abstract as the series evolved. In Georgia O'Keeffe, Portrait of an Artist (a 1977 WNET/Thirteen video interview), O'Keeffe explained the genesis of this well-known body of paintings. O'Keeffe put up all the paintings she'd done over the previous year and came to the grim realization that she'd produced no art to please herself. She'd been painting to please others. Obviously, this early work lacked passion and inspiration. Then one day she went to see a collection of paintings at a New York City gallery where she came across a small, beautifully painted picture of a flower. The magnificence of that small piece sparked something inside of her to attempt her own brand of floral painting. She knew, however, that if she wanted her flowers to be noticed, she would have to paint big so they could not be ignored.

It's fun to see O'Keeffe's wheels turning in this series of thoughts. She was clearly inspired with a vision that is directly linked to her passion for flowers. During the act of production, O'Keeffe didn't stop with one or two paintings of a Jack-in-a-pulpit. She created numerous versions at this one flower, simplifying its shapes at each attempt. Here, O'Keeffe's strong commitment to capturing the essence of a Jack-in-the-pulpit is evident. The driving force behind the success of her paintings was her rule and focus over the inner creative process. In the end, O'Keeffe's domination of all its powers is what brought her visual revelations to life.

## BECOMING A CONSCIOUS PARTNER IN AN UNCONSCIOUS SYSTEM

Being attentive to the subtle influences these powers have on thoughts, words and actions opens an entry point toward becoming an active partner in the creative process. That's really all it takes to catch a glimpse of this activity going on inside of each one of us. Try this. Some day, in the midst of a tough grind, stop for a moment and ask yourself what's at the heart of your creation or notice how a particular inspiration is tied to a personal interest or realize how committed you've been to completing your project. Then, see how you have been at the helm of the whole operation all along. By concentrating on any of these stages during the creative process, it's easy to connect the dots and see the interrelatedness of the

## Recommended Reading

Several books exist on the topics of inner guides and on the nature of creativity. A few of my favorites include:

- The Courage to Create, Rollo May, Bantam Books, 1975
- A Kick in the Seat of the Pants: Using Your Explorer, Artist, Judge, & Warrior to be More Creative, Roger von Oech, Harper & Row, 1986
- Awakening the Heroes Within: Twelve Archetypes to Help Us Find Ourselves and Transform Our World, Carol S. Pearson, Harper Collins, 1991
- Leaping Poetry: An Idea with Poems and Translations, Robert Bly, Beacon Press, 1972 (see "The Three Brains" chapter)
- Art and Artist: Creative Urge and Personality Development, Otto Rank, Norton Books, 1989
- The Creative Process: Reflections on the Invention in the Arts and Sciences, Ed. Brewster Ghiselin, Mentor Books, 1952
- The King Within: Accessing the King in the Male Psyche, Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette, Robert Morrow Co., 1992

entire system.

As a teacher at Massachusetts College of Art and Design, I'm able to witness the growth of the creative process as it develops in my students. For this article, I've chosen three MassArt alums as prime examples of those who have successfully awakened their creativity and personal self-expression. The paintings of Melissa Stratton visually emote the internal intensity an enlivened creative process can generate. Miniature colored-paper sculptures serve Maria Palkon as both meditative and artistic pursuits. And by beginning each work with a poem, Louis "Pronzy" Perez is able to complement the essence of portraiture with his soundscape poetry.

Moore refers to this as "dancing the four quarters." A glorious, internal ballet is performed when all four creative forces work in unison to empower and illuminate your unique visions and your artistic gifts. John Roman is a freelance artist who's been teaching illustration at Boston's Massachusetts College of Art and Design since 1993. He is also the author of Simon & Schuster's *The Art of Illustrated Maps: A Complete Guide to Creative Mapmaking's History, Process and Inspiration* (2015). See his work at [johnromanillustration.com](http://johnromanillustration.com). ■



# 8

## WAYS TO GET MORE OUT OF YOUR EMAIL LIST BY JENN VIRSKUS

BUILD YOUR BRAND, DRIVE TRAFFIC TO YOUR WEBSITE AND SELL MORE ARTWORK



**Y**OU'VE BEEN DILIGENTLY working to build your email list — collecting cards at exhibitions and email addresses from past buyers and maybe you've even installed a “subscribe” button on your website that adds email addresses directly to your mailing list. Your list has grown from a few dozen to a few hundred or maybe even a few thousand subscribers. But now that you've got this curated list of colleagues, customers and fans, what do you do with it?

Cameron Schmitz (cameronschmitz.com) started prioritizing email marketing last year. Previously, she used it exclusively to send out invitations to upcoming shows. One of her most successful campaigns was a mid-summer studio sale to clear out older pieces from series she was no longer exhibiting. “I did a crazy discount — something like 75 percent off. Within a couple of hours, I had over \$3000 in sales,” she said. Schmitz now sends monthly emails to share new work, information about her workshops or her process, as well as new events. “I’m the perfect example of an artist who’s just starting out. I’m learning as I go, but at the same time, I do realize how valuable it is.” Many artists are hesitant to send too many emails for fear of adding to inbox clutter. This doesn’t mean you should send fewer emails; it means you must ensure each email you send contains something valuable to your subscribers. “People want to hear directly from the artist.”

I know that I’m my own best marketer,” Schmitz said. Whether you announce a studio sale, a periodic giveaway or discount, have an upcoming exhibition, or offer insight to your process, there are dozens of ways to use your email list to build your brand, drive traffic to your website and, ultimately, turn subscribers into buyers.



“I’VE FOUND IT’S BEEN A REALLY GREAT WAY TO COMMUNICATE TO PEOPLE ABOUT MY WORK.”

### BUILD YOUR BRAND WITH TEMPLATES

Sending regular emails to those who follow your work is a way to build your personal artwork brand. As

with any marketing tool, it’s essential to have a consistent look and feel. An email template is a digital letterhead so that rather than starting from scratch every time you want to send an email, you set up a handful of templates for different types of emails — when you’re ready to send, just drag and drop in a few new images, add some text and the appropriate website link.

San Francisco-based painter and graphic designer Jeffrey Nemeroff (jeffreynemeroff.com) has been working with MailChimp for the past four years. He’s set up three templates: One for sharing a single event, one for several events and one for sharing new work.

My templates have a simple, straightforward design. I do use more than one image, it can help me to know which pieces people respond to depending on how many clicks they get, but I don’t clutter it up,” he said. Most email platforms have a few blank template configurations so you don’t need to know a single line of code. Choose the layout you want, whether it’s one, two or three columns or a combination, drop your logo in the header, choose a few coordinating colors for the body and links, and use those basic settings for all your templates.

A good email template should contain your business logo, an attention-grabbing headline, a primary image, a sense of urgency or timeliness, content that provides value to the recipient and a call to action (CTA). Reinforce your brand by choosing colors and images that are consistent with

your website. Templates also take the guesswork out of deciding what to send. With a good template, you fill in the blanks.

### 2 SEND TEST EMAILS TO CATCH TYPOS

Part of building your brand is building your professionalism, and nothing will sabotage that effort faster than grammatical errors, broken links or missing essentials in your emails (or in your website copy). If you’re sending an email about a new post on your website, you want to be sure you’ve got the URL correct. Before you send an email to your email list, always send yourself a test copy and click on every link in the email and triple-check the spelling of every word. If you have a colleague or friend with a sharp eye for detail, send the test to that person as well. It’s harder to catch your own typos.

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3\*



### 3 DRIVE TRAFFIC TO YOUR WEBSITE

Ultimately, my email list is about selling work. But I figure any traffic to the site is on the road to doing that,” Nemeroff said. Regardless of the type of email he’s sending, Nemeroff doesn’t put too much information (including the price of artwork) in the body copy.

If they have all the information in the email, they won’t click through to the website. And if they do click through to the website, I’m hoping they’ll look further once they’re there,” he said.

When he’s sending an email about an upcoming exhibition, he puts the details in a blog post on his website and links the email to the post. If he’s sending an email about new work, he puts the name, medium and size of the piece in the email, but a potential buyer has to click to his website to find out how much it costs. That way, his website gets the SEO benefit of additional traffic even if the piece doesn’t sell right away.

“I TRACK EVERYTHING. I LOOK AT CAMPAIGN REPORTS, AND I ANALYZE ALL THE CLICK-THROUGH TO SEE WHICH CAMPAIGNS DID BETTER THAN OTHERS.”

~JEFFEREY NEMEROFF

### 4 SEND TARGETED EMAILS WITH SEGMENTATION

Scroll down your email list and you’ll likely notice names from several aspects of your art career: gallery owners, past buyers, former students and colleagues. Some people you’ll know personally; others you may not recognize. Email marketing is really time-consuming, but I’ve found it’s been a really great way to communicate to people about my work. Some of these people have followed my work for years, some are recent signups, some are former painting students of mine. That’s something I take into consideration. It’s a big mix, not just buyers and collectors,” Schmitz said.

Major email marketing platforms like MailChimp and Constant Contact allow you to automatically create segments or sub-groups of your primary email list using

a seemingly infinite number of factors — location, signup source, date added or any custom fields you include in your signup form. You can also manually create segments like artists, customers, students or galleries.

So rather than sending an email about a gallery opening in San Francisco to subscribers across the country (or around the world), you create a location-based segment of subscribers within a few hours’ drive of the San Francisco Bay Area. Then, you can let the people most likely to attend the show know about the event. Segmenting is also great for sending reminder emails. In the case of the gallery opening, you might send an email to your entire list two weeks out and then a day or two before the event, send a follow-up email to anyone who opened or clicked on the original email and anyone who lives in close proximity to the event location. The ability to send information only to the people who are likely to need it is a benefit for both you and your subscribers — you’ll likely see higher open rates and click-through rates because what you’re sending provides value for the recipient.

### 5 SEND A/B TESTS TO INCREASE OPENS

A common question when it comes to email marketing is, “When should I send my emails?” Unfortunately, there is no one-size-fits-all answer to this question. Some email marketing platforms like MailChimp have a scheduling feature that uses algorithms based on your past campaign activity and the activity of other accounts in your segment to determine the “best” time to send an email.

Another way is to send an A/B test — that is, send your email at two different times to a portion of your list and see which one performs better. Do that a few times, and you’ll have a decent idea of whether your subscribers prefer to receive your emails in the morning or evening, during the week or on the weekend.

I track everything. I look at campaign reports and I analyze all the click-throughs to see which campaigns did better than others,” Nemeroff said.

You can also test other aspects of the email. Some examples include: Are recipients more likely to open an email with a casual or a formal subject line? Will they click more on images or buttons? Do they respond to a lot of text or a little? Are your recipients more

likely to open the email if it’s from your name or your business’s name?

It’s a little more effort to send an A/B test, but the information you glean, even if your list is on the small side, is invaluable to your email marketing efforts long term.

### 6 SIMPLIFY WITH AUTO RESPONDERS

Most email marketing platforms allow you to set up emails that will automatically send depending on one or more variables: A discount to new subscribers, a “Still Interested?” message to people who haven’t opened or clicked say five or more campaigns or even a special gift or opportunity for subscribers who regularly open your emails. You could use an auto-responder to thank people who’ve recently made a purchase on your website with a small discount that invites them to purchase again. If you’ve got a virtual guestbook set up at a gallery opening (a great way to collect email addresses), you can use an auto-responder to send an email the next day to thank everyone who signs up for coming and invite them to check out more of your work on your website or follow you on social media.

### 7 RESEND CAMPAIGNS TO RE-ENGAGE

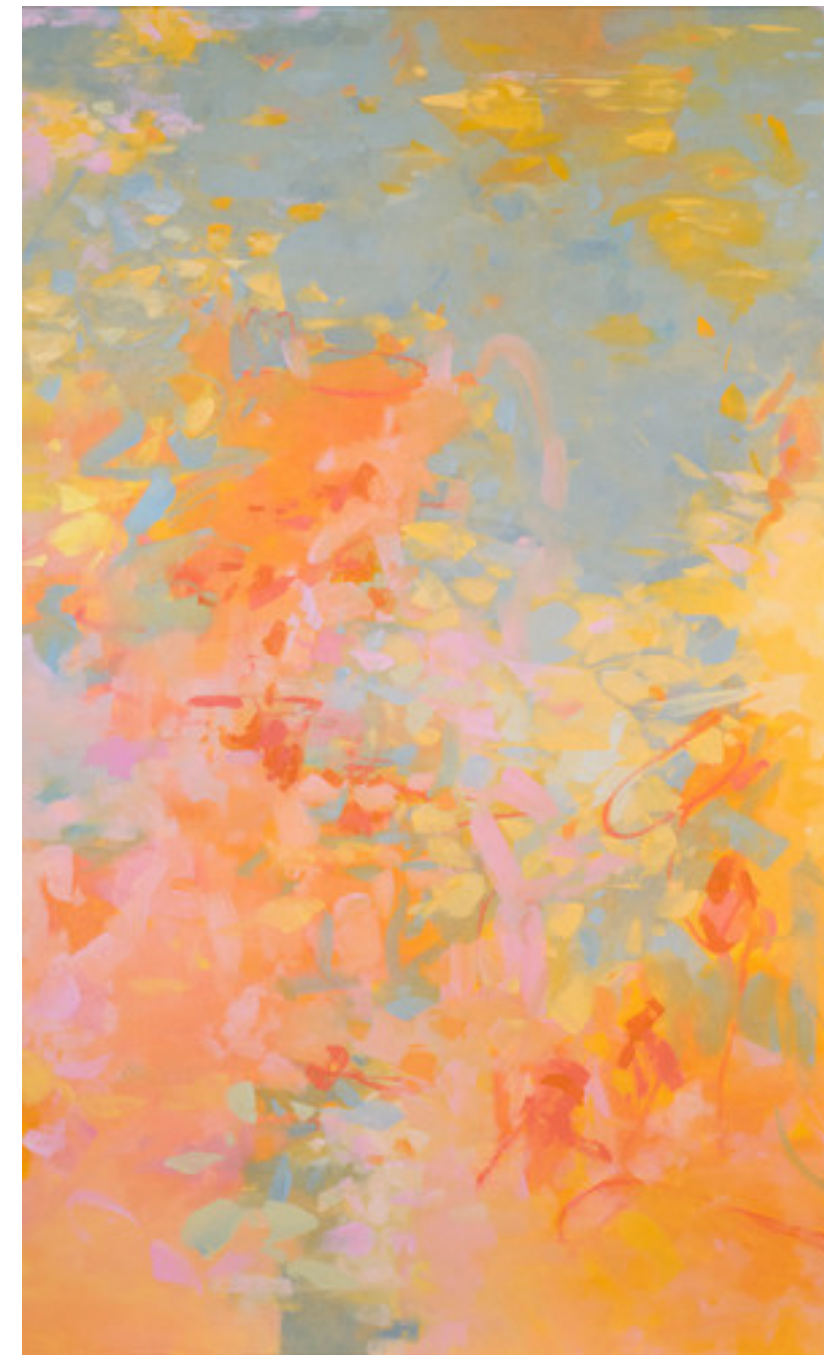
There are dozens of reasons someone might not open your email campaign: The subject line didn’t entice them; they were busy that day or maybe it just got lost in the shuffle. A quick and easy way to get a little more mileage out of a particular email campaign is to make a copy and resend it to subscribers who didn’t open the first email. In some cases (like a discount sent on Cyber Monday) you may want to replicate the email exactly. In other cases, you may want to tweak the subject line or sending time to reach more of your subscribers.

It’s good practice to try a few different approaches over several months and keep an eye on the analytics to get a sense of what works best for your list. Another way to re-engage subscribers is to offer a discount or bonus. I did a giveaway to the people on my mailing list only I feel like long term, the people on my mailing list are the people I want to reward,” Schmitz said. The giveaway helped her not only to get her long-time subscribers to open the email and drive more traffic to her website but to grow her

list as well. ■

### 8 RETARGET YOUR LIST ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Your email list is your most valuable marketing tool — but there are more ways to use it than just sending emails. Import your email list into Facebook (or Twitter) to create a “custom audience” that you can use for creating super-targeted ads. To do this, you’ll need a Facebook Page (not profile) — that could be your business or artists’ page — and an advertising account.







## DOES THE TITLE OF YOUR ARTWORK HELP OR HINDER YOUR MARKETING?

BY DANIEL GRANT

It's never clear what actually sells a work of art: It could be the strength of the image or the power of the sales pitch. Or perhaps the artist herself made a positive impression on the buyer, or some art advisor whispered that this artwork will increase significantly in value over the next several years. The tipping point might be any one of a dozen factors — even an artwork's title.



**“A title affords one an opportunity to establish a meaning that isn't necessarily evident in the work itself, and can add a complexity to the reading of the work.”**

Many artists do not want to consider a title, naming their creation's "Untitled" or, in the case of Jackson Pollock, Number 27, 1950, which referred only to the year in which he painted that particular work. Northampton, Massachusetts painter Scott Prior (scottpriorart.com), a prolific artist, noted that "it's hard to keep coming up with titles," calling that part of his work "an annoyance." The titles he comes up with tend to be explanatory — Popcorn Stand at the Beach or First Snow — and he occasionally throws in the name of a location when his paintings are being sold in a particular area, such as a Nantucket beach when he is exhibiting at a Nantucket art gallery or Muir Beach when the gallery is in northern California. That is his concession to the concept that titling is a form of marketing. Art buyers on the West Coast generally are less interested in hanging images of the East Coast in their homes.

Sometimes, however, specificity doesn't even matter. "If I don't identify the location, people assume that they know the location," he said. "I can do a painting of a lake in Massachusetts, and someone in Oregon thinks it's a lake near his house."

**PROS AND CONS OF TITLES**

There are benefits and drawbacks to titles. On the down side, they require an artist to find words to describe what he or she has already spent time describing by way of a two- or three-dimensional artwork, and a title may have the effect of limiting the meaning of the work. An example of this might be James McNeill Whistler's most famous painting, Portrait of the Artist's Mother, better known by the more popular title Whistler's Mother. The artist's original title, when he submitted the 1871 painting to the Royal Academy of in London for its 104th Exhibition, was Arrangement in Grey and Black, which reflected his belief that the work's subject was less important than the application and color of paint. However, both members of the Royal Academy and the British public were unhappy with a portrait described solely as an

"arrangement" of colors, wanting more of an explanatory title, and Whistler appended the more explanatory words to his original title just for this exhibition, although that name stuck and is how one usually refers to that painting today.

There are downsides to not using an easy-to-remember title, since "Untitled" doesn't bring any particular image to mind, and then there is the record-keeping problem. "Many times, when I was younger," sculptor Kiki Smith said, she named pieces "Untitled," and "I've been paying for it ever since, when I try to find a piece or remember what it was." Gallery owners who find themselves storing numerous works by an artist all called "Untitled" complain about the same thing. For that reason, a meaningful title strikes her as "extremely important for one's mental health and well-being. Besides that, a title affords one an opportunity to establish a connection with the work that isn't necessarily of the work itself, and can add a complexity to the reading of the work."

Still, even after a career spanning 30-plus years, coming up with titles rarely has been easy for her, and she has relied on dealers and her studio assistants for this. "Sometimes," she said, "we have ideas for a title without a work, so we make a list of them and save them for rainy days. Also, sometimes, we call up my assistant's father, as he is engaged in poetry and has many interesting words in his head." One of her dealers got her to change a title because it "was rather gloomy. It hadn't occurred to me." (She did not identify what that piece was originally called and what the title became.)

**FIND THE POETRY IN YOUR TITLES**

Poetic titles may be evocative; art critic Clement Greenberg devised poetic names (Lavender Mist, Cathedral or Alchemy) for some of Pollock's numbered and dated paintings to give viewers a handle on abstract works they might not otherwise understand. Sometimes, however, poetic titles can verge on something that suggests a Hallmark card. New York art dealer Renato Danese called Lavender Mist a "corny" title, although he understands why Greenberg preferred it to Number 1, 1950. Sculptor Ursula von Rydingsvard (ursulavonrydingsvard.net) rejects just numbering artworks, "treating them as though they're orphans." This German-born American sculptor with a Polish mother often titles her works with Polish names, such as Luba (grammar school) or Dumna (proud woman). There is perhaps a certain poetry in foreign words, and the works of Loveland, Colorado sculptor Dan Ostermiller





(danostermillencom) often have titles in Spanish because it sounds more romantic. It also will encourage people to ask about it." Noting that the right title can lead to a sale, he added that "I have a sculpture of a little saw-whet owl called Paleadorsito which is 'little fighter' in Spanish and people love that."

### IS A PICTURE WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS?

Painter Brian Rutenberg (brianrutenbergart.com) said that "it's hip to claim that your work will 'speak for itself,' but it won't. You have to help it." In his 2016 book, *Clear Seeing Place*, he noted that his titles come from reading poetry:

I choose words that don't influence the viewer but broaden their experience, such as *Buckle* or *Clover*. My titles may also refer to a dominant tonality, such as *Silver Favorites* and *Hemlock Lake*, or reflect my Southern origins as in *Saltwater* and *Camellia*. Many painters claim that a title limits the viewer and undermines the purity of the image. I disagree. The viewer needs limits, and no image is pure. Untitled suggests that the painting can be about anything, which is too democratic. Art is not a democracy but a dictatorship. A painter must take a clear, personal stance without telling the viewer what to see, only how to see it. Painting is open ended as long as the painter keeps one foot on the viewer's throat at all times.

As examples, he noted that his 2017 painting *Willow in a Windstorm* uses "sensory description to evoke two things we all have experienced, wind blowing through a tree," while another recent oil *Azalea* refers "to a dominant tonality, pale pink and brown, in order to suggest azalea season in South Carolina where I was born and raised."

Artists may not be thinking of titles as specifically related to marketing and sales, but they recognize what Greenberg understood, that what you call it is an entrance for viewers to gain some understanding of an otherwise foreign object. The title of Piet Mondrian's 1942-3 *Broadway Boogie-Woogie* offers the artist's sense of rhythmic movement on an otherwise still canvas; while Grant Wood's 1930 painting title *American Gothic* suggests a degree of satire where the image itself is ambiguous in its intent.

Sculptor Donald Lipski often has cited works by other artists versed in postwar art to see how an idea presented by one artist *Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue*" series of paintings from the late 1960s. "This is both an homage and a contextualization, he said, allowing those titles, such as his flag works from 1989-92, many of which are titled *Who*



*Afraid of Red, White & Blue*, referencing Barnett Newman's "who," sculptor Donald Lipski often has in his say be reimagined by another. His circular assemblage of buckets and broken glass, *Free Reef*, refers to "Carl Andre's styrofoam block piece, *Reef*. For me, the title gives the work associations it wouldn't otherwise have and adds a new importance to the empty space in the center." Danese called titles "a concession to the literal world, to people who feel the title places the work somewhere in their psychological sphere," and he regularly helps the artists he represents come up with something appropriate. He has worked with sculptor Richard Serra who occasionally has given his work politically charged titles, such as the 1990 lithograph *Fuck Helms*, from Harvey Gantt, referencing then North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms, who sought to abolish the National Endowment for the Arts, and African-American architect and Democratic politician Harvey Gantt, who

twice lost in races for the Senate to Helms. "People haven't shied away from Serra's work as a result. It's not the kiss of death." The process of naming an artwork may range from deeply considered to whimsical. Sculptor Rona Pondick (ronapondick.com) said that she may work on a specific piece for a period of years, and over that period of time, the sculpture may pick up one or more nicknames that may become its final title. Titles come late in the process for von Rydingsvard, and her studio assistants — who need some way of identifying what they have been working on for their time sheets — give her sculptures at least temporary names, and occasionally they have become the actual titles.

### TITLES ENGAGE THE VIEWER

Giving a title to a work of art is historically a relatively new concept, starting in the 18th century and picking up momentum in the 19th. All those "Madonna and Child"

paintings in museums around the world were given titles by museum curators, art historians or someone other than the artist. Leonardo da Vinci simply painted a portrait of the wife of a patron, leaving it up to others to call it *G. zoconda* or *Mona Lisa*. (Sometimes, tides are changed by curators as new research identifies a different possible interpretation.) These titles were explanatory, and many artists subsequently are content to follow in this tradition, naming their pieces to identify where or what something is, such as Henri Fantin-Latour's 1883 *Painting Potted Pansies* or Scott Prior's *Three Cows*. On the other hand, San Francisco artist Will Wilson (willwilsonart.com) claimed that the title of his painting *An Arrangement* adds meaning to this image of two men standing on opposite sides of a table arranging flowers, one pruning them while the other puts them in a vase. "For me, the painting is about the constant arrangements we make with ourselves on a moment-to-moment basis, trying to find balance." He added that titles "open up new meaning" to viewers, and many of them "find their own meaning. If they become emotionally involved, then that's a home run for any painter."

### TITLES AS THE THIRD LEG OF A STOOL

At times, a title may not be something separate from the artwork but become strongly associated with it, such as *Broadway Boogie-Woogie*. Or it might refer to something quite personal to the artist, such as Arshile Gorky's 1944 painting *How My Mother's Embroidered Apron Unfolds in My Life*, which invites an interested viewer to seek out additional information about the artist. What Gorky's intentions might have been in devising this and other titles are not known as he took his own life within four years of completing this painting, but the effect has been to add to the intrigue that the artwork itself aroused. A good title itself cannot sell a work of art that otherwise does not appeal to a viewer, but, when the appeal is there, the right title may add to its allure, providing a back story or different perspective or association builds an investment of time and interest on the part of the person looking at it. Without that type of investment, the investment of money is less apt to take place. ■