

# 12 Mistakes Every Artist Should Avoid In 2012

BY GARY T. KERR

## 1. Signing Your Art With Just Your Initials

Why? There are no famous artists that did so. And, when you sign a painting with your initials, you are secretly saying; "I'm not ready yet." There will be exceptions to this, but this is based on having photographed 10,000 paintings at our studio—a pretty good sample. Sign your paintings with your name consistently. Here are some excellent alternatives to just your initials; J. J. Smith, John J. Smith, John Smith, J. Smith. But not J.J.S.! Treat your signature the way companies treat their brands and logos. And don't use a Sharpie to sign your art!

## 2. Not Framing Your Art

Let's divide up the world here; Your art is either representational or non-representational. Non-representational art may look better as a clean, frameless presentation and may be your best choice for your framing aesthetic. Conversely, representational art should be presented in a proper frame—even if it is a minimalist, floater-type. Framing your art adds value and nicely framed art is less likely to have an interested buyer balk on the price. Frame your art, present it well in a gorgeous frame to maximize perceived value and communicate to the world 'You know what you are doing.'

## 3. Touching Up Or Altering Your Art After It Was Finished

Leave your painting alone once finished. You must be willing to let go of your art after it is done. Tinkering with a painting is irresistible to most artists, it takes great discipline to finish a piece and leave it alone. The fact is, no painting is ever completely finished. Being willing to let the last 3% go is what makes a great artists. Are you?

## 4. Using Art Height And Width Dimensions Interchangeably

In the world of art, you must always communicate image dimensions accurately with height stated first and width stated second. It is not interchangeable. Be sure to use this consistently everywhere; web, brochures, placards, and verbally. If you catch someone doing this in reverse, please correct them—nicely.

## 5. Discounting Your Art To Make A Sale

Lowering your prices to make a sale may seem like a smart move, but you are setting a precedent. You must establish a price and stick with it, or possibly raise it. Protect your past buyers by letting potential buyers know you will protect them by not discounting your art to make a sale. If you run into a lot of buyers who are price sensitive, offer a fine art print instead. Reserve your originals for people who **really** want original art and are willing to pay for it.

## 6. Using Cheap Or Low-end Artist Materials

Every artist has been tempted to save money on artist materials. Reconsider this habit for yourself. If you wish to be taken seriously, skip the canvas wrapped panels—those are for art students. Consider a quality stretched canvas or premium brand watercolor paper and avoid the cheap knockoff brands trying to save a few dollars. Good brushes are essential too and make a difference, but only if you take good care of them. Talented artists believe in their journey and quality art materials help you on that journey. You will be judged by the quality of your art materials. Quality art materials perform better, last longer, and put your art more in the collectible category. Sloppy, low end presentation of your art will confound your journey. Your art creates value and dollars will follow that value—but not if it looks like a homemade experiment.

## 7. Not Titling Your Art

Your art needs to be titled. This is a business of selling emotion and your title will emphasize the emotional connection of your art. An untitled piece may be found with non-representational art, but avoid it if possible. A good title confirms to the art buyer that this piece belongs in their home. Don't leave this critical step out of presenting your art professionally. Avoid tongue-in-cheek or kitsch titles. Observe how fine art is titled in museums and fine art galleries. Always keep accurate records of your titles and the year painted. Avoid using titles from movies or other cliché type of approaches.

## 8. Painting One-off Paintings

You are on a journey. Have a plan to paint 8 to 12 pieces minimum in a cohesive voice and style. Any artist can hit one or two home-runs, successful artists paint in a consistent voice and theme over time to build portfolios of images that prove they have arrived to prospective galleries and collectors. Don't be a one-hit wonder, paint a portfolio and the right doors will open for your art.

## 9. Painting In Multiple Voices And Styles

The best advice you will ever get is this; If I mix 10 of your images in with 90 other images from other artists and I can't pick out your 10, you will struggle to attract the attention of serious art dealers or collectors. Paint in a consistent voice and theme that tells us it's you and unmistakably you. If you paint all over the map, no one is going to find you.

## 10. Mishandling Your Art

Treat your art as something of value at all times. By respecting every painting you make, you are subconsciously leading to a sale if you perceive that your art has value. Treat it accordingly and the value will carry through to that sale. Even if the piece is not your best work, treat it with respect to train your mind on this issue. Never carry your art in a trash bag, the message to yourself could be catastrophic. Professional portfolio cases and proper packaging are worth the time and effort to avoid harming your art. When shipping your art, consider a quality float-box or custom crate to ensure worry-free arrival.

## 11. Displaying Art For Sale On The Floor

Where a painting is located for sale contributes to its perceived value. Always hang art, or place it on an easel and be sure it is properly lit for viewing. Art relegated to unimportant status will never help you or your sales. Take a look at the care galleries and museums put into hanging and lighting art properly.

## 12. Selling Your Art Without First Getting A Preservation-Grade Art Capture

As the son of an artist who had painted hundreds of oil paintings in the '70s and '80s that are all sold, I can assure you it is a huge loss to our family to not have even a photographic slide of any of those paintings. Don't let this happen to your family. Your art image may actually be worth many more times the amount of the sale of the original. You would not tear up a winning lottery ticket would you? Selling your art without a capture is the same thing. The copyright laws are on your side, but without a preservation-grade art capture, that copyright is worthless. Without a quality art capture, there will be no retrospective of you in the future—don't let that happen.

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