

# VANITY FAIR

Rihanna Reveals Title, Album Art for Long-Awaited Eighth Album

OCTOBER 8, 2015 9:24 AM

BY JOSH DUBOFF



Since she has become a near-unparalleled pop-cultural force, especially in the past few years, it is easy to forget that Rihanna has not actually released a proper album since 2012. After putting one out every fall, starting in 2005, for seven out of eight straight years (taking only 2008 off), she has taken her time since 2012's *Unapologetic*. Starting around last year, Rihanna's Navy—starving for new material—began to interpret any vague tweet or album-art-reminiscent Instagram as grounds for working themselves into a frenzy over the promise of #R8, the shorthand hashtag for referring to the album, the promise, the pop rainbow due on the pop horizon.

This year, she has released three songs (each accompanied with a music video): “FourFiveSeconds” (a collaboration with Kanye West and Paul McCartney) in January, “Bitch Better Have My Money” in March, and “American Oxygen” in April. But, this flurry of singles was not followed by a surprise album release or any sort of announcement—eventually, at some point over the summer, rumors abounded that Rihanna had scrapped the entire album and was starting over. The promise of #R8 seemed less and less certain with each passing carefree Instagram Rihanna posted.

But yesterday, October 7, marks the great turning point: the day #R8 transformed from hazy prospect into palpable reality. Rihanna hosted an event at Los Angeles's Mama gallery, where she debuted the art for the album, all of which was created by artist Roy Nachum (in total, seven original oil paintings by Nachum were featured). Rihanna had her guests don red eye masks as they perused the exhibit, and asked them to touch large-scale Braille poems which were embedded on top of the images. The cover art, which was not unveiled until Rihanna herself arrived, features the singer as a child, wearing a gold crown and holding a balloon, sheathed in red paint. (There is something very Kanye-esque about this aesthetic, no?) “I fell in love with [Nachum] because I felt like there was another spirit, there was another layer to the art. After we met, we talked about what I wanted visually, what would make me the happiest girl in the world,” Rihanna said.

The album is called *Anti*, which Rihanna confirmed on her Instagram account, posting a shot from the exhibit. “By continuing to follow her own instincts,” the explanation reads, “her work strives to make an impact by doing the very antithesis of what the public expects.”

Not every R8 mystery has been solved, however—no release date for *Anti* has been revealed.