

The Internet is ruining your future arts career



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Without a doubt, one of the Internet's greatest achievements—aside from porn—is the mass proliferation of art. With a couple of clicks and a Google image search, you can access the sum total of all human artistic creation, from classics like the Mona Lisa to recreations of ancient Mongol chanting. And if you like your art fresh, then the Internet is the place to find the latest and best that culture has to offer you.

The only problem is that, now, it's nearly impossible for artists to make a living from it.

It's the reality of supply and demand: when supply is high, prices go down. Right now, it seems everyone with a web camera is putting

something up on YouTube, anyone that can draw is making a comic, and people with even vague writing abilities are pumping out blogs like copulating rabbits.

Since posting things on the Internet is so cheap, and since programs like Photoshop make producing art so easy, anyone with a computer and some technical know-how can create impressive portfolio pieces without going into debt with student loans. And with so much out there, prices are going to remain near zero.

Lots of people thought—and still think—that the answer is advertising. A few 20-second product placements allow people to enjoy free programs and music on both the radio and television. Plus, advertisers even seem to be willing to buy ads on the wall space above urinals. But the very nature of the Internet is hostile to advertisers.

Cyberspace's anonymity, and the ability for its users to indefinitely customize their websites, utterly kills the

potential for advertising. Businesses want to know demographic and statistical information about a website before they'll begin to advertise on it—information that's impossible to gather accurately when it's status quo to lie and hide everything about yourself. The easy answer seemed to be to the pay-per-click system, where a website earns cash based on how many people click on the banner, but that's turned out to be ineffective. It's too easy to cheat to make it an effective method of advertising for a company.

At the same time, stealing and piracy is an overstated problem. Programs like iTunes have shown that people are still willing to pay for Internet goods, even if they don't have to. Meanwhile, the legal Jaws of Life are quickly closing in on seemingly legitimate services like YouTube and various Google programs, and eventually any intellectual property theft there will be stemmed.

As for less legitimate sources,

most people don't like downloading some sketchy program so they can watch low-quality rips of their favorite movies, and they definitely don't like talking to some über-nerd from the basement of damnation to get their art fix either.

If this trend continues, the option of being a professional artist will finally die. Art will be relegated to a hobby done by enthusiasts and as a labour of love, rather than a feasible career choice.

Credit cards are the Internet's currency of choice, but customers are still cautious of using them because of the fear of a hacker stealing it. And if you're a business, using credit

cards are a huge hassle because you have to constantly spend money to keep your security is up to date. Pay Pal seemed to be the answer for a while, but thanks to their notoriously customer service, consumers and businesses alike have grown weary of it.

Some entrepreneurial artists have managed to find innovative ways of using the Internet to advertise their other activities. The web comic Penny Arcade, for example, has created an entire expo, PAX, as well as a line of merchandise, to support themselves. But sadly, efforts like this are few and far between.

If this trend continues, the option of being a professional artist will finally die. Art will be relegated to a hobby done by enthusiasts and as a labour of love, rather than a feasible career choice. The Arts chant, about wanting fries with your degree—heard around campus as a self-defeating joke—could turn out to be painfully true.

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