

Thumbnail- The best art right now is on YouTube

A dude who turns political debates into musicals

A dude who sings protest songs in the woods

Other dudes who go where traditional news reporters are too afraid to go

A two and a half hour long cultural history of the United States in the 1990s

A several hours-long documentary of a dude attempting to travel the entirety of the River Thames from source to sea

Political pundits and politicians except as horror animations

If Wes Anderson was an ecologist

If Pedro from Napoleon Dynamite narrated terrarium progress

Dark, surreal comedy created to look as if it came out in 1992

Or a type of comedy so bizarre I don't even know how to describe it

The best art right now is on YouTube.

Ok...and to a lesser extent, TikTok and Spotify...but mostly YouTube....because that's where you can actually make a decent living with your art.

If you think the claim I just made is wack, let's back up a bit. Maybe we should answer the question...“What even IS art??” Well, “art” is a pretty difficult thing to define, but I've come up with a snazzy definition that hopefully resonates with you. However, in order to define “art” we must first define another difficult thing to define... “culture.”

Ok, let's try. Culture is what we all do, say, believe, and think about based on interacting with others. A group of people has a shared culture because they are constantly interacting with each other. Now, obviously today there are MANY different groups of people interacting with each other due to all humans being more connected now than ever before, but that doesn't change the definition of “culture” itself.

And so, here's my definition of art.

Art is any time we use our imagination to express something new that attempts to change the culture. Ok ok yeah. Art is subjective. What is considered a masterpiece to one person may be considered trash to the next. However, I argue that “good art” expresses something that we were all thinking about anyway but we weren't able to express before. In other words, good art shines a light on something that we always knew was there, but for so long was just always hanging out in the dark. “Bad art” doesn't do that. It's derivative. It expresses something none of us were thinking and never will. Or, it has no intention of changing the culture.

But again, that's just my bloody opinion. Art is subjective.

It's not easy to come up with good art. Unless you're someone like Mozart, who wrote his first song when he was just five years old, creating good art takes years of practice.¹ Artists almost always begin by copying other artists. Ain't no shame in that, man. We all need guidance.

¹ <https://www.mozartproject.org/prodigy-or-legend-the-story-of-mozarts-first-song/>

And so, in order to create good art, we need lots of time to practice, and thus it requires a lot of discipline. But often, we need a lot of MONEY to create good art. After all, if we want to create an epic space opera media franchise, that requires some resources, bucko.

But it's deeper than that. You see, we ALL are born artists. Every single gosh darn one of us. Including you watching this right now. Oh, you're just listening? I don't blame you. I just put stock footage up here, anyway. But yeah, so if we're all artists, why aren't we all creating good art? Mostly because we lack the two most important resources- time and money. If we have financial security, we are more likely to take chances on our art. If we are financially stable in general, we are more likely to give into our artistic impulses. And we often have more time-or at least we can MAKE the time- to become a better artist. And I think time is the more important resource.

Do you need an example? Ok, let me give you an example. Let's say you're a musician who is trying to write better songs. Well sure, you need money to buy musical instruments and equipment. But you mostly need TIME to get better at writing music. If you're a musician who's also working three jobs just to pay the bills, you're giving up a LOT of time that could be dedicated to improving your songwriting.

So that brings us back to the claim I made before:
The best art right now is originating on YouTube

I'm serious, punks. The most innovative art that's coming out today is generally not being found at Warner, Sony, or Universal. It's not found on Fox, CBS, NBC, or ABC. It's certainly not on Disney. Not even Pixar. It's not on Netflix, not on Amazon Prime Video, Hulu, Paramount, Max, or Apple TV. Ok maybe a bit on Apple TV. The most innovative art is generally not found in Hollywood or Bollywood or Dollywood. Sorry, Dolly.

Nah man, the most innovative art today is found on the very platform you are watching right now. I know some of you are cringing out right now, but hear me out.

(ad)

Uh but first this video is sponsored by Raycon. I've been using Raycon Everyday Earbuds for several years now. But their latest model is better than ever, with a 32-hour battery life and multipoint connectivity...which means you can pair with two devices at once! Raycon's Everyday Earbuds have excellent noise cancellation. They quickly charge. They're ergonomic. And they start at just half the price as other premium audio brands with similar features. I especially enjoy watching YOUTUBE VIDEOS ON MY PHONE with them. So try them out yourself. Go to BUY RAYCON dot com slash tbgo to get 20% off the best-selling Everyday Earbuds. Brought to you by Raycon.

Ok, so here's why YouTube is generally where the best art is right now.

First of all, YouTube directly pays artists. And so does TikTok and Spotify, yeah yeah yeah, but not like YouTube does. YouTube, by far, is more generous to its creators than any other mainstream platform I've found.

Through its Partner Program, YouTube pays creators 55% of net revenues from ads displayed or streamed on their videos. For Shorts, YouTube pays 45% of the revenue reserved to them based on their share of views from a pool of money given to all creators. It pays creators 70% of net revenues from channel memberships and other ways viewers are just straight up looking for ways to donate.² There are product affiliate links to earn additional income. Between 2021 and 2023, YouTube paid out more than \$70 billion to creators- that's way more than any other platform.³ Not only that, YouTubers often get additional funding through sponsorships, selling their own products, and donation sites like Patreon. Yes, I'm a full-time YouTuber and that sponsor you saw earlier is helping me pay the bills this month. That doesn't mean I make good art, by the way.

YouTube has more than 2.6 billion active users, and that number only continues to grow. There are more than 65 million people who post their stuff on YouTube.⁴ While we don't have exact numbers, according to my own research I estimate that at least between five to ten million people are regularly making money from ad revenue on their videos on the platform. According to a report by Linktree, 12% of YouTubers make at least \$50,000 a year from ad revenue.⁵ Crunching the numbers, I estimate that's now probably at least one million people. That means there's probably at least one million people on this very platform we call YouTube making videos full-time. That's a million people who are essentially their own bosses. Sure, they have to make their audiences happy, but their audiences often reward them for their creativity because, as it turns out, we humans love good art.

In fact, audiences are so happy with creators that MANY creators no longer have to rely on ad revenue anymore. Their patrons donate enough to them to a point where artists can take their time to better craft their art.

One of the biggest reasons why art is thriving on YouTube right now is because it seems to be one of the last few places where we get celebrated for being ourselves. On here, authenticity rules. It seems to matter more than anything else. And since artificial intelligence is taking over the internet, authenticity arguably means even more today than it ever has before. And because authenticity is rewarded on YouTube, it's easier there to experiment and try new things. After all, it's because of their authenticity that YouTubers have such diehard and loyal fanbases.

Now, things aren't all biscuits and gravy. YouTube has a habit of demonetizing content that it fears will scare away advertisers, even if that content is educational. It seems creators with

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<https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/72902?hl=en#zippy=%2Chow-do-i-earn-revenue%2Cwhats-my-revenue-share>

³ https://www.youtube.com/intl/en_us/creators/partner-program/

⁴ <https://www.demandsage.com/youtube-creator-statistics/>

⁵ https://techcrunch.com/2022/04/20/linktree-creator-economy-report-research/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

fewer subscribers are especially vulnerable to having their videos demonetized. Not only that, creators often feel pressured to keep pumping out content in order to remain relevant and better grow their channel. Some YouTubers have complained that releasing sporadically hurts any momentum they attempt to build up for channel growth. This pressure to constantly release new content...to essentially become content machines...leads to burnout and a loss of artistic integrity and growth. Not only that, there remains the constant threat of “audience capture,” in which artists become captured by their audience, almost as if they are held hostage by them. Sure, it starts out as an influencer just wanting to create more content their audience wants, but it ultimately turns into a creator abandoning their whole identity and replacing it with one entirely made for their audience.⁶ Its algorithms aren’t perfect. One study found that YouTube often recommends culture war videos since they tend to create more high arousal emotions.⁷

Regardless, nearly EVERY media organization deals with these issues. No matter where you release your art, there’s seemingly always the threat of censorship...there’s always the threat of the platform or audience or even the artists themselves sacrificing artistic integrity in order to have wider appeal. Since so many things are demanding our attention these days, that means stuff that creates high arousal emotions tends to break through and go viral.

But nah Gregory. Despite all the problems, YouTube is one of the last few remaining places where the counterculture can thrive. There’s a reason why young people, in particular, are drawn to it. It’s a haven for rebels. A sanctuary for the weird...for the ones who push the envelope. The last place to create entirely new genres, for crying out loud. Like a genre of sneaking into college football stadiums. Like a genre of using guide books from the past today as a sneaky way to teach history. Opening up old food and eating it. Trying weird-flavored stuff. Stealth camping. Drivelapse. Ridiculous inventions. Bedroom satire. Doctor comedy. YouTube Poop. No context. Rick Astley meme stories. Hornet nest removal. Interviews that have to be whispered because they’re in the library.

What’s weird is that YouTubers don’t often even think of themselves as “artists.” They’re more likely to think of themselves as “content creators” or “influencers.” But make no mistake. They are artists. They are using their imaginations to express things that we were all thinking about anyway but weren’t quite able to express before. And the great art coming out on YouTube today will be remembered much longer than the mediocre crap coming out anywhere else. Do not take this platform for granted. It could be gone, just like-

Sources/further reading:

<https://influencermarketinghub.com/creator-economy-stats>

https://www.youtube.com/intl/en_us/creators/partner-program/

⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XX2RpY_dj9Y

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<https://thehill.com/policy/technology/4727588-research-finds-pattern-of-youtube-recommending-right-leaning-christian-videos/>

YouTube channels that release good art:

<https://www.youtube.com/@CaptainDisillusion>
<https://www.youtube.com/@EpicSpaceman>
<https://www.youtube.com/@JoshJohnsonComedy>
<https://www.youtube.com/@HorsesOnYT>
https://www.youtube.com/@cool_cammy
<https://www.youtube.com/@AamonAnimations>
<https://www.youtube.com/@skycorphomevideo>
<https://www.youtube.com/@HomemadeEcosystems>
<https://www.youtube.com/@hbombguy>
<https://www.youtube.com/@oliviasquizzle>
<https://www.youtube.com/@rmbrown5736>
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<https://www.youtube.com/@AshleyEmbers>
<https://www.youtube.com/@WesWherever>
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<https://www.youtube.com/@BrunoPisaniAdventure>
<https://www.youtube.com/@simonegiertz>
<https://www.youtube.com/@PeterSantenello>
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