

## Disclaimer

Growing a following, likes, internet stats, and the like, will not guarantee you happiness. There are many ways to gain an audience and social media is just one of many. This document only reflects one person's perspective of growing an audience on Twitter. I've tried Tumblr a bit, was mostly on dA from 2008-2015 as a quiet hermit, and I no longer update my instagram. Your experience may vary.

### **In case this document gets spread elsewhere:**

I'm Cheryl Young, freelance background artist and @cysketch on Twitter :3c

If this information is of help to you, feel free to leave a tip on my [ko-fi!](#)

Also big thank you to the all kind people who helped me proofread/edit this doc while I was making it! You guys are the best \o/

## My Story

I started more actively posting to Twitter around 2017, after I graduated from art school. My first big jump in followers grew mid 2018 thanks to my first viral post of my drink series and by the end of the year I'd reached 20k. 2019 I was less active due to studio work, but got to 40k by the end, and 2020 uh, it's gone places and it's very humbling X'D

Starting out, I learned from the success of my peers in college and my professor's advice that fanart helps get attention to your work, if you post both that and original pieces. I have very little interest in fanart (I realised after trying a few times) and I reasoned that at this point, I just had to become the biggest fan of my own work, or I would never have the drive to keep making work and posting to the internet. At that point in time, I had started freelancing with Minecraft server art as a way to gain income. I was pretty satisfied with the work because I was:

- a) Paid to get better at perspective/composition/colours
- b) Got experience working for clients
- c) Got better at drawing character poses with foreshortening

I didn't want to do minecraft server work as my main source of income forever though.

So then came the challenge of finding the one thing I could draw over and over for myself without getting bored, and when I made the drink series illustration, it was literally an epiphany that I was basically doing what I loved doing as a child, but in drawing form - making environments for hamsters to live in. You know where it went from there.

In a way, drawing more environments helped me also get over changing my drawing style. I've gone from 1px clean brush line weight mastery into thick deadline (consistent line width) drawing. The brush I use for everything now is combining my experience of drawing traditionally and digital to make the process faster for myself since I was finishing pieces faster on paper.

I changed my drawing style for the sake of my physical and mental health, as I knew my old style would take me too long to draw and make every single line look clean, and I needed to make something look good no matter what I drew with it so I would always be happy with the result. It no longer mattered to me as much what I drew, because the act of drawing became so much easier to do for me, and my production rate increased significantly as I could complete more pieces to post to social media.

Nowadays I just think of something, draw it, finish, then throw it online and being able to do that is so satisfying. Social media to me is like a digital dumping ground of all the pieces and ideas I draw for fun!

## Fanart vs Original Art

I had two posts at 20k likes, so I can definitively say that fanart will get you more likes, but original art gets you more followers. As a background artist, I've also noticed that I get a lot less people telling me to draw certain characters which I see a lot of character artists getting subjected to. I think this falls into the topic of the kind of subject matter you show on social media. Some artists separate their fanart account from their professional one for that reason, to keep their interests separate. Personally I do both on the same one because it's just easier for me. Just post what you like and roll with it.

## How I grew my audience

Well like I said, I just became the biggest fan of my own work XD No one will give a shit about it more than I will. I learned that I wasn't very comfortable talking about wanting to do certain projects and announcing them because I was afraid of not falling through with the project commitment in the end. Some projects didn't finish, but they were great learning experiences to see how to make things easier for myself. When I decide to commit to a project, I tend to post wip threads because it just helps keep my sanity and part of me is like IF I'M GOING THROUGH THIS HELL, I'M GOING TO DRAG YOU ALL WITH ME HAHHAHA and it's a fun journey ✨

I think as long as you're invested in what you're doing, you're likely to attract like minded people as you go, and that's a wonderful thing. Sometimes I don't have the energy to respond to comments and that's just how it is. You're not being paid to be on social media after all, so look after yourself first and foremost.

At the very least, I think being able to proudly say that I draw hamsters in backgrounds whenever I get asked what I'm doing is very fun XD I genuinely enjoy the challenge of drawing environments so I just like showing parts of it online as I go.

When presenting your work, while you may sometimes have negative thoughts about it, try to avoid posting about it on social media and try to present your work objectively instead e.g. "I

struggled with colouring this piece and drawing x, but overall I'm proud of the composition and my progress!"

## Networking/Community

This is something that happens organically over a long period of time. Sometimes you vibe with other people, sometimes you don't, and that's it. Personally I don't actually comment that much on other people's posts because most of the time I can't think of something to say X'D but I will if I find a connection I can talk about. If that happens to be good ol Egg Benedict from DGS then so be it.

Much like how you can attract like minded people with the things you post on your page, you can interact with others within fandoms and interests. Zines are a great way to find friends and projects to do. While having a business connection is valid, I think the art community values friendship and respect for each other as fellow human beings. In short - **Don't be an ass**. Art improvement is a long term investment, and so are relationships.

## When you dun goofed

As we are entering an ever growing global population of people being online, learning about cultural and personal differences as well as navigating that space can get very hectic. For example, artists from more conservative cultures may take what you say literally and get upset over the nature of what's said that would be perceived as playful rudeness on the commenter's end, or you misgender someone. Try not to be memey if you know the artist doesn't vibe with that kind of thing. Acknowledge what you've done, apologise, and make action towards doing better next time. Learn to communicate and understand the other side's point of view first before putting your biases in.

## Consent

Reference is an important part to growing your visual library as an artist, and social media is a great place to gain inspiration and ideas for projects. This is something not normalised enough, but ask for permission to use artist's/ photographer's /3D modellers pieces as reference if able. If there's no answer/a rejection - don't use it, or make sure your final piece is more than 50% different from the original. I feel this is a better way to respect the original artist's vision and work they put into creating the piece, and you'd be better off learning how to make your own hybrid remix of your influences. Don't just use individual artists as inspo - learn to expand your sphere of influence and learn from many more artists alike. There's so much more variety and cool things out there that can shape your learning and craft.

Goes without saying, but it's better to RT a piece by an artist rather than reposting as well.

## The Business Angle

As my income derives from people finding my work on social media, I had to find a way to comfortably continue making new pieces to improve my portfolio. If I look at what I'm doing from an external observation's pov, I'm sharing the process of my pieces, interacting with the community as I respond to comments and other people's posts. I'm consistently posting new work to Twitter to keep my work in people's eyes. Social media growth to me is a side effect of my continued effort to improve and share my work. I make each piece to roughly the same level of polish and organise my best pieces into my portfolio.

If you're looking to get work as an artist, a portfolio with clear organised categorisations of the types of work you provide is important for both clarity, and for the ease of those in the position of hiring you to see the body of work you're capable of producing in one place. When I don't have any client work, I make new pieces and post to social media, updating my portfolio as I go.

There are plenty of people who have jobs in the art industry that have no social media presence at all. It's your responsibility to make better work, update your portfolio, and continue to apply for job openings when they open. Look at the portfolios of existing artists in industry with jobs you want and make similar work to what's expected in production.

Keep a pinned post with 4 of your best pieces with **clear links** to your portfolio, contacts, etc. Be clear in what kind of work you're offering to potential clients and recruiters.

## Luck

*"Luck is when Opportunity meets Preparation plus Action"* - Croix Sather

Luck is an undeniable factor in social media for getting attention/jobs/etc. Proactively posting leads to increased chances in opportunities, then when it comes, you'll be ready for it. But until then, you have to sharpen your blade and continue to work at it til it's within your grasp.

## Managing your relationship with Social Media

### Stats

Relying on likes, followers, numbers - is putting your fate and expectation in the hands of other people, so it's better to just focus on what you're capable of doing for yourself on your own terms. It's nice that others are validating your work and efforts, but trying to aim for that for EVERY single post to give you something in return is very draining.

It's nice, but at the end of the day it's just a number on a screen. Just be aware of that ^^

## You are not paid to be on here

If social media gets overwhelming, step away from the platform, delete the app off your phone, distance yourself away or talk to people you trust (or a therapist) about your worries. You are responsible for your own experience on a public platform.

On the same note, it's completely fine if you don't join in on an art hashtag or trend going on. You're literally not missing out on anything, trust me. There are so many different projects and events going on, that if you stretch yourself thin and try to meet them all, you may end up running yourself dry and burned out. Look after yourself.

Personally I use [Twitter Demetricator](#) for google chrome which turns off all the number stats and it's helped my mental health significantly since I have to be on Twitter for work reasons. It's also totally fine to mute a post and go back later to check (accidental viral post). Same goes for retweets where people forget to untag you. Muting words is also a feature if certain topics get overwhelming for you as well!

## When to post

I just put this in here because I feel like that's something a lot of people want to know, and I just say it doesn't matter XD I live in the opposite timezone to a big bulk of my audience and I'm just going to post whenever I feel like it haha. I can always just RT it later anyway. Personally I just do 2-3 times with at least 6-12 hour intervals in between, but that's just me. Sometimes I go back a few days later and share it again. I usually post around 7-9pm GMT+8 if it's a piece I care about, but usually it just so happens that I finish drawing at that time. Some artists RT a lot of their older pieces when they don't have any new work to show.

Remember that not all the work you make *has* to be posted on social media. You can always just draw for yourself in private. Creating work should not become an obligation/chore.

## The Grind

This is going back to the numbers game again, but it's in relation to the kind of art and work that you post.

Making art and posting to social media is like playing an MMORPG. Your battles (posts) may vary depending on what your current skill level is, and the loot drops (likes/follows) will be different every time. Sometimes you gotta just grind away at the slimes, sometimes you catch a rare shiny pokemon (viral post). Since everyone has their own special abilities, some may level up faster and gain fancy items, and others may take a while longer to get there. But much like how an MMORPG is a game, you can always put it down and take a break. The grind is not constant, stable, nor will it ever give you what you expect, and that's just how it is. So look after yourself, your friends, and focus on the things that make you happy/the journey worthwhile.

Numbers will not guarantee your happiness.

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To stress again, this is my (one person's) experience of using Twitter as my main social media platform. Everyone's experiences will vary.

Good luck :D