

Catbug's 5 rules for success:

RULE #1: Take it easy.

The greatest idea has already been had. Someone already put sunglasses on a dog. The man who first did it lived as a God until the day he died, now he's gone and his children don't pay taxes. Their money's no good where they live, all their meals are comped and that's the way it should be. But this is not your fate. The best you can do is iterate and remix other people's good ideas. Put sunglasses on a basketball. Put a hat on a dog, stuff like that.

We live within increasingly shrinking concentric rings of cultural nostalgia. The best you can hope for as a creator is to take the pre-existing codes of past genres, artists, modes etc. and stamp some thin veneer of novelty on them. A little twist goes a long way. Be careful not to stray too far or you risk isolating the subculture your success depends upon. And don't forget, sometimes certain eras, styles or trends of the past will have a wave of resurgent popularity. In which case you can forego any twist or remixing altogether, directly parroting past art while riding that wave towards acclaim.

RULE #2: Be professional.

Remember that art is a service and when creating you're responsible to those you're providing that service to. The needs of the audience supersede the needs of the artist. So, as an artist you should always be asking yourself: do I think people will like what I'm making? Does this have an audience? Is this marketable?

It's important to avoid the selfish instincts of creativity, which often tip towards self-exploration, experimentation and indulgence. Instead, remember to selflessly seek to reflect the tastes and interests of an undefined mass of strangers. This doesn't mean your art shouldn't have a voice or a point of view, but you should always strive to project a voice people recognize or present a point of view you think others share. Casting a wide net is the best way to ensure you're delivering the work your audience deserves.

Similarly, stating that your art speaks for a cause, a politic, a community, a culture or even embodies something as lofty as "Truth", "Beauty" and other metaphysical concepts is a good way to keep your work grounded. Remember that it's selfish for your art to be only for, or about yourself. Instead, check your ego at the door and proclaim yourself and the things you create to be vessels and manifestations of transcendent values.

RULE #3: Be online.

These days it's popular to be critical of the internet. We all know the kind of negativity I'm talking about. People talk about doom scrolling, widespread apathy, degradation of attention spans, the shallowness of social media and so on. There's no shortage of haters out there. But whether the haters like it or not, the internet is at the centre of culture. Which means that the artists who best adapt, reflect and conform to the "shallow and degraded" values of the internet are the artists most likely to succeed.

This doesn't mean you necessarily need to adopt an "internet-y" aesthetic to be successful (although you probably should). You can hold whatever values around aesthetics, lifestyle etc. you want and still post about it. But definitely post about it. How else can you responsibly advocate for your values unless you're representing them in posts? How else can you advocate for your own art? There isn't a better way. And besides, there's no reason to believe doing so in any way affects or reflects upon the art you create or how it's consumed. Sure, we've all heard about an alleged connection between medium and message, but the guy who came up with that was Canadian. And he's dead. So what the hell does he know about anything.

When people look back at this time, they'll recognize that the most online artists were the most successful. And there's nothing wrong with that. After all, posting itself is kind of an art if you think about it.

RULE #4: Respect success.

It's important to always pay attention to whoever's already getting the most attention. This is not only how you stay in touch with the zeitgeist, it's also a surefire way to find the best art out there. Cream rises to the top as they say. So if you want good art, look no further than the things being placed directly in front of you by someone else.

Even if you dislike the most talked about culture of the moment, it's important to consume it so you can participate in "the conversation". "The conversation" is always thrilling, always important. And by participating, you'll get a better sense of how to turn your art into something people can casually discuss with their colleagues. You'll unlock essential tips and tricks that can guide you towards increasing popularity. Which is the same thing as success. This is an important point to emphasize: a popular work is by definition a successful work.

And this is the standard you should base all your artistic decisions on. Don't overthink it. Don't base decisions on the nature of the work itself. Instead, look outside of the work and outside of yourself for answers. It's all well and good to say trust your intuition, but unless your intuition has brought you a profitable artistic career, it's not all that worth listening to is it?

RULE #5: Start a podcast.

