



Your “Song of the Summer” Sucks: The downfall of modern art

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Guys, I think I just wrote the article of the summer.

Kidding. But how many times have you scrolled across TikTok “indie artists” claiming the title “song of the summer,” while near-identical melodies with lackluster lyrics blare in the background? The internet is overwhelmed with constant releases of half-baked singles, drawings and novellas for profit and fame. You’ve seen the “song of the summer” advertising format beat to death, but were any of the songs memorable whatsoever? What happened to taking time to find a unique artistic voice and create something that makes a statement?

In my recent meditations on the present state of art, I’ve noted two issues: a value of quantity over quality and a pandering to palatability over genuine artistry.

With the rise of short-form social media platforms such as TikTok, attention spans have decreased significantly. Our brains have become rewired for instant gratification: Netflix drops entire seasons of TV shows at once; artists release albums on yearly timelines. We’ve become insatiable: fast fashion, fast food and now fast media. We’re not merely accustomed to slop media, we (falsely) believe we’re satisfied by it.

Social media’s impact isn’t merely limited to consumers; it extends to artists themselves. Audiences feel entitled to consistent new releases of media, and artists feel the pressure to keep up. To create so much in such short periods of time means less time to refine and sit with one’s work.

Furthermore, creating and publicizing art has become infinitely more accessible in our digital age. Anyone can self-publish books, produce entire albums in their bedrooms, or post paintings for the world to see. Social media has catapulted authentic artists like Chappell Roan into stardom, and it would be an oversight not to acknowledge the benefits it can bring to those with genuine passion for their craft. The problem, rather, comes from the oversaturation of new “artists” ripping off the same singers and authors in an attempt to grab their fifteen minutes of fame. Their content comes out of a hunger to be seen, rather than to create.

By now, artists have learned that the masses accept dumbed-down content. BookTok, once a virtual forum to discuss classic

and modern literature alike, has become supersaturated with up-and-coming “authors” mashing together popular tropes instead of creating a story or a statement. It’s become less about making art that speaks to oneself as an artist and to a target audience and more of analytics – how many viewers/readers/streams can you get? Talented artists are losing out to good businesspeople. In simple terms, art doesn’t have to be good for the masses to consume it anymore, so what’s the point in putting in as much effort?

Case in point: we’ve all (unfortunately) had time to sit with Taylor Swift’s latest album, *The Life of a Showgirl*. Pop princess Swift has taken to releasing full albums less than a year apart, and quite frankly, the quality is laughable. As a former diehard folklore and evermore fan, I can’t even stomach her latest releases because they lack intention, passion, and anything closely resembling a statement.

So, what’s the solution to slop art? First, a quick philosophy lesson:

In philosopher Martin Heidegger’s *Discourse on Thinking*, he establishes two schools of thought: calculative thinking and meditative thinking. Calculative thinking is unconscious, computing “more economical possibilities. . . rac[ing] from one prospect to the next” (Heidegger). In this case, calculative thinking is making art for a profit, usually categorized by the reappearance of formulaic tropes that have proven to do well with the general public. Meditative thinking, on the other hand, is “above” our typical step-by-step formula of thought. It is at once myopic and overarching, focusing on minor details and the big picture simultaneously. This is the kind of thinking that produces masterpieces. While Heidegger’s political views are frankly disgusting, his approach to thought is worth some consideration. Since meditative thinking is increasingly difficult due to shortened attention spans and a penchant for instant gratification, it’s increasingly rare and we’re seeing less quality art.

I believe that a return to meditative thinking can lead to a renaissance of genuine art. Logging off and taking time to sit with your own thoughts unlocks a wealth of creativity. It sounds silly, but I’ve gotten my best ideas not from scrolling for inspiration but from staring out a window and letting my mind wander. Meditative thinking is an innate ability, it just takes effort to tap into. As a child, you probably drew pictures or made up dance



ILLUSTRATION BY COLBI LORANGER, ASSOCIATE MANAGING EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

routines or created short films purely for fun. Making art is as simple as returning to that state of mind.

Note that by “good art,” I’m not demanding everyone to create the Mona Lisa. “Good art” can be a campy short film, a literary masterpiece, a one-minute orchestral composition, whatever! For art to be good, it merely has to come from a place of genuine passion and have something to say. I am of the strong belief that now more than ever, we need authentic music, literature, visual art and more that make statements, not slop.

So, if you’re passionate about your art, make sure it feels like you. Put it out there or don’t, just make art for art’s sake! Even if (especially if) it’s weird or “unpalatable” or niche. Authenticity is all you need.

