

When It's Toxic to Share on Social Media

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It isn't like me. I've found myself discarding ideas for my Make Something Every Week project because they didn't come to fruition quickly.

Yet normally I'm very patient.

If you've been following my social media streams recently, you'd be forgiven for thinking I'd abandoned this project altogether. I don't seem to have made anything.

But the truth is somewhat different.

For weeks, I've made *something* every week, but those somethings have been messy, scruffy, prototypes that still need more adapting before they'll suit my needs.

They haven't reached the stage of being worth showing.

And therein lies the problem.

I've been feeling that I *ought* to share these ideas because part of the motivation behind my MSEW project is to share my work more regularly on social media.

And we're supposed to share everything all the time, aren't we? The social media gurus tell us that it's the way to grow our fanbase, and ultimately our business, in this interconnected world.

Well yes. And no.

Sharing our art is a delicate thing.

I've talked before about the toxicity of too much time looking at other people's work online.

But the other side of the coin is that it can also be dangerous to share your work if it's the wrong time or the wrong audience.

The Wrong Audience to Share With

I bet you've had this experience at least once. You excitedly share your latest masterpiece with a family member. Instead of an enthusiastic response they give you that look that says it's long past the time you got a 'real' job.

Or you take your freshly penned poem to the local writers group only to your peers decimate your analogies, your metre, and even the title for heavens sake!

These are classic examples of the wrong audience.

The Wrong Time to Share

But getting the timing right for sharing is, if anything, even more crucial.

The right time means that our ideas are fully incubated.

Incubation is a very precious part of our creative process. It's the time when we internalise the exterior stimulation and knowledge we've gathered, and let it stew in the juices of our subconscious.

This is our personal alchemy.

When our idea eventually emerges it will no longer be a disparate assortment of gathered stimuli, but instead will speak with our unique creative voice.

Because this part of our creative process is so delicate and so important, sharing our ideas before they're fully formed can be seriously damaging.

The wrong reaction can make us profoundly doubt what we're doing, and either throw us off track, or stall us completely.

It's like baking a cake.

Imagine that in your rush to show your friends the marvellous new cake you're baking, you pull it out of the oven in order to photograph it and post it on Facebook.

It would be disastrous!

Firstly the cake wouldn't look very appealing at this point. In fact it won't look like a cake. It will just look like a gooey mixture in a tin. If you've added fruit it will even have lumps in. Definitely not mouth-watering.

Not likely to get many thumbs up.

But secondly, and most importantly, opening the oven door at this point will mean that your cake won't rise. You've ruined the delicate process of baking (incubating) your cake.

So in your rush to get positive feedback from your friends, you've ruined the cake and you haven't got any 'Likes'.

Those 'somethings' I've been making over the last few weeks have been the equivalent of the gooey cake mixture in the tin. Iterations of ideas I'm playing with that aren't fully baked yet.

No wonder I didn't want to share them.

I normally guard my incubation process like a she-tiger with her cubs. Don't look! Don't TOUCH!

So when yet another week had gone by and I still had nothing I wanted to share on social media, I stepped back and reconnected with my original objectives for the project.

Why *am* I making something every week?

“I’m focussing on developing ideas for products that I could sell at an accessible price point to complement my very labour-intensive Artist’s Books. Because of this, each ‘something’ is really a prototype and doesn’t have to be a saleable piece of work. I just have to finish it in a week. So there can be lots of iterations of an idea, which I gradually refine over the year. I also recognise that - if a piece calls to me - I might go on to develop it as a finished artwork in its own right.”

(What I Hope to Learn from Making Something Every Week)

So I decided to liberate myself from needing to post MSEW’s when they’re not really post-worthy. It’s more important to allow my incubation process the time it needs.

If that means 10 iterations of what to the casual observer might look the same design, then so be it.

I know I’ll get where I need to be in the end.

And then I’ll post something pretty on Instagram.

Who knows, I might even get some likes.

Have you had toxic sharing experiences?

- What did you learn from them?
 - How do you avoid repeating the same mistake?
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