

A Warning Letter to All Writers - Do not let your *art* devolve into content

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Dear Writer,

I get it. It's tough out there. On my best days, I adore what I do even if it only matters to five people.

On my worst days, I *despise* that my treasured medium has been taken around the corner and pimped out to entrepreneurs to whom “writing” is merely a synonym for “content.”

Content gets traffic, traffic gets sales, and a sale gets money. My mind accepts this concept even while my soul violently rejects it.

Make no mistake, we are living in a world where you can spend *hours* perfecting a post, pushing your idea through three solid drafts, and still get no action. In the meantime, someone else can come along with a similar piece that is connected to the right channels, has the right headline, projects the perfect stock photograph, games the system, and rockets to the top of the Internet.

It's obnoxious.

I'm writing this to you, Writer, because in this sea of vomit manufactured for search engines, you should still bother writing creatively for one important reason:

The world needs more art. It does not need more content.

Here's a little guide to let you know which you're creating:

Art — is used to touch another person's heart

Content — is used to touch another person's wallet

Art — for the soul

Content — for the mind (sometimes)

Art — a list with original thought, ideas, humor, and/or introspection

Content — a list with hyperlinks

Art — stands the test of time

Content — is gone in moments (but don't worry, more will come along soon)

Art — the product

Content — the marketing*

Artist: DO NOT try and sell a product that is content. It will probably work, but it won't last.

Art — reaches out to *one* specific person (even and especially if that person is imaginary)

Content — boils down the subject matter so it can be shareable by everyone. (“I want to be seen as productive! Better share 10 Ways to Supercharge Your Work Life”)

Art — is not understood by everyone

Content — is easily understood by the lowest common denominator, thus increasing its likelihood to achieve maximum traffic (remember, traffic = money)

Art — quality matters

Content — *quantity* matters

Art — is for human beings

Content — is for Google

Now, here's the curveball.

You can do both.

Ernest Hemingway got paid to write. F. Scott Fitzgerald got paid to write. Louisa May Alcott got paid to write. These literary giants, along with all the others, would have been rushing to cash in on this internet thing were it available.

As [Internet legend Austin Kleon](#) says:

“We all have to get over our ‘starving artist’ romanticism and the idea that touching money inherently corrupts”

Content is just a part of the game right now. Instead of whining about how unfair the internet is, why can't you just create the best content for people?

I write content at times because it is useful to people. I don't think I'd be nearly the writer I am without the endless content we have access to today.

My plea to you, though, is this:

Do not let your *art* devolve into content.

Let it stand as it has always stood: in the playground with your six-year-old self. Because art doesn't worry about how many copies it will sell. Art doesn't worry about who thinks what or making the words “consumable.”

Art is its own being, and it will always find those who need it.

Without a search engine.