Open Letter To Creatives Of The Net

Hey!

Are you a new creative (or an older creative, same thing)?

Do you feel poisoned by social media?

Are you tired of having to follow time schedules, keywords and having to alter your own artwork in order to rack up some audience?

Do you feel "like fatigue" and get disappointed by your pieces not collecting enough reblogs despite you being pretty proud of what you made?

Do you think the platforms you are spending most of your time and resources on work against you and shadowban your content?

Are you tired of getting unwanted posts slammed onto your dashboard, having to deal with bots in DMs, and intrusive advertising in every corner?

If these descriptions fit you, then please please please do yourself a favour and **LEARN HTML**.

As Web 2.0 and 3.0 trends have rolled out, netsurfers have been accustomed to use **social media** also as a means to share, store and display artwork to the point that this is now the most immediate and cheap way to build a gallery online. *But it is not*.

It's common knowledge that no social media is built for artwork. None of the current options are ideal to store permanent galleries of any kind; on top of it, social medias rely on algorithms that actively work against artistic content.

We unfortunately became lazier and less responsible as time went on and left only a few big companies to take care of the net and shape as they see fit. It's time to reverse that.

So please, **LEARN HTML**.

I've seen so many disgruntled, sad or angry posts of artists frustrated that *Twitter/Furaffinity/Deviantart/whatever social* or gallery doesn't satisfy them anymore and have no idea where their fandom is going and fear that the direction will change so much that will leave content creators behind- well, it's time to break the cycle. **MAKE YOUR OWN WEBSITE**.

"Oh but if I make one, I'll be on an island of my own!"

This is exactly why the message has to spread as much as possible. The trend has to start somewhere with someone: that somewhere can be *here* and that someone can be *you*. If everyone has a website, then it becomes once again normal for an artist to, first and foremost, have their own page on the web that is not attached to any bigger conglomerate.

"Oh but modern site builders like Wix or Wordpress do not allow old things like layout freedom anymore!"

I know. This is why you need to **LEARN HTML** so you can build it yourself.

Web developing languages like HTML, CSS (and more!) can be used to make a lot of pages, sites and projects that can range from very simple to very complex. They might take a while to master but thankfully are easy to learn, especially the basics. Gather resources and make the website of your dreams!

You do not have to make a new social media; you don't have to build a gallery for a collectivity. A personal corner, a portfolio, a place to store your own thoughts and the things you like is sufficient. Artists *can* thrive on static pages (and even then, after you've mastered the basics, why not spruce it up a little more and try a bit of JavaScript and PHP? Nothing will stop you).

So, learn HTML to build your own gallery. One whose colour scheme, options, sizes and priorities are centered on you and your own art.

There are several ways to acknowledge and practice web development for personal use:

 - **W3Schools.com** is both the best way to start understanding these languages from scratch and a good resource to dust off some old skills.

- If you're ready to experiment but don't want real commitment or consequences yet, **Neocities.org** offers free hosting and an on-site text application to write your pages and view them directly on your browser. It's the perfect playground for starting sites and for whoever wants to fully grasp the concept of building a static HTML page. I don't recommend it as a free substitute for an actual domain, but as a beginner place to learn and experiment, yeah that works fantastically!

- While **Visual Studio Code** offers the best writing environment for free, HTML pages are incredibly versatile and can be written even on NotePad. NotePad, seriously! If lines of code scare you, then a *WYSISWYG* editor would be best for you. Short for *"What You See Is What You Get"*, these kind of programs help you build pages graphically, as if you were working on it on Paint. There's plenty of free options too!

- Need inspirations for layouts or want to understand how a particular HTML element works? Did you know you can see the HTML of pages you're visiting?

- Ready to adopt your own domain? **Hosting sites** are aplenty on the net, each fulfilling specific needs in terms of budget and available space. Free hosts probably still exist, take a look around. Need an unlimited file repository? Just a GB of space? Are you looking for novelty top-level domains? Hostings got you covered! They're out there, just search around.

This huge journey starts with a small step: **LEARN HTML**.

"But it takes experience and skill to build websites!"

I was 11-12 at the start of the domestic Internet era and every single fansite or personal webpage I visited was maintained by kids of my own age. The oldest webmaster I knew of was 16! While it's true that skill level varied greatly among these pages, most of them were still easily readable, explorable and most of all, they were online and updated. If a kid in the late 90's could pull it off, why can't you now?

At the cost of sounding like a broken record allow me to take once again Suta-Raito as example: for a long time its layout has been a quality standard among the community both for its pleasing aesthetic and its functionality. Valley Of Nightmares and Seafoam Island presented similar layouts and were also

inspirations for many other aspiring webmasters.

"But if I build my own website disjointed from socials, how am I gonna build my audience?"

The concept of big communities and web popularity existed way before socials and ironically, it relied more on communication and collaboration than it does now, where a page can rack up likes only by buying sterile advertising space. There's so many ways to make your site become a network!

- First of all, **affiliates**. No website was an island back then; webmasters would befriend via email (*or MSN when it came out!*) and decide to exchange linked banners so viewers of both websites would also check new places. Site banners in their iconic 88x31px size have since become cute collectibles and another way to decorate your site!

- Some domains were dedicated to **topsites**: a ranked list of pages dedicated to a certain subject or genre, in which websurfers could vote for their favourite to land in the top ten (and you'd get a nice graphics to display onsite, as well!).

- As soon as more advanced building languages became available a few sites even started allowing for viewer comments just like modern blogs; however, viewers worldwide could reach out to webmasters by simply contacting them on email or instant messaging! Now that we are always readily available on **Telegram** or **Discord** as well, easy direct messaging is not a social media exclusive at all.

- Community building around webpages was both free and easy as pie thanks to **forums**: even the smallest website had one, so viewers and fans alike could exchange a word and find themselves a place on the net. Forums are sadly no more, but once again both Discord and Telegram prove to be valid substitutes for building audience and communities thanks to their groups and servers feature. A website linked to a Telegram/Discord community would surely be visited by its members!

- **Oekaki** was the single best thing of art-centered websites in the mid 2000s: you could draw online, doodle and goof off with other creatives and viewers alike! The service has been since substituted by other means of drawing online with friends so the habit can be still brought back!

There's so many other small but fun and effective ways to get to know fellow artists and get yourself known with websites: ==awards==, *contests*, *fanmail*, *group projects*. In all of these examples the key was always "partecipate and be friendly", not "add a ton of hashtags and hope for the algorithm to notice". Audience built around websites would be a little smaller than the bloated social medias but would always be made up of people actually interested in what the website had to offer. Let's start once again focusing on quality and not on quantity in all aspects of web popularity.

Of course your new website can be linked to your favourite social media, if you want: for better or for worse, socials are still the best way to reach audience so advertising your page updates there is not a bad idea at all; studying new ways to take advantage of modern Internet tools in order to boost a site or provide an interactive experience is totally doable. The obvious plus is that once that social platform will inevitably be gone, all interested viewers still can visit your site and have a surefire place to still follow your new artings. With a permanent website you will never suffer loss of followings nor of your own content.

I'm not going to lie and say the building process is immediate and free of obstacles; it takes time, practice and patience to both build a site and have it known to others. I butted my head against the keyboard so many times trying to figure out how to properly display stuff in my own site (*even just the menu, go figure*) and went for a whole year with a placeholder layout before coming up with something that really satisfies me. Even now I know there's some things here and there that can be done better: small quality of life fixes that can polish the code, make navigation easier, give more display options to my pictures. But the most important thing is that I have the authority to change every single thing in my own web space exactly because it's mine.

No more begging for other developers to fix things, no more waiting for external updates. My domain is here so I can do what I want with it without relying on an external staff, without relying on webspace built by others that had other needs and projects in mind.

Of utmost importance, my website is here because I took action and started it: yours can be online for the same reason, with the same motivation. *You're*

the creator.

It's a long journey but it is not impossible and the end result is truly something that caters to the maker, that shapes up around the art it is built to host, that is yours and yours truly. I can't stress enough how making one's own website will make you feel that you truly own and manage what you create because that's basically what it is. You will be building your own home on the net, not *"rent a flat"* in a social media that will evict you eventually.

Finally yes, I too was a bit afraid that my website would have been a drop in the ocean at the start; I knew that my initial updates would become screams in the void as audience could still easily check me out on other sites, but the situation didn't last long.

Customers now know that they can rely on my queue page to see where their commission progress is or when I reopen for business; I get emails or Telegram messages from viewers wanting to discuss my latest gallery or journal additions and it's always an articulated and inspiring conversation, no more *"Cool-Thanks"* empty feedback; the endorphin rush of having a random person come and say *"your website layout takes me back in time"* is better than any new like I could ever get on Twitter.

So, creatives of the net: be the start of this change.

Please learn HTML. Get the "land" and build the web home of your dreams. Exchange affiliates with others; get yourself known and help others get known, too. Communicate, participate, offer an experience to your audience that can't ever be replicated on socials.

We can fix this poisoned network one little webcorner at a time.