

How to turn a doodling hobby into a successful career



Renzo Gonzalez works on one of his latest comics. (Photo: Alix Farr)

By Alix Farr
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Are you the kind of person that ends up with more doodles than words on your class notes? Do you paint for fun and secretly imagine your friends as cartoon characters? Is the avatar in all your social media profiles a pencil sketch self-portrait?

There's good news for you: an artistic bent can become a successful career.

Case in point: Peruvian graphic designer and artist Renzo Gonzalez.

"You just have to constantly educate yourself," is his advice to anyone trying to become a professional artist. "Never stop investigating the art world. You have to know how things work in order to break the rules."

And he should know.

Gonzalez began life as an artistically-inclined kid. He made art because he loved it, and conveniently enough he was great at it, too. By age 8 he was winning art awards in school, and not long after he was competing in - and winning - art competitions in Lima.

Gonzalez also became interested in comics. Visiting his parents' store when he was a kid, he would sit reading comics while he waited to go home. He became so fascinated with the art and story-telling form, he began to design his own. His most popular comic among his classmates was one that featured the school bully always encountering some humorous misfortune.

His professional (i.e. paid) career also started young. By the end of high school he had begun to sell illustrations by request and copies of famous works of art, by such legends in the art world as Kandinsky, Miro and Picasso.

But Gonzalez was not naive.

"It was hard to be a 'visual' artist economically," he said.

So he decided to pursue what he considered a more lucrative career that let him use his artistic talent - graphic design. He spent four years studying at Orval, an art school in Lima.

When he finished, he wasn't sure what to do. He had a rock band and eventually decided to spend a few years dedicating his time to music, but before long he returned to his art career.

He taught himself web design and got his start by designing websites for local bands.

Before long his career was taking off as word spread of his talent. His self-made business is now known internationally for his work in graphic and web design and illustration and he has worked with major companies all over Peru and the United States.

But even after all of his success, Gonzalez has never abandoned his passion for **comics**. He still draws when he has time, now often inserting social and political messages into the stories.



(Photo: Copyright Renzo Gonzalez)

For young people who want to follow his path and make a career out of a passion for art, he insists that this is a serious business.

In the classes he teaches at his old art school, Orval, he says the students don't always have the background they need to succeed.

"They have charisma and talent," Gonzalez said. "But they don't have enough training. You have to constantly feed your passion."

So if you are hoping to turn your sketches into a paying career, take heed: work hard, study hard, and you can make a living off of doing something you love.

To learn more about Renzo Gonzalez, visit his website: www.renzogonzalez.com.