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'My Whole Online Presence Gone In A Second'

23 Mar
2022

Is this artwork worth having your social media accounts suspended? One artist explains how a fundraiser has spiralled into a major headache.

National Youth Arts Award winner *Oliver Cain's* one of many young artists who make the most of social media to build their audience and share their work. He's lost that platform, all over a post of a painted male nipple. Cain explains in his own words.

What a fun time it is to be an artist.

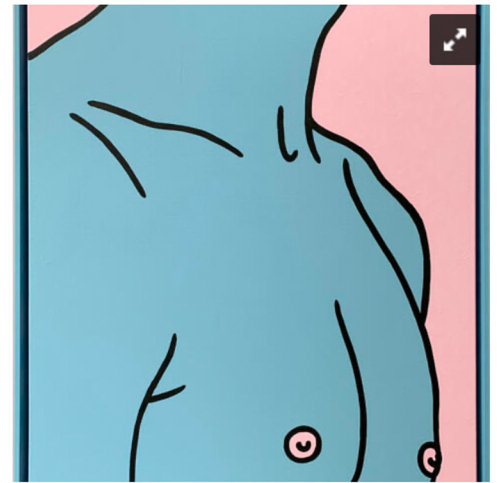
The joy of a global pandemic means that most of the fabulous exhibitions and events you had planned got delayed, postponed, reorganised, and cancelled. Not just once, if you were lucky it happened throughout 2020 and 2021.

With 2022 promising new things, I was optimistic and had a busy start to the year. I was excited to have an exhibition with Auckland Pride and when Pride was cancelled due to COVID, I still decided to go ahead with the exhibition. My work was raising funds for the NZ AIDS Foundation. and was showing casing a range of paintings and sculptures all with a light homoerotic theme.

Even though the art wasn't really challenging (even for conservative art lovers), I selected the 'safest' painting I had and promoted the exhibition through Instagram.

The exhibition went well and was successful. Then the second to last day I got a message from Facebook saying, 'Your page has been reported many times and will be taken down due to a violation of the Facebook Terms of Services.'

Both my personal Facebook account and my Business Art Instagram account were suspended without warning because of clear homophobic reports of 'nudity' on an approved sponsored post for my fund-raising Pride exhibition.



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Oliver Cain with the 'offending' artwork, Andrew. Photo: Supplied.

I know and understand the rules to be abided by when sponsoring a post and being an artist that makes queer related art I've always made sure that what I posted was 'safe'. I have never had a problem with



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any of the work I have posted in the past. The painting I advertised was of a blue man's chest from his chin down to the middle of his chest.

Apparently bare male nipples are offensive to people, but only paintings of a gay themed exhibition and for a queer related organisation. Hardly risky compared to the millions of actual photos of barely clothed men and women currently on Instagram.

It blows my mind that Instagram/Facebook can not only ban an advert, but my whole online presence as an artist is gone in a second. I have lost years of contacts and communication and the development of a loyal community and customer base because of the narrowmindedness of a few individuals that reported my work.

The decision can be appealed but it appears to be a BIG black hole as the messages I have received is "*We have fewer people available to review information due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This means that we may be unable to review your account.*"

Even if my case is strong, it doesn't mean anyone will even look at it, I may never get my account, my online community, and my customers back because one of the biggest digital companies in the world 'can't cope'. As a paying customer, I find it ridiculous that there is no help for any issues or problems that come as a result of the service you are paying for. Meta is one big black hole that you throw all your hopes, dreams, and endless hours into as with absolutely no way of contacting them - it's a perfect way for them to rule the internet.



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Oliver Cain working on his HIV Fundraising exhibition. Photo: Supplied.

I didn't have millions of followers, but I have worked hard to build what I had. Enjoying connecting with other artists and clients around the world. I never assumed everyone would like what I produce, but I thought we lived in a society where even if we weren't willing to learn from each other's differences, we could at least tolerate them.

I guess I was wrong. A big thank you for all those who have and continue to support me and my practice.

UPDATE: Since the publication of this article, Oliver's Instagram account has been reinstated - with Facebook messaging to say it was "disabled by mistake." - you can follow him [@olivercainstudios](#)