

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

How to Be Both Financially Flexible and Responsible with a Credit Card

Sam Shemin · Monday, August 11th, 2025

A common misconception about credit cards is that having one always leads to debt. In reality, however, credit cards can be a valuable tool that offers flexibility and aids in better financial management. With responsible and strategic use, cardholders can effectively leverage their credit cards to manage cash flow, build credit, and even earn rewards—all without falling into debt.

Admittedly, the challenge lies in maintaining discipline. Without careful monitoring, it's easy to overspend or carry a balance that can lead to high interest charges. Some people may also not fully understand how to strategically use card features, which can lead to repayment struggles. That's why, if you want to balance financial flexibility with responsible credit card use, you should consider the following tips to achieve that goal:

1. Pay Your Balance in Full Each Month

One of the best ways to keep your credit card a helpful tool rather than a financial burden is by paying off the balance every month. By doing this, you avoid paying interest charges, allowing your credit card to remain a convenient way to maintain financial flexibility and earn rewards without incurring additional costs. This approach helps build a positive credit history over time.

2. Set a Clear Budget

Don't treat your credit card as if it's free money. Rather, set a strict budget to avoid impulse buys and ensure you're only spending on things you really need. Keep track of every purchase, and don't let the card's flexibility tempt you into buying things that aren't part of your plan. Using budgeting apps or simply noting your spending priorities on your phone can also help you stay aware of where your money is going, making it easier to remain disciplined while still enjoying the perks of your card.

3. Use Cash Advances Wisely

A **credit card cash advance** provides a helpful financial cushion in times of need, offering quick access to funds when you're in a bind. However, while it can provide flexibility, it's important to note that it comes with fees higher than your regular credit card purchase.

Therefore, if you need to take out a cash advance, make sure you prioritize its repayment and to only borrow what you really need. Always remember that cash advances should be reserved for

emergencies, not day-to-day or luxury spending. This way, you can avoid accumulating unnecessary debt and being stuck with high interest charges.

4. Take Advantage of Rewards but Don't Overextend

Credit cards often come with rewards like cashback or points, which can be great for boosting savings and enhancing financial flexibility. That said, just because you're getting rewards doesn't mean you should be spending more than you can afford. Stick to buying what you need and use the rewards as a bonus, not an excuse to make unnecessary purchases. That way, you're benefiting from the rewards without going overboard.

5. Monitor Your Credit Utilization

Remember to track how much of your credit limit you're using, ideally keeping it under 30%. When your credit utilization is high, you have less available credit, which limits your financial flexibility. This means you'll have fewer resources to fall back on in case of an emergency or unexpected expense.

Moreover, low credit utilization demonstrates that you're managing your credit responsibly. This, in turn, can positively impact your credit score and make you a more attractive candidate for future loans or additional credit.

6. Leverage Technology to Stay on Top of Credit Card Management

Technology can be your best friend when it comes to managing your credit card responsibly. Use budgeting apps to keep track of your credit card expenses and set up alerts on your phone for due dates. Additionally, many apps allow you to categorize your spending, helping you identify areas where you might be overindulging.

Setting up alerts makes managing due dates less stressful, especially if you're juggling multiple credit cards. Meanwhile, budget trackers help you review your spending habits, making it easier to cut unnecessary expenses or adjust your budget as needed.

7. Know Your Credit Card's Terms and Fees

Responsibly managing your credit card involves understanding its terms and fees. Be sure to familiarize yourself with your card's billing cycle, interest rates, penalty fees, and reward rules. Additionally, check if your card has an annual fee or extra charges for foreign transactions. Knowing these details can help you avoid unexpected costs while maximizing the benefits your card offers.

Being aware of your card's fees also lets you make more informed decisions about how you use it. For example, knowing that your credit card offers the highest cashback on groceries allows you to primarily use it for grocery runs, maximizing rewards and putting more money back in your pocket.

With the help of the tips mentioned above, you can successfully balance financial flexibility with responsible credit card use. This allows you to fully leverage your credit card to manage expenses, build good credit, and handle unexpected costs, all while staying in control of your financial well-being.

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The Financial Trade-Offs of the Freelance Lifestyle

Our Friends · Monday, August 11th, 2025

In recent years, freelancing has become an increasingly attractive career path for many Filipinos. With more companies and clients worldwide turning to remote and project-based workers, talented professionals in the Philippines now have greater access to flexible job opportunities in graphic design, virtual assistance, writing, marketing, IT, and more.

Beyond the job opportunities themselves, technology has also made freelancing more convenient than ever. It's now easy to communicate with both local and international clients through tools like email or messaging apps. Additionally, digital payment platforms make it simple to receive earnings even from overseas clients. For example, many Filipino freelancers receive payments through PayPal and can conveniently transfer their balance from **PayPal to Maya**, which allows them to store their funds in the popular e-wallet and pay local establishments for their everyday needs.

But while freelancing opens up many financial opportunities, it also comes with important responsibilities and challenges. In this article, let's look at the financial upsides and downsides of freelance life so that you can really think about whether this path is right for you at this stage in your life.

The Financial Upside of Freelancing

Higher Earning Potential

One of the biggest financial advantages of freelancing is the potential to earn more than in a traditional office job. That's because freelancers are not limited by fixed monthly salaries and can charge based on the complexity, urgency, and value of their work. In many cases, skilled freelancers in the Philippines have been able to double—or even triple—their previous incomes by working with international clients who pay in USD or other stronger currencies.

Moreover, since you can work with multiple clients at once or take on extra projects during your free time, your earnings are only limited by your time and capacity. With the right strategies and a rewarding client base, freelancing can become a highly profitable endeavor.

Savings on Daily Expenses

Working as a freelancer offers financial relief in many practical areas. Since you don't have to report to the office and can work from home, you eliminate the daily commute. That means no more spending on bus and MRT fare or even gasoline if you drive. Over a month, that adds up to significant savings.

Second, there's no need to constantly dine out for lunch or grab coffee outside. Instead, you can prepare meals at home, which is healthier and more economical. You can also save on clothing and grooming expenses since office jobs tend to require you to spend a lot for these. Freelancers, on the other hand, can work in comfortable lounge clothes. Perhaps you could even cut back on housekeeping costs since your flexible schedule allows you to manage household chores during breaks.

Control Over Projects and Time

Freelancing also offers a rare level of control over your career. You get to decide which projects to take on, what kind of clients you want to work with, and how much time you want to dedicate to each task. This freedom means you can focus on work that aligns with your interests and values—and more importantly, projects that pay well.

So, if a client or job isn't working out financially or mentally, you can simply move on to the next one. This level of autonomy allows you to build a career on your terms, which can lead to better job satisfaction overall.

Flexibility to Maximize Income

The freelance lifestyle also allows you to explore multiple income streams. For example, you can freelance full-time and sell digital products, such as templates, presets, or courses, on the side. You could offer consulting services or do affiliate marketing.

Because you control your schedule, you can allocate time to build passion projects or passive income sources that grow over time. This kind of financial flexibility isn't typically available in a traditional job, where you're confined to one source of income and fixed working hours.

The Financial Trade-Offs of Freelancing: Things All Freelancers Should Consider

Irregular and Unpredictable Income

While freelancing definitely offers the potential for higher income, it also comes with uncertainty. Unlike traditional jobs where you receive a set salary every 15th and 30th of the month, freelance income can vary dramatically from month to month. There may be periods when you're fully booked and others when work is scarce. This unpredictability can make budgeting and long-term planning more difficult.

If you don't have a financial buffer or emergency fund, it can be stressful to manage monthly bills, groceries, and unexpected expenses during slow months. That being said, freelancers need to learn how to live below their means and save consistently in order to remain financially fluid.

Payment Delays from Clients

Another common issue freelancers face is delayed payments. Since most freelance work involves invoicing after project completion, some clients may take weeks or even months to pay. There are even unfortunate cases where freelancers don't get paid at all.

Traditional employees have clear payroll schedules, but freelancers have to actively follow up, send reminders, and sometimes deal with unresponsive or dishonest clients. If any of these problems come your way, they can cause major disruptions in your cash flow and make it harder to manage bills and obligations on time.

No Traditional Employee Benefits

Freelancers don't enjoy the usual perks that come with being a regular employee in the Philippines. There's no 13th month pay, no company-sponsored healthcare benefits, and no employer contributions to government-mandated benefits such as those from the Social Security System (SSS), Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth), and Home Development Mutual Fund (Pag-IBIG).

If you want coverage and savings for the future, you'll have to manage and pay for them on your own. That includes voluntarily registering for and contributing to these agencies.

Tax and Administrative Responsibilities

Compared to employees whose taxes are automatically withheld by their employer, freelancers must handle everything themselves. This includes keeping one's own record of deductible expenses, computing income taxes, and collecting receipts for auditing purposes. Some freelancers manage their taxes with free online tools or hire a bookkeeper, but either option requires time, effort, or money. You shouldn't be remiss about these because without proper financial organization, you may run into legal issues or penalties down the line.

Ultimately, freelancing can be a rewarding path, especially for self-driven individuals who value flexibility and want greater control over their work and income. But with that freedom comes the need for careful financial planning and discipline.

Before diving in, it's important to understand the financial responsibilities that come with being your own boss. With adequate preparation and smarter money management habits, freelancing can open the door to long-term financial stability and a career that truly works on your terms.

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The Superheroes of Summer

David Sheward · Monday, August 11th, 2025

I haven't been to a superhero movie for the past few summers. The recent crop seemed pretty lackluster. But two of this year's cinematic comic-book efforts caught my attention and drove me back to the theater, in 3-D no less: *Superman* and *The Fantastic Four: First Steps*. Both feature the figureheads of their respective comic houses, DC for Superman and Marvel for the FF. Both have been adapted for film and TV numerous times before with varying success. The Man of Steel has flown into pop culture through multiple media since his birth in 1938. He remains one of the few characters to be the subject of a series of movies, at least one live-action TV show, and a Broadway musical (the others are Spider Man, Sherlock Holmes, Tarzan, The Addams Family, and Nick and Nora Charles.) In addition, Supes was immortalized on the radio (voiced by *To Tell the Truth* host Bud Collyer) and in several animated cartoon series. Though they are the first family of Marvel Comics, the FF have not fared as well in their transitions to the silver and video screens. They have had no less than four different cartoon series—I remember 1968's Hanna-Barbera iteration best since I used to watch it every Saturday morning—and four sets of actors have played them in live action, receiving mixed notices for the first three times. Now both franchises have been given new life in cinematic form.



David Corenswet in *Superman*.

Credit: Jessica Miglio/Warner Bros/DC

James Gunn's *Superman* has come under fire from conservatives for being too "woke," meaning Superman is portrayed as being too supportive of immigrants since he is one himself, arriving on Earth after his home world Krypton exploded. The parallels between our current political climate continue. The plot is set in motion as Superman interferes when a Russia-like country invades a Ukraine-like neighbor. In a story trope echoing a move the Man of Steel made with Adolph Hitler, the superhero flies the Putin-esque dictator to a remote location and sits him on a cactus, promising worse treatment if the invading leader doesn't behave himself. Also Superman's traditional arch

enemy Lex Luthor is a sort of Elon Musk-Donald Trump type who imprisons anyone he doesn't like in a pocket universe resembling detention camps in El Salvador. The villain is in cahoots with the Putin-like despot and actually kills an immigrant food vendor in cold blood just because he was nice to Superman. Luthor also uses trolls (actual monkeys typing on keyboards) to smear Superman on social media.

Superman was always woke—meaning in favor of social justice and sticking up for the rights of minorities—so the right-wing whining feels petty and churlish. This Superman played with humor and humility by David Corenswet is a champion of the underdog and not a toady of the rich (Trump).

Putting politics aside, the action adventure aspects and special effects are first rate. Luthor's pocket universe threatens to destroy our own and Superman must save us. Gunn assumes we know the Superman origin and doesn't waste much time on the Clark Kent secret-identity angle. Lois Lane (a plucky Rachel Brosnahan) already knows Clark is really Superman and they're "dating." Gunn also stuffs in more exciting tidbits from the DC comics: Krypto the Super Dog (a disobedient pup who nearly steals the movie but saves the day), the Fortress of Solitude (a tribute to the 1978 movie), and three additional super-heroes, Green Lantern, Hawkgirl and Mr. Terrific (a delightfully dry Edi Gathegi). Supergirl and Peacemaker also make cameo appearances.



Ebon Moss-Bachrach, Pedro Pascal, Vanessa Kirby, and Joseph Quinn in *The Fantastic Four: First Steps*.

Credit: Marvel Studio

The Fantastic Four: First Steps also bypasses its origin story and jumps right into the action—the threat of planet-devouring Galactus and his herald the Silver Surfer (this time a woman played with icy cool by Julia Garner). In addition, what sets this reboot apart from its predecessors is the super-cool retro-futuristic production design by Kasra Farahani which is worthy of an Oscar nomination. As the pre-credit titles inform us we are in Earth 828, an alternate universe with Jetsons-esque flying cars, Alexander Calder mobiles, and '60s architecture.

Pedro Pascal as Reed Richards/Mr. Fantastic, Vanessa Kirby as Sue Richards/The Invisible Woman, Joseph Quinn as Johnny Storm/The Human Torch and Ebon Moss-Bachrach as Ben

Grimm/The Thing all underplay their roles. The usually bombastic, rock-encrusted Thing is soft-spoken and refuses to utter the catch phrase “It’s Clobberin’ Time” claiming it was only invented for the quartet’s cartoon show. The quasi-sibling rivalry between the Thing and the boyish Human Torch is also subtle. Director Matt Shankman doesn’t hit us over the head with the humor. Even Herbie the Robot, a relic of the ridiculous 1978 animated FF series, is given a modicum of dignity.

Like James Gunn’s Superman, Shankman’s protagonists come across as human beings who happen to be in a position to save the world. Both movies offers realistic limning as well as spectacular world-shattering effects, particularly the FF’s trip to Galactus’ mammoth space ship. Give yourself a treat and head to the theater (preferably one that has 3-D and/or IMAX) for a comic-book double feature.

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The Quiet Revival of Sacred Aesthetics in Modern Culture

Our Friends · Monday, August 11th, 2025

In a world buzzing with rapid innovation, digital overload, and endless noise, there’s a growing cultural undercurrent that’s turning back to something ancient. It’s not just a trend—it’s a search for meaning, ritual, and a sense of grounding. From fashion and fragrance to music and interior design, sacred aesthetics rooted in spiritual tradition are making a quiet yet powerful return.

This revival isn’t about organized religion or dogma. Instead, it’s a reimagining of elements long associated with spiritual practices, now being appreciated for their cultural depth, artistry, and emotional resonance. Whether it’s through the aroma of time-honored resins, the symbolism of handcrafted jewelry, or the reemergence of Gregorian chant samples in ambient music, people are reconnecting with the past in highly personal, creative ways.

A New Relationship with Ritual

One of the most noticeable shifts in culture is how people are redefining their daily rituals. In an era of burnout and overstimulation, small intentional acts have become anchors. Lighting a candle, journaling, or simply sitting in silence are not just forms of self-care, but modern-day rituals designed to create moments of peace and connection.

The sensory experience plays a huge role here. Scents, for example, have an immediate impact on the emotional and spiritual state. Many are discovering ancient aromatic traditions that were once reserved for sacred spaces. The calming, meditative qualities of **orthodox incense**, often crafted from frankincense, myrrh, and natural resins, are being rediscovered by a new generation. Its deep, smoky fragrance evokes stillness and reflection, making it a favorite not only in religious settings but also in creative studios, wellness spaces, and homes that prioritize mindful living.

Jewelry as a Personal Symbol

Another fascinating evolution is the way spiritual symbols are finding their place in fashion.

Jewelry, once worn to express identity or signal status, is now being embraced as a deeply personal form of storytelling. Many are moving away from generic, mass-produced accessories and turning instead to pieces with cultural or spiritual resonance.

A piece like a **14k gold cross necklace**, for instance, may hold religious meaning for some, but for others, it's a powerful symbol of protection, legacy, or familial memory. Gold itself has long been associated with purity and divinity, and when combined with meaningful symbols, it becomes more than just an accessory. It becomes a wearable piece of one's inner world.

This shift reflects a wider cultural desire to express individuality through intention rather than trends. Custom jewelry, heirloom pieces, and designs that carry personal significance are being favored over flashy fashion statements.

Sound, Silence, and Sacred Space

Beyond objects and aesthetics, sound and silence are becoming part of the cultural conversation in meaningful ways. In music, producers are sampling liturgical sounds, chants, and ancient instruments, weaving them into experimental and ambient genres. These sounds bring a grounding energy that stands in contrast to the hyper-digitized nature of contemporary music.

But silence, too, is gaining value. Once overlooked, quiet has become a form of luxury in the cultural imagination. Meditation apps, silent retreats, and noise-cancelling products are all responses to this yearning for inner stillness. People are learning to create sacred space in their own environments—whether through spatial design, scent, or sound.

This doesn't require devotion to any particular faith tradition. Instead, it's about reclaiming a sense of presence and depth that modern life often neglects.

Sacred Aesthetics in Design and Art

Interior design and visual art have not been untouched by this shift. Minimalist spaces filled with natural light, tactile textures, and calming colors echo monastic aesthetics. Artists and designers are referencing ancient architecture, iconography, and craftsmanship in ways that feel fresh rather than nostalgic.

Sculpture, painting, and mixed media are incorporating spiritual themes in subtle and symbolic ways. This is especially evident in the use of gold leaf, natural pigments, and sacred geometry. These elements invite the viewer to engage with art not just visually, but emotionally and spiritually.

As culture moves toward slower, more meaningful modes of living, design becomes a way to shape the energy of a space. Whether it's through a simple altar setup, a quiet corner with incense and a book, or a piece of jewelry that carries memory and intention, sacred aesthetics offer a sense of rootedness.

The Intersection of the Old and the New

This cultural revival is not about going backward. It's about weaving the wisdom of the past into modern life in a way that feels authentic. It's an invitation to find beauty in simplicity, to explore identity through deeper symbols, and to embrace traditions not as rigid rules but as sources of

inspiration.

Brands and creators who understand this are finding resonance with audiences seeking more than just surface-level experiences. They're crafting items, spaces, and stories that honor heritage while embracing modern expression.

In this space, the sacred and the stylish can coexist. A piece of jewelry can be both beautiful and meaningful. A scent can be both ancient and relevant. A space can be both designed and devotional.

Final Thoughts

As the world grows more complex, many are turning inward, looking for ways to feel more connected, more present, and more at peace. This renewed appreciation for the sacred—expressed through scent, symbol, sound, and space—is more than a cultural moment. It's a quiet movement that invites us to slow down, listen deeply, and rediscover what matters most.

In the blending of old-world traditions with new-world creativity, culture finds its way back to center—not through loud declarations, but through the quiet, powerful language of meaning.

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Why Small Brands Order Custom DTF Transfers for Better Impact

Our Friends · Monday, August 11th, 2025

In a highly competitive market, small brands are always looking for ways to get noticed. Customized DTF (Direct to Film) transfers have recently become an attractive option for boosting product appeal. Such an approach allows for flexibility and creativity, making it appealing for startups.

Understanding DTF Transfers

Before you **order custom DTF transfers**, you must know that they are made by printing glass-surface-resistant components onto a specific film and then transferring them to materials. The method enables fine detail and bright colors, perfect for eye-catching products. In contrast to classic printing technology, DTF transfers render a smooth finish, which increases durability and quality.

Flexibility and Creativity

Custom DTF transfers have the most significant advantage of being flexible. This allows brands to test out as many designs as they want, free from any restrictions. This freedom promotes a possibility for creative expression, allowing businesses to create innovative and unforgettable products.

This flexibility serves small brands well, as they serve a diverse customer population. Seasonal design or limited run with the DTF transfer fashion as a result, which leaves brands fresh and in the spotlight.

Cost-Effectiveness

Cost is always a factor for **small brands**. Custom DTF transfers are available for a fraction of the price. They use fewer resources than other methods, which lowers the overall process cost. Furthermore, the low minimum order quantity ensures effective cost control.

By optimizing production, brands can use resources judiciously. This saves money and is in line with sustainability, which is increasingly important to consumers.

Quality and Durability

Customer satisfaction is highly related to quality. Several benefits of DTF transfers include durability and wearability. Even after being washed several times, our colors still look lively, making this product engaging for an extended time frame.

Reliability inspires consumer confidence, resulting in the purchase of the same brand again and again, ultimately creating brand loyalty. This creates the potential for small brands to sell products that not only look beautiful but are also durable and, therefore, can also add to the brand's quality.

Quick Turnaround

Today, the market demands speed, and speed is the only thing keeping you in the game. The fast production time of custom DTF transfers is essential for small brands that want to act on trends quickly. The short turnaround time allows businesses to get new designs out in the market quickly so that they can maintain variety in their offerings.

This flexibility gives a competitive advantage. Brands will be able to tap into trends as they come rather than waiting for editors to track those down, so the process is a lot more immediate, giving customers what they want when they want it and with the most effective ways of marketing.

Customization Options

DTF transfers added a whole new level of personalization that helped draw more customers and retain them. When it comes to custom-branded products, DTF transfers provide a spectrum of customization. From adding names to items to having an exclusive design, the possibilities are endless.

Consumers prefer products made for them, so this personalized approach is appealing. Small brands can carve out a unique niche within the market with more niche products, a definite draw to their audience.

Eco-Friendly Practices

Consumers are putting more emphasis on sustainability than ever before. Support eco-friendly practices, reducing waste and harmful chemicals used with DTF transfers. That resonates with environmentally conscious customers and strengthens brand image.

Going sustainable allows small brands to reach an even larger consumer base. This reaffirms the brand as responsible, forward-thinking, and eco-friendly.

Building Brand Identity

Establishing a reputable brand is one of the things small businesses cannot afford to ignore. Custom DTF transfers offer a canvas to showcase a brand's essence and unique attributes. A regular and attractive design helps strengthen brand recognition and loyalty.

Investing in quality transfers ensures that brands communicate their promise and vision through their products. This consistency breeds trust and thus lays a foundation for long-term success.

Conclusion

For DTF, custom transfers provide small brands with a medium that can make a difference! Their flexibility, affordability, and quality make these transfers the ultimate solutions to enrich product services and attract consumers. With this approach, small brands will be able to tackle the market like professionals and make their killing.

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Design, Safety, and Innovation: Where Automotive Culture Is Heading

Our Friends · Monday, August 11th, 2025

The automotive world is undergoing a transformation, one that goes far beyond new paint colours and upgraded dashboards. Today's vehicles reflect a shift in culture, priorities, and technological possibilities. As sustainability gains ground, safety standards rise, and design becomes more functional and emotionally resonant, automotive culture is being redefined.

From what powers our cars to the tyres that keep them safely on the road, every component is evolving. Let's take a closer look at where automotive culture is heading and how design, safety, and innovation are leading the charge.

Design: From Form-Following-Function to Form-Fused-with-Emotion

Automotive design used to prioritise practicality and aerodynamics. Today, it's a far more complex blend of emotion, efficiency, and lifestyle. Modern consumers want cars that reflect their identity: sleek city cars, rugged crossovers, or bold electric SUVs that look as futuristic as they are sustainable.

Designers are working closely with engineers to craft shapes that are both beautiful and intelligent. This includes:

- **Active aerodynamics** that adjust to improve performance and fuel economy
- **Signature lighting** that adds personality and improves visibility
- **Minimalist interiors** focused on space, simplicity, and digital integration

Even essential components like [car tyres](#) are now part of the design narrative, with manufacturers opting for sidewall patterns and tread styles that complement a car's aesthetic while also delivering on performance.

Safety: A Tech-Driven Revolution in Protection

Safety has always been a pillar of automotive development, but it has now entered a digital age. Passive safety features like crumple zones and [airbags](#) remain essential, but active safety technologies are setting new standards.

Today's standout innovations include:

- **Autonomous Emergency Braking (AEB):** Detects potential collisions and applies brakes automatically
- **Lane-Keeping Assist and Blind Spot Detection:** Helps prevent unintentional drift and lane-change collisions
- **360-Degree Cameras and Parking Assistance:** Makes manoeuvring safer and easier for all skill levels

Many of these systems rely on sensors and AI to monitor the environment in real time, alerting drivers to danger before it becomes a crisis. But safety doesn't stop at tech. It also depends on maintenance and quality parts. For example, tyres with strong wet grip and even wear are crucial for delivering on the promises of modern braking systems. Investing in proper tyres ensures that your vehicle's safety features work as intended.

Innovation In Automotive Culture: The Powertrain Reimagined

Arguably the most revolutionary change in automotive culture is the shift away from internal combustion engines. [The rise of electric vehicles \(EVs\)](#), hybrids, and hydrogen fuel cell technologies represents not only a technological leap but a cultural one. People are increasingly choosing vehicles based on environmental impact, long-term cost, and ethical alignment.

Key innovations shaping this transition:

- **Solid-state batteries:** Offering faster charging, greater range, and improved safety
- **Vehicle-to-grid technology:** Allowing EVs to return unused energy to the grid

- **Regenerative braking:** Converting kinetic energy into electrical energy to recharge batteries

This change doesn't just affect powertrains; it reshapes infrastructure, service networks, and even vehicle design. With no large engines or fuel tanks to accommodate, EVs offer more cabin and storage space and can adopt sleeker, more aerodynamic forms.

Mobility as a Lifestyle, Not Just a Commute

Car ownership is no longer just about getting from A to B. Vehicles are now extensions of personal lifestyle and values. This shift is especially visible among younger generations who are increasingly attracted to flexible models like car subscriptions, vehicle sharing, and on-demand access.

Autonomous vehicles (AVs) also promise to change the very meaning of driving. In the future, cars may become moving offices, entertainment pods, or relaxation spaces, designed for passengers, not drivers.

And as vehicles become more connected, data plays a larger role in mobility. Everything from your driving habits to tyre pressure can be tracked, analysed, and optimised to enhance your experience.

Photo at top: Garvin St. Villier via Pexels

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What Foods Work Best Alongside Semaglutide for Controlling Cravings?

Our Friends · Monday, August 11th, 2025

Many people use semaglutide to help manage weight and control appetite. Pairing this medication with the right foods can support its effects and make the process smoother.

Certain foods can work with semaglutide to help curb cravings and build healthy habits. Learning which foods support this medication can prepare someone for better results and an easier journey. This article explores the connection between semaglutide and food choices for those who want steady progress and lasting change.

Lean chicken breast for high protein and satiety

Lean chicken breast offers a high source of protein with very little fat. In just 100 grams, there are about 31 grams of protein and only 165 calories. This makes chicken breast a favorable food for

those looking to feel full and manage calories.

People using [compounded semaglutide for appetite management](#) may benefit from eating more chicken breast. The protein in chicken helps increase feelings of fullness. As a result, cravings may occur less often throughout the day.

Chicken breast also fits into many different meal plans. It takes on many flavors and can fit a range of diets. By pairing chicken breast with other simple foods, individuals can better control hunger. Consuming lean protein at each meal supports steady energy and may help reduce overeating.

Salmon for omega-3s that support metabolism

Salmon stands out as a natural source of omega-3 fatty acids. These healthy fats play a role in supporting metabolism and may help the body work more efficiently.

Omega-3s, such as those found in salmon, can help with satiety. People often feel fuller after a meal that includes salmon, which may help reduce the urge for snacks between meals.

Salmon also provides quality protein, which supports muscle health and keeps energy levels more steady throughout the day. For those taking semaglutide, foods like salmon can fit well into a balanced diet by supporting both cravings control and overall metabolic function.

Regularly eating salmon offers benefits beyond just omega-3s. It contains key nutrients like vitamin D and B vitamins, supporting the body's daily needs. As a result, adding salmon to meals may make the weight management process feel a bit easier.

Greek yogurt as a low-calorie protein source

Greek yogurt stands out as a protein-rich food that fits well with a semaglutide routine. It contains more protein per serving than many regular yogurts, which helps people feel full for longer. This can help cut down on extra snacking during the day.

Low-fat or nonfat Greek yogurt usually has fewer calories but still offers a thick, creamy texture. It also contains probiotics, which support gut health. Most Greek yogurt brands keep the sugar content low, especially the plain varieties.

Adding Greek yogurt to meals or snacks is simple. It pairs well with fruit, nuts, or seeds for extra flavor and nutrients. Because it is easy to prepare and can be eaten on the go, Greek yogurt fits busy lifestyles.

Overall, using Greek yogurt as a low-calorie protein source may support both appetite control and balanced nutrition. Its nutrient profile makes it a sensible choice for those seeking to manage cravings while taking semaglutide.

Broccoli and other non-starchy vegetables to increase fiber

Broccoli stands out as a popular choice for adding more fiber to the diet. It gives a mild flavor, a satisfying crunch, and offers a boost to the feeling of fullness. This can help make cravings less intense between meals.

Non-starchy vegetables like carrots, spinach, kale, and bell peppers also supply fiber without a lot

of calories. People can add these vegetables easily to salads, soups, and side dishes. As a result, meals feel more filling without raising total calorie intake by much.

In addition, a higher fiber intake can promote better digestion and may help manage hunger as people use semaglutide. Doctors often suggest starting with small servings and drinking enough water to avoid stomach discomfort. By increasing vegetables on the plate, it becomes easier to stick to a healthy eating plan.

Almonds and walnuts for healthy fats that curb hunger

Almonds and walnuts provide healthy fats, protein, and fiber. These nutrients help people feel full longer and make it easier to control cravings throughout the day. Studies show these nuts can support metabolic health alongside treatments like semaglutide.

Almonds supply vitamin E, minerals, and plant compounds. Walnut consumption offers omega-3 fatty acids important for heart and brain health. Both types of nuts also stabilize blood sugar, which can prevent sudden spikes and drops that trigger hunger.

A small handful of almonds or walnuts can serve as a smart snack between meals. Unlike processed snacks, they keep people satisfied and may help reduce the urge to overeat. Because they are calorie-dense, moderate intake works best for most people.

Adding almonds and walnuts to a balanced diet gives lasting energy and steady appetite control. For those using semaglutide, these nuts can fit easily into a healthy eating plan that supports long-term goals.

Conclusion

Choosing foods high in fiber, lean protein, and healthy fats helps support the effects of semaglutide and manage cravings. Complex carbohydrates, like whole grains and vegetables, give steady energy and help control hunger.

Many find that eating slowly and paying attention to fullness helps reduce overeating. Hydration also plays a role in feeling satisfied and maintaining balance.

Using thoughtful food choices, along with semaglutide, makes it easier to stick to healthy habits and reach personal health goals.

Photo at top: Pixabay via Pexels

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Interview with Novelist Jennifer Givhan

Mish (Eileen) Murphy · Monday, August 11th, 2025

Jenn Givhan's new novel *Salt Bones* (Mulholland Books, July 22, 2025) is a haunting reimagining of the Persephone and Demeter myth. Set in the sun-scorched Mexico-California borderlands near the Salton Sea, Givhan explores the bonds between mothers and daughters, the darkness of environmental collapse, and the power of ancestral memory.

Givhan is an award-winning poet, novelist, and self-described bruja who draws on her Mexican-American and Indigenous roots in *Salt Bones*. We spoke with her about myth, motherhood, the desert's dark light, and what it takes to write fiercely in the post-post-postmodern world.

Read these excerpts, which we published last week:

[“The Salton Sea, Southern California”](#)

[“The First Missing Girl”](#)



1. Let's begin with the title. What does *Salt Bones* mean to you, and how did that phrase

come to represent the heart of this novel?

In the desert borderlands of Southern California where I grew up, a toxic river fed a deadly, ancient lake, the Salton Sea. This river and lake were reanimated in the early 20th century through flooding and a break in an irrigation dam fed by the Colorado River. As a girl, I'd run barefoot past the date palms and horse pens to that river, where my mama warned me not to eat the fish, not to swim in that water, poisoned by decades of pesticides dropped by crop dusters over surrounding farmland.

Seven years ago, when I returned to El Valle with my children, my comadre grilled carne asada and told me the sea was drying up, releasing pesticide-laden dust and threatening to turn our town into a ghostland. Our Ancestors had followed the sea's rhythms for generations, but this drying was different. A century ago, settlers took the water rights and banned Native and Mexican people from land ownership. They built a billion-dollar farming empire, but the people of El Valle saw little of that wealth. Now, the water's vanishing, and the chemicals left behind are aerosolizing and entering the lungs of El Valle residents.

When I heard this, I pulled a short story I'd shelved, "Salt Bones," and began again. I immersed myself in the Valley's history: the racism that shaped it, the forgotten labor, the stories buried under pesticides and dust.

I've been haunted by the millions of fish that once swam the Salton Sea. Their bones now crumble into white hash along the playa—little shards that look like human teeth. The fish have died off, but I won't let the same happen to mi familia and comunidad.

This book is about a family haunted by the so-called accidental sea, but more than that, it's a love song for my disappearing homeland.

2. You've drawn from mythology before—La Llorona, for instance, in *River Woman*, *River Demon*. What called you to Persephone and Demeter this time? How does their story fit within a borderlands context?

This story of mama-daughterhood has followed me my whole life, probably because it encompasses my greatest fear. As a daughter, that was losing my mother. As a mother, it is losing my children. My own mother is a storyteller. She embellishes like nobody's business, but she also has a keen sense of timing, place, familial connection, emotional underpinning, and striking symbolism. And, like many Mexican and Indigenous girls and women of her generation, she's gone through some terrible things, but she's also a resilient, sensitive spirit who made forgiveness and love the utmost priority in her life, and all of that rubbed off on me. Throughout my childhood, my mother's stories became my own. Sometimes I don't know where her voice ends and mine begins. I didn't set out to write a retelling of any myth in particular, but I've been obsessed with Persephone and Demeter for years, and it just bled through the pages as *Salt Bones* rooted in the girlhood of a character who shares certain similarities with my mother and me.

The novel begins with a quote from Eavan Boland: *The only legend I have ever loved is / the story of a daughter lost in hell. / And found and rescued there.*

As an English major, I was steeped in the Western canon, but as a Chicana and Indigenous woman, my heart thrums with Mesoamerican myth. I braid Demeter with La Siguanaba to show that our stories are just as powerful, although often erased. Both spring from the same mother-root of grief, survival, and fierce love, which my novel fuses as reclamation and lovesong.

I don't want to give too much away about La Siguanaba and how she haunts this story, but I will say that my daughter fell in love with horses and we've spent a lot of time together at the horse pens and arenas and trail rides along the Rio Grande, so I honestly became as haunted as Mal in terms of horses.

As with many of my novels, the characters in their landscapes come to me and ask me to tell their story, and the myth of La Siguanaba grew inside of me as Mal's story unfolded along the Salton Sea, along with El Cucuy and los chupacabras and many of the other so-called monsters that roam through the Mexicali borderlands where I grew up.

A fellow writer and I were once laughing about how people ask if we write fantasy or horror or magical realism, and all of that might be true, but for us, we are also just writing our childhoods as he grew up in the Caribbean and I was born and raised on the Southwestern border. Most of my books focus on La Llorona, and you'd think that with the Salton Sea being a prominent feature of this newest book that she would have appeared again, but I do feel like she's in the subtext and heart of everything I write, and it was time for another monstrous mama to make herself known.

3. You braid Latina and Indigenous myth, family drama, horror, and magical realism into a seamless story. What's your approach to blending genres and traditions?

As a mother-poet who grew up in the borderlands, I couldn't escape the strange cadences and rhythms and nonlinear, recursive patterns of thinking and understanding and storytelling if I tried. I'm grateful that voice is queen in writing since what perhaps felt like a curse while I was growing up (how sensitive I am—how much of an outsider I felt like everywhere I went) becomes a strength in my writing.

Poetry lives in my bones, and from that skeleton I start with voice, image, and rhythm, writing toward what hurts. Every novel feels like a long sonnet with a turn, that knife twist. Poetry taught me to listen for silence and shape it into story, while horror and mystery and magical realism live side by side, especially for marginalized folks.

Salt Bones peels back a murder plot to reveal deeper hauntings such as environmental racism, ancestral grief, family rot, and gendered violence. The monsters in this story wear many masks, and as the central mama of the story, Malamar "Mal" Veracruz learns, some monsters can only be exhumed from the damp, dark soil feeding poison to the water.

4. You're incredibly prolific—eleven novels in nine years. How do you keep the creative fire burning while mentoring other writers and raising a family?

Most mornings, after coffee and hot chocolate with my daughter, I declare: *Today I'm gonna write something UGLY!* We growl and stomp and chant it together—*UGLY! MESSY! FERAL! WEIRD!*

That ritual gives me permission to show up as I am—brain fog, chronic illness, self-doubt demons and all. I follow my unruly characters through the fog and trust the story will find me.

5. You describe yourself as a *bruja*. How does your spirituality inform your writing? Has writing become a ritual of its own?

Writing is absolutely a ritual and has helped me deepen my connection to my Ancestors. As I've practiced *brujería* and *curanderismo* over the years, I began building portable altars—spaces to

honor the sacred wherever I am. Sometimes that means lighting candles beside the bathtub while I soak to ease chronic pain. Sometimes that means placing my grandmother's photo next to my laptop. All of these rituals, large and small, help open portals to the underbelly, which I often liken to the Upside Down in *Stranger Things*, where I'm able to transmute story.

My spiritual practices have taught me to be gentler with myself. If I can't write on a particular day, it isn't failure, but rest, which can be sacred, fertile, and resistance. These altars remind me that the sacred is already within. The Muse is already here; my job is to quiet myself and listen.

6. Motherhood is central to *Salt Bones*, as it is in much of your work. What draws you to write about motherhood again and again?

Because it is the site of the unspeakable and the sacred, motherhood poetics holds space for the liminal, the overlooked, and the dismissed. Writing about motherhood can be labeled sentimental or confessional, which I find outrageously suspect to begin with, since men have won major awards writing about mothers, for instance. Even so, I tend to see myself as crafting motherhood through the underbelly, creating an act of reclamation and sassing back to the boxes or pedestals our society has tried cramming mothers into or atop.

As Cheryl Strayed says in her Dear Sugar column, *We must write like motherf*ckers, on the kitchen floor, with all our strength, wrestling with the second beating heart inside us.*

As a mama writing through post-partum depression, for instance, my work became lifesaving. The mother must survive the wound that never heals, if only to carry her babies to safety. That paradox and tension between survival and loss is the core of my motherhood poetics. It's what I return to, over and over.

7. Your identity encompasses many layers—Mexican-American, Indigenous, poet, mother, daughter. How do those inheritances shape your work?

My writing comes from the confluence of all the identities I carry. As a Chicana and Indigenous woman from the borderlands, my stories resist erasure. They fuse myth and memory, personal and political, lyric and narrative because that's how I live.

Our communities have survived through story. My work continues that legacy.

A major goal for this book was to show the deeply entrenched eco-socio-political inequities woven into the fabric of our society and way of life especially in the Southwest where Latinos and Indigenous people often live in poverty even though our Ancestors have called this land sacred and home for millennia.

And at the same time, show how resilient and strong we are—how adaptable—and that our ancestral practices carry us as do our family traditions, even when, as in *Salt Bones*, there is sometimes sickness at the root that must be dredged up and healed.

For instance, my protagonist Mal became a butcher as I knew from my hundreds of pages of prewriting into her childhood on the Salton Sea that she was raised mostly by her father, a Cahuilla and Kumeyaay man whose family is from both the U.S. and Mexico side of the border as they traveled back and forth over the centuries, and that her father was also a skilled hunter and fisherman.

Mal was the sibling in her family most open to learning their ancestral practices, and there was a scene that meant a great deal to me about where her father took her hunting and taught her to respect the lives of the animals whose lives she takes for food. This was tied for me into El Valle's practices of farming, fish and game in and around the sea, and the beef plant nearby—all of which I wanted to examine without becoming preachy.

8. You've cited Toni Morrison and Ana Castillo among your literary influences. Who are some others who've shaped you?

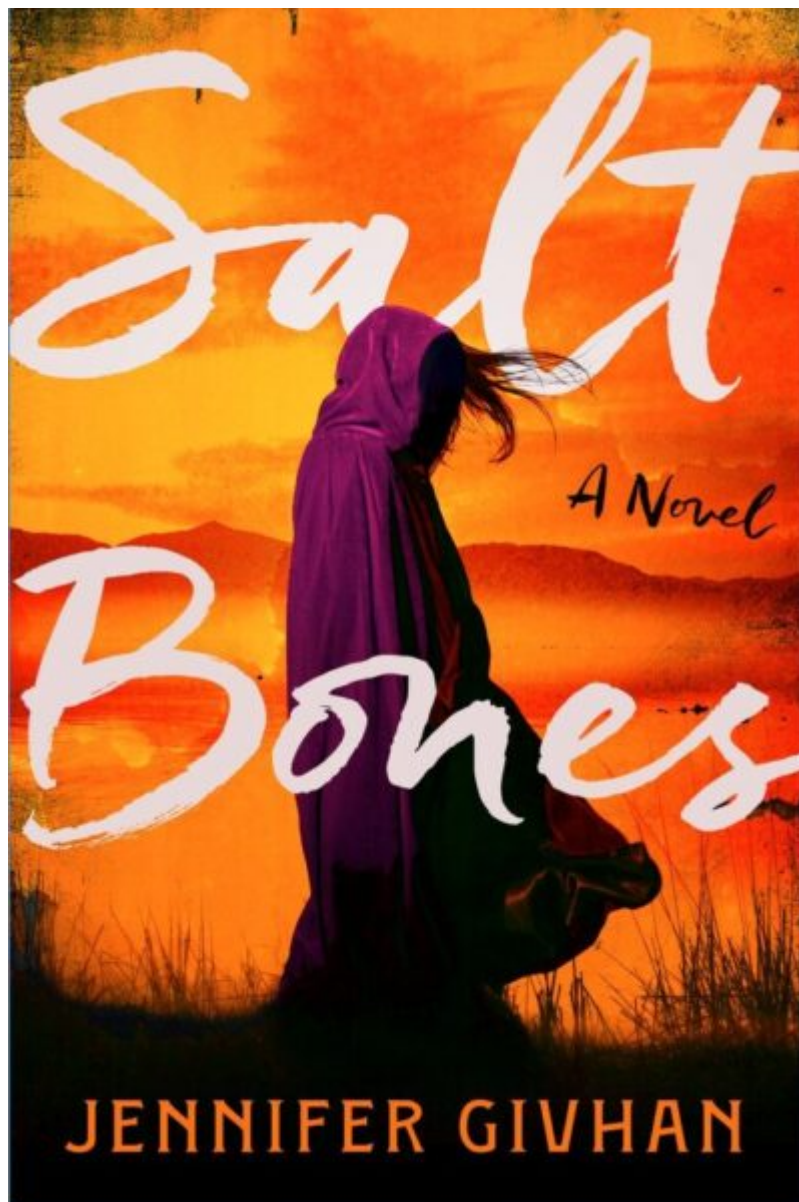
Toni Morrison changed everything for me when I first read it in a senior AP English class I was taking online through Stanford University on a computer the program had lent me, the only person at my school that year to take the class. *Beloved* showed me a novel could be ghost story, lullaby, reckoning, and time machine all at once. I'm also deeply influenced by Ana Castillo, and more recently by Jesmyn Ward's haunted South, which echoes my desert borderlands with ancestral grief, complicated mamas, and land that both loves and devours. A few other top contenders in my heart are Victor LaValle's *The Changeling*, Ana Dávila Cardinal's *The Storyteller's Death*, Erika T Wurth's *White Horse*, Cynthia Pelayo's *Vanishing Daughters*, Jessica Johns' *Bad Cree*, and Carolina Flórez-Cerchiaro's *Bochica*. I'm always looking for stories that inspire, gut, and rebuild me.

9. If readers take away just one truth, image, or question from *Salt Bones*, what do you hope it is?

My heartwork and reason for being are to share the stories of the people too often unseen and ignored. The land, the animals, and the people are all integrally interconnected, and I'm asking for an overall move toward empathy and awareness. Toward asking, how did we make this? Who are the people behind what we often take for granted? How are my everyday actions affecting those in regions perhaps unknown to me, and how can I learn their stories to bridge that gap and make more ethical choices in large and small ways?

I hope readers leave this book both haunted and awakened, with a deeper love for the strong women in their lives and a renewed reverence for the marginalized communities that hold us up.

Even in poisoned places, beauty and resistance will rise.



Purchase *Salt Bones* by Jennifer Givhan

Posted in [Discourse](#), [Literature](#) | [No Comments »](#)

Soft2Bet: Driving Innovation with AWS?Cloud Powered Gaming Technology

Our Friends · Sunday, August 10th, 2025

iGaming moves fast. Expectations move faster. To keep players engaged in a world of instant gratification, platform providers need more than flashy graphics and loyalty points — they need infrastructure that can keep up. Soft2Bet knows this well. That's why the company didn't just adopt cloud technology; it built an innovation strategy around it. From product rollouts to player personalization, Soft2Bet's move to a cloud-native setup isn't just about scale — it's about staying sharp, agile, and always ready for what's next.

Why Soft2Bet Went Cloud-First

When your platform serves millions of players across continents, growth isn't a nice-to-have — it's a requirement. But scaling brings complexity. More markets mean more regulations. More games mean more load. More features mean more development cycles. Soft2Bet saw the writing on the wall early and chose to build on cloud foundations from the start. AWS gave the company the flexibility and muscle it needed — not just to grow, but to grow wisely.

Here's what drove the shift:

- Rapid market expansion: New regions, new games, new user demands — all without missing a beat.
- High availability: Downtime isn't an option when your players are global and always online.
- Flexible resource scaling: Traffic spikes? Feature launches? The platform adjusts in real time.
- Cost efficiency: Pay for what you use. Scale when you need it. No more bloated legacy stacks.

"On AWS, we can draw business insights quickly and connect and scale to as many data sources as we want in our analytics landscape."

Yoel Zuckerberg
Chief Product Officer, Soft2Bet

The Impact of Cloud-Native Architecture

Soft2Bet didn't just move to the cloud — it went cloud-native. Shifting to the cloud didn't just modernize the backend — it redefined how things get done. Teams can now build in smaller pieces, deploy without drama, and adjust on the fly.

New features don't need full-system overhauls. Teams can test, ship, and improve without breaking a sweat — or anything else. Updates go live without downtime. Experiments can run quietly in the background. And when something doesn't land? It's out before players notice.

This agility lets Soft2Bet focus less on maintaining infrastructure and more on creating game-changing experiences. Literally.

Data-Driven by Design

Cloud speed is great. But cloud smarts? Even better. Soft2Bet isn't just building faster — it's building smarter. Data is the company's compass, powering decisions from UX tweaks to market strategy.

Real-Time Intelligence

Speed matters — but clarity is everything. Thanks to the [Soft2Bet data strategy](#), the company doesn't wait for weekly dashboards or quarterly insights. Instead, teams get a live pulse on everything from user engagement to backend performance. From spotting where users drop off to tracking campaign performance, Soft2Bet makes decisions in the moment — not after the fact. Real-time data keeps every team aligned, responsive, and ready to adapt fast. It's smart,

streamlined, and built for action.

Personalization at Scale

Soft2Bet knows one-size-fits-all doesn't cut it in gaming. Using real-time data on AWS, the platform tailors each player's experience — from game picks to promo offers — based on behavior, not guesswork. A new user sees something different than a returning regular, and it all happens seamlessly in the background. Smart, smooth, and personal by design.

Smarter Product Development

Soft2Bet builds based on data, not hunches. Features at Soft2Bet aren't built on maybes — they're built on user moves. With all the data in one place, teams can instantly see what's landing and what's falling flat. No guesswork. Just clear signals that help them tweak, improve, or scrap ideas before they waste time. It's development with eyes wide open.

KYC

Average **verification time** less than 0.7 days
55% of docs **approved automatically**

Safe and secure

We implement a controlled framework of AML/CTF Business Risk Assessment, Policies and procedures in order to meet regulatory requirements and maintain a safe service

Machine learning

Accurate and well defined anti-fraud and anti-bonus abuse system in partnership with state of the art machine learning tech

E-KYC

For a better customer experience and increased security, we employ an automated document verification platform powered by recognised third party provider

PEP/Sanctions

We conduct Full Background checks with numerous databases, enforcement and global sanction lists, PEP, adverse media etc



Security, Compliance, and Player Trust

In iGaming, trust is everything. Soft2Bet gets it — cool features won't matter if trust goes out the window. All locked in from the ground up. Thanks to AWS, Soft2Bet keeps things tight behind the scenes — data stays encrypted, compliance boxes are ticked (yes, even GDPR), and the platform stays up and running, no matter what. Players get peace of mind. Regulators get transparency. And the tech team gets the tools to sleep at night. It's not just about ticking boxes. It's about building trust into every interaction — from sign-up to payout.

Culture + Cloud = Innovation Engine

Cloud tech is powerful. But it's Soft2Bet's people and culture that turn that power into progress. The cloud gives the tools — the team brings the mindset.

- **Teamwork from the jump:** [Developers](#), creatives, and data folks are aligned from the first sketch to final release.
- **Room to test and try again:** Quick MVPs are the norm. If something doesn't stick? No big deal — next idea up.
- **Everyone's aligned:** Goals are clear, and every team knows exactly how they contribute to the end result.

- **Feedback in motion:** Ideas get tested, refined, and relaunched quickly — no long waits, just smart iteration.
- **Curiosity encouraged:** Questions aren't just allowed — they're expected.

Scaling Smarter, Not Just Bigger

Expansion is inevitable. But Soft2Bet isn't aiming to grow louder — it's growing cleverer. The future means smarter automation, [AI-led personalization](#), and entering new regulated markets with confidence.

Its modular cloud setup makes that possible. Launching a new brand? Easy. Testing new features in one region before rolling out globally? Done. Soft2Bet is scaling like a startup, but thinking like a tech giant.

Sure, the flashy games and smart promos grab attention. But the real magic? It's all happening behind the scenes. That's where the story gets interesting. Soft2Bet's cloud-first strategy isn't just keeping up with the gaming world. It's helping define it.

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Where Can You Find Reliable Information On Kratom Legality In Canada?

Sam Shemin · Saturday, August 9th, 2025

Kratom's legal landscape is quite nuanced.

While the herb is 100% legal in certain jurisdictions, it's highly regulated and outright criminalized in others. That's surprisingly interesting for a plant associated with numerous medicinal properties.

If you're in Canada and are wondering where you can access kratom-related information, this post is for you.

Read below for insights into kratom's legality in Canada.

Can I Legally Access Kratom In Canada?

A common question you'll bump into while searching for kratom products in North America is – **is**

kratom legal in Canada?

There's no legislation banning the sale, distribution, and use of kratom in Canada.

In fact, the herb hasn't appeared in any official legislative discourses. That makes it technically legal throughout the country's ten provinces and three territories.

Perhaps a more relevant question should be – is kratom regulated in Canada?

The answer would be yes. While the Canadian government hasn't legislated against kratom products, kratom trade technically falls under the spheres of two regulators – Health Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA).



Photo: Arek Socha via Pixabay

Places To Find Reliable Kratom Information in Canada

1. Government Websites

As mentioned, the kratom trade in Canada falls under the ambit of Health Canada and the CFIA. Note that these government agencies don't regulate kratom distribution directly, but rather by their respective mandates.

a. Health Canada

Health Canada is the Canadian national agency charged with ensuring the safety of pharmaceutical products across the country.

Now, most people consume kratom as a medicinal drug. The herb technically falls under Natural Health Products (NHPs).

So, it's understandable why its distribution would be a matter of top concern for Health Canada.

While kratom isn't criminalized in Canada, Health Canada hasn't approved it for human

consumption. The implication is that sellers cannot legally market the herb as a medicinal drug.

Instead of definitive statements like “kratom can cure pain,” vendors should consider more ambiguous wordings like “kratom may soothe muscle pain.”

Health Canada appears to have its attention fixed on more problematic drugs like methamphetamine. However, the agency has previously seized unauthorized kratom brands, underscoring its commitment to regulating the quality of pharmacological products in the country.

b) The CFIA

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency’s core mandate is to ensure the safety of dietary products in the country.

Like Health Canada, the CFIA hasn’t approved kratom for medicinal use. The difference is that the regulator mainly oversees consumable goods, which means they’d have more issues with kratom-infused edibles.

Most Canadian kratom sellers have crafted ingenious strategies to bypass Health Canada and the CFIA’s restrictions, such as labeling their products as “not for consumption” or “for research purposes.”

That said, checking into either agency’s website can help you stay abreast of kratom’s regulatory trajectory.

2. News Outlets

Media companies have a mandate to provide their audiences with factual, timely, and relevant information.

The Canada Gazette is the largest Canadian news website dedicated to legislative publication. So, it’s probably the first platform that will publish any changes in kratom laws.

Other popular news outlets where you can find reliable kratom information in Canada include CBC News, Bloomberg Canada, and Global News.

Note that most of these media companies broadcast different news types. To filter out the noise, focus on health and wellness segments.

3. Online Community Forums

Online community forums are a treasure trove of information for wellness enthusiasts seeking to integrate kratom into their routines. Whether you’re looking for information on kratom’s perceived health benefits, prominent strains, or legality, you’re sure to find it on these groups.

Reddit and Quora are perhaps the most vibrant online community forums in North America. Head to either group, pose your kratom-related queries, and (hopefully), an informed user will be happy to share their insights.

However, keep an open mind while looking for kratom information on online community forums.

As most replies are unverified, commenters can easily misrepresent facts. Some inputs may also be influenced by individual bias in favor of or against kratom.



Photo: Imagemo Design Studio via Pixabay

4. Vendor Websites

Reputable kratom vendors aren't merely fixated on pushing their products. Instead, they delight in sharing insightful kratom facts with their would-be clients.

Before purchasing kratom, head to a vendor's website and check if they maintain a dedicated blog section.

Read every publication intellectually, paying attention to science-backed and officially endorsed facts.

Some kratom vendors also offer newsletter services. If you trust a company well enough, subscribe to their newsletters to stay informed on every new kratom news when it breaks.

5. Herbal Consultants

Herbal consultants focus on researching, testing, and promoting natural remedies. So, they're another go-to resource when looking for kratom-related information.

Some herbal consultants practice independently. Others work within certain industries, particularly wellness, fitness, and lobby groups.

Independent practitioners are more reliable, as they tend to offer balanced perspectives on kratom use.

Note that herbalists aren't regulated in Canada. Therefore, it's best to fact-check every piece of information before acting on it.



Photo: Pexels via Pixabay.

Overcoming Regulatory Hurdles in Kratom Access

Kratom is legal in Canada because there's no outright legislation proscribing it. Canadian wellness enthusiasts can access, distribute, and consume the herb without risking run-ins with the law.

However, Health Canada mandates all kratom vendors within the country to avoid misleading their potential clients. Kratom sellers cannot ascribe definitive pharmacological properties to their products, nor should such supplements carry the official seal of approval by government regulators.

Besides, the CFIA technically prohibits kratom stores from dealing in consumable kratom goods. The onus is on vendors to package their products accordingly.

Photo: KATRIN BOLOVTSOVA via Pexels.

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Why Kratom Express Is a Trusted Name Among Enthusiasts

Our Friends · Saturday, August 9th, 2025

Kratom's everywhere now. And if you've thought about buying it online, you'd be surprised that

it's not as easy as you thought. Why? Some sellers are dishonest. So, one of the biggest hurdles you'll have to navigate is determining who's legit and who's just after your money.

Some sellers overpromise and underdeliver. Others cut corners by buying and sourcing inferior raw materials, followed by substandard production, with the hope you don't notice. Others promise fast shipping only to be slapped by uncommunicative support and late deliveries.

But some, like Canada Kratom Express (CKE), stand above the pack. This provider has been around. People love their products for a reason; you get your order in good quality, and it meets your expectations.

If you're someone who cares what goes in your body, CKE is a name worth knowing when it comes to kratom.

Here's why so many people stick with them.

1. They Third-Party Test Their Kratom



Photo: KamranAydinovia Freepik.

You shouldn't have to worry about your health when using kratom. With a diligent seller like **Canada Kratom Express** that tests all its products, you don't have to wonder if your kratom is safe. They don't just subject their products to rigorous quality tests but rely on third-party labs to certify their purity.

Since regulations when it comes to quality are still lacking in the kratom industry, a purity assurance from a verified independent party is welcome. These tests check that the products have no heavy metals or pesticides, and that the alkaloid levels are right. This way, you are not getting a mystery package but consistent quality.

And they make the COAs easily accessible on the website, or you can ask support for clarification.

Some sellers are not open to disclosing such helpful information, which makes the quality of their products questionable.

2. Tons of Strains to Choose From

People use kratom for all kinds of reasons. It can help relieve pain, ease stress, help you relax after a brutal shift, or even sharpen your focus. Kratom Express understands that, and with their many kratom products from red, green, and white strains, it's easy to find one that fits your needs.

Each product comes with a proper label to avoid confusion. It makes sticking to the recommended dosage easy. So, whether new or experienced, finding what works for you is stress-free.

3. What You Order Is What You Get



Photo: Freepik via Freepik.

Quality consistency is key when buying kratom. After spending all the time researching for the best vendors, it's disappointing to get reduced quality in subsequent purchases. Many kratom enthusiasts love Kratom Express because they get the same quality on reorder. As a reputable kratom seller, they source products from legitimate kratom farmers in Indonesia who cultivate organically.

So, you don't have to bear the inferior quality products because the sellers settled for random suppliers. From planting, cultivating, harvesting, drying, and storage—everything is done by professionals. That means smoother powder and high purity, which is what you need in an effective product.

4. They Have a Solid Reputation

Kratom Express has been doing this since 2016. You don't last that long in the kratom space unless people trust you. By sourcing from reputable sellers and adhering to strict production standards, buyers get what they pay for. There are no hidden charges or concealed information about the products.

And if something goes wrong, they have responsive support on standby that fixes it as soon as possible instead of ghosting you. Their customer support staff is knowledgeable with various kratom strains and can answer all your questions.

5. Helpful Human Customer Support



Photo: Freepik via Freepik.

Ordering kratom can be stressful, especially when you're new. Sometimes you are not sure what strain to try or even how much to take. In case of delays, you might need assurance on when it will arrive. And this is where buying from a provider with easily accessible and responsive customer support makes all the difference.

Need to make an inquiry or seek clarification? Phone calls get answered promptly. You can even email or message them for prompt replies. And they don't just respond, they're helpful, ensuring all your needs are addressed before moving on.

6. Fast Shipping and Discreet Packaging

Ordering online is supposed to be convenient. Although some delays might be unavoidable, you want a provider who goes out of their way to ensure you get your package on time. This is another area in which Kratom Express thrives. Once you place your order, it is processed immediately to ensure that you get it on time.

CKE also offers tracking options. You are not in the dark as you wait for your shipment. With the tracking feature, you can monitor it every minute. Knowing where your stuff is allows you to estimate arrival and plan your needs. If something seems unusual, simply contact them and they'll check on it to streamline delivery.

And when the package arrives at your doorstep, it's clean and discreet. It's well packaged to ensure your privacy is maintained.

Conclusion

Buying kratom online can be challenging, especially for a beginner. Even seasoned users sometimes struggle. But it doesn't have to be that way. When you find a vendor that has your interests at heart—reputable, consistent, and honest—it makes a big difference. Kratom Express checks all those boxes. They've been around and understand what their customers need, and by providing premium products and quality support services, they have quickly become many users' favorite.

If you've suffered a bad experience from inferior kratom before—or simply want to start on the right foot—give Canada Kratom Express a shot.

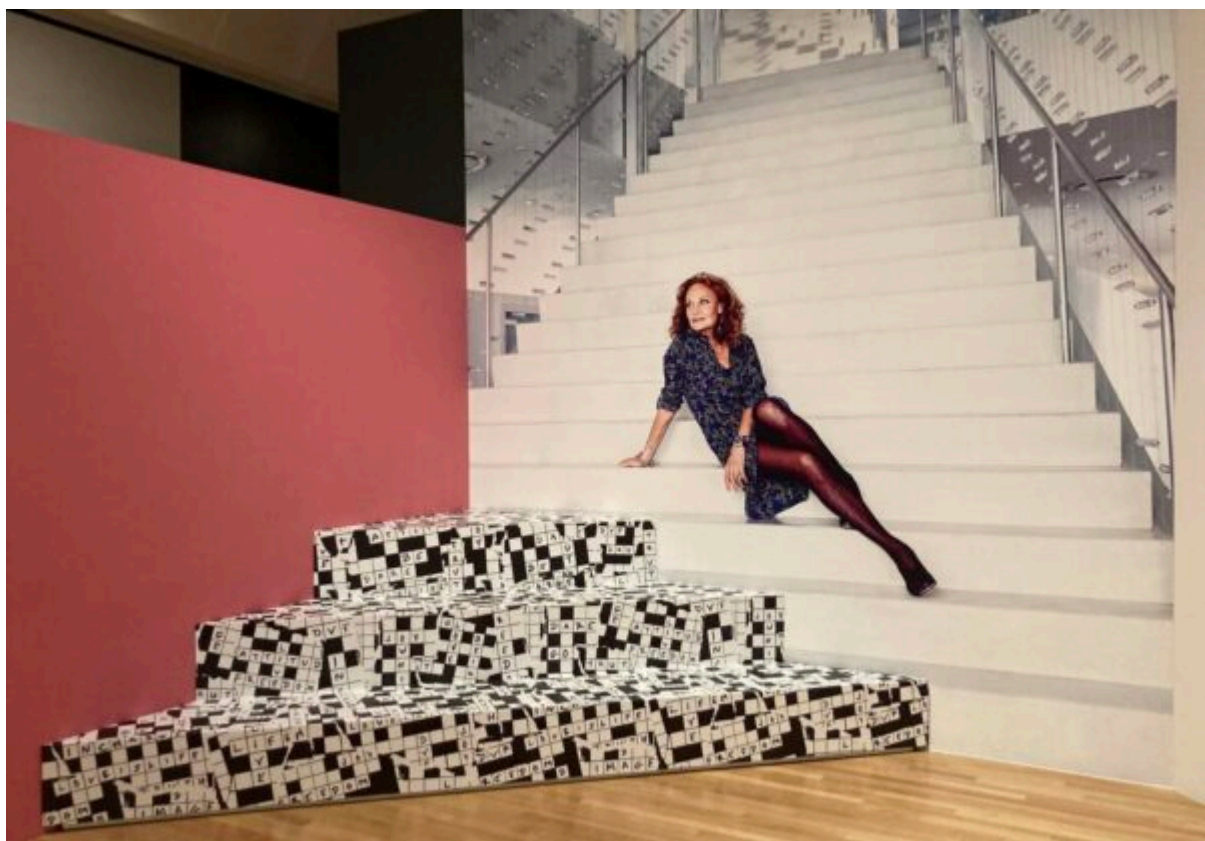
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Diane von Furstenberg at Skirball

Elisa Leonelli · Saturday, August 9th, 2025

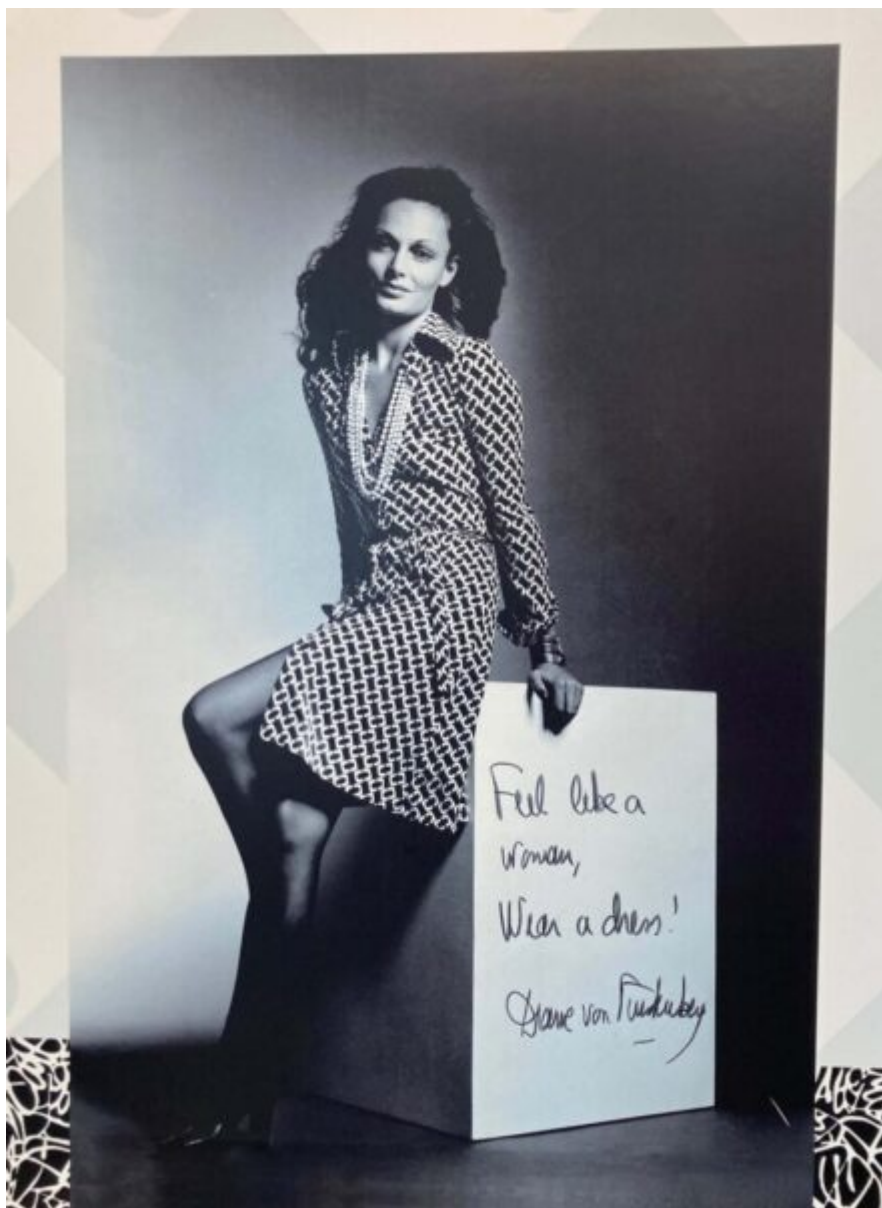


“Diane von Furstenberg: Woman Before Fashion” opened at Skirball Cultural Center October 17, 2024, but I had overlooked it until now.

Last week a friend suggested I watch the documentary *Diane von Furstenberg: Woman in Charge*, which I did, and I realized how unusual the life of this woman of my generation had been. I then explored the exhibit, that you still have time to see, if you hurry, because it closes August 31.

First, [Diane Halfin](#) is a European immigrant, born in Brussels, Belgium, and French speaking. Secondly, she is the daughter of a Holocaust survivor. Thirdly, she became a hugely successful businesswoman in New York in the 1970s and remains so to this day.

Gloria Steinem said: “DVF is an example to women everywhere, from women refugees who must expand language and culture, to women artists and business owners forging a path in a patriarchal world.”



In the documentary, directed by a Muslim woman, Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, Diane gets to tell her life story, and claims to have done it all on her own, but she did get some help. In 1969 she married a German Roman Catholic prince, [Egon von Furstenberg](#), son of Clara Agnelli, had two children with him, Alexander and Tatiana, then in 2001 she married movie mogul [Barry Diller](#). Diller

released “his” memoir, *Who Knew*, on May 20, 2025.

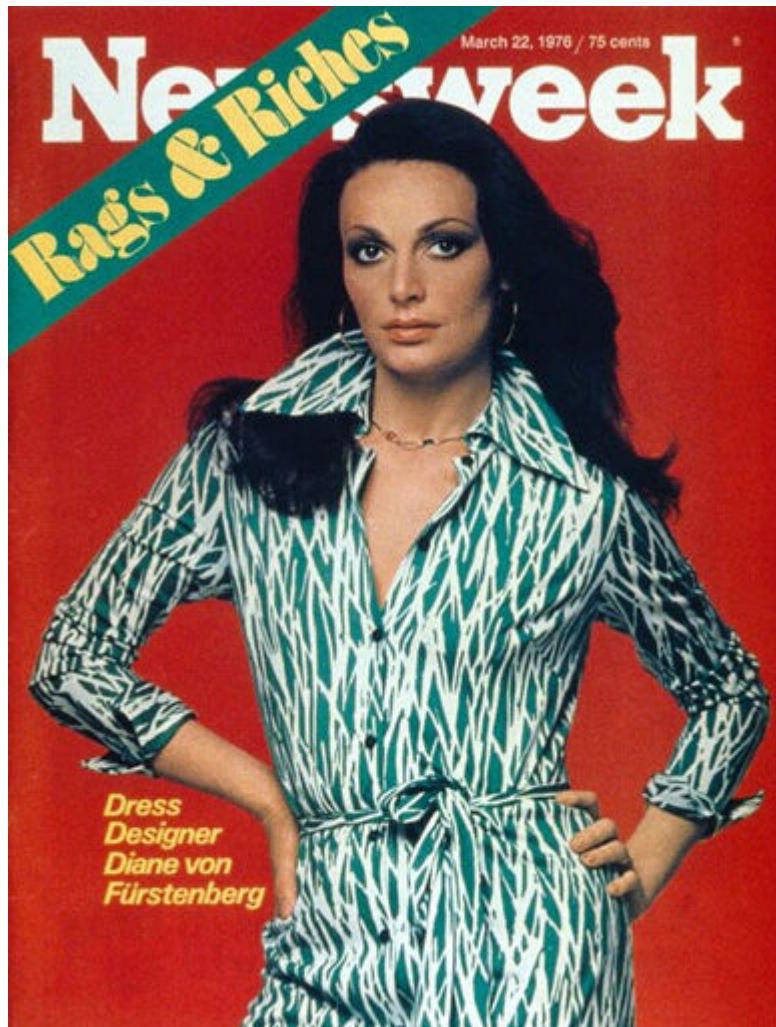
Diane wrote four books: *Diane Von Furstenberg’s Book of Beauty: How to Become a More Attractive, Confident, and Sensual Woman* (1976); *Diane: A Signature Life* (1998); *The Woman I Wanted to Be* (2014); *Own It: The Secret to Life* (2021).



The Skirball exhibit celebrates the 50th anniversary of the iconic wrap dress. I would not go as far as claiming, as a title card says, that it “became a symbol of Women’s Liberation in the 1970s.”



Here's a more apt description: "The wrap-around dress in printed jersey is slipped on like a long shirt. The panels cross over each other, two ribbons circle the waist and are tied in front to close it."



By 1976 DVF had sold over one millions of low priced \$86 wrap dresses landing Diane on the cover of Newsweek.



The designer created other styles through the years, she said “every season is a story. Fabric first, colors are the letters, prints are the words and the silhouette completes the sentence.”



“Life is a journey, enjoy the ride!” The Petite Valise “illustrates Diane’s passion for travel and discovering new places.”



“When you know how to pack, you know how to live.”



In 2019 at the Met Gala, Diane wore a dress inspired by the Statue of Liberty, having been named its “godmother” in 2016. She paid tribute to her mother Lily, who had joined the resistance in German occupied Belgium, was arrested by the Gestapo on May 6, 1944 and sent to Auschwitz. [Watch on YouTube](#)



Diane is still designing fashion lines, check out [her website](#) for the 2025 collection, available for sale online.

We conclude with these words from Diane von Furstenberg: “Once InCharge, we share our power to ADVOCATE. Take action on causes that matter, rally, speak up, organize, and make an impact.”

Photos (c) Elisa Leonelli

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Five Ways Contemporary Art Reflects Social Change

Our Friends · Friday, August 8th, 2025

Contemporary art serves as a mirror to society, capturing shifts in culture, politics, and identity. Artists today push boundaries, using their work to challenge norms and spark conversations. From climate activism to digital revolutions, art evolves alongside global change. Whether through provocative installations or immersive [online real pokies](#), creativity remains a powerful tool for reflection.

The Intersection of Art and Activism

Art has long been a vehicle for protest, but today’s creators blend aesthetics with urgency. Street

murals advocating racial justice and performance pieces critiquing inequality dominate galleries and public spaces. In 2022, over 60% of major art exhibitions featured themes tied to social movements. The rise of digital platforms amplifies these messages, with artists like Ai Weiwei leveraging Instagram to reach millions.

How Technology Redefines Artistic Expression

Digital tools have revolutionised how artists engage with audiences. Virtual reality installations immerse viewers in refugee crises, while NFTs challenge traditional ownership models. A 2023 study found that 45% of contemporary artists now incorporate AI or coding into their practice. This shift reflects broader societal reliance on technology, blurring lines between creator and consumer.

Art as a Catalyst for Cultural Shifts

Minority voices dominate contemporary art scenes, reshaping historical narratives. Indigenous artists reclaim stolen heritage through mixed-media works, while queer collectives redefine representation. Auction sales for underrepresented artists surged by 78% between 2020-2024, signalling market recognition of diverse perspectives. Museums increasingly face pressure to decolonise collections, proving art's role in rewriting history.

Environmental Crisis Through an Artistic Lens

Climate anxiety fuels a wave of eco-conscious art:

- Sculptures from recycled plastics
- Data-driven installations on melting glaciers that provoke visceral reactions
- The 2021 Venice Biennale, which dedicated 30% of its exhibits to environmental themes, reflecting global preoccupations
- Collaborations between artists and scientists, turning research into compelling visual stories that demand policy changes

The Commercialisation of Social Commentary

Paradoxically, activism in art attracts lucrative investments. Corporations commission socially charged pieces for brand reinvention, raising ethical debates. Auction prices for protest art rose by 52% since 2019, revealing capitalism's co-option of dissent. Yet this commercialisation also funds grassroots movements, creating complex alliances between art and commerce.

Contemporary art doesn't just reflect change, it accelerates it. By distilling complex issues into tangible experiences, artists shape public discourse in ways headlines cannot. The next decade will likely see even deeper integration of art and advocacy, proving creativity remains society's most adaptable language.

Photo at top by iSAW Company on Unsplash

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