Artists Re:thinking the Blockchain

Initial Book Offering - Rob Myers
First some big questions
What is art?

We’ve just seen some!

Or look at the BearWhale ➡ ➡ ➡

Artists make art by:

- using techniques (e.g. pen and ink, playing a guitar, token creation)
- and imagery/iconography (e.g. the BearWhale, everyday life, kitties)
- to work with ideas (e.g. triumph over fiat, decentralisation, ownership)
What does art have to do with the blockchain?

In art, the blockchain can be that technique, imagery/iconography or idea.

Art can:

- promote and normalise the idea of the blockchain
- critique and unpack the idea of the blockchain
- depict the blockchain and its effects to let people make up their own minds
What does the blockchain have to do with art?

The blockchain can be used as

- a medium for art (art on the blockchain, not necessarily about it)
- a subject of art (art about the blockchain, not necessarily on it)

Cryptocurrency, tokens and DAOs can be used to fund and organise:

- the creation of art
- the curation and exhibition of art
- the sale and ownership of art
If only there was a convenient guide to this exciting new area...
The history of the book
At CoinFest 2014 Vancouver, local artist Erik Zepka curated the show “Computers and Capital”

By Rob Myers - 13/03/2014

Bitcoin is the leading cryptographic digital currency. Created in 2009 by the now possibly unmasked hacker Satoshi Nakamoto, it polarizes opinion. Some people promote it as the technical embodiment of a libertarian attack on the inequity of "fiat currency" and the power of the state. Others worry that it may fuel speculative bubbles and undermine the stability of the global financial system.
Furtherfield
About us

Furtherfield connects people to new ideas, critical thinking and imaginative possibilities for art, technology and the world around us. Through artworks, labs and debate people from all walks of life explore today’s important questions.

Platforming Finsbury Park

Furtherfield's Gallery and Lab are located in the middle of London's Finsbury Park. Adventurous digital arts experiences radiate from these venues, transforming...
Furtherfield

- Artists collective, web site, gallery, hacker space.
- Founded 1997 in London by artists Ruth Catlow and Marc Garrett.
- Dedicated to “Art, society and social change”.
- Produces events, publications, education, exhibitions.
- Current “Art, Data, Money” series of events and publications, including:
  - “Change Everything Forever” video
  - DAOWO conferences.
  - “New World Order” exhibition.
Torque
Sam Skinner
THFREE TEXTZ

Nook

Torque #2: THE ACT OF READING
print edition

The sentence was like a fence, it went round three fields, had five gates, and joined with several others. It was meaningless on its own and recently electrified. Rectangle in places and entangled in others. No one knew where it started or who put it up. Few trespassed.

It began where it transmitted it was through before b

The book reached for it.
Avoiding assuming brain became the broth.
What’s not, to non-human writing
Torque

- Founded by Nathan Jones and Sam Skinner in the UK in 2012.
- “An itinerant publisher, arts and curatorial platform”.
- Editors of the book along with Ruth & Marc from Furtherfield.
- Good editors make everything better.
Promoting The Book: Bad Shibe
Bad Shibe

- Zine produced to promote “Artists Re:thinking The Blockchain”.
- About a post-everything cryptocurrency-based future.
- With a society that has adopted and corrupted Doge culture to survive.
- The narrator is a tween who doesn’t understand any of this.
- We follow them as they start to question their place in the world…
- …as one or more disasters may be about to befall it.
- I love Lina’s illustrations, the narrator makes the story hard to illustrate.
Wow. It’s two days since I rankchecked AreWeThereYet.

Hello phone! What’s my rank?

Wow. Much slippage. There’s a noob who’s ahead of me in the rankings. Amaze. BangZoom78 has come out of nowhere and is tipping like a true shibe. Truer. Amaze. Such tippage. We tip our fellow shibes to show our appreciation. BangZoom78 must be surrounded by amaze shibes. Very amaze.

Where am I? I was asleep.

Wow. I’m lying on the couch. I like the couch. I like our room. The light coming through the planks over the window is either morning or evening. Wait, if it’s that strong it’s evening. School soon! I was working at the orchard today. ...
The Book
Artists
Re:Thinking
the
Blockchain

Edited by Ruth Catlow, Marc Garrett, Nathan Jones & Sam Skinner
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Plantoid by Primavera Di Filippi
Plantoid

- Sculptures that react to you tipping them in Bitcoin.
- Smart contracts that represent their genome and can commission new ones.
- A model for sustainable funding, creation and exhibition of physical art.
- If successful, they might consume the planet.
Terra0

● A forest that owns and manages itself as a DAO, a “Deodand”.
● A model of algorithmic governance and resource management.
● If successful, they might save the planet.
Blockchain Poetics by Rob Myers
As suggested above, the economic value of the established through its security against double transactions, Bitcoin uses Public Key Cryptography, originally invented in secrecy by the UK govt. in the 1970s, and later in the decade in the USA. PKC is very large, very random numbers to create a modulus, communications can be hidden in. The cypher PKC, and used it to secure email and other communications its application to electronic currency. Cypherpunks have their precedents – the relationship between cryptography and money goes back to the use of mediaeval Europe, the relationship between cryptography to antiquity. But the era of Bitcoin and Wikileaks, and its deployment of PKC is different by
Blockchain Poetics

- The blockchain is the product of particular ideas of freedom and justice.
- The blockchain touches on ideas of identity, value, truth, order and time.
- The blockchain has a shape, a rhythm, evokes other forms, spaces, events.
- To competently promote or critique the blockchain we need a deeper understanding of this politics, philosophy and aesthetics.
- This will involve a learning curve for both proponents and critics.
- A lot of this learning will involve the Cypherpunks.
Art can decentralise this process of learning, and prototype its lessons.
Links

https://keybase.com/robmyers

https://robmyers.org/abcd

https://furtherfield.org/

http://www.torquetorque.net/

https://www.amazon.co.uk/Artists-Re-Blockchain-Ruth-Catlow/dp/0993248748/