

# 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...

# Artists Re:Thinking the Blockchain



Edited by Ruth Catlow, Marc Garrett,  
Nathan Jones & Sam Skinner

# The history of the book



At CoinFest 2014 Vancouver,  
local artist Erik Zepka curated the show  
“Computers and Capital”

## Computers and Capital: The Rise of Digital Currency

By Rob Myers - 13/03/2014



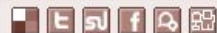
tags

art artdatamoney

bitcoin bitcoins

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 iniquity of "fiat currency" and the power of the

share



download



gallery homepage

**furtherfield**  
GALLERY & COMMONS

Furtherfield

# FURTHERFIELD

WHAT'S ON | DEBATE | PLAN YOUR VISIT | ABOUT US



## 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

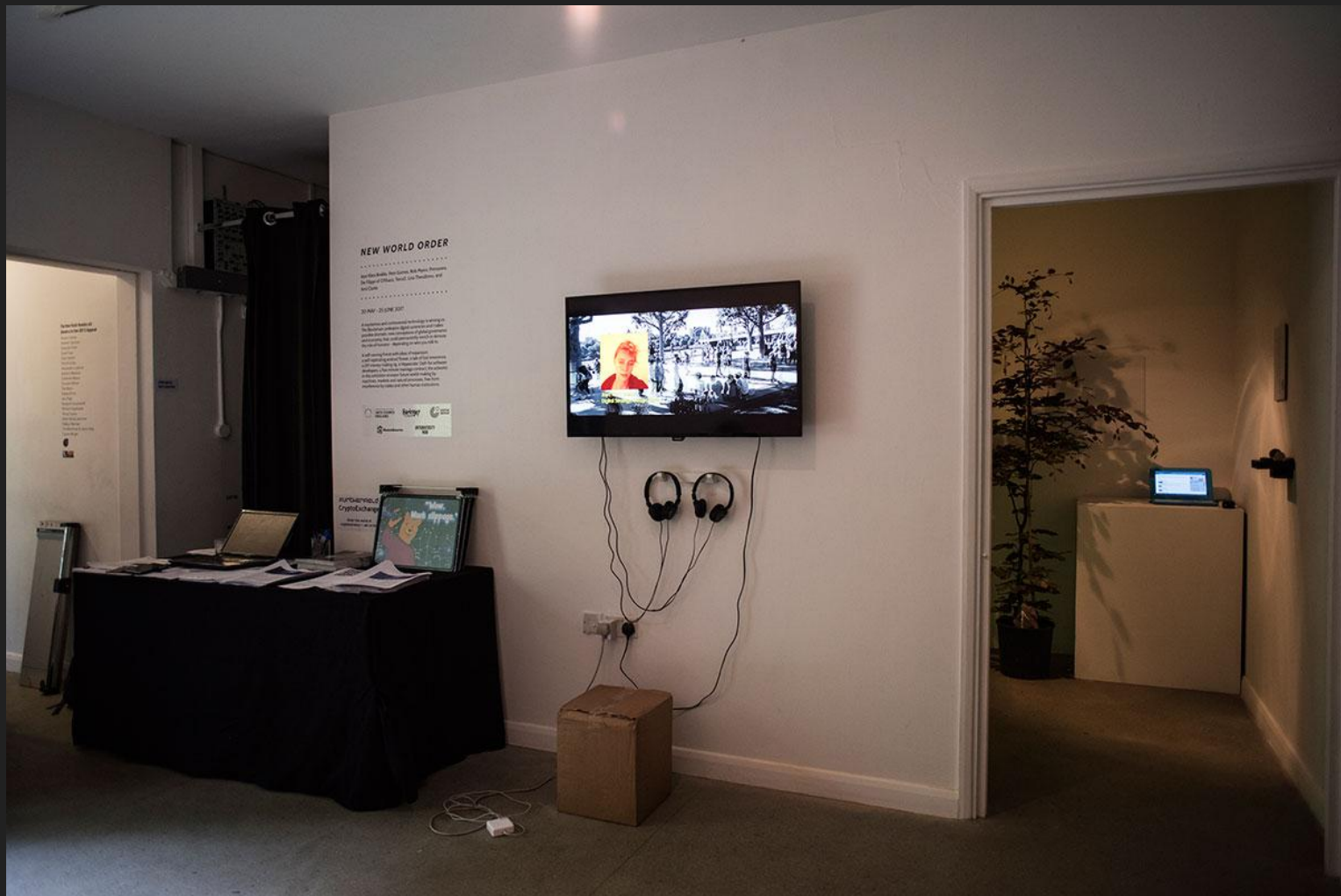
# Furtherfield

- 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



τ

ABOUT

PROJECTS ▾

PUBLICATIONS ▾

SHOP ▾



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 where it went. Fourteen crossed

It began where w  
transmitted it wa  
through before b

The book reached  
reached for it.

Avoiding assumi  
brain became the  
broth.

What's not, to ni  
non-human writin

# 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

"Such future. Very crypto.  
Much catastrophe. Wow."



**BAD SHIBE** A story by Rob Myers Illustrations by Lina Theodorou Afterword by Ruth Catlow

# Bad Shibe

- Zine produced to promote “Artists Re:thinking The Blockchain”.
  - A short story written at the end of 2014, published at the start of 2017.
  - 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

# Contents

Introduction

Documentation

Fictions

Theory

César Escudero Andaluz, Jaya Klara Brekke,  
Theodoros Chiotis, Ami Clarke, Simon Denny,  
The Design Informatics Research Centre  
(Edinburgh), Max Dovey, Mat Dryhurst,  
Primavera De Filippi, Peter Gomes, Elias  
Haase, Juhee Hahm, Max Hampshire,  
Kimberley ter Heerdt, Holly Herndon, Helen  
Kaplinsky, Paul Kolling, Elli Kuruş, Nikki Loef,  
Bjørn Magnhildøen, Rob Myers, Martín Nadal,  
Rachel O'Dwyer, Edward Picot, Paul Seidler,  
Hito Steyerl, Surfatia, Lina Theodorou, Pablo  
Velasco, Ben Vickers, Mark Waugh, Cecilia  
Wee, and Martin Zeilinger

# Documentation

FinBook: Literary content as digital commodity    Rory Gianni et al

Text as Market    Ami Clarke

Plantoid    Primavera De Filippi

Terra0    Paul Seidler, Paul Kolling, and Max Hampshire

Critical mining: blockchain and bitcoin in contemporary art    Martín Nadal & César Escudero Andaluz

The Blockchain: Change everything forever    Peter Gomes

Satoshi Oath    Jaya Klara Brekke and Elias Haase

01.01.20    Kimberley ter Heerdt & Nikki Loef

Role Play Your Way to Budgetary Blockchain Bliss    Pablo Velasco

A Shared Timeline    PWR Studio

Gamer Case Images    Simon Denn

# Fictions

Flying Under A Neutral Flag   Cecilia Wee

History of Political Operating Systems > Interview with Dr. L. Godord   Elli Kuruş

All That Happened   Surfatial

Bad Shibe   Rob Myers and Lina Theodorou

Defixio Nervorum   Theodoros Chiotis

How to Surf   Juhee Hahm

# Theory

If You Don't Have Bread, Eat Art!: Contemporary Art and Derivative Fascisms Hito Steyerl

HAUNTED BY CYBERNETICS / IMMUTABILITY MANTRA Ben Vickers

Blockchain Poetics Rob Myers

Love on the Block Max Dovey

Collections management on the blockchain: A return to the principles of the museum Helen Kaplinsky

Artists Rights in the Era of the Distributed Ledger Mark Waugh

Everything You've Always Wanted to Know About the Blockchain\* Martin Zeilinger

Does digital culture want to be free? Rachel O'Dwyer

Aphantasia - blockchain as medium for art Bjørn Magnhildøen, Noemata

Interview with Holly Herndon and Mat Dryhurst Marc Garrett

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 by Paul Seidler,  
Paul Kolling, and Max Hampshire



# 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

*Security, Work, Power, Proof*

As suggested above, the economic value of the established through its security against double transactions, Bitcoin uses Public Key Cryptography, a system originally invented in secrecy by the UK government in the 1970s, and later in the decade in the USA.<sup>18</sup> PKC uses strings of very large, very random numbers to create a means by which communications can be hidden in. The cypher used is called PKC, and used it to secure email and other communications before its application to electronic currency. Cypher and cryptography have their precedents – the relationship between cryptography and money goes back to the use of media in ancient Europe, the relationship between cryptography and money to antiquity.<sup>19</sup> 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/>