Occupy the blockchain

Artists: ACVM/ Tudor Chiliman, Ada Mușat, Aeul, Alex Baciu, ATOMA, ERPS, HOMEBOY LDJ, Irlo, Kero Zen, Lucian Sandu Milea, Obie Platon, Ortaku, Pisica Pătrată, Pandele, robert OBERT, SeReBe

Curator: Raluca Nestor Oancea

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Special guest: kinema ikon group
Live sound performance: dyslex

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Opening: Wednesday, 21 July, 18:00
21.07 - 04.08.2021

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We are used to seeing the digital space, the internet, as an extension of the public space. Vaccinated against consumerist strategies that take over the pixelated universe with advertising and slogans, we stand against its instrumentalization. We either block online or push ignore or may even get actively involved in various subversive movements. At large, the fight to liberate the digital space is an online transposition of the May '68 protests against a capitalist system pushing the natural and anthropic environments to the role of mere stage set (Guy Debord on the perils of urbanism). The digital space occupy movement started during the '90s, when the net art artists launched Tactical Media manifests against the suffocating strategies of control and centralization, against the advert-filled social-media landscape, opposed to digital art standardization (limiting Flash models, predefined menus, etc.)

Behold a new technology, the NFT, aspiring to the same goals of digital democratization and freedom. NFT Art or Crypto art, is developing freely and is distributed following the crypto-coin model. Each work that is minted on one of the profile-platforms is linked into the blockchain, digitally-guaranteed by an automatically generated unique code, free from the control of any bank or financial consortium. The machine-given freedom is not risk-free. Should one lose the unique access code to the virtual wallet, no human or banking authority is able to intervene to stop the investment dissolution in a virtual void (see the legend of the eccentric crypto-millionaire Mircea Popescu, found dead on a beach on Costa Rica, his fortune all but lost).

Shortly after its launch, the NFT is still creating a lot of confusion. What can a digital collage, a tweet, the original code of www, have in common with basketball plays or an animated

meme of the Nyan Cat? What is the difference between selling postcards with Michelangelo's works and launching an NFT copy, following the Uffizi gallery model? Do we select an open platform, where anyone can upload anything, or an elitist one such as SuperRare? In Romania, church goers are told that only through buying an NFT are they able to have a sneak peek into the altar of the People's Salvation Cathedral, at the holy icon of the Platytera Virgin Mary.

In our opinion, just as the internet was close to being overtaken by the dotcom neoliberalism, and just as social media underwent its Social Dilemma, the Crypto danger for art is to be limited to recirculating influencer brands, to the simple re-gurgitation of name value-spreading, forgetting to make art. Outlining an aesthetic depends on how artists respond to relaunching a Tactical Media manifest, occupying the medium with their own messages.

And who is more suited for the blockchain occupy movement than street-artists, they themselves shaped by the guerilla-fight against the normalization the public space? It is within this context that Anca Poterasu Gallery launches a unique NFT collection gathering the most important Romanian graffiti artists and muralists: ACVM/ Tudor Chiliman, Ada Mușat, Aeul, Alex Baciu, ATOMA, ERPS, HOMEBOY LDJ, Irlo, Kero Zen, Lucian Sandu Milea, Obie Platon, Ortaku, Pisica Pătrată, Pandele, robert OBERT, SeReBe.

These mysterious personas, hidden in plain sight even as their names are written all over city-walls, undergo a hybrid practice, between street art and social activism, contemporary dance, illustration, comics, digital graphics, installation, painting (with punk, pop, surrealist, fantasy, sf tattoo-art influences). There are the ones that founded the New Mural Order (Irlo, Obie Platon, Kero Zen), have set records for the largest murals in the country, or the largest wall on Arthur Verona Street (Irlo, Alex Baciu), have collaborated with famous musicians (Obie Platon and Roger Waters), have launched experimental spaces, catalogues, cultural projects and intermedia festivals (Tudor Chiliman and the Waha Festival, Lucian Sandu Milea and Carol 53, Pisica Pătrată and his famous art-books, Robert OBERT and Profeția Urbană [The Urban Prophecy, en.]).

Their artwork has influenced public space and European galleries (Albania, Belgium, Czech Republic, Croatia, Switzerland, Finland, Germany, Greece, France, Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal, United Kingdom, Moldovan Republic, Serbia, Spain, Hungary) or in the US, have taken over exotic spaces in China, Morocco, the Azores Islands.

This group of public space reformists have created street-art inspired works in the context of an original digital art collection. In order to express their disapproval towards the NFT invasion of mere copies of museum pieces, the artists destroyed any physical trace of the works. Especially relevant to this point is the literal cut-through of Aeul's famous street art pig

icon. The purpose of the collection is to infuse the NFT platforms with a critical discourse regarding various technological, political, biological control strategies. To this end, we are debating on how technology impacts on various degrees of individual freedom which is already conditioned by a mediatic society that facilitates the dissolution of the self and Authenticity.

The NFT collection will be launched on Blockchain.art (BCA). Designed by art world professionals for art world professionals, BCA is a data- base+marketplace for digital art forms that applies a dedicated blockchain infrastructure to the art market. BCA has launched a beta version of the application built in the Polkadot Network ecosystem. In particular, the BCA closed beta is built on RMRK.app, which is an NFT platform on the Kusama Network. The Polkadot and Kusama Networks use a proof-of-stake protocol, which minimizes energy consumption. For that reason, it is more sustainable and scalable than other blockchains.

The street-artists' special guest is the Kinema Ikon group, the initiators of digital media art in Romania, with an installation which recontextualizes the NFT collection.

The event features a special live sound performance starting at 20.00h by dyslex, invited through the AFCN project eART35.

Partner of the event: National Museum of Romanian Literature.

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Raluca Oancea (Nestor) is a lecturer at The National University of Arts in Bucharest where she teaches Aesthetics and New Media Art. She holds a degree in computer science and one in philosophy of culture, together with a Master of Fine Arts and a PhD in new media theory. Her doctoral thesis examines the connection between new media and contemporary art, the presence of classical and new aesthetic categories in the field of photography, cinema and new media art. She is also an independent curator and a writer for cultural and academic magazines such as: Praesens, Camera Austria, Ekphrasis, Eikon, Vremea, Scena9, Zeppelin, Revista ARTA, Revista de Filosofie, Annals of the University of Bucharest.