



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 30, 2021

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MCA Denver presents...NFTs: Putting the fun in non-fungible tokens, a four-part series on the NFT phenomenon, begins October 20

This free, virtual program, sponsored by Sotheby's, will detail the history of blockchain technology and explore the future of art in the digital world

Denver, CO - The Museum of Contemporary Art Denver (MCA Denver) will present a free, four-part virtual series on the phenomenon of NFTs, or non-fungible tokens, the history of blockchain technology, and the future of art in the digital world. Lead sponsorship of this program is provided by Sotheby's. The dates for each episode are October 20, October 27, November 3, and November 10, 2021. Episodes air at 5PM MST/7PM EST. Each is free to attend and can be found on MCA Denver's [YouTube channel](#). Participants can RSVP [here](#) to receive a direct link to the livestream.

The series, titled *NFTs: Putting the fun in non-fungible tokens*, will take participants on a journey that explores how blockchain's impact on the art market has something much broader to teach us not only about what we value but about how we reimagine the art world. Participants will learn from experts about the history of NFTs and why the NFT phenomenon has the potential to upend systems of artistic production, ownership, collecting, and audience engagement with art.

Nora Burnett Abrams, MCA Denver Mark G. Falcone Director, and Amy Whitaker, leading blockchain researcher and Assistant Professor in Visual Arts Administration at New York University's Steinhardt School, will host four, one-hour episodes, each of which invites a variety of experts and practitioners—including blockchain inventors, researchers, artists, collectors, museum professionals, and market specialists—to participate in collectively defining the contours of the NFT phenomenon.

"The recent explosion of popular interest in NFTs is widely acknowledged but little understood. With this series we want to speak directly about the technology, its origins, and its creative possibilities. This will be a primer for anyone who is curious about NFTs and wants to hear directly from experts about how this phenomenon emerged and where it might lead," said Nora Burnett Abrams, MCA Denver Director. "MCA Denver's programming often punctures the pretensions of contemporary art and, instead, allows us to address serious issues without taking ourselves too seriously. We hope that participants will find this program illuminating, as we peel back the layers of the wild and complex history of blockchain technology, from its humble beginnings to the \$69 million Beeple sale to the numerous possibilities the future holds for NFTs, artists, and the art world."

“Underneath the glittery cloud cover of stratospheric sales prices for NFTs, there are quieter but potentially transformational experiments being undertaken by artists—to retain equity in their work, to pool risk, or to build community. In this series, we get to talk with people who built the blockchain itself as an art project, beginning thirty years ago, and we also get to talk with those who are imagining the future. We want everyone to feel invited to understand the technology, history, and current lay of the land, and to join in the conversation about what comes next,” said Amy Whitaker, a longtime expert on blockchain applications in the arts and Assistant Professor in Visual Arts Administration at New York University’s Steinhardt School.

Nina del Rio, Sotheby’s Head of Advisory, commented: “Since launching our first NFT sale earlier this year, with the leading digital artist Pak, we’ve had a tremendous response from existing and new collectors who are interested in this burgeoning new art movement. Part of the process in introducing NFT sales to traditional collectors, as well as institutions, has been discussing the genesis of NFT’s and the important role they are playing in the digital and physical art world by introducing a new generation of creators and suggesting new ways of appreciating art. We are proud to partner with the MCA Denver on this initiative. We are confident NFTs have staying power in the art world, and will make a lasting impact on how we perceive digital art as part of the larger conversation about the future of contemporary art.”

In episode one, *Origin Stories*, participants will learn how and why the blockchain was invented in the first place, how it emerged from a knowledge story not a money story, and how we can view blockchain as a still evolving art project unto itself. In this episode, Abrams and Whitaker will build an understanding of the timeline of blockchain technology from creation to today, define what an NFT is, and open the questions for now NFTs might change entrenched power structures in the art world, inviting artists into new forms of economic sustainability, and influence how we think about ownership and value in the larger world. This episode airs on October 20, 2021.

In episode two, airing October 27, 2021, Abrams and Whitaker will start to talk *about* and not *around* NFTs by talking with artists who are making them. Beginning with Kevin McCoy, who made the very first NFT in 2014 (and made the blockchain work *Public Key/Private Key* with Jennifer McCoy), participants will see hands-on how artists have approached the production of an NFT, how they think about NFTs politically, and what they think NFTs mean for the future of art.

Episode three, airing November 3, 2021, will feature Beatriz Ramos and Judy Mam, the founders of the collaborative drawing platform Dada on their Creeps & Weirdos NFT sale, and as well as collectors, market experts, and auction-house practitioners on the complexities of buying and collecting NFTs artistically, technologically, and legally under frameworks that include anti-money-laundering and privacy regulation.

In the final episode of this series, airing November 10, 2021, Abrams and Whitaker will explore who is still excluded in the NFT phenomenon, the possibilities for greater inclusion and equity, and the ways in which NFTs could keep evolving in the future. In part one of this episode, we talk with artists and gallerists who are imagining more equitable structures of the future, and in part two we talk with museum practitioners on the role of NFTs in new forms of fundraising, collections care, and community governance.

About Nora Burnett Abrams [headshot attached]: Nora Burnett Abrams is the Mark G. Falcone Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver. Prior to this role, she was the museum's chief curator, responsible for its exhibition program and special artists' projects. Her career began at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, where she worked on the *Sol LeWitt on the Roof* and *Robert Rauschenberg: Combines* exhibitions. Since arriving in Denver in 2010, she has organized over 40 exhibitions and authored or contributed to over a dozen accompanying publications. She has taught art history at New York University and lectured throughout the country on modern and contemporary art. She holds art history degrees from Stanford University (B.A.), Columbia University (M.A.), and a Ph.D. from the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University.

About Amy Whitaker [headshot attached]: Amy Whitaker is a leading blockchain researcher in the arts and assistant professor in Visual Arts Administration at New York University's Steinhardt School. Her research explores the frictions between art and markets and proposes pioneering systems of economic support for artists using fractional equity and blockchain. She has advised the company Bitmark since 2014, and her profile of Stuart Haber and Scott Stornetta, inventors of the proto-blockchain, was published in the *Wall Street Journal*. Her academic papers have appeared in major journals such as *Management Science*, *Journal of Cultural Economics*, and *International Journal of Cultural Policy*. Her work on Equity for Artists was a finalist in *Fast Company's* World Changing Ideas Competition, and she is the 2021 recipient of the European Academy of Management's Edith Penrose Award for trailblazing research. Her work has been cited in the *Financial Times*, *Time Magazine*, *Fast Company*, *The Atlantic*, *The Guardian*, *Harper's*, *The Art Newspaper*, *Artsy*, *Hyperallergic*, and many others. She is the author of three books including *Museum Legs*, *Art Thinking*, and *Economics of Visual Art*, recently published by Cambridge University Press. She holds degrees from Williams College (B.A.), Yale University (M.B.A.), University College London (M.F.A.), and University of London (Ph.D.).

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About MCA Denver

The Museum of Contemporary Art Denver (MCA Denver) explores the art and culture of our time through rotating exhibitions and public educational programs. Featuring international, national, and regional artists, MCA Denver offers a wide range of exhibitions promoting creative experimentation with art and ideas. Through adult and youth education programs and other creative events, the museum serves as an innovative forum for a culturally engaged community.

Current + Upcoming MCA Denver Exhibitions

Jason Moran: Bathing the Room with Blues - September 10, 2021-January 30, 2022

Deborah Roberts: I'm - September 10, 2021-January 30, 2022