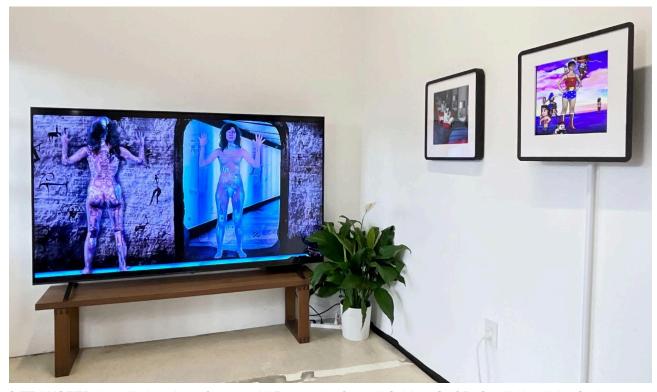# TRANSFER Data Trust Introduces Solidarity Exchange Model for Digital Art Preservation and Ownership

Funding secured for establishing an Artist-Owned Decentralized Archive and Cooperative Value Exchange Network

© TRANSFER, Installation view of restored AR artworks from 'A Subject Self-Defined' (2016) by Carla Gannis in Miami, FL December 2023.

MIAMI, FL — June 10, 2024 — TRANSFER Data Trust is excited to establish its artist-owned decentralized archive and cooperative value exchange network, thanks to support from the Knight Art + Tech Expansion Fund, Filecoin Foundation for the Decentralized Web (FFDW) and Filecoin Foundation. This innovative project offers a new approach to media art conservation, valuation, and governance. Initiated in 2023 with early support from Gray Area and Filecoin Foundation, the nonprofit Trust aims to preserve artworks for future generations, ensuring their continuity and safeguarding their legacy.

Cross-Disciplinary Collaboration

Through the Knight Art + Tech Expansion Fund, Knight Foundation supports the long-term sustainability of artists and arts organizations by providing practitioners with the tools they need to increase the integration of technology in their work. The Data

Trust will use the new funds – a grant total of $120,000 – to convene a team of researchers, technologists, conservators, and archivists to support the founding artists in establishing their archives. The matching grant from Filecoin Foundation for the Decentralized Web (FFDW) and Filecoin Foundation makes it possible for the Data Trust to develop the technological infrastructure required to sustain the initiative.

"TRANSFER is at the forefront of helping artists to experiment with new media and to envision new futures enabled by technology," said Koven Smith, Knight Foundation's Senior Director of Arts, "and we are thrilled to support that work."

"As an organization dedicated to preserving humanity's most important information, FFDW is delighted to support TRANSFER's work to make decentralized technologies accessible for artists," said Marta Belcher, President & Chair of FFDW.

TRANSFER artists including Huntrezz Janos, Carla Gannis, Lorna Mills, Rosa Menkman, and Eva Papamargariti are leading the way by collaborating on conservation and decentralized tech-enabled archive management workflows with Kelani Nichole, TRANSFER Founder, Wade Wallerstein, TRANSFER Director and Curator at Gray Area, and Regina Harsanyi, Associate Curator of Media Arts at Museum of the Moving Image and Preventive Conservator.

The Trust supports each artist's archive in unique ways, by partnering with [NYU Tandon School of Engineering Integrated Design and Media Program](#) to develop experimental engineering and care protocols. For Janos, the trust will liberate her artwork from the confines of the Meta ecosystem, by making it fully accessible to the public through open-source technology. In Gannis' case, a complete digital restoration process is underway to salvage her work from a now-defunct third-party application, exemplifying the Trust's commitment to preserving artistic legacies. For Mills, the Trust will re-stage and re-document physical installations of her online artworks. For Menkman and Papamargariti, the Trust will ensure their virtual artworks rendered in 3D software remain accessible to viewers and true to their artistic vision for generations to come. These real-life use cases serve as design inputs for a revolutionary approach to preserving technology-based cultural artifacts.

"These grants will empower us to create a cooperative model that directly addresses inequities in the contemporary art market," says Kelani Nichole, Founder of TRANSFER. "We are so grateful to be a 2024 recipient of the Art + Tech Expansion Fund in Miami, and we're thrilled with the commitment to this project through FFDW and Filecoin Foundation to match the Knight Foundation grant. Everything about this project, from concept to funding to execution exemplifies what cross-disciplinary collaboration between the arts and technology space can and should be."

New Solidarity Exchange Model for Preservation, Ownership, and Value

TRANSFER Data Trust is an open protocol for appraising, preserving, conserving, and exchanging time-based media art. The initiative seeks to establish a cooperative trust model that is co-owned and co-governed by the founding members. This model allows artists to grow equity in their IP by pooling resources and managed assets, and together the entire Trust benefits. Profits from acquisitions via the Trust and growing valuation of the artworks underwrite the cost of preventive conservation and care for the artworks into the future – providing a tangible benefit to artists, collectors, and the entire arts ecosystem. By purchasing art from the Trust, collectors and institutions are joining a collective care network where artists, conservationists, and technologists collaborate to uphold the care of the art into the future. This solidarity exchange model, in which everyone benefits, also ensures that the Trust sustains itself in perpetuity.

The Data Trust redefines the role of 21st-century art galleries and shifts power to artists by leveraging principles of data sovereignty backed by smart contracts and decentralized storage. This emergent model, driven by the real needs of contemporary artists, is revolutionary because it allows artists to maintain ownership and agency over their data. The Trust will safeguard this data using decentralized storage nodes located within the artists' studios, that store encrypted copies of each other's archives for redundancy and safekeeping. Private collectors and museums who acquire artworks backed by the trust can also opt-in to host a decentralized storage node and back the Trust. Long-term storage contracts will enable artists to set the terms of exchange for their work, and allow them to retain control and provenance on future sales, permitted use and exhibition loans of their work in perpetuity.

Safeguarding Data in the Wake of AI

At a moment where the proliferation of AI – and the corporate use of personal data to train AI models – is rampant, it's more important than ever for artists and creatives to retain ownership over their data. In traditional art markets, artists often hand over the management of their work and IP to galleries, which sell it to collectors and split the profit, leaving artists with minimal control over their work and its value. With the rise of AI and simulation technologies, it has become increasingly difficult to manage rights and access, and guarantee authenticity of artistic intellectual property. TRANSFER Data Trust changes this dynamic by giving artists agency over their data, and thus their artwork's value, in a decentralized system that operates outside of these extractive practices.

"The proliferation of AI is increasingly stripping artists of their value by turning their creations into data that can be sourced and used across the internet," says founding artist Rosa Menkman. "The Data Trust offers a solution by allowing artists to own and sovereignly manage their data, ensuring we have control over the use of our work and its value for the long term."

TRANSFER Data Trust convenes leaders in the field to ensure rights management and IP protections are woven into the collective's workflows and smart contracts that hold data committed to the Trust. This model can scale to all creative industries, where artists seek control over how their data sets are used, including, but not limited to training AI models.

By leveraging open cultural infrastructure and introducing a solidarity-based exchange model, TRANSFER Data Trust aims to scale institutional and public access to digital art, while maintaining these works into the future and protecting artists rights to own their data. "The potential to scale this data sovereignty model for more equitable social media, generative AI, or biotech is endless," says Gray Area Executive Director, Barry Threw. "This project demonstrates the ability of artist-led interdisciplinary research to produce cutting-edge, values-driven innovation for a fraction of the cost of more traditional approaches."

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TRANSFER Data Trust is a decentralized artist-owned archive and cooperative value exchange network. The mission of the non-profit trust is to maintain artworks in perpetuity, ensuring their preservation and access across generations. The Data Trust manages and grows the value of digital assets by leveraging smart contracts and decentralized storage. Backed by a network of specialists, the emergent care model offers a new approach to media art valuation, conservation and governance.

TRANSFER Data Trust is made possible thanks to generous funding from the Knight Art + Tech Expansion Fund, Filecoin Foundation, and Filecoin Foundation for the Decentralized Web and is supported by Gray Area and NYU Tandon School of Engineering Integrated Design and Media Program.

The Knight Art + Tech Expansion Fund seeks to support the long term sustainability of artists and arts organizations in our Knight communities by providing practitioners with the tools they need to increase the integration of technology in their work.

Gray Area is a San Francisco-based nonprofit cultural incubator with a mission to cultivate, sustain, and apply antidisciplinary collaboration — integrating art, technology, science, and the humanities — towards a more equitable and regenerative future. Gray Area is the fiscal sponsor for TRANSFER Data Trust.

Filecoin Foundation for the Decentralized Web (FFDW) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with the mission of preserving humanity's most important information. FFDW focuses on charitable activities, including building and supporting the decentralized web community, funding research and development, and educating the public about the decentralized web.

Filecoin Foundation facilitates the open source governance of the Filecoin network, funds research and development projects for decentralized technologies, and supports the growth of the Filecoin ecosystem and community. Filecoin is the world's largest decentralized storage network.