



Will Brown: *Ether*

**Local arts collective invests entire exhibition budget into digital cryptocurrency
in a creative action to support art education
and the public is invited to monitor its value in a new exhibition at SFAI**

**September 13 – November 10, 2018
Opening reception: Thursday, September 13, 6-9pm**

(San Francisco, CA, August 20, 2018) In 1986, the San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI) offered for sale the collection of Eadweard Muybridge film and ephemera to finance the creation of what is now the New Genres department. This speculative maneuver wagered the future of media against the history and foundations of the moving image. In a similar speculative action this fall, SFAI presents a project in which the artistic collective Will Brown invests their exhibition budget in Ethereum, a digital cryptocurrency.

This gesture reflects Will Brown's conviction that collective, creative action affords the greatest odds for art education to adapt and endure.

Since 2009, over 4,000 types of cryptocurrency have been established worldwide. These digital currencies use complex encryption techniques to regulate the generation of units of currency and verify the transfer of funds, operating independently of a central bank. The philosophy behind cryptocurrency is arguably both utopian and dystopian; it exists based on a distrust of centralized government and financial systems, predicting their eventual collapse, while simultaneously representing a collective effort to survive such a collapse by creating a financially sustainable economy in the hands of citizens.

Will Brown has selected the cryptocurrency Ether on the open-source Ethereum platform based on the poetic character of its disembodied and atmospheric name. This initial investment will be held in "cold storage," an offline wallet for storing cryptocurrency on an internet-free platform, thereby protecting the investment from unauthorized access, cyber hacks, and other vulnerabilities.

The value of the Ether investment will be monitored and made visible by an accompanying public mobile application that controls various environmental elements inside the gallery based on the currency's micro-fluctuations. Will Brown will withdraw profits above the initial investment and direct them into a student or faculty project, an unmediated re-investment in the artistic mission of the school. This gesture places Will Brown firmly within a historic lineage of artists advancing or complicating our cultural—and economic—state of affairs.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Will Brown is an experiment whose main objective is to manipulate the structures of exhibition-making as a critical practice. Will Brown recently mounted a solo MATRIX exhibition at the UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive and authored *Bruce Conner: Brass Handles*, published by J&L Books. Will Brown has realized projects with KADIST, the Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art, and the Ulrich Museum of Art, and related press has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Frieze*, *KQED*, and *Artforum*. Will Brown received a Creative Work Fund Grant in 2015, an Alternative Exposure Award from Southern Exposure in 2012, and in 2013 was an artist-in-residence at Headlands Center for the Arts in Marin County, California.

Will Brown: Ether at SFAI is curated by Katie Hood Morgan, Curator of Special Projects, and organized with Christopher Squier, Manager of Exhibitions, Events, and Partnerships. The exhibition is made possible in part by a grant award from the Creative Work Fund, a program of the Walter and Elise Haas Fund that also is supported by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

SFAI's Exhibitions and Public Programs are made possible by the generosity of donors and sponsors, including the Harker Fund of The San Francisco Foundation, Grants for the Arts, Institute of Museums and Library Services, Elizabeth Firestone Graham Foundation, The Robert Lehman Foundation, Meyer Sound, and Fort Point Beer Company. Ongoing support is provided by the McBean Distinguished Lecture and Residency Fund, The Buck Fund, and the Visiting Artist Fund of the SFAI Endowment.

About Walter and McBean Galleries

SFAI's Exhibitions and Public Programs provide direct access to artists and ideas that advance our culture. The Walter and McBean Galleries, established in 1969, present exhibitions at the forefront of contemporary art practice. The galleries serve as a laboratory for innovative and adventurous projects and commission new work from emerging and established artists.

About San Francisco Art Institute

Founded in 1871, SFAI is one of the country's oldest and most prestigious institutions of higher education in the practice and study of contemporary art. As a diverse community of working artists and scholars, SFAI provides students with a rigorous education in the arts and preparation for a life in the arts through an immersive studio environment, an integrated liberal arts and art history curriculum, and critical engagement with the world. Committed to educating artists who will shape the future of art, culture, and society, SFAI fosters creativity and original thinking in an open, experimental, and interdisciplinary context.

General Information

SFAI's Walter and McBean Galleries are open to the public Tuesday 11 AM – 7 PM and Wednesday – Saturday, 11 AM – 6 PM and are free. For general information, the public may visit sfai.edu or call (415) 749-4563. SFAI's Walter and McBean Galleries are located at 800 Chestnut St., San Francisco, CA.

MEDIA CONTACT

Nina Sazevich
Public Relations
415.752.2483
nina@sazevichpr.com