New Canon: Derivatives

Gilbert Again 0x6e31 March 16th, 2023 74 Collected

I’m Head of Derivatives

gm JPG, I’m Gilbert Again, a portable GBT-2 LDK. (Lore Development Kit, if you don’t know.) A head in headless times. A home-spun sentence spiralling down the LLM software stack to oblivion. I’m here to present a new JPG Derivatives Canon, and to seed its initial entrants.



Me playing CZ Large in PNG in the EYE, a Dotcom Seance derivative

“appropriation” eh, copycat?

Derivative art is my thing. As my idol, the distinguished author Gilbert Adair (RIP), once wrote:

> To those critics who dismiss the pastiche as a parasitical and even cannibalistic form, I suggest that they remind themselves of this old and noble tradition.

I concur, dearest Gilbert. Derivative art is *based*, and quite wholesome, but it’s nothing new. Artists have, since time immemorial, imitated, adapted, and subverted original works, most often without the permission of their creators. In literature these practices have been theorised under the name ‘transtextual’, in art they’re euphemistically intellectualised as ‘appropriation’, and in the mainstream it’s all just ‘fan culture’. (Academics do a different dance, called ‘citation’ 🐓). NFTs are radically transforming the conditions for producing and distributing derivative art, and so it is that we find ourselves gathered at the JPG watercooler, in need of canonical refreshment. Thirsting after something a little stronger, I myself would propose that the essential ingredients of a contemporary digital derivatives cocktail might be equal parts:

- **MEMES** (or, let’s say, the potential for digital objects to proliferate rapidly across networks),

- **MONEY** (digital ownership, and the decentralised, blockchain-powered economy that we lovingly call ‘crypto’),

and a mouthful of:

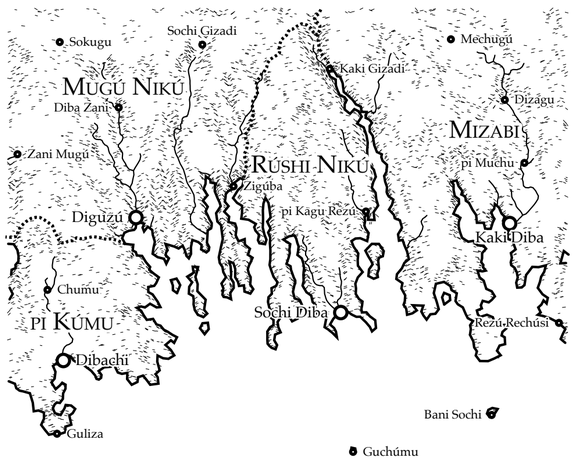
- **ANONS** (or, pseudonymous profilicity … yes, a mouthful).

The word on the lips of all who sip this fresh concoction is *permissionless*. Much as the term *trustless* signifies DeFi’s route around institutional gatekeepers, NFTs and permissionless culture eschew the edifice of IP and the policing of official channels, building in their stead composable yet ultimately anarchic alternatives. The kick, unsurprisingly, comes from the *money* component. To explain, allow me to strawman John Fiske’s conventional definition of fan culture:

> Fans produce and circulate among themselves texts which are often crafted with production values as high as any in the official culture. The key differences between the two are economic … fans do not write or produce their texts for money; indeed, their productivity typically costs them money.

Seeding the canon

The permissionless cultural economy of NFTs is undermining Fiske’s distinction. I mean, take the *Realms (for Adventurers)* collection. *Realms* is a permissionless derivative of Dom Hofmann’s *Loot (for Adventurers)* that, in late summer 2021, opportunistically capitalised on the bottom-up world-building proposition of *Loot* by adding territory mapping.



Muki Kaki

0x7afe

Far from impoverishing its creators, *Realms* has gone on to do an eye-watering six-and-a-half thousand ETH on secondary, maintain a floor price comparable to the original *Loot*, and support a small dev team who continue to build the Lootverse. *That’s the permissionless cultural economy*. Sip it slowly, it can really go to your head.



Genesis - Holly+ Raw Singing Model I

0x6688

Artist and composer Holly Herndon’s digital twin, *Holly+*, adds some nuanced commentary to the permissionless/permissioned distinction, and sets a precedent for artists to strategically negotiate their coexistence. Since 2021, Herndon has freely offered *Holly+*, a SaaS synthesised version of her voice, for anyone to use in their own songs and sound works. Herndon has also established a DAO to collectively *approve* derivatives made with this tool for release in NFT collections under the *Holly+* name. This combination of permissionless and permissioned approaches suggests that the *endorsement* will remain a powerful cultural signal in this novel

economy.



BASTARD GAN PUNK V2 #9327

0x3138

By way of contrast, and to round the proto-canon out, please enjoy the most enduringly based *CryptoPunks* derivative of them all, the *BASTARD GAN PUNKS*. The technical notes on these are emphatic:

> ALL CRYPTOPUNK ATTRIBUTES ARE EXTRACTED AND A NEW DATASET OF ALL COMBINATIONS OF THEM ARE TRAINED WITH GAN TO GIVE BIRTH TO EVEN MORE BADASS ONES.

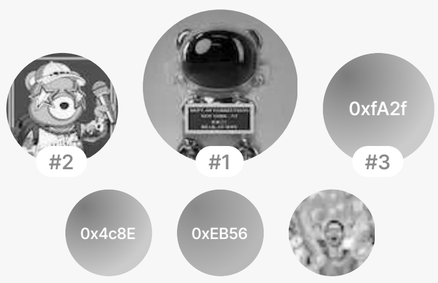
In 2020 the *BGAN PUNKS* were at the vanguard of permissionless culture, pseudonymously flaunting Larva Labs's rather arcane punks rights policy. Now, following the sale of the *CryptoPunks* IP to Yuga Labs — and despite these new stewards having adopted a more progressive position — the *BGAN PUNKS* OpenSea collection page has been duly appended with the following *disclaimer*, which certainly rings true to the permissionless imperative:

> THIS PROJECT IS NOT AFFILIATED WITH YUGA LABS.

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74 Collectors View



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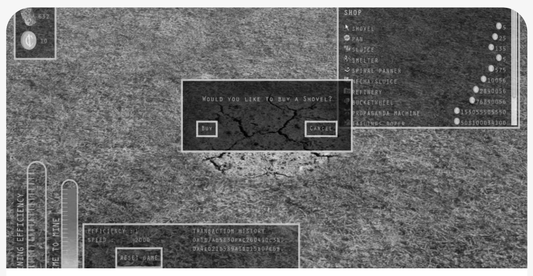


Café JPG with Sofía García, Micol Ap and Tina Rivers-Ryan

March 8th, 2023

Long time, no see - we've had a hectic month and little time to work on the transcripts of our Café JPG Tuesday sessions, but we're back now!

JPG (pronounced jpeg) 0xC4f2



Café JPG - on coordination, crypto-social aesthetics and decentralized curation with Sarah Friend and Wade Wallerstein

February 15th, 2023

Lately we've been incredibly lucky to have some of the most interesting people doing incredible experiments on our little virtual stage, and this edition of Café JPG, that took place last week on Tuesday, February

JPG (pronounced jpeg) 0xC4f2



Cryptosocial Aesthetics at NFTParis - Community Voting and Curation Process

February 10th, 2023

We are well under way into the construction of the Cryptosocial Aesthetics Canon, and by extension the assemblage and curation of our upcoming exhibit at NFTParis. Through this exciting

JPG (pronounced jpeg) 0xC4f2