

Performance as Token

Performance as Token explores what happens when an ephemeral performance enters the economy of the collectible artwork.

Performance is fundamentally temporal. It exists through bodies, presence, duration and encounter. A performance happens, is witnessed, and disappears. Its documentation may survive, yet documentation traditionally remains secondary to the event itself: a photograph records what happened, while the performance remains the original artistic act.

Performance as Token proposes a different relationship between event and document. It asks what happens when the photographic trace of a performance becomes a unique artwork in its own right — authenticated, individually identified and made collectible through blockchain technology.

The project establishes a direct connection between performance, image, ownership and value. Following the performance, the artist selects a specific photographic image that represents the event. This image is minted as a unique NFT, creating a digital artwork linked to one particular performance, at one particular moment and in one particular place.

The token therefore functions simultaneously as document, artwork, certificate and economic object.

Its significance lies in the relationship between these different states. The photograph preserves a visual trace of something that has disappeared. The token gives that trace a singular identity. The blockchain provides a publicly verifiable record of provenance and ownership. The performance remains ephemeral, while its digital counterpart enters a system based on persistence, circulation and exchange.

This creates a productive tension between two fundamentally different temporalities: the temporary nature of performance and the persistent nature of the digital record.

The project also questions established assumptions about how performance can generate economic value. Historically, performance has often existed at a distance from conventional systems of collection and ownership. Performances can be commissioned, presented, documented and archived, yet the live event itself remains difficult to possess. Performance as

Token proposes another possibility: rather than attempting to make the performance itself permanent, it creates a singular object that carries the trace of its disappearance.

The NFT becomes a form of post-performance materiality.

The project can operate through individual performances as well as collaborative events. Artists, photographers, musicians, performers and other contributors can enter into a shared authorship model. Questions of attribution, revenue distribution and future value become part of the artistic framework itself.

This opens a further field of inquiry: Who owns a moment? Who owns its image? Who creates value around an event? And how does value move between the artist, the audience, the document and the collector?

The collector does not acquire the performance. They acquire a unique digital work connected to its existence. Ownership therefore operates through a form of proximity: the token becomes a trace, a witness and a point of access to an event that can never be experienced again in exactly the same way.

The audience also becomes part of this economy of witnessing. A performance may generate multiple photographs, memories and interpretations, yet only one selected image becomes the tokenised artwork. The act of selection consequently becomes a curatorial and artistic gesture.

Performance as Token thus treats tokenisation as a form of artistic editing. The blockchain is not the artistic subject in itself. It functions as an infrastructure through which questions of authenticity, scarcity, authorship, provenance, ownership and exchange can be examined.

The project situates itself within the continuing evolution of performance documentation and contemporary collecting practices. It considers how technologies originally developed for digital ownership can intersect with an art form historically defined by presence, disappearance and embodied experience.

Rather than attempting to overcome the ephemerality of performance, Performance as Token makes that ephemerality its starting point.

The performance disappears.

The image remains.

The token carries the trace.

And through that trace, a new relationship between time, memory, ownership and economic value becomes possible.

Curatorial proposition

Performance as Token can be presented as a series of live performances accompanied by a corresponding series of unique digital artworks. Each token originates from one specific event and becomes part of an evolving archive of performances.

The project can be presented in galleries, performance spaces, festivals, museums or alternative cultural spaces, with the physical performance and its digital afterlife existing in dialogue.

The resulting collection becomes an archive of events that can no longer be repeated in their original form. Each token marks a moment of disappearance: a performance that happened once, was witnessed, documented and subsequently transformed into a collectible artwork.

In this sense, Performance as Token is both an artistic format and a curatorial experiment. It proposes a new economy around performance while critically examining the structures through which contemporary art acquires, circulates and preserves value.