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# This Digital Art Gallery Immortalizes Your Patronage in the Blockchain

"You can buy next-to-impossible-to-valuate works of art with a next-to-impossible-to-valuate currency."

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**Jordan Pearson**

Jun 19 2015, 10:01pm

Image: Flickr/[BTC Keychain](#)

How do you make an art gallery for the internet, where attention only lasts as long as

a listicle, and work is easily copied? For Vienna-based artists Andy Boot and Valentin Rurhy, [Bitcoin](#) is the answer to both of those problems.

Boot and Rurhy started [Cointemporary](#) last year, a digital art gallery that shows one piece at a time for a week and sells it for a fixed price in Bitcoin. Even though the value of Bitcoin tends to [fluctuate wildly](#), the price for a work on Cointemporary is a flat fee negotiated with the artist using the average Bitcoin price over the last 24 hours.

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The gallery has sold some physical art, but digital files and even software are also regularly featured. Right now, you can buy a [neural net](#)—a program that simulates neural connections in the brain—that uses transhumanist futurist [Ray Kurzweil](#)'s texts as training data to generate new sentences. The app is called *Long Short Term Memory*, and there are only 15 "editions" available for purchase. Each edition is backed up by a unique ID on [the blockchain](#), the publicly viewable ledger that stores Bitcoin transactions.

"It is pretty obvious that until now, any kind of digital rights management has failed," Rurhy wrote. "This is not the user's fault, it's the fault of the owners and distributors, and their approach to digital property. The users have always used digital content the right way. You simply can't own a file like you can own a car."

An obvious question is how can you possibly sell a digital file in distinct "editions"—if I torrent an album, is that edition number 293484750 of that album? It seems a bit silly, but Andy and Rurhy have turned to [Ascribe](#), a service that uses the blockchain to solve this problem.

**"It is pretty obvious that until now, any kind of digital rights management has failed"**

On Ascribe, a digital or physical artwork is registered in its system as proof of ownership, which is backed up by a file with a timestamp on the blockchain. You can still make the file available to everyone in a torrent, for example, but you will always have proof that you're the original owner.

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The blockchain normally stores blocks of Bitcoin transaction data, but it's possible to upload other files, too—a photo of Nelson Mandela [has been found](#) there, for example. Uploading proof of a file's authenticity can be done by performing an irreversible [cryptographic hash function](#) with the file data. This results in a code, a unique ID, that can be slipped into a block of transactions. To confirm the authenticity of the original file, you can repeat the hash function and see if the result is the same.

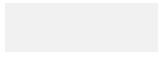
*Watch more from Motherboard: Life Inside a Chinese Bitcoin Mine*

The flat Bitcoin price of the works is a risk for Boot and Rurhy, because if someone happens to buy a piece of art in one of Bitcoin's frequent price slumps, they'll have to make up the difference in exchange themselves when they pay the artist. The reasoning behind this decision, Rurhy told me in an email, is that attaching value to art and Bitcoin are of a similar kind of esoteric alchemy.

"Andy Boot and I have been interested in the concept of cryptocurrencies for some time now and saw surprisingly many parallels to the art world," Rurhy wrote. "Or, to put it in the words of a [Ycombinator user](#): 'So you can buy next-to-impossible-to-valuate works of art with a next-to-impossible-to-valuate currency. It makes sense, when you think about it.'"

According to Rurhy, Cointemporary will be going on hiatus for the summer after their

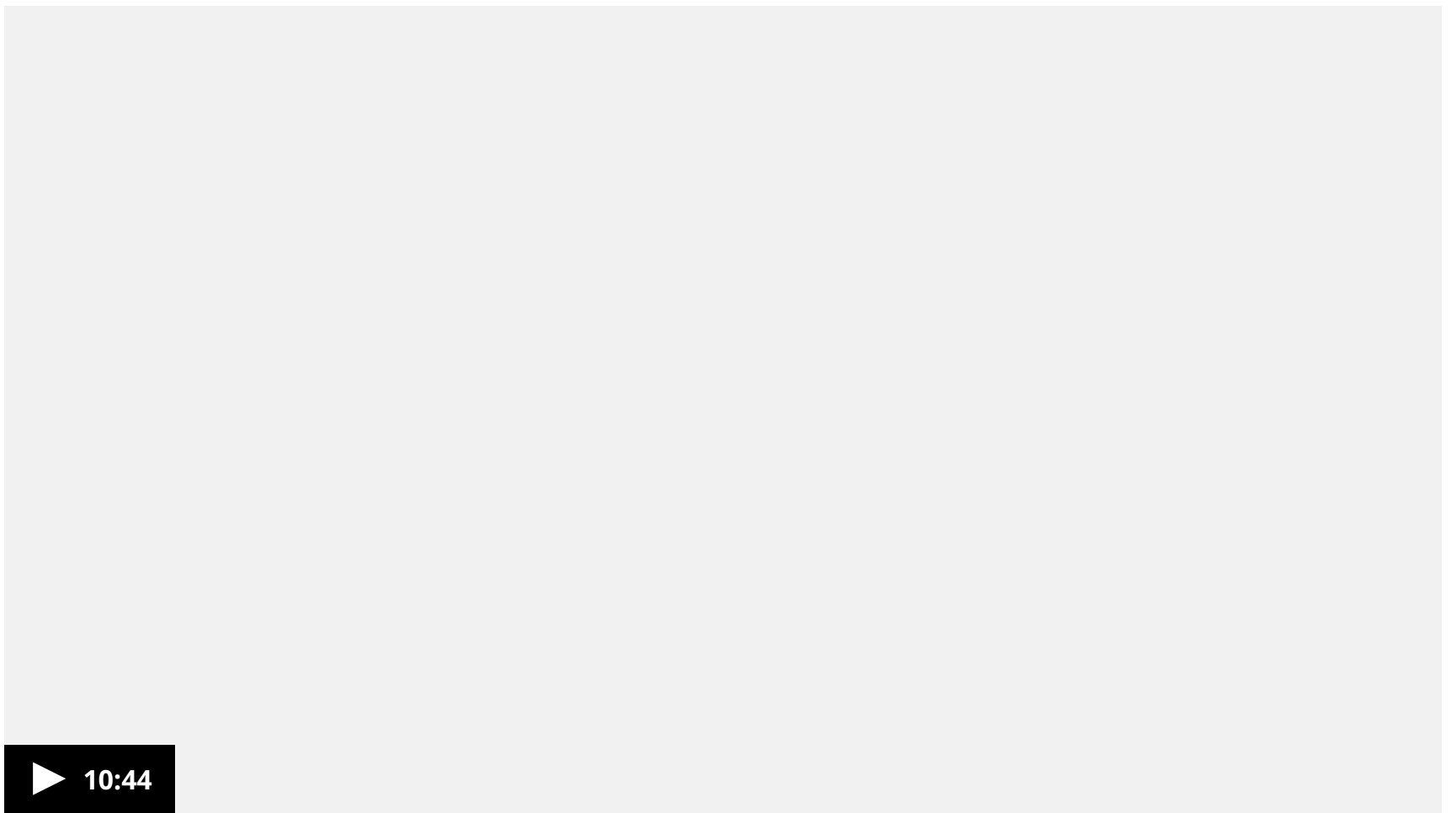
next work goes on sale. So, if you feel like trading your internet money for some internet art, you'd better do it quick.



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# This Extinct Wolf-Sized Otter Demolished Prey With Its Forceful Bite

**This 110-pound otter that lived 6 million years ago had a powerful bite, and was likely a top predator.**

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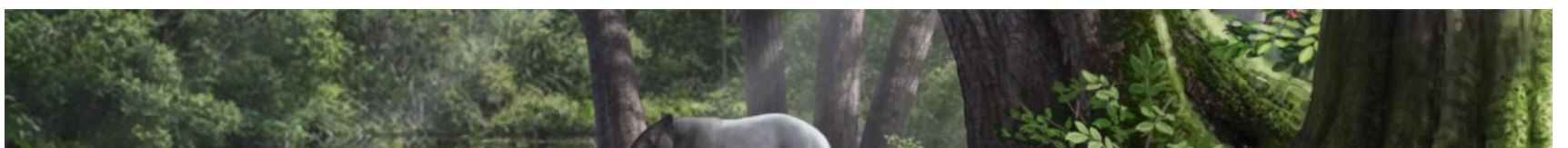


**Becky Ferreira**

Nov 9 2017, 11:00am

When people think of otters, “top predator” is not normally the phrase that jumps to mind. But that’s only because we live in an era of unfathomably cute otter species, which range in weight [from 11 to 90 pounds](#).

Wind the clock back 6.24 million years, however, and you might have to confront *Siamogale melilutra*, an early otter that tipped the scales at 110 pounds and was roughly the size of a wolf. Paleontologists [announced the discovery](#) of this prehistoric species in the *Journal of Systematic Palaeontology* earlier this year, after finding its fossilized remains in China’s Yunnan province.





Now, a second study on the extinct aquatic mammal, [published Thursday in \*Scientific Reports\*](#), shows that *S. melilutra* was not only an uber-otter, it also had an unexpectedly powerful bite.

Scientists led by Z. Jack Tseng, a [computational anatomist](#) at the University at Buffalo and a research associate at the American Museum of Natural History and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, estimated the strength of the primitive otter's jaws based on its cranial remains.

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When they compared computed tomography (CT) scans of 10 living otter species' skulls to simulations of the Siamogale's head, they found that the extinct animal's jaws were six times stiffer than expected.

Comparison of otter jaws. Image: [Tseng et al., \*Scientific Reports\*, 2017](#)

This correlates to a stronger bite force than extant otters, even accounting for the differences in size. It also suggests that Siamogale may have been an apex hunter in its swamp foodweb, capable of puncturing the shells of crabs, mollusks, and turtles, chewing through the bones of frogs and birds, or taking a chunk out of larger animals if threatened.

"We don't know for sure, but we think that this otter was more of a top predator than

living species of otters are," Tseng [said in a statement](#). "Our findings imply that Siamogale could crush much harder and larger prey than any living otter can."

**Read More: [These Keyboard-Playing Free Jazz Otters Are Going Places](#)**

This is not the first time that the otter family has proved to be more fearsome than its cuddly appearance might imply. Humans are [sometimes attacked](#) by rabid otters, and the horrifying acts of depravity otters commit against baby seals include [gratuitous killing and necrophilia](#). It goes to show that no matter how adorable you think these animals are, you otter keep your distance.

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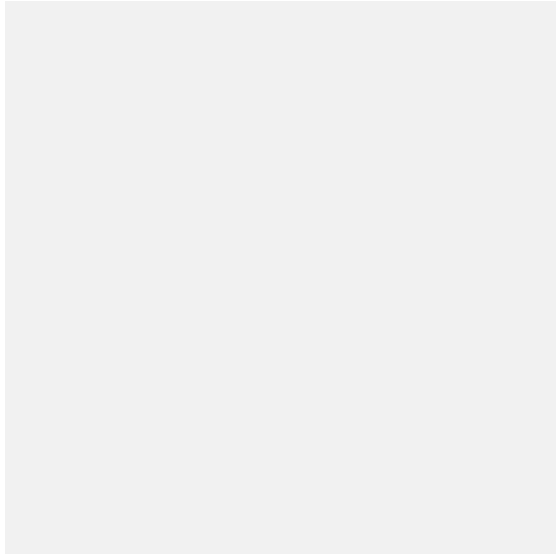
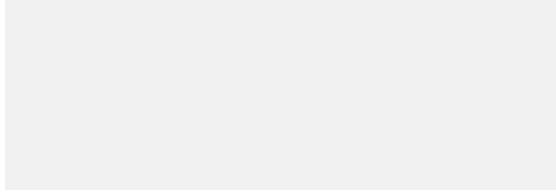
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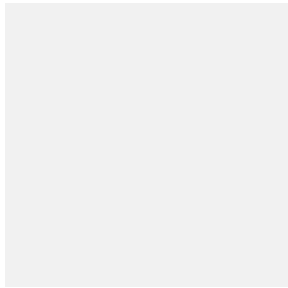
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