

Solo Mining: Limited Information and Boundless Loneliness

Loneliness has become more than just an urban epidemic; it has nearly engulfed human society. We attempt to rely on romance, work, vanity, sex, money, friendship, indulgence, drugs, and alcohol as remedies, but these are mere desperate struggles. In the aftermath, we face withdrawal symptoms and an intensifying sense of isolation, unable to cope. Humanity is no longer content to confine its pretenses to Earth, now eagerly unloading them into space, as though the Karman line can no longer contain such profound loneliness. For CryptoZR, the situation is differs slightly — a satellite continuously crosses the terminator line, orbiting her tirelessly day and night.

The SCA-1 satellite is the first in Xu Bing's "Star Chain of Arts Project," inviting artists worldwide to engage in a three-year space exploration. CryptoZR's *Solo Mining* is the inaugural work in this project, continuing her exploration of blockchain technology and concepts rich in religious and philosophical significance. *Solo Mining* establishes rules based on the source code of Satoshi Nakamoto's Bitcoin genesis block, creating a blockchain, *ZRCoin*, belonging solely to her. The blocks will be independently mined by the satellite after it connects to the network, simulating the early days of Bitcoin when Nakamoto mined alone before achieving consensus. CryptoZR views Nakamoto's journey from personal will to consensus as deeply intertwined with loneliness, the feeling magnified by the cosmos' boundlessness in *Solo Mining*. This act of wrapping individual will in the guise of religious asceticism evokes of Christ bearing the cross or Buddha feeding his flesh to an eagle.

Terms like "genesis" and "decentralization" are often used by crypto enthusiasts as enticing wrappers, yet the overwhelming flood of cyber-religious allegories no longer excites. Crypto believers seem to confuse the decentralization of technical architecture with the decentralization of social power, transforming their admiration for Satoshi Nakamoto into a form of religious faith. However, artists quickly realized that no matter how utopias the promises of the new crypto elite seemed, they relied on greed for money and speculation to maintain their followers. This reliance caused crypto art to lose momentum, burning brightly before fading away. Artists left empty-handed by the crypto wave experienced withdrawal symptoms, viewing new technologies as Ponzi schemes.

This isn't the first time CryptoZR has used religious metaphors in her exploration of crypto art. In her 2020 work *A Small Goal*, the metaphor of Eastern religious philosophy was even more apparent: she randomly issued virtual currency to users through the Ethereum ERC20 protocol. When users suddenly found an extra billion in their digital accounts, the moment they desired to cash out, the billion vanished like an illusionary daydream. This reflection on greed's collapse is reminiscent of Nam June Paik's critique of television media.

The history of crypto art is driven primarily by money—a capitalist spectacle where those who control the discourse are often the crypto bourgeoisie, who became rich overnight through speculation. Art, in most cases, is nothing more than a lacy negligee, making money appear more sensual in ideas and visuals. Just as avant-garde art that once opposed the market was eventually co-opted by it, the thin veneer of critique in crypto art is powerless against the overwhelming wealth of the crypto market. The truth that art as Don Quixote is obscured by deceptive mechanisms of

consensus, autonomous organizations, and anarchistic ideals. The contradiction between private assets and open consensus is an insurmountable chasm in crypto art. If a decentralized system recognizes the value of consensus, assets should be shared or distributed across consensus proportion, but this clearly infringes on the interests of the new elite. The stage of public opinion has always been dominated by speculative elites waving flags, but we have yet to see anyone respected purely for their consensus, suggesting that the lonely crypto believer is the most isolated of all, and this loneliness grows as the new elites revel in their success.

However, the critique and lament of crypto art are not all that *Solo Mining* embodies. The satellite not only extends cyberspace beyond the Karman line, but it also sends computer hardware into outer space, with art posing itself like lacy negligees between two realms. Cyberspace, as a human-made environment, cannot escape the constraints of human society, where info-wars and digital life unfold simultaneously. In contrast, outer space appears pure and mysterious, untouched too much by human pollution—although this purity is unlikely to last. We are powerless to stop our ambitions and emptiness, nor can we prevent the endless expansion and colonization driven by capital. In CryptoZR's framework, no new satellites or terminals will share mining or consensus with SCA-1, and the hash rate of the ZRCoin blockchain will remain constant—a solo dance within an isolated space. Unlike most contemporary art, which depends on exhibitions or streaming, *Solo Mining* seems to focus solely on personal will, serving as an indulgent and extravagant cosmic display. If not constrained by the three-year satellite collection cycles, CryptoZR might wish to leave *Solo Mining* in space permanently, until cosmic rays eventually destroy it.

Even when isolated in both cyberspace and outer space, discussing a distant satellite feels as easy as talking about god we've never encountered. Humanity can effortlessly engage with the inaccessible, like art, ideas and information flow freely among us. We have reason to believe that artistic concepts or information can circulate within the human world—even if no one has ever seen a satellite in space, the art concept can still be shared. As Thierry de Duve suggested in the late 20th century, the Idea of an ecosystem of self regulated organisms might in the near future replace that of a community of reasonable being.¹ I imagine such an ecosystem as similar to a cybernetic system, where individuals communicate and provide feedback through information. In 2021, Hoelscher proposed the idea of art as an information ecosystem, combining this with Arthur Danto's concept of the art world, arguing that art is a byproduct of its appearance in the world.² But if we truly view art as information, then art can, in fact, be transmitted among any objects, not just within the human world. This is perhaps the most intriguing aspect of space art—it highlights humanity's futility in the realm of art, are humans laborers in isolation in the cosmos, mere workers in *Solo Mining*.

If art can evolve within the human world, it must also be able to manifest in digital realms, among plants and animals, or even in outer space—independent of humanity. Art exploration is merely an outpouring of human's arrogance and loneliness. As Sol LeWitt arrogantly mocked Henry Flynt, "A nobody. Who heard him, who knew of him, who cared what he said? So what if some thirteenth-century Chinese painter threw ink around in ways that look Pollock-like, or that Max Ernst did?",³ When art finally emerges in other worlds, humanity might not find comfort in this similarity but instead feel even more isolated due to its arrogance. For me, personally, staring blankly on this summer night on the plains, gazing at the starry night enshrouding the village, meditating on a

satellite in space, or playing the Qin to the cow in the evening breeze seems far more engaging than observing the tides of crypto art history—after all, art history is just a gilded cabinet for collecting lacy negligees.

Without a doubt, contemporary art's critical power has increasingly dwindled, gradually devolving into a Tamagotchi of social media. When civilization perishes, will the art relics in outer space serve as our cosmic epitaph? If so, space art is entirely unnecessary. The universe has already answered with its dark silence and magnificent clamor—let the humanist windbags remain within the Karman line; the universe does not care, not even about loneliness.

1. Thierry De Duve, *Kant after Duchamp*, (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press), 1996, p.462.

2. Jason A. Hoelscher, *Art as Information Ecology: Artworks, Artworlds and Complex Systems Aesthetics*, (Durham: Duke University Press), 2021.

3. Terry Smith, *One and Five Ideas: On Conceptual Art and Conceptualism, Edited and with an Introduction by Robert Bailey*, (Durham: Duke University Press), 2017, p.125.