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Will work for crypto: MobileCoin introduces world's first artist residency exploring digital privacy

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San Francisco-based cryptocurrency startup MobileCoin has launched an artist residency program to support contemporary artists exploring issues relating to privacy.

The program is aimed at granting contemporary artists the opportunity to explore themes within digital privacy and, more broadly, to look into issues concerning security, autonomy and the many nuances of the multifaceted privacy issue. MobileCoin's Wednesday announcement coincides with [Miami Art Week](#), taking place from Nov. 30 to Dec. 5.

Dubbed the Private Practice Residency, it spans three months



during which MobileCoin offers artists a \$2,500 monthly stipend, along with access to its resources — cryptographers, lawyers and other experts working in digital privacy.

COURTESY OF MOBILECOIN

Inga Bard, contemporary artist and MobileCoin's director of art

In addition to the residency, MobileCoin also partnered with the New Art Dealers Alliance Art Fair on an award for the best privacy-related work of art during Miami Art Week. The winners will receive \$7,500 in MOB (MobileCoin's own cryptocurrency) — the first cryptocurrency prize ever to be awarded at an art fair.

On Friday, Andrew Berardini, a Los Angeles-based art critic and curator and Inga Bard, a contemporary artist and director of art at MobileCoin selected three artists and projects that exemplified the theme: Puerto Rico-based artist Gabriella Torres Ferrar represented by Embajada; Hangama Amiri represented by Towards, Toronto; and Black Experience isn't a Spectacle by afila.si presented by Anteism Books in the Artists' Book Publishers section of the fair. The \$7,500 prize will be equally divided among the three winners.

"With the inaugural MobileCoin Art Prize, we set out to support artists thinking about privacy in the 21st century. Amidst the incredible talent from all over the world at NADA, we witnessed how the endlessly inventive and brilliant artists of our time think through the deeply relevant contemporary issue of privacy in the digital age, one which is central to MobileCoin's ethos around personal privacy and confidentiality," said Andrew Berardini and Inga Bard. "Each of these extraordinary artists supports a different and significant facet of privacy in our times, and we are honored to award their meaningful work."

I spoke with Bard about the residency and why the theme of privacy is central to MobileCoin's ethos.

"Privacy is fundamental to art. The right to privacy is the right to solace, to reflection, to expression; it is the right to association and movement without intrusion or intimidation. Privacy is essential to the autonomy and dignity required to make art and participate in the cultural life of a free society. MobileCoin's commitment to privacy and sustainability in our transactions is also a commitment to artists," said Bard.

The inaugural season of this residency was by invitation, and included internationally renowned artists [Neil Beloufa](#) and [David Horvitz](#). Beloufa is a Franco-Algerian artist based in Paris known for his video installations. Horvitz is an American multimedia artist whose work includes performance, photography, art books and conceptual websites. Berardini and Bard decided to extend invitations to more well-known artists to participate in the residency's first season to foster this critical cultural dialogue about the role that privacy plays — or doesn't — in our lives.

Moving forward, they plan to open up the residency for [external submissions](#) by artists working anywhere in the world.

"For the first season of the residency, we chose to invite artists whose work we are familiar with and are excited about, one of which who has already created work about the appropriated life of our personal data on the world wide web. We also selected artists that we admire for being conceptual poets, and we're eager to support artists that are interested to explore the subject for the first time," Bard told me.

This concept is a first in many ways. There have been many well-publicized collaborations between tech companies and artists, but playing host to a full-fledged residency can be a model in a country where support for the arts depends largely upon the generosity of private donors.

"At MobileCoin we want to highlight issues of privacy in the arts because we're not seeing enough of the conversation about it in [our] culture. We also hope that the immense wealth of cryptocurrency can be channeled towards the arts beyond NFTs. We are doing our part through the MobileCoin Art Prize and Private Practice Art Residency and by doing so, we can hopefully encourage our peers to follow suit," said Bard.

If that wasn't enough, MobileCoin also launched [MobileCoin Radio](#) in January via Twitch, weekly livestream of music that financially supports musicians.

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