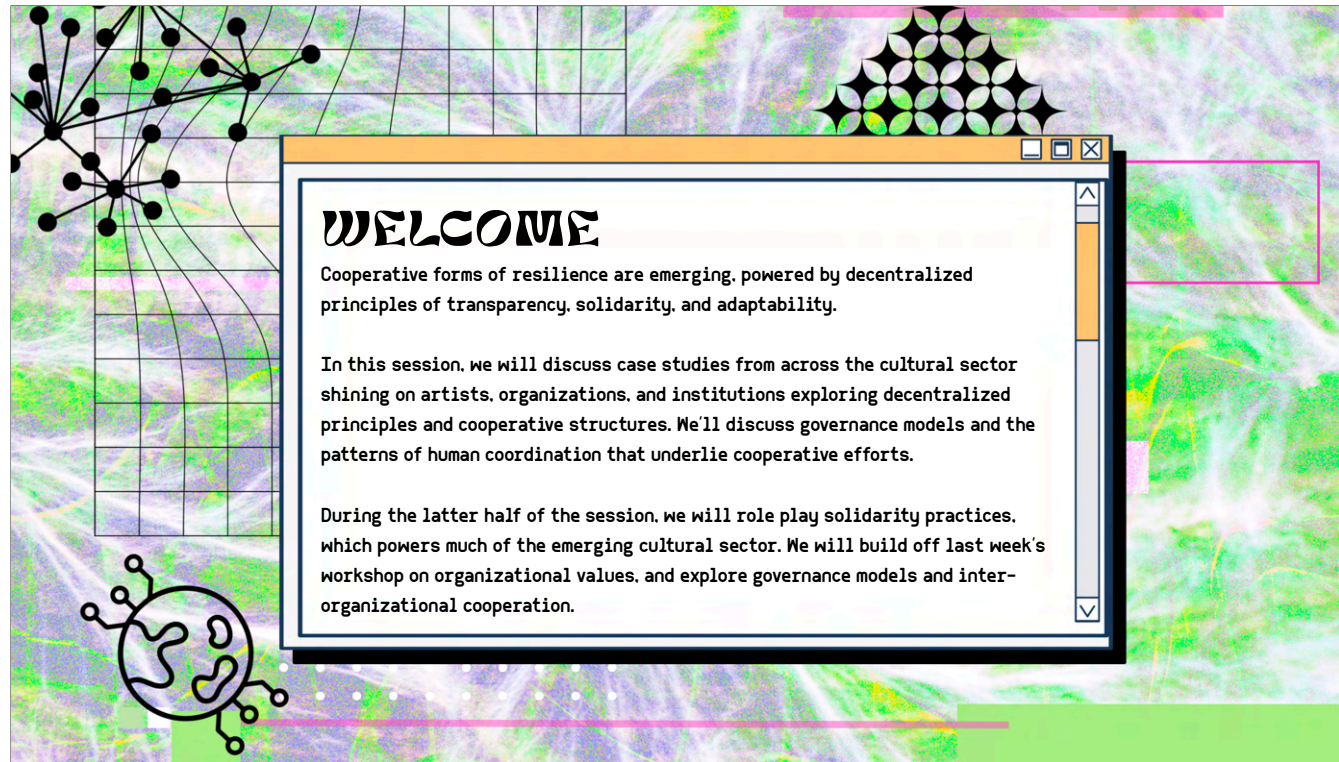


SESSION 9:
**GOVERNANCE,
COOPERATIVE RESILIENCE,
AND CULTURAL VALUE
EXCHANGE**

EDUCATORS: Kelani Nichole & mai ishikawa sutton
May 14, 2025



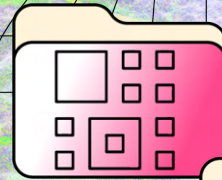
WELCOME

Cooperative forms of resilience are emerging, powered by decentralized principles of transparency, solidarity, and adaptability.

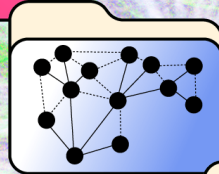
In this session, we will discuss case studies from across the cultural sector shining on artists, organizations, and institutions exploring decentralized principles and cooperative structures. We'll discuss governance models and the patterns of human coordination that underlie cooperative efforts.

During the latter half of the session, we will role play solidarity practices, which powers much of the emerging cultural sector. We will build off last week's workshop on organizational values, and explore governance models and inter-organizational cooperation.

AGENDA



**RESILIENCE MODELS
& COOPERATIVES**

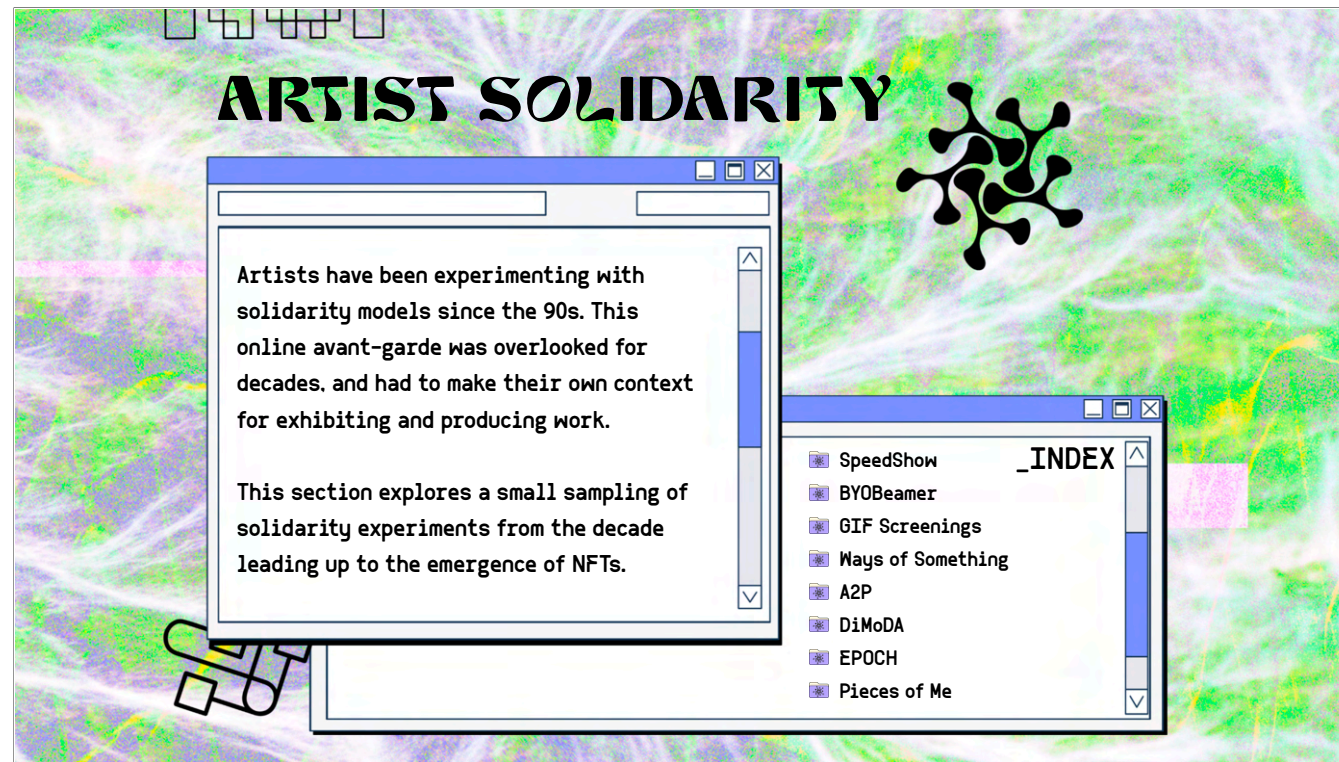


**GOVERNANCE
MODELS**



**WORKSHOP:
CULTURAL UALUE
EXCHANGE**

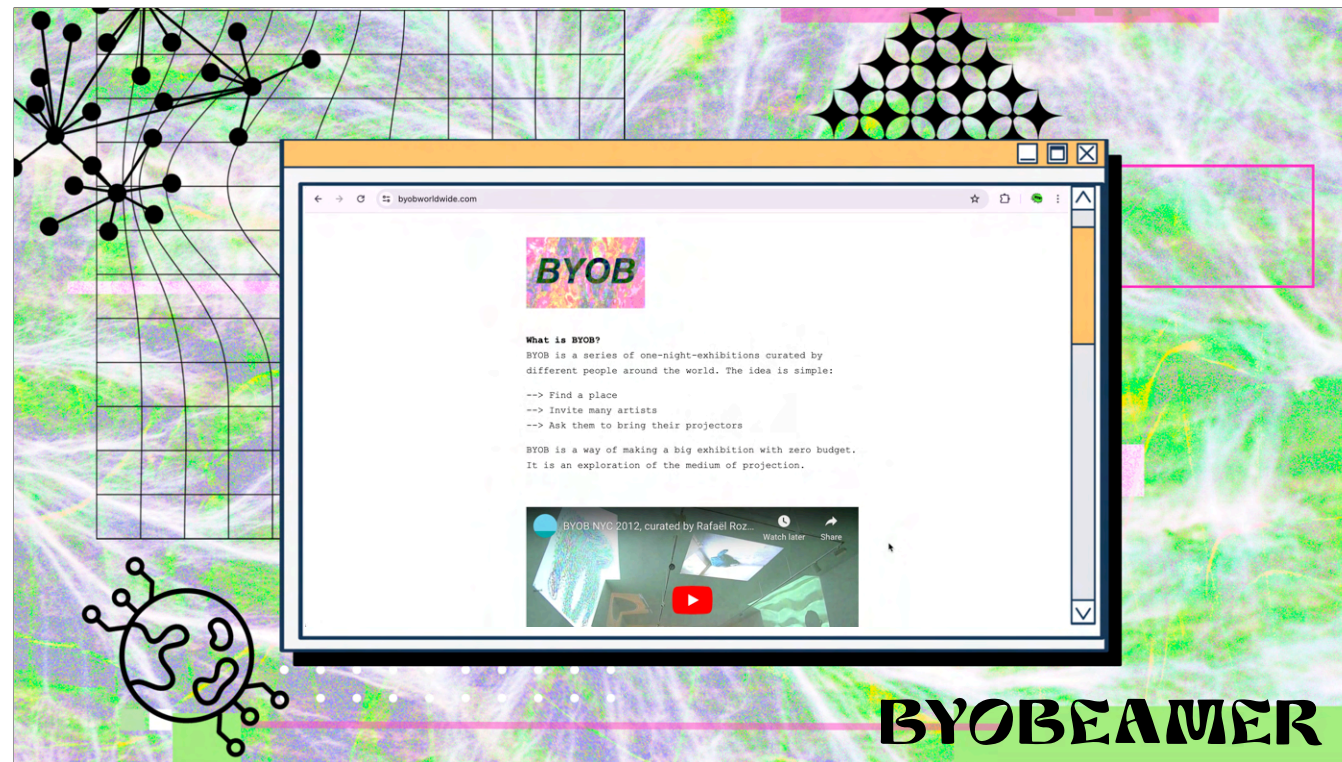




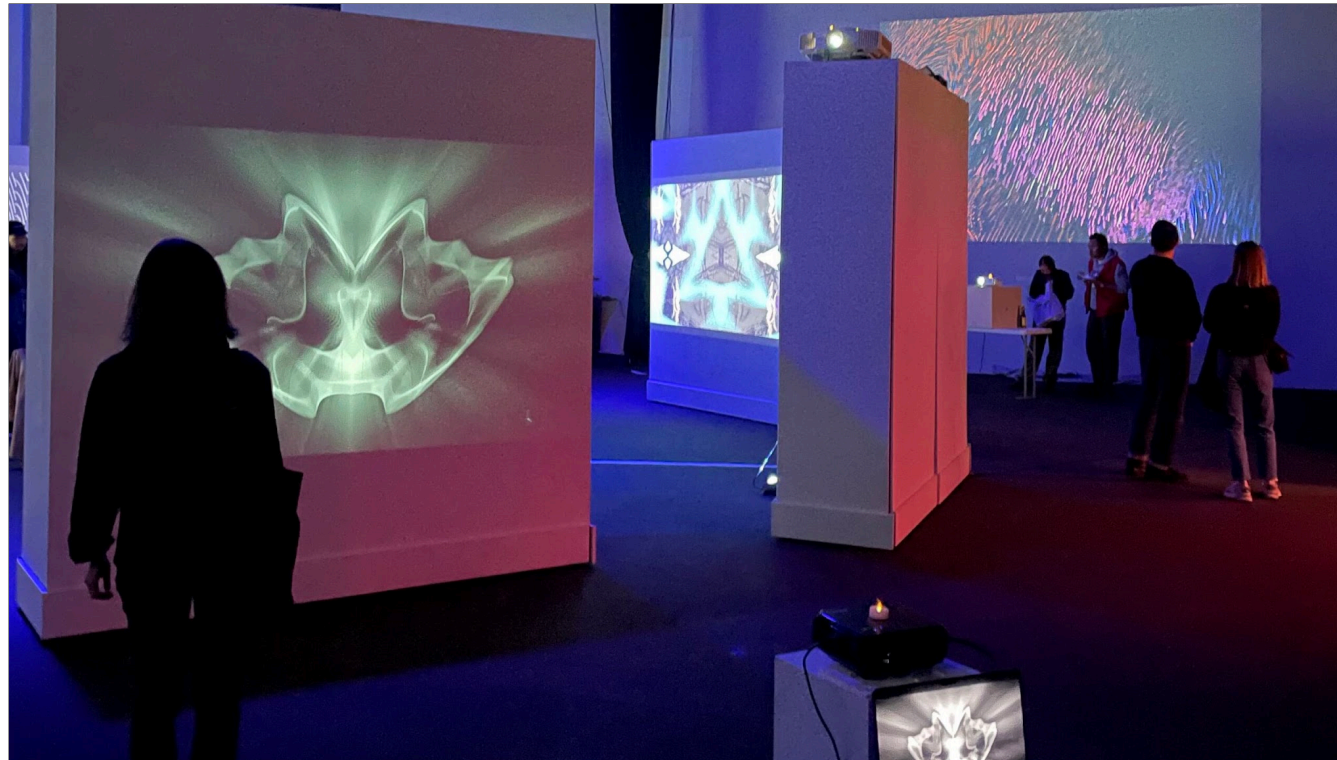
Survey of an online avant-garde, experimental solidarity movement that was creating it's own context.



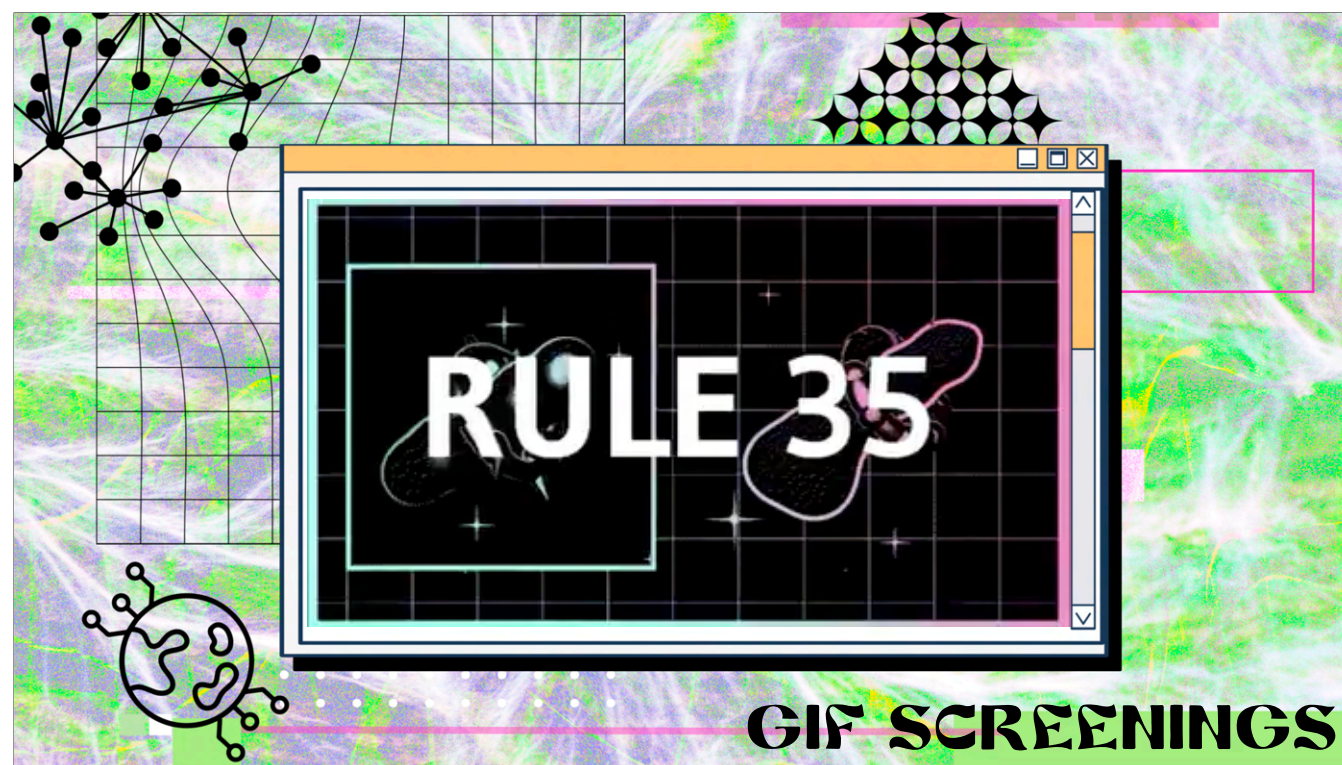
The first example is speed show, this is a very simple idea. The artist Aram Bartholl invited artists to exhibit their work in internet cafes. Each computer in the cafe had a different artwork. These happenings created an offline community, creating visibility for a ton of artists who hadn't had a chance to show in physical space.



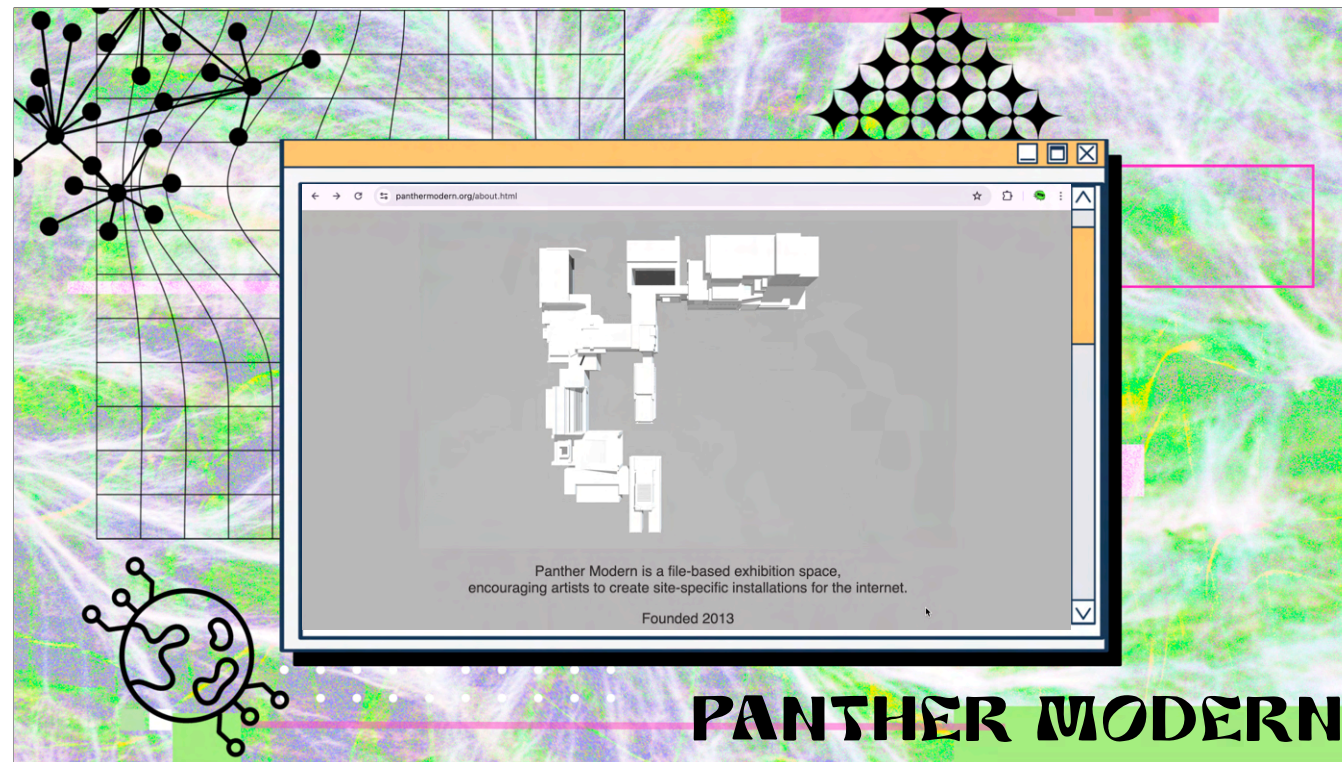
Similarly Bring your Own Beamer is a format created by Rafael Rozendaal, another artist making opportunities for his peers. The idea is very simple, arrange a place, time, and support infrastructure (like power) and invite artists to bring a projector and show their work in a physical space. This is a very successful and still thriving format, free to participate for everyone. The format itself is also open for anyone to use.



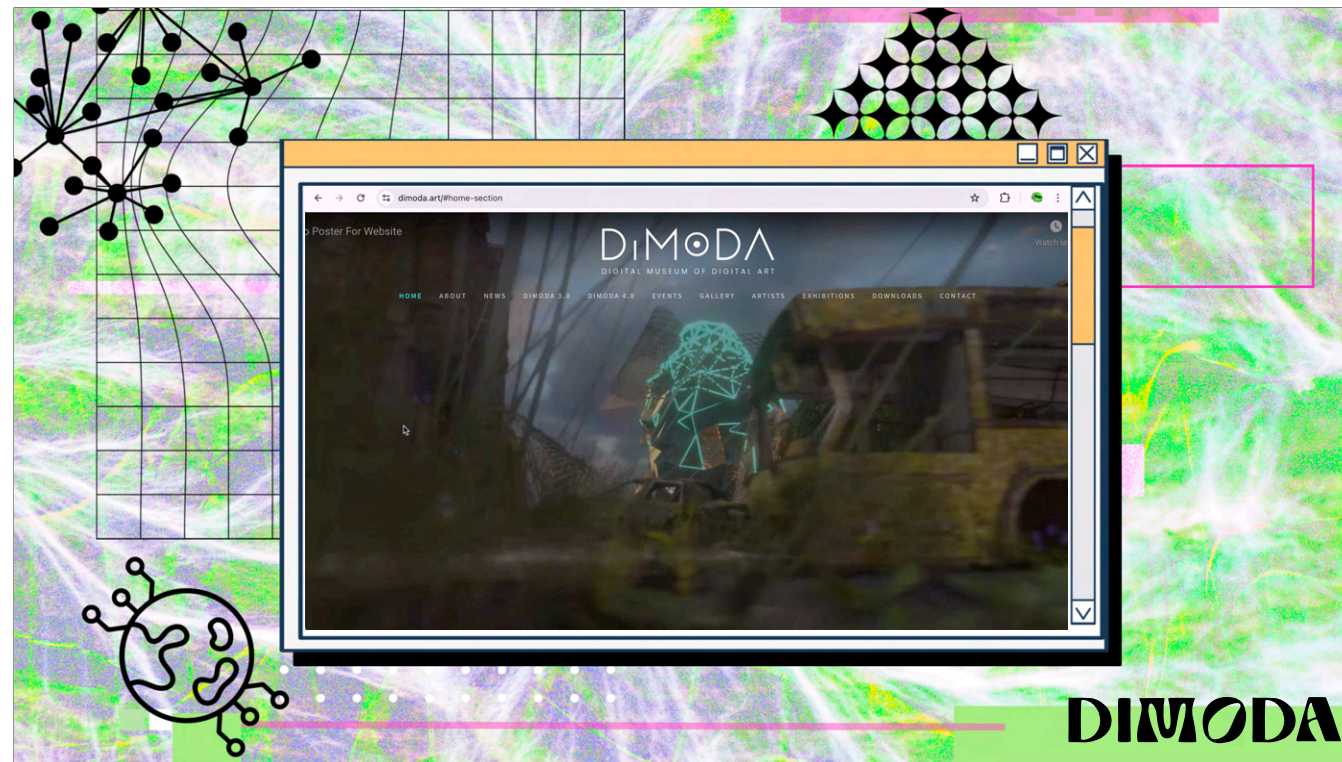
In fact, Gray Area has a tradition of hosting BYOB events that are gorgeously produced in the theater in Mission District SF.



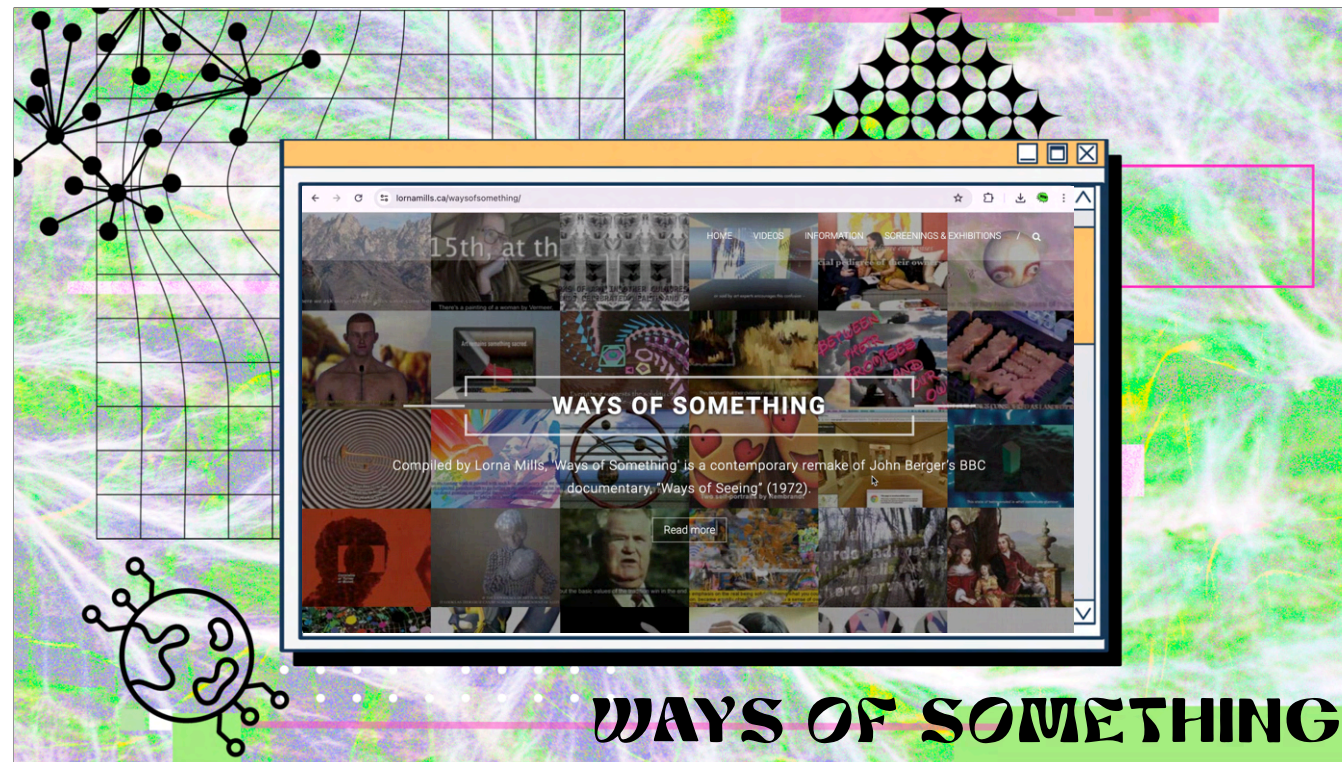
GIF Screening events ran in TRANSFER. At the end of artist's solo show a group of artists would be invited to respond to the work in the solo show with animated GIF contributions. This was curated by the exhibiting artist, so it was a generous act of opening up a solo show to a community of artists to showcase their work within the exhibition. It brought together a community of netartists in physical space, a way to support a large community of artists, supporting the work of hundreds of artists over the years.



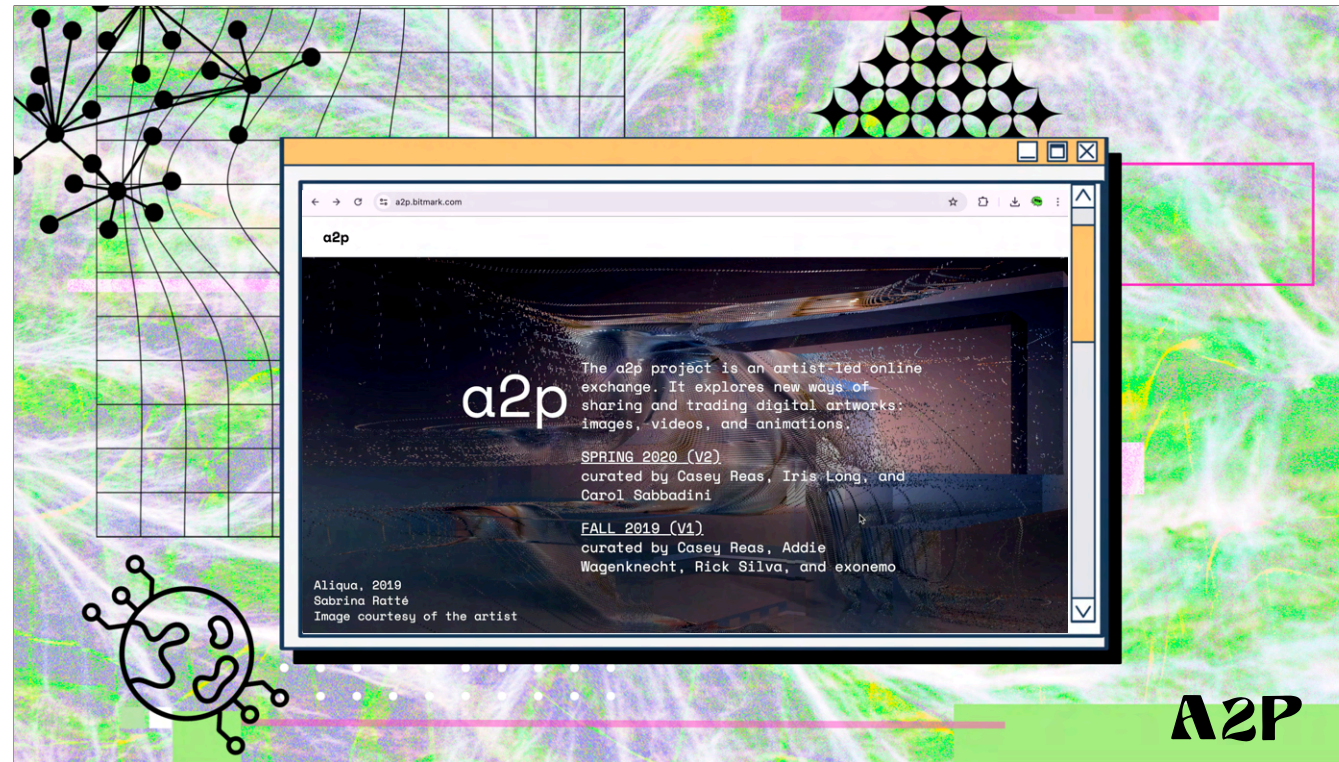
Founded by LaTurbo Avedon, this experiment was a virtual exhibition space that explored architecture and conceptual virtual worlds in contemporary art. Started in 2013, the project went on for years and featured artists who would rise to fame in NFT.



This is another virtual exhibition space, which existed in virtual reality and was experienced in a headset and also as a playable world online. Founded by Alfredo Salazar-carro, the artist would invite a curator to select artists working in 3D and world building on a theme, and then he would architect an entire museum around the show. The museum changed each time it was curated. Alfredo was very generous with his time to support artists to explore VR for the first time in their practice.



This is a recreation of John Berger's 'Ways of Seeing' compiled by Lorna Mills. She invited a group of artists to re-tell Berger's narrative minute-by-minute exquisite course style for art after the internet. The work was sprawling, including 113 global artists, and was acquired by the Whitney Museum of American Art. What are the limits of the institutions of the art world, and how can we think about solidarity and community in new conceptual formats.



A2p came a little later than these experiments, and it was the precursor to NFTs. Artists exchanged artworks on the bit mark blockchain, in an act of solidarity and generosity. This was the first experiment for NFT platform Feral File.



This is a project that was facilitated by TRANSFER, during the hype of NFTs. It was about bringing together artists who had very different perspectives on NFTs. This project is featured later in the course as a detailed case study in decentralized storage.

COOPERATIVES

DEFINITION: A cooperative or co-op is a business structure that is owned and democratically controlled by its member-owners who utilize its services. Member-owners can be customers, workers, franchise-owners, users, etc.

Co-ops have been around 100s of years but first one is considered the Rochdale Pioneers in Rochdale, England in 1844. They also established co-op principles and one of their members founded the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA).

Artists alone have been forming co-ops for more than 100 years as a means of resilience.

THE 7 CO-OP PRINCIPLES ×

Adopted by the International Cooperative Alliance (1995) :

1. Voluntary and Open Membership
2. Democratic Member Control
3. Members' Economic Participation
4. Autonomy and Independence
5. Education, Training and Information
6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives
7. Concern for Community

Source: <https://ncbaclusa.coop/resources/7-cooperative-principles/>

WORKER / PLATFORM CO-OPS

Platform Co-ops: Businesses that sell goods or services primarily through a website, mobile app, or protocol. They rely on democratic decision-making and shared platform ownership by workers and/or users.

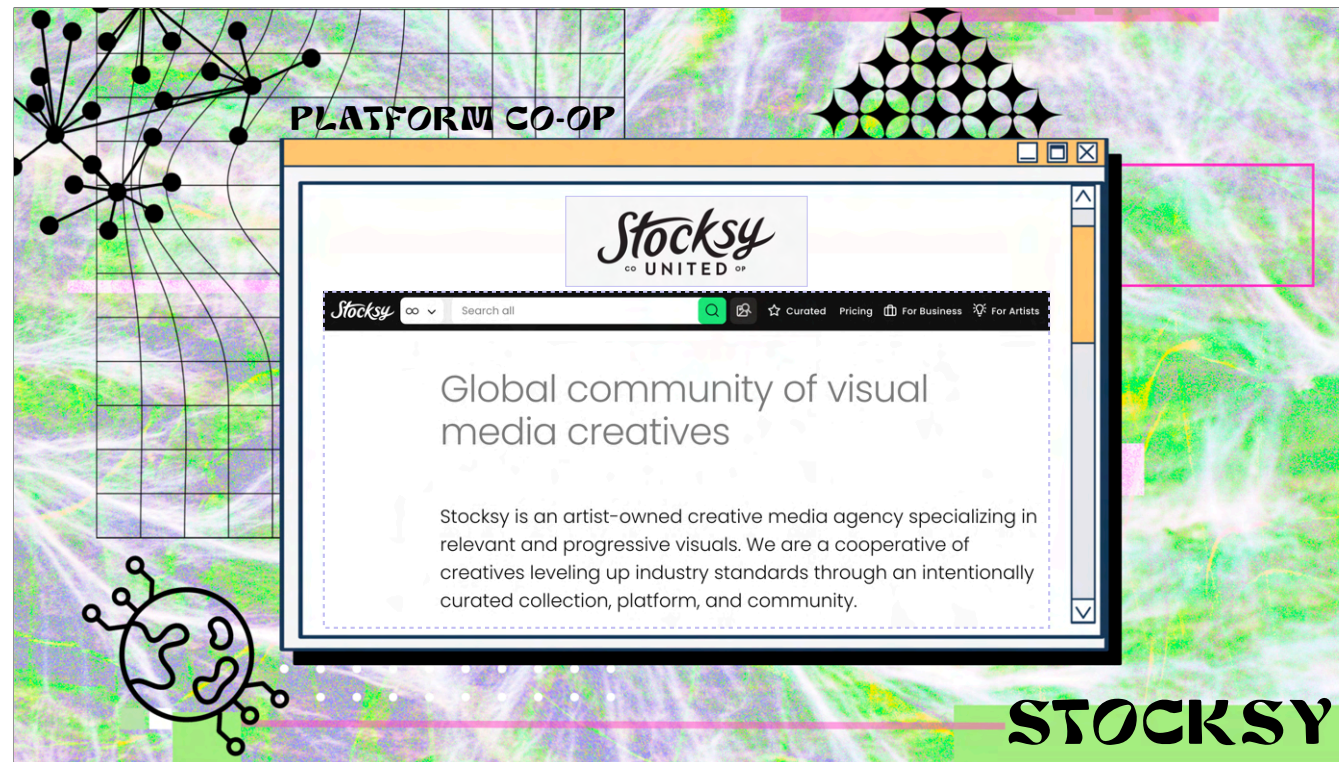
Worker Co-ops: Operate as businesses in which ownership and management are in the hands of the workers.

Platform Co-ops

- > Fairmondo
- > Fairbnb
- Stocksy
- Subvert
- Exit to Community

Worker Co-ops

- Art.coop
- DisCO.coop
- Hypha.coop
- Art.coop
- TRANSFER Data Trust



Stocksy: <https://www.stocksy.com/service/about>

- Stocksy is one of the longest standing and successful examples of a platform co-op
- It came about when iStockPhoto was sold to Getty Images
- The owner of iStockPhoto created Stocksy in 2013 as a creator-owned co-operative with the resources we had from the sale
- As of 2025 they have 1,800 artists in over 80 countries
- 50%-75% of license sales goes directly to the artists



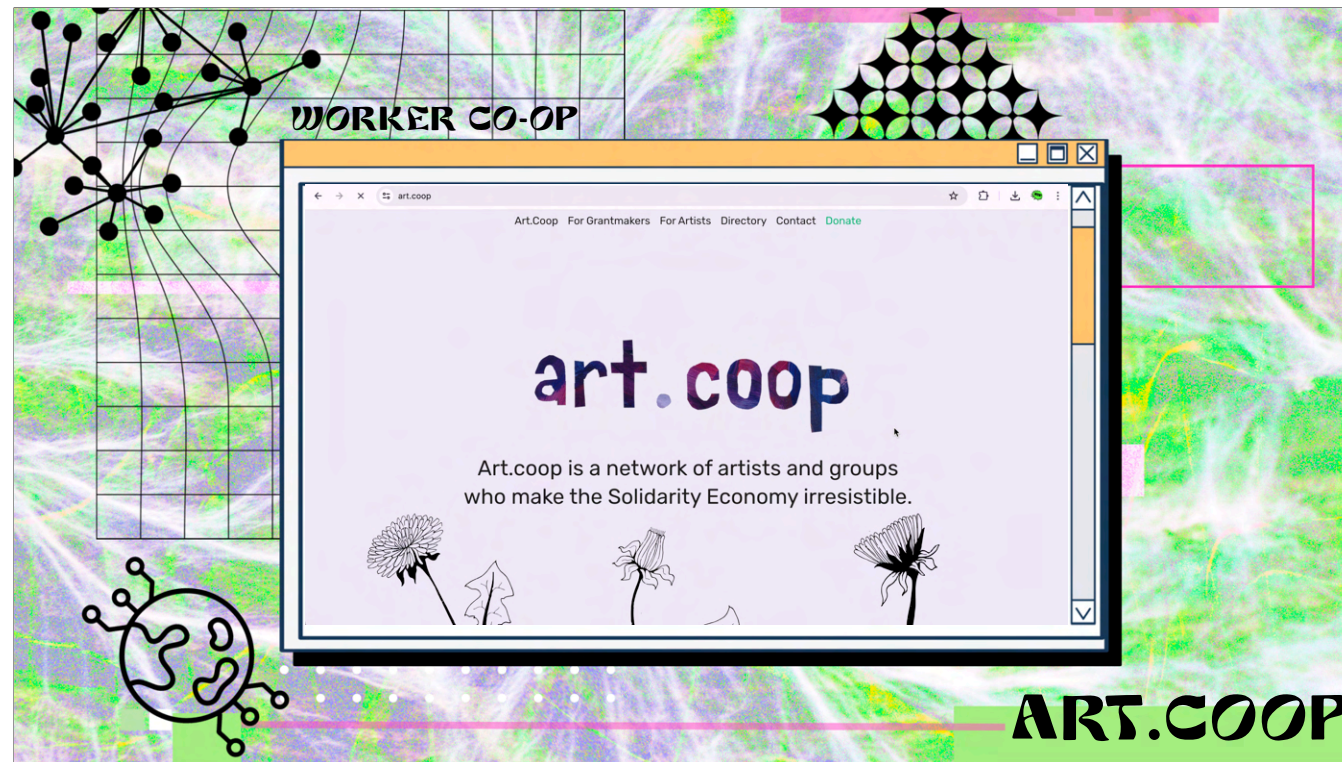
Subvert: <https://subvert.fm/>

- Subvert is a music streaming platform that is in development, slated to be launched in 2025 that markets itself as a Bandcamp alternative
- They currently have over 5,000 members, who are either musicians/artists/labels themselves or joined as an investor-member (Supporter & Allies”) with a \$100 one-time membership fee



Exit to Community (E2C): <https://e2c.how/>

- Emerged out of the Media Economies Design Lab (MEDLab) at the University of Boulder Colorado
- E2C is an effort to develop alternatives to the standard model of the startup “exit”, where a business is acquired by a more established company or a public stock offering,
- It provides resources for business instead to “exit” by ownership of the entity by the community of stakeholders — employees, customers, etc.
- E2C attempts to make the creation of co-operatives and other stakeholder-ownership models more viable by providing case studies, legal templates, and various other resources and educational materials.



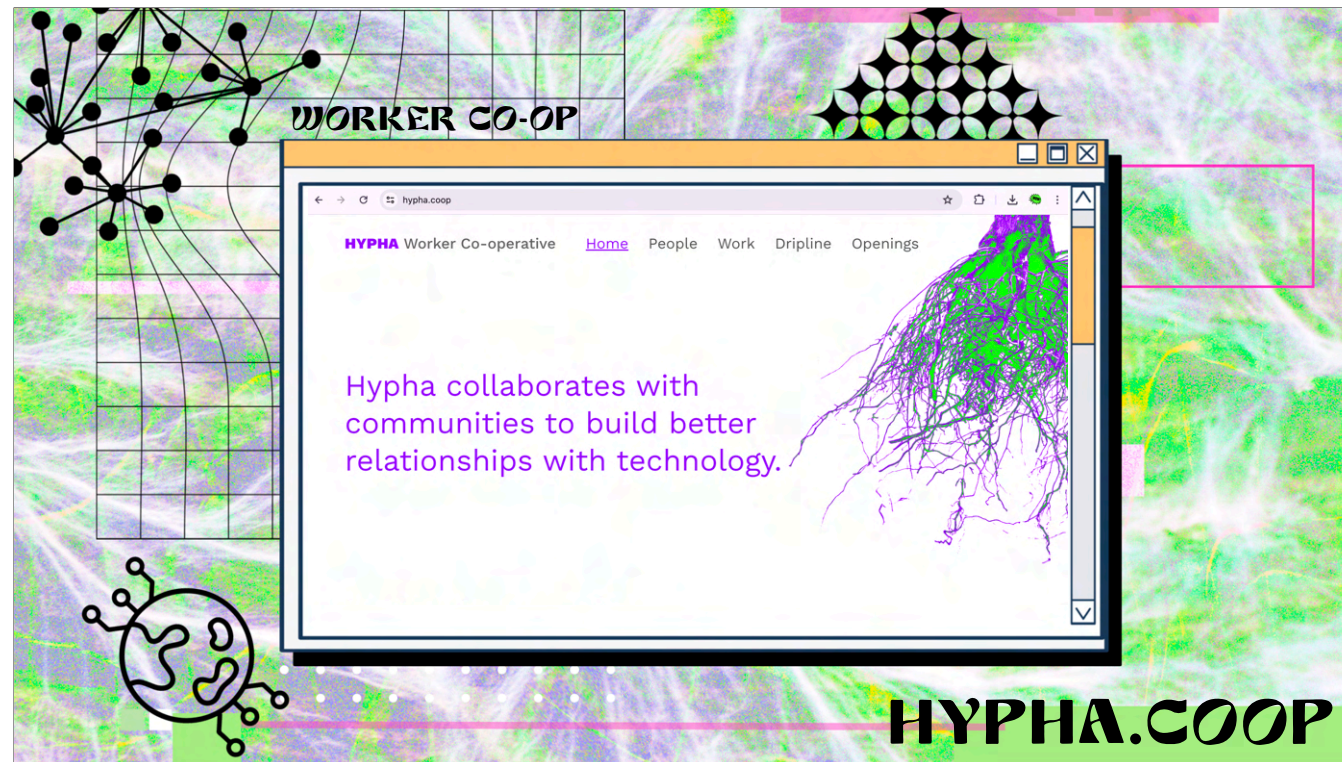
Art.coop: <https://www.art.coop/>

- A solidarity network for artists / culture-workers and groups “who make the Solidarity Economy” irresistible
- They have a directory of projects and other resources including podcasts, courses, and case studies.
- They also have grants and fellowships for artists working at the intersection of cultural work and solidarity economics.



DisCO.coop: <https://www.disco.coop/>

- Disco is a co-op that advocates for “distributed co-operatives for radical workplace democracy.”
- They produce documents and media to describe and model approaches to co-operative, commons-oriented entities rooted in feminist economics.
- For example, they have developed a framework for organizations to distribute labor based on different categories, Livelihood work, Love work, and Care work.



Hypha Worker Co-op: <https://hypha.coop/>

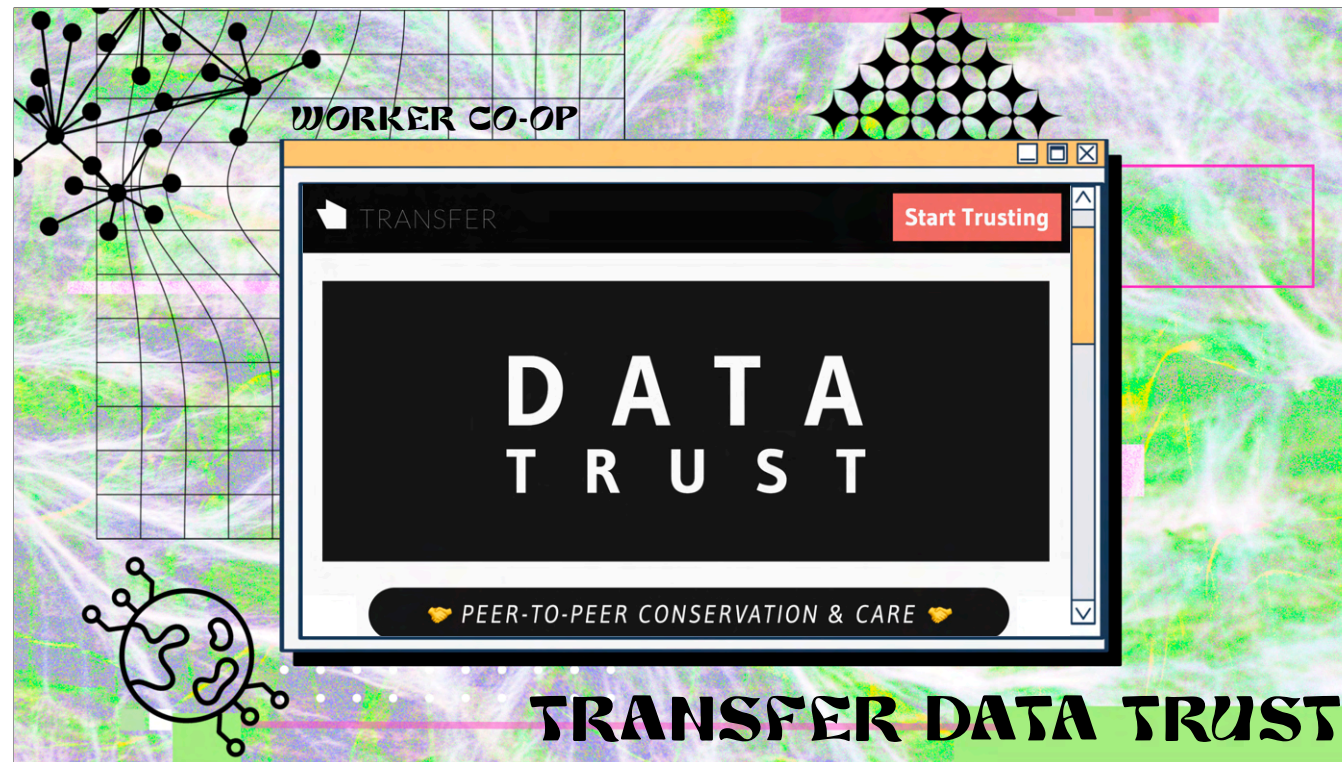
- Hypha is a tech worker co-op based in Toronto, Canada.
- It has 12 members (as of Summer 2025), and works on a range of projects from decentralized data provenance, governance and test net operations for blockchains, and creation of platforms and tools for arts, culture, and activism.

ARTIST COOPS

Artist cooperatives emerged in the early 20th century as groups of artists pooling resources to create, exhibit, and sell their work collectively, thereby gaining greater control over their creative and financial destinies. They proliferated in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly in urban centers like New York and San Francisco, as a response to the commercial gallery system, offering artists democratic spaces to innovate collaboratively and support one another's artistic growth.

- * Associated American Artists (AAA) NYC. 1934
- * Taller de Gráfica Popular (TGP) Mexico City. 1937
- * CoBrA (Copenhagen, Brussels, Amsterdam) Europe. 1948
- * San Francisco Art Institute Artists' Cooperative Gallery. 1952
- * Black Artists' Group (BAG) St. Louis. 1968
- * A.I.R. Gallery (Artists in Residence) NYC. 1972
- * The Guerrilla Girls. NYC. 1985

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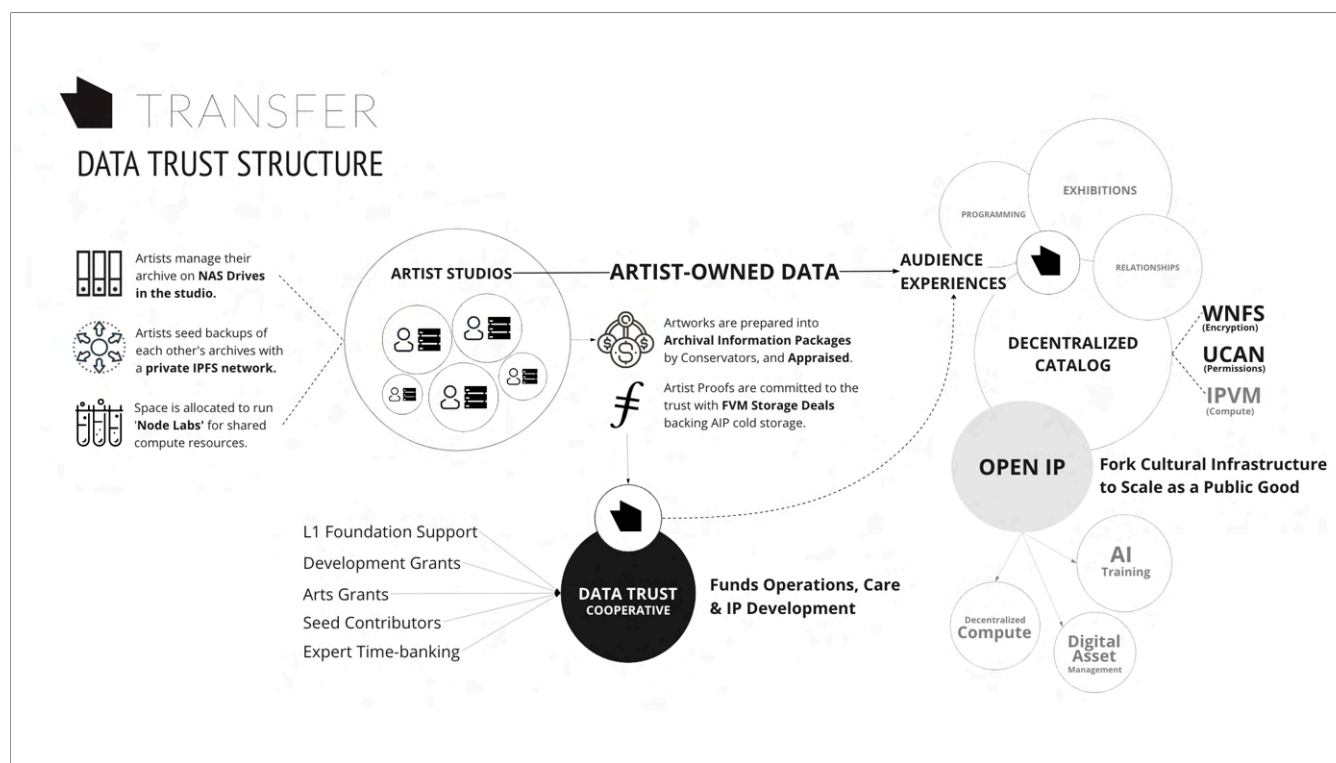
The work that we are doing at TRANSFER Data Trust fits somewhere in between a worker cooperative and platform coop. 'Exit to Community' inspired the idea of exiting ownership of the gallery to the artists. Thinking about a new model for supporting data-first artworks like video games, virtual worlds, net art, etc.

GOVERNANCE MODELS

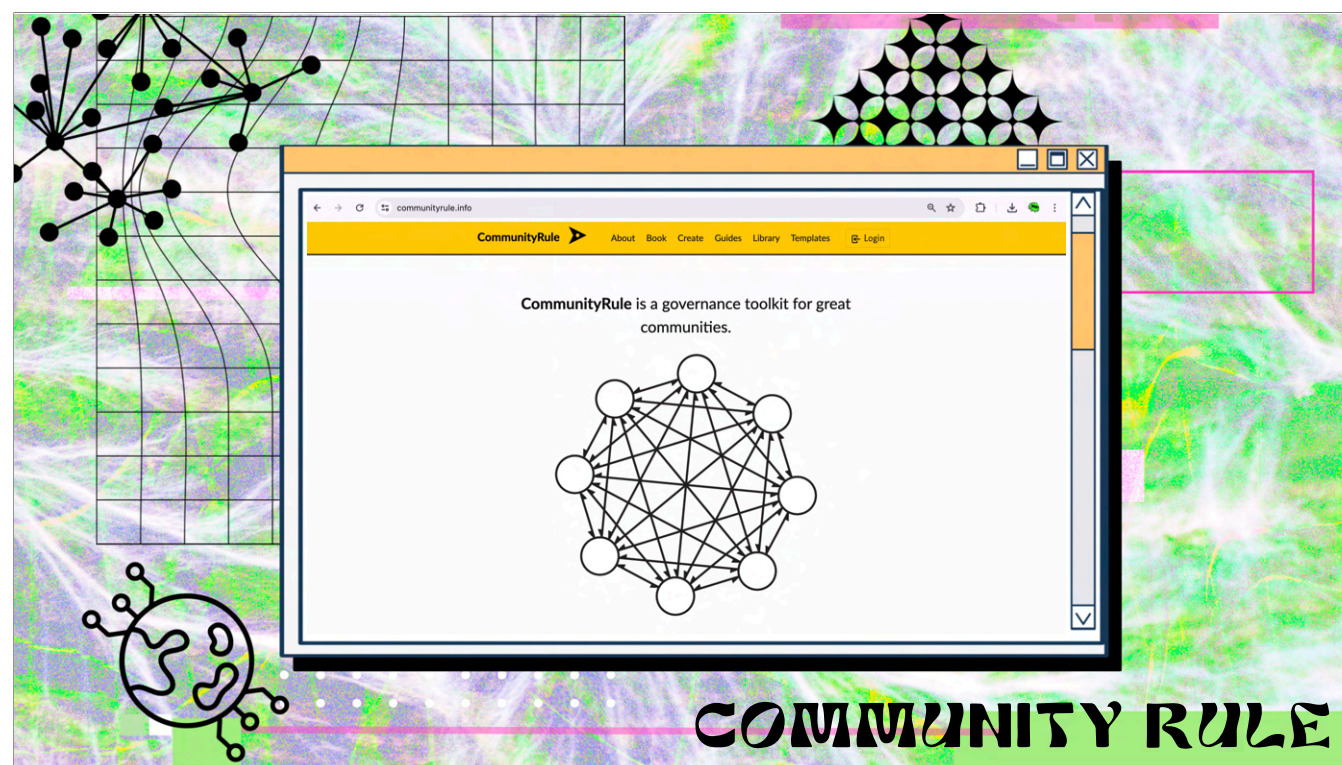
Decentralized Autonomous Organizations (DAOs) took off in Web3, but they have quickly been revealed as flawed in ideology and execution.

We'll start with a look at some emergent governance models, before jumping into a case study of three leading DAO experiments to discuss the structures, what worked well, and what didn't.

- Governance Models _INDEX
 - Community Rule
 - Emergent Strategy
 - Distributed Coops
- DAOs
 - Ethereum Name Service (ENS)
 - Friends With Benefits (FWB)
 - Haus der Elektronisch Kunst (HEK)



We have developed a new model, which you can see here at a high level. This will be flushed out in more detail in the upcoming course around 'Decentralized Storage' with Regina Harsanyi



Next, let's dig into the governance models that we're going to look at in the workshop session. This is taken from 'Community Rule' an amazing online resource.

GOVERNANCE TEMPLATES

 **Benevolent Dictator**

The Benevolent Dictator holds ultimate decision-making power, until the group is ready for a more inclusive structure.

Values

Membership

Autocracy

Delegation

Expiration

Executive

Lobbying

 **Circles**

Units called Circles have the ability to decide and act on matters in their domains, which their members agree on through a Council.


Values

Membership

Council

Delegation

Lazy consensus

 **Consensus**

Decisions that affect the group collectively should involve participation of all participants.

Values

Membership

Exclusion

Consensus

Deliberation

Do-Ocracy



GOVERNANCE TEMPLATES



Benevolent Dictator

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Values Membership Autocracy Delegation Expiration Executive Lobbying



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Values Membership Council Delegation Lazy consensus



Consensus

Decisions that affect the group collectively should involve participation of all participants.

Values Membership Exclusion Consensus Deliberation Do-Ocracy



Do-ocracy

Those who take initiative to do something in the group can decide how they do it.

Values Membership Autonomy Do-ocracy Lobbying



Elected Board

An elected board determines policies and organizes their implementation.

Values Membership Board Representation Majority Voting



Jury

Proposals are shaped and decided on by randomly selected juries.

Values Membership Legislature Sortition Petition Policy Register



GOVERNANCE TEMPLATES



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Values Membership Exclusion Consensus Deliberation Do-Ocracy



Do-ocracy

Those who take initiative to do something in the group can decide how they do it.

Values Membership Autonomy Do-ocracy Lobbying



Petition

All participants can propose and vote on proposals for the group.

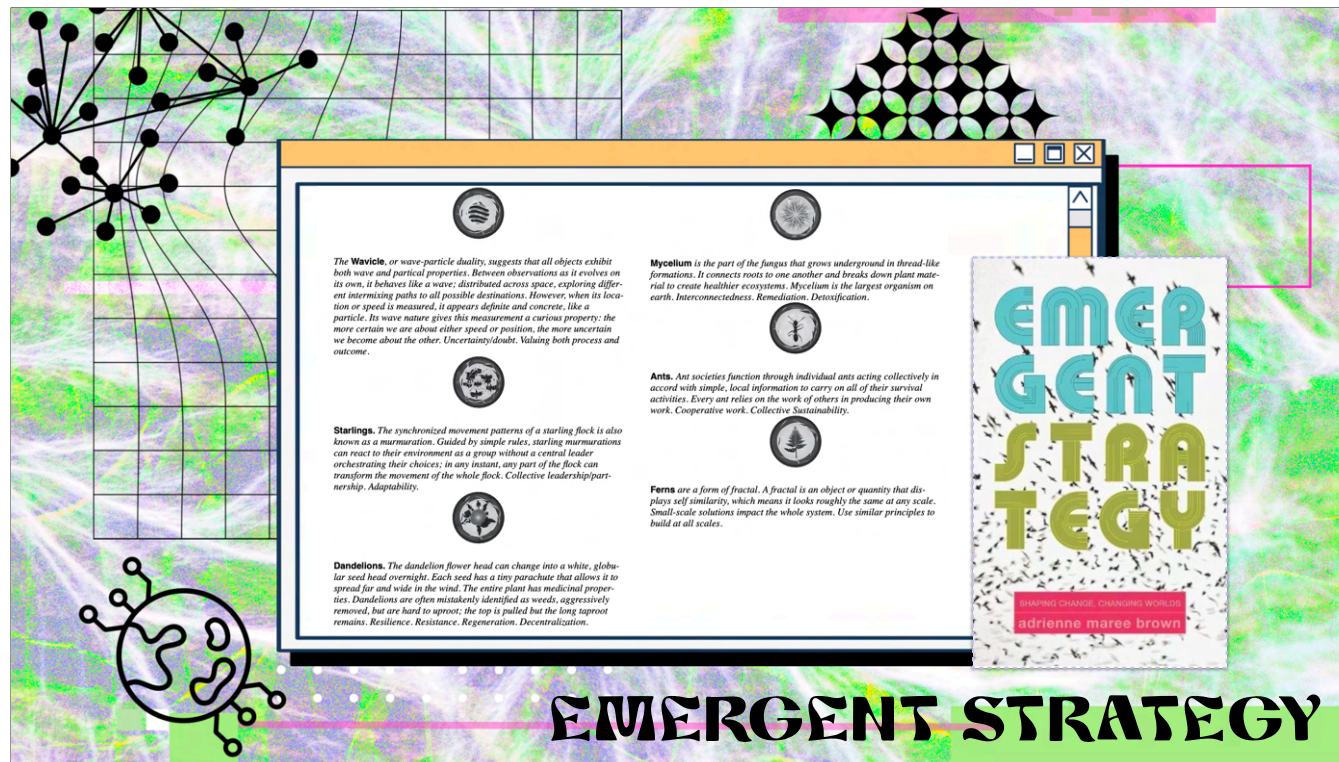
Values Membership Petition



Self-Appointed Board

A board that selects its own members determines policies and organizes their implementation.

Values Membership Board Majority Voting



This is another amazing example from Adrienne Marie Brown, thinking about natural systems as a way to model governance, instead of around capital and power, thinking about natural collaboration and symbiotic balance.

DISTRIBUTED CO-OP

DisCOs are our proposal to use the power of distributed ledger and peer-to-peer technologies to prioritize taking care of human beings. They constitute an affirmative, entirely feasible vision for new and radical forms of ownership, governance, entrepreneurship, and financialization to fight pervasive economic inequality. At the same time, they focus on building synergies among related but often siloed sectors that urgently need to build better strategic alliances to develop creative, inclusive solutions.

What are these sectors? Beyond the blockchain space and the ideas of Commons and co-ops, there are more ingredients in the DisCO mixer.

**If I Only
Had a
Heart:
A DisCO
Manifesto**

DisCO

And a powerful example of governance can be found here in the DiSCO manifesto.

DISTRIBUTED COOP

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What are these sectors? Beyond the blockchain space and the ideas of Commons and co-ops, there are more ingredients in the DisCO mixer.

- **The Commons and P2P:** Commons are community led, self-organised systems for the long-term stewarding of resources, often flowering in the cracks between the market or State. Peer to Peer or P2P describes non-hierarchical, non-coercive social relations happening in human networks, often augmented through technological infrastructures. P2P provides an enabling infrastructure for acts of commoning. Examples include [cooperatively managed forests](#), [water distribution irrigation systems](#), [social currencies](#), [Free/Libre and Open-Source Software](#), [self organized urban spaces](#), [distributed manufacturing networks](#) and [so much more](#).
- **Open Cooperativism:** These are locally grounded, commons-oriented and transnationally-networked cooperatives focused on social and environmental work. Open co-ops can be viewed as the experimental edge of the work of [Platform Cooperativism](#), exploring convergences between the Commons and P2P movements along with the world of cooperatives and the Social and Solidarity Economy. Examples include [Enspiral](#), [Fairmondo](#), [L'Atelier Paysan](#), [AnyShare](#) and the [Mutual Aid Network](#).

DISTRIBUTED COOP

DisCOs

DisCOs are our proposal to use the power of distributed technologies to prioritize taking care of human beings. It is an entirely feasible vision for new and radical forms of entrepreneurship, and financialization to fight pervasively. At the same time, they focus on building synergies among sectors that urgently need to build better strategic alliances and solutions.

What are these sectors? Beyond the blockchain space and co-ops, there are more ingredients in the DisCO mix:

The Commons and P2P

— **The Commons and P2P:** Commons are community led, self-organised systems for the long-term stewarding of resources, often flowering in the cracks between the market and the State. P2P describes non-hierarchical, human networks, often augmented by digital technologies. It provides an enabling infrastructure for [cooperatively managed forests](#), [currencies](#), [Free/Libre and Open Source Software](#), [spaces](#), [distributed manufacturing](#) and [other](#).

Open-Value Accounting

— **Open-Value Accounting:** A form of accounting where contributions to a shared project are documented to allow retrospective analysis of the distributions of effort and labor, and enable better and more fair distributions of incomes. Open-value accounting enables [value sovereignty](#), or how a commons self-regulates its market relations so the core aspects of its common wealth and social relationships remain inalienable. Examples include [Sensorica](#), [Backfeed](#), [CoMakery](#) and [MetaMaps](#). Open-Value Accounting also highlights invisible work, which leads us to...

Feminist Economics

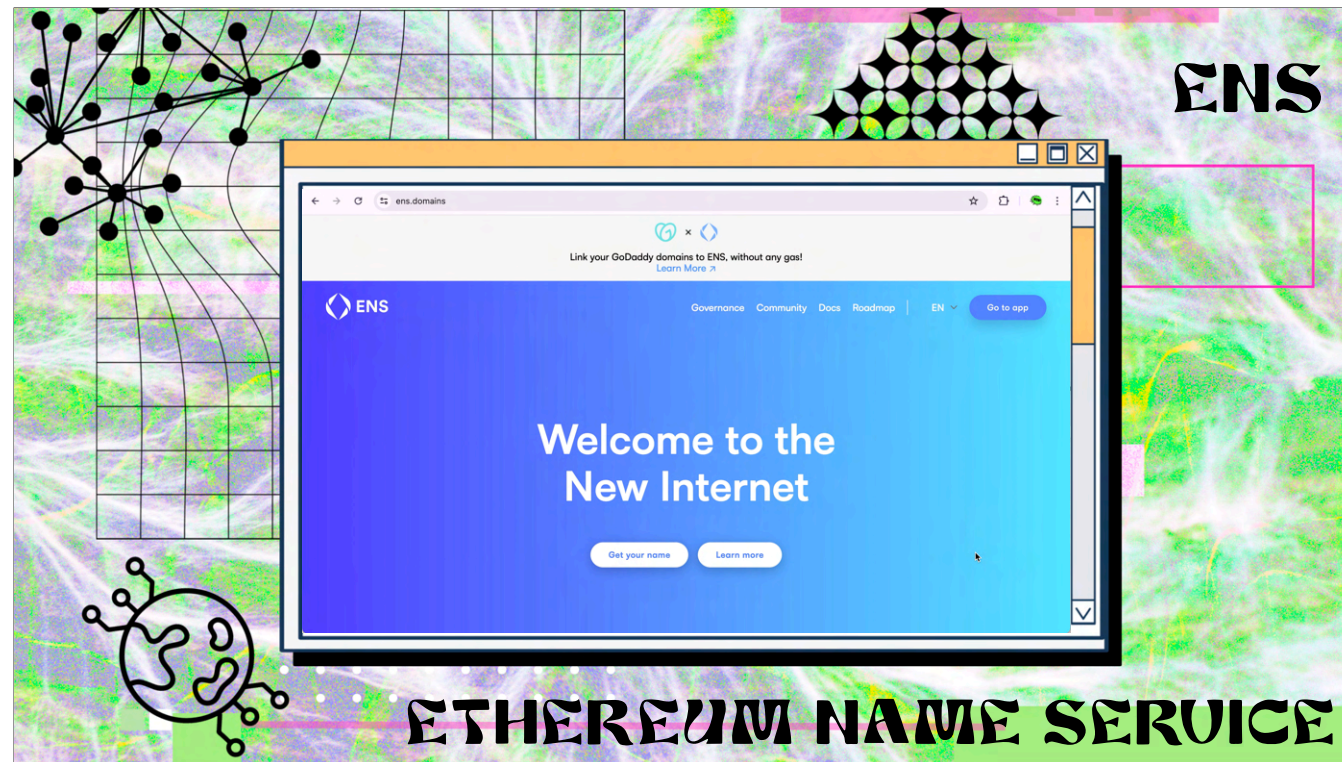
— **Feminist Economics:** This school of economic thought also asserts value sovereignty by challenging normative¹⁹ notions of economic abstraction — something very persistent in the blockchain space. Feminist Economics proposes a more holistic approach to the very idea of “the economy,” factoring in often-invisibilized and unpaid factors such as care work, human connection, interdependency and emotional labor into economic theory. [Examples abound](#), yet are often hidden.²⁰

DAOS

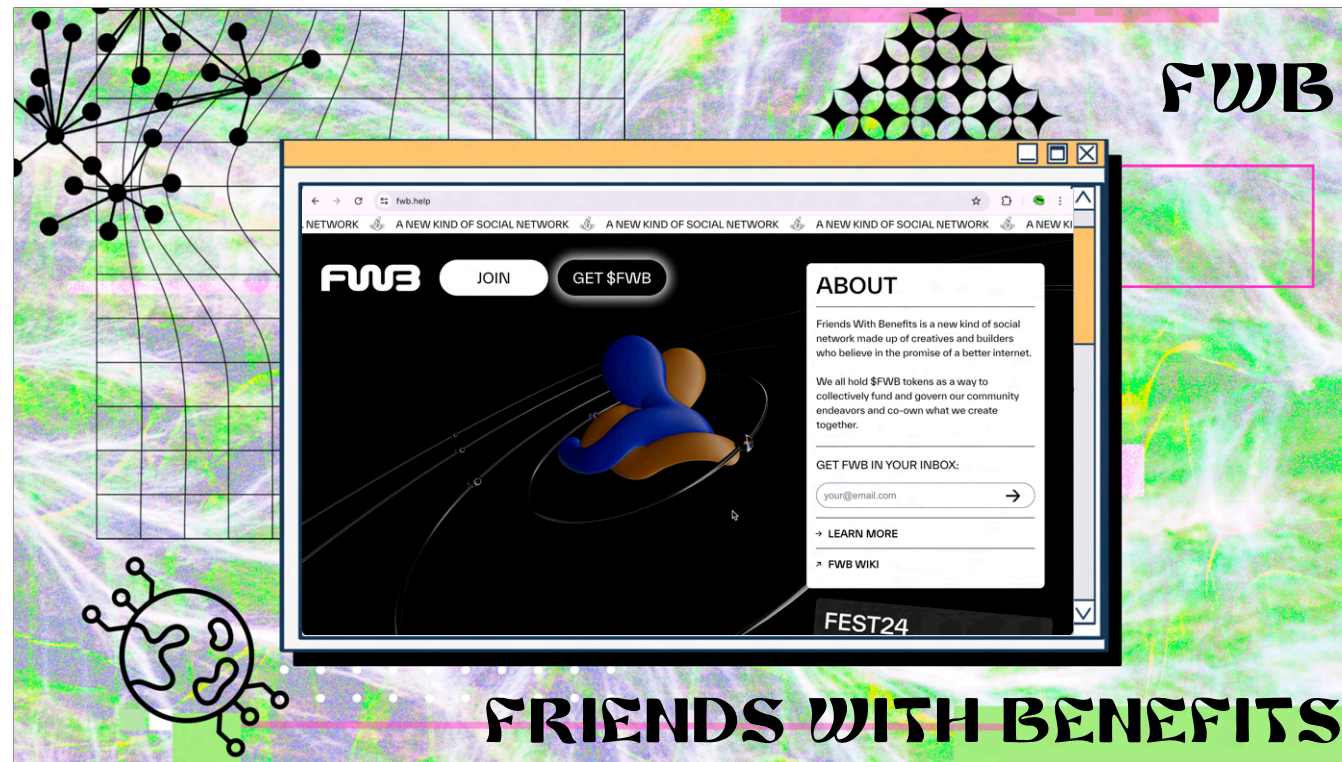
A Decentralized Autonomous Organization is a blockchain-based system that enables people to collaborate and make decisions in a decentralized manner without the need for a central authority. The key infrastructure component is a 'token' that can serve both functional and financial purposes.

The concept gained popularity with the launch of the Ethereum blockchain in 2015, which provided a platform for creating and running DAOs.

The first major experiment was "The DAO," created in 2016 as a venture capital fund in the Ethereum ecosystem, which aimed to democratize investments, and infamously resulted in a significant security breach leading to a substantial loss of funds.



ENS is a human readable name that links to your ethereum wallet. Once it was already up and operational as a service, it decided to tokenize and give the namespace governance over to the people who had purchased these names. Airdrops were quite lucrative, and the governance was effective in making decisions, raising the value, and removing bad actors.



Social token experiment that was a vibrant community and IRL gatherings. When the price of ETH plummeted and the token crashed, the reserves got short and the humans doing the labor to maintain the DAO started to ask questions about how people were being compensated. Tensions rose and the nature of the DAO changed considerably. The entity still remains as an annual fest with a L2 'arcade' token but it doesn't hold the value of the original \$FWB.



This is a DAO founded around artworks. The founder acquired artworks, and each artist was issued tokens. Because this was later in the lifecycle of DAOs it was never fully monetized, which is why it's great. It was more about access to events, and recognizing a community on-chain.

