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FIVE-DAY NFT EXHIBITION IN MANCHESTER POWERED BY METAVERSE BRAND 2117

Manchester - November 29, 2022: **Edua Sykes** has today announced *Unbanned*, a five-day exhibition featuring artists from regions such as Latin America, Africa, Eurasia, and the Middle East, which will take over Canvas on Oxford Road, January 22-26, 2023.

Opening with a preview party for press and ticket holders on January 21st, the exhibition comes as a response to the infamous banning sanctions that NFT marketplaces imposed on artists based on their country of origin and/or geolocation.

Founder of **CrypticVentures**, Edua Sykes, as well as philanthropic gallerist, and owner of the **Adelia Art Gallery** in Liverpool, **Amir Soleymani**, will act as co-curators of this unprecedented NFT exhibition.

The shortlist of artists considered for *Unbanned* will be in the hands of regional ambassadors: founder of **Electric Artefacts**, **Aleksandra Artamonovskaja**, (Eurasia), musical artist, **Ernesto Cisneros**, (Latin America), illustrator **Ralph Khoury**, (Africa), and abstract artist, **Arefeh Norouzi**, (Middle East).

Banned artists can also directly apply to be exhibited at *Unbanned*. Online applications will be overseen by critically acclaimed *TIME Magazine* artist, **Parin Heidari**, and be submitted through creative hub, **JOYN**.

"I thought it would be important to have a clear curatorial system that would allow us to properly identify most, if not all, artists that were banned. By having ambassadors that already have an extensive community of artists in their regions, whilst opening an application form, we can ensure that no one is left behind." said Edua Sykes, creator of *Unbanned*.

Lebanese artist, Ralph Khoury, also added: "The only form of curation amongst NFT marketplaces should be based on the merit of the art and nothing else. It is ridiculous to ban someone based on their nationality or where they live. It's important to have exhibitions like *Unbanned*, to counteract the ridiculous sanctions implemented by these big marketplaces who disregarded artists for geo political reasons that have nothing to do with art."

The exhibition, which already has a great Web3 input, is powered by metaverse brand **2117**, in what promises to be one of the most forward-thinking art exhibitions to take place in Manchester.

Amin Al Zarouni, CEO of **Bedu** and 2117, said: "It has been saddening for us to see artists from around the globe being banned from NFT marketplaces based on their nationality or geographical location. We have experienced this first hand with some of our artists having their collections being delisted, and our holders not being able to preview their assets on a certain marketplace. *Unbanned* represents the spirit of Web3.0; by supporting artists whose work has been banned, they are giving them a voice and a platform for their messages to be heard" He continued by adding "At Bedu we believe in equal rights and opportunities for everyone and, as such, supporting *Unbanned* through our metaverse brand, 2117, was a seamless decision that shows that our values aren't just meant to be recited, but implemented and supported."

Following the preview night, *Unbanned* will be open to the public, who can attend by registering for a free ticket. These tickets will become available at a later date in December.

The five days open to the public will have a programme of activities, as part of the "Artists Supporting Artists Scheme", which intends to have a crossover of communities that will allow for a wider conversation on the topic, as well as on the power of selling art as NFTs, and how artists lives have been affected by the banning situation.

TIME Pieces artist, Parin Heidari, noted: “This can make or break someone's livelihood. Many banned artists have made these marketplaces very profitable before getting banned. If they are banned, all percentages from past sales should return to artists. They can't utilise artists' talent for their own personal gain.”

“This exhibition also questions Web3 companies' true commitment to the decentralisation values that they so much promote.” Edua Sykes added. “We know that no Web3 company is 100% decentralised as they are all limited companies wherever they're based, but we were all supposed to be working together for the greater purpose; now, those vows have been broken. We can't remain silent about this. Unbanned gives these artists a platform where their art can be celebrated and their voices heard”

This event also marks **Canvas**' first art exhibition after its opening earlier this year.

“It is a pleasure for us to host *Unbanned*, as our main focus at Canvas is to support artists from all backgrounds and provide them with a space where they can showcase their creative potential. This will mark our first major art exhibition since we opened and cannot wait to welcome the NFT community of Manchester and beyond.” said **Joe Splain** Head of Programming at Canvas

Selected artists for the exhibition will be announced in the first days of January 2023 and will be found on the *Unbanned* website.

Tickets can be obtained here.

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Who is Edua Sykes?

Edua is a Web3 professional, who has organised and curated cryptoart exhibitions in cities such as London, Manchester, New York and Miami. She has become a key voice in the promotion of digital fashion, being a guest speaker at conferences such as Decentraland's Metaverse Fashion Week, Web3 London, NFT Bristol, and NFT Berlin. She has released multiple projects, from photo-poetry storytelling, to songwriting, and is responsible for organising Digital Natives, the biggest NFT event in Manchester for an NFT marketplace, in October 2021.

*For more information, please refer to the *Unbanned* website*

What is CrypticVentures?

At the intersection of tech and art, CrypticVentures is a company committed to developing its mission of social entrepreneurship by utilising and implementing Web3 technologies that have a positive impact on society

What is Electric Artefacts?

Electric Artefacts is a curatorial advisory for Blockchain and NFT-focused art projects. Their mission is to empower artists, collectors, brands and enthusiasts through digital art curation, projects, exhibitions, events, and education.

What is JOYN?

Joyn is a creative hub that gives creators a way to discover and connect with others who share their vision and provides them with tools and the community support they need for their projects.

What is Web3?

Web3 is an idea of a new iteration of the World Wide Web. If Web1 was the beginning of the

internet with static pages and basic communication systems, and Web2 is highly visual, with video calls, and dominating social media, Web3 is being in the internet. An immersive new phase, which incorporates values of decentralisation, transparency, blockchain technologies, token-based economies, and DAOs (Decentralised Autonomous Organisations), thus removing centralised monopolies and, as a result, giving power back to the community.

What is an NFT?

A Non Fungible Token (NFT) is a unique digital identifier that cannot be copied or substituted, as it has unique properties. An NFT can be seen as being a digital receipt that stays forever on the blockchain. When an artist sells art as an NFT, this is usually either a JPEG, PNG, gif, or Mp4 file which holds an artwork, or a physical artwork that has been scanned or digitised (thus becoming any of the aforementioned). Either way, these artworks are tokenized once they are minted on the blockchain. Blockchains cannot be altered, and the history of the token (in this case the artwork) is always publicly available, from who created it, who minted it, who bid, bought and whom it was transferred to. When it comes to art, NFTs are perfect for authenticating artworks and disabling counterfeit practices. The way in which these are sold, by using smart contracts, artists can get royalties for any future re-sales of their works, something that they were unable to do with traditional art galleries.

What is an NFT marketplace?

NFT marketplaces are platforms where users can purchase art as NFTs. This can be from pictures, to drawings, to paintings, to 3D sculptures. They have become majorly popular in recent years, and have been responsible for the fast adoption of blockchain technologies.

What is decentralisation?

Decentralisation is a process by which an organisation's decision making is distributed or delegated away from centralised and authoritative groups. This removes concepts of monopolisation, and gives way for Decentralised Finance to exist, being reliant on Web3 technologies such as blockchain, and NFTs. Decentralisation also means, in a theoretical approach, that everyone belongs to the same community, which is borderless and embracing of all, regardless of their nationality or location.

For more information:

press@crypticventures.io

www.unbanned.art