

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



843 Beeple — It was about more than NFTs

His name is Beeple. Recently, he sold a piece of digital art for \$69 million, and the internet lost its mind. I'm Jerry Roberts, and today we dig a little into the story behind the story. There's a great lesson we can all benefit from. That's next, on The Extra Point.

You recall the story of the guy who sold the NFT — Non-Fungible Token — at auction for almost \$70 million. Suddenly, the whole world knew about NFTs.

Actually, those have been around since 2012. An NFT is a tradable asset, which is sold and entered into the blockchain, which ensures ownership and authenticity. Nobody thought much about them until Beeple sold his art at famed Christie's auction house in London, about three months ago.

Beeple — real name Mike Winkelmann — is a digital artist in Charleston, South Carolina. Growing up in cold Wisconsin, Winkelmann spent much his time indoors on his computer. He wanted to be an artist, but wasn't very good at it. Still, it was his dream.

In 2007, he decided the best way to do that was to practice art every single day. He'd take a pen and paper and draw whatever came to mind. He says his first work was of his uncle, and was horrible. The next day he drew another, and the next day another. After 100 days, he saw that his art was better. After 365 days, he was designing 3-D art.

Winkelmann kept at it, every day, even on the day his child was born. Every piece of art he made, he uploaded to the Internet under the name Beeple, and slowly he began to gain a following. He repeated the exercise every day for 13 years, 5000 consecutive days. That's 5000 pieces of art, 5000 opportunities to improve, 5,000 chances to be noticed.

Well, that notice had spread a bit farther than

he knew. Some 8,000 miles away, in India, a man who goes by the professional name of MetaKovan, had become a big fan of his work.

Winkelmann had the idea to create an NFT out of those 5,000 images, and to sell all of them in one big bundle, and that he would use Christie's to do it. He said he had no expectations for how much the art would pull in the auction. He just hoped for the best.

Winkelmann said the bidding started slow, but kept going, and before he knew it the numbers were shocking. The 13 years of work, those 5,000 pieces of art went to MetaKovan for the breathtaking price of \$69 million, which turned the digital world upside down.

Overnight, thousands, maybe millions of cryptocurrency enthusiasts began talking about NFTs, making them, buying them, and planning for overnight riches.

For Winkelmann, Beeple, this was not an overnight success. It was the product of 13 years of hard work, often tedious work, and he tried to improve as an artist. It was creating hundreds, then thousands of pieces of art, while working to feed his family.

It's a story of uncommon focus, uncommon dedication, doing what he enjoyed, hoping that one day he might get good enough to earn a living that way. He could have given up at any point along the way, on any of those 5,000 days.

You wonder how many other Winkelmanns there are out there, who have exhibited that kind of dogged perseverance, with a goal they feel is worthwhile pursuing in that fashion. You wonder if there is a Winkelmann or two here in Guam, doing that now.

This story is not really about art, or NFTs and crypto, or the millions Winkelmann made. (Con't.)

It's flat-out about commitment, and belief. If you want to become better at something, whatever that is, you have to commit to your image of you having that talent, and that commitment needs to be like the one Winkelmann, Bleep, made to himself.

As for the money, Winkelmann will use some to help his family, but he plans to give the majority of it away to causes he believes in — including to fund the efforts of people who want to be artists, just like him.

That's The Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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