

Cassie Liu, “Environmentally Focused NFTs Try to Offset Carbon Footprints,” *ArtAsiaPacific*, April 22, 2021.

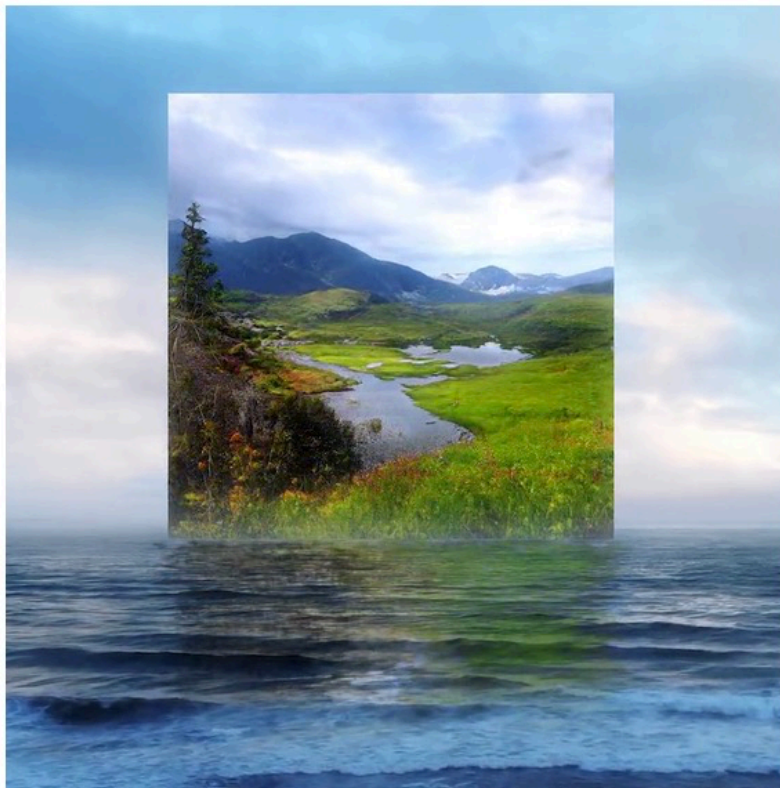
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ENVIRONMENTALLY FOCUSED NFTS TRY TO OFFSET CARBON FOOTPRINT

BY CASSIE LIU



Still image of **REFIK ANADOL**'s NFT artwork, *Machine Hallucinations: Nature Dreams—Last Memory*, 2021. Image via [Twitter](#).

Recent record sales of non-fungible token (NFT) art have made global headlines, although there is increasing concern about the staggering greenhouse emissions associated with the new crypto technology. Amid a growing debate, some artists and organizations have issued environmentally sensitive NFT artworks or initiatives ahead of Earth Day, April 22, while debates concerning ways to offset the digital collectible's negative impact on the environment continues.

Climate friendly travel network SUNx and cyber security company WISeKey launched their joint “Earth Watch” NFT fundraising auction today. Running until June 5, the auction sells a digital mirror of the original 1992 Earth Swatch designed by the late climate

Petzel

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activist Maurice Strong, who commissioned the world’s first “state of the environment” report for the United Nations in 1971, with proceeds going towards various environmental groups. Earlier last month, Social Alpha Foundation led Carbon Drop, a carbon-neutral fundraising auction (March 20–22), featuring NFT artworks inspired by the Earth by eight artists, including, among others, NFT superstar Beeple’s *OCEAN FRONT* (2019) as well as Refik Anadol’s *Machine Hallucinations: Nature Dreams—Last Memory* (2021). The sale raised more than USD 6 million for the nonprofit Open Earth Foundation towards a forest conservation project in Peru. Each artist and artwork reportedly received 60 carbon offsets, provided by Creol.io, which purchase “verified Carbon Credits” on the client’s behalf and “offsets them automatically.”

Individual artists have also engaged in environmentally focused NFTs. Released by artist Simon Denny on March 18 at his current solo exhibition, “Mine,” at New York’s Petzel gallery, the new *NFT Mine Offsets* series originated from Denny’s attempts to offset the carbon emissions generated by blockchain infrastructure. The NFTs depict portraits of second-handed crypto miners, while sale proceeds will be donated to the nonprofit climateprediction.net, which models possible outcomes of climate change. Meanwhile, artist John Gerrard’s newly released NFT, *Western Flag* (2021), derived from the artist’s 2017 Earth Day commission *Western Flag (Spindletop, Texas)*, aims to transfer half of the ethereum proceeds from the sale to regenerate.farm, an emergency cryptofund dedicated to soil restoration and post-petroleum agricultural practices in Ireland.

NFTs require one to register a string of unique codes on a virtual ledger or blockchain, a process that mandates immense computer electricity, which generated largely by fossil fuels. It is estimated that the creation of a single NFT produces as much greenhouse gas as an 800-kilometer trip in a gasoline-powered car, fuelling criticism of the practice by environmentalists.

Christie’s USD 69 million auction of Beeple’s *Everydays—The First 5000 Days* (2021) in March has led to buzzing activity in the art world, both among artists producing NFT and crypto artworks and among collectors eager to purchase these for skyrocketing amounts.

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