



ARTS & CULTURE

Art Lover Buys Digital Work for \$6.6 Million

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When a painting by a famous artist like Vincent Van Gogh sells for millions of dollars, it makes headlines. But what about a **digital** work made by a current artist? Would you expect it to sell for \$6.6 million?

That is exactly what happened last week, with a 10-second video made by the artist known as BEEPLE.

Last year, an art collector from Florida bought Beeple's video for about \$67,000. Last week, the collector sold the video for \$6.6 million.

The video artwork shows former U.S. President Donald Trump on the ground, with his body covered in slogans – phrases used by groups to gain attention.

The marketplace for digital work is growing quickly. Thanks to software that guarantees a digital file is **unique**, such art buys are becoming more common. The software is called blockchain. It acts as a “digital **signature**” and proves that an item that may only exist **virtually** is one-of-a-kind.

Beeple's real name is Mike Winkelmann. He has another digital work of art that is being sold by Christie's, a famous **auction** company. The artwork is a collection of 5,000 photos. So far, offers have reached \$3 million.

When the auction ends, Christie's will accept payment in traditional money or in the virtual currency known as Ether.

Noah Davis works for Christie's. He said, “We are in unknown territory.”

It's not just artwork that is being sold this way.

For many years, people have traded sports cards -- thick pieces of paper that had pictures of sports stars. Eventually, some of those sports cards became valuable and would sell for many thousands of dollars.

Sports cards are still popular, but some sports leagues are moving into the digital world, as well.

For example, the National Basketball Association has a new marketplace for trading short videos, called Top Shot.

Short videos of big moments from games, like a **dunk** by LeBron James of the Los Angeles Lakers, are selling for thousands of dollars. The largest sale on the site so far came in February, when a user bought the dunk by James for \$208,000.

One Top Shot user told the Reuters news agency he had bought **items** on the marketplace for about \$1 million and re-sold them for almost \$5 million.

Experts in the business of buying and selling digital items say people are getting more used to the idea of owning something they cannot touch.

Andrew Steinwold runs an investment **fund** that buys and then re-sells these digital files. The fund started in January with a value of \$6 million.

While he said he warns investors to be careful with their money, he also thinks there is the possibility for the market for digital files to increase over time.

"I think it's going to reach into the trillions of dollars one day," he said.

I'm Dan Friedell.

Elizabeth Howcroft and Ritvik Carvalho wrote this story for the Reuters news agency. Dan Friedell adapted it for Learning English. Ashley Thompson was the editor.

What do you think about the digital sales? We want to hear from you. Write to us in the Comments Section and [visit our Facebook page](#).

Words in This Story

digital *-n.* using or characterized by computer technology

unique *-adj.* belonging to or connected with only one particular thing, place, or person

signature *-n.* a person's name written in that person's handwriting

virtual *-adj.* existing or occurring on computers or on the Internet

auction *-n.* a public sale at which things are sold to the people who offer to pay the most

dunk *-n.* the act of jumping high in the air and pushing (the ball) down through the basket

fund *-n.* an amount of money that is used for a special purpose

item *-n.* an individual thing
