

# Editorial

# Metaverse and Crypto Art During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Bussakorn Binson<sup>+</sup> Executive Director

The situation under the COVID-19 pandemic has caused changes in ones worklife and interpersonal communications due to health and safety concerns resulting in a distance and remoteness from one another. Many people managed to work at home or so called "work from home" facilitated by computing devices, the internet and software tele-communication platforms.

Computing literacy has become a basic skill needed for everyone not only for communications purposes, but to create more forms of online businesses during the locked down. Creation of a virtual world, following the *Second Life* concept (founded by Philip Rosedale, 2007) which provides an online space known as "Metaverse" for anyone to explore parallel to the real world, has become popular.

<sup>+</sup> Bussakorn Binson, Executive Director JUCR, Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand.  
email: bsumrongthong@yahoo.com.

The Metaverse aims are to create a realistic space where individuals are represented by personal avatars and provides an opportunity for people to socialize, conduct business to compensate for the needed social-distancing during the current pandemic.

The new digital medium for secure transaction known as *Cryptocurrency* is becoming evermore popular. This new digital currency has changed a sector of the arts business to be termed *crypto arts* which is based on and relies on blockchain technology. *Crypto art* has become more popular as humans are currently spending most of their daily lives at home and popularizing these technological fads and their related trends. Similarly, as more and more people are spending long hours a day online the news of this emerging new currency has easily drawn attention of consumers and profiteering speculators.

The advancements in artwork creation such as online art classes, virtual exhibitions and galleries have also become popular as it is the only way artists can continue to survive during the pandemic's ongoing and seemingly endless locked downs. Additionally, specifically instructions on creating 3D forms and virtual spaces have also seen increasing demand from students. The buying and selling of crypto art are considered to be good opportunities for many artists who want to become known as crypto artists as they can create their artworks, certify them online and put it up for sale on ad hoc platforms via their computer and no "traditional materials," need to be procured or transportation to a gallery. The only complication for new crypto artist is that one needs to purchase some cryptocurrency and create a digital wallet before they can connect to a *non fungible token* (NFT) platform. Afterwards, their artwork's file is uploaded and the setting up of an auction with a written description of its type of NFT and how the payment can be made. However, there would be what is known as a "*fee of gas*" (since crypto currency relies on energy-intensive block chains as the form of payment) and there is a platform commission per the agreement between the platform's owner and the posting artist.

The outbreak of COVID-19 is considered an evolutionary era in the field of art that has changed the expressive ecosystem not only regarding the ways of art creation, and the learning of arts, but the exhibition of artistic works as well as its business side. The Metaverse will certainly be an additional channel for arts related activities from this time on.

Each Metaverse location termed as "*town*" will have its own unique urban life just as in the real world. Each will become new centers for business and marketing venues. Going forward, it is important for artists to be well prepared for these changes and ready themselves to explore these new ways to live, to learn and to earn, in order to secure the future value of their art and income enabling survival in the post pandemic marketplace.