

This NFT project is literally putting poetry on the blockchain

 by Saniya More

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Quick Take

- Etherpoems is a new non-fungible token (NFT) collective that is minting poems and putting them directly on-chain.
- So far, the project has released two collections of poetry NFTs.
- Despite Etherpoems' novelty, the collective has struggled to generate the same level of activity as other NFT projects that have recently taken the cryptoverse by storm.

[Ana Maria Caballero](#) has been throwing her words out into the world for years, winning several [awards](#) for her poems and essays along the way.

But she says she has often felt like she wasn't being true to the craft because she has a day job that pays the bills and helps her to raise her children. "Poetry is the only artistic craft I can think of that no one can really make a living off of," she said.

But when Caballero came across [Etherpoems](#), a new blockchain-based poetry NFT project, she immediately jumped at the chance to potentially make more money on her writing. She's minted [22 poems](#) so far and is still waiting for one to get snatched up.

The project is one of many that are attempting to turn creative works into digital assets amid a booming market for NFTs. What makes Etherpoems unique, though, is that it is the first project to quite literally put poetry *on the blockchain*.

Ballads on the blockchain

Typically in the case of NFTs, what lives on the digital ledger is only a reference to a datastore (usually held in the decentralized Interplanetary File System (IPFS)). But Etherpoems' NFTs contain the actual poem, meaning it will live on Ethereum as long as the blockchain does and doesn't depend on any separate storage networks.

The poems are stored in the "input data" field in the Ethereum transactions, using hashes. To see the poem, you simply decode the hashes — or let a block explorer like Etherscan do so for you.

Etherpoems also claims to be the first NFT project to use "collective deployed" smart contracts, meaning all proceeds from primary and secondary sale royalties are split among all of the collective's contributors.

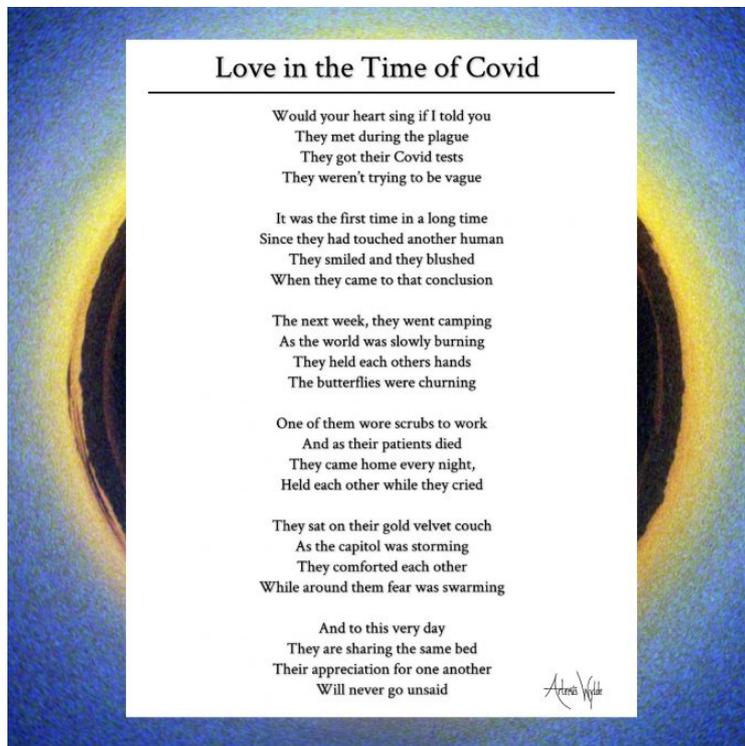
The platform's founder, who goes by the name [digitalartchick](#), says she started the collective because she saw a lack of "written word NFTs" in the crypto space.

"Currently, music and written word NFTs are taking a backseat to art tokens. But as the potential of blockchain is realized, this will change," she told The Block. "Blockchain tech is the best way to preserve data that humanity has ever seen."

Digital artist [Artemis Wylde](#) joined the Etherpoems collective after digitalartchick tweeted out a call for poets in early May for [Etherpoems I](#), the collective's first collection of 206 poems.

After Wylde commented on the tweet with a link to an animated spoken word poem, digitalartchick asked her to help curate [Etherpoems II](#), which consisted of 732 more poems. Wylde spent the next month contacting poets, answering their questions, and creating 50 of her own pieces for the collection.

Her most expensive poem — Love in the Time of Covid — sold for [5 ETH](#) (about \$16,700). Wylde wrote the poem about meeting her partner in the middle of the pandemic last summer. Because her partner is a doctor working on the COVID frontlines and was exposed to positive patients daily, Wylde and she spent extended periods of time in quarantine together.



Wylde says because her work is so visual, she usually creates animations and then writes and records a piece that the animation inspired. But for Etherpoems, she reversed her approach.

Every day, she sat down to meditate with a journal by her side and jotted down poems that came to her mind. Then, she and her partner went through archives of photos and videos they had collected on their trips together and created visuals from them. "I wanted to make sure that the words were the main focus," she said.

"Up until now, we've just been taking each other's word for who wrote what," she said. "These NFTs, in addition to being gorgeous works of art and writing, are highly valuable collectibles. They are the first of their kind."

Despite Etherpoems' novelty, however, the activity around its collections still pale in comparison to other NFT projects that have taken the cryptoverse by storm.

Etherpoems I has generated 23.3 ETH (about \$77,500) in trading volume, with the floor price of the collection at 0.3 ETH (about \$1,000). Meanwhile, the Etherpoems II collection hasn't been fully minted. Only 132 out of 732 poems have been tokenized.

According to digitalartchick, unlike Etherpoems I, Etherpoems II never sold out because writing entire poems to the blockchain costs quite a bit of gas. She said this has likely hindered sales.

Technical issues aside, many in the Etherpoems collective believe that if collectors can make the leap from thinking of poems as works of art to thinking about them as tradable assets, a whole new market of aesthetic collectibles can be shared and valued.

"Beyond the basic utility of communal chronicling, poetry and the blockchain also have a shared connection to memory," Caballero said. "Some might say that the blockchain stores facts, while poetry stores emotions, impressions and culture itself."