**University of Leicester**

**Future 50 PhD Scholarship**

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| **Project Reference** | RI DC Cossu  |

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| **Additional Supervisor** | Mary-Alice Stack, Chief Executive, [Creative United](https://www.creativeunited.org.uk/)  |

**Section 2 – *Project Information***

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| **Project Title** | *Art & the Blockchain: a post-cryptographic future for the culture sector?* |
| **Project Highlights:** | 1. | **A transdisciplinary approach** – working across media studies, cultural informatics, arts management |
| 2. | **Driven by action research** – testing and developing ideas in and through practice with a partnering social enterprise |
| 3. | **Embedded within a new Research Institute** – benefiting from the support and inspiration of an emerging community of scholars helping the culture sector to adapt to a digital age. |
| **Project Summary**  |
| The cycles of technological innovation have frequently dominated debates in the social sciences. In the area of digital culture, one vivid example has been the consequences of the decentralised, distributed architectures enabled by blockchain – not least its uses in currency issuing and in the artistic sector (through NFTs). This studentship will allow an outstanding PhD candidate to critically examine the uses of those technologies in the creative and cultural industries (Cossu, 2022a; 2022b), exploring the changes in the years to come from a ‘post-hype’ perspective. Existing research on blockchain and the arts has typically been limited to single case studies. The opportunity, therefore, is for a more comprehensive understanding of how blockchain is impacting upon the creative and arts sector more systemically. In general, researchers often study blockchain through technological, monetary, legal, and ideological lenses (Chohan 2017). What is missing is an account of how these technologies address longstanding issue in the field of art and creative work, such as inequality, and the lack of inclusivity and diversity (O’Brien 2021). With the support of its project partner (Creative United), this studentship will offer a chance to explore real world practices, the everyday of the artistic, cultural and creative work by analysing its interplay with emerging technologies. Creative United is an innovation driven social enterprise, its mission to enable increased access and inclusion in the arts and creative industries. Its work includes programmes that help reduce the financial barriers to participation in the arts, as well as those that look to address the inequalities faced by disabled people and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Creative United work with partners across the public and private sectors and have a special focus on participation in music and contemporary visual arts. The PhD Scholarship will be based at the university’s new Institute for Digital Culture, aligning with its core objective of delivering research that is purposeful and useful for cultural organisations, professional bodies, and communities of practice in their transition to a new digital environment. Chohan, U.W. (2017). The leisures of blockchains: Exploratory analysis. SSRN. Retrievedfrom [https://ssrn.com/abstract=1234455](https://ssrn.com/abstract%3D1234455)Cossu, A. (2022a). Cultures of digital finance: The rise of the financial public sphere. International Journal of Cultural Policy, 28(7), 845–857. https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2022.2137158Cossu, A. (2022b). Autonomous Art Institutions: Artists disrupting the Creative City. London: Rowman & LittlefieldO'Brien, D. (2021, September 16). *What works to support equity, diversity, and inclusion in the...* Creative Industries Policy & Evidence Centre. Retrieved October 20, 2022, from https://pec.ac.uk/blog/what-works-to-support-equity-diversity-and-inclusion-in-the-creative-industries  |