

# AUTHENTICATION IN ART

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## Is Blockchain The Right Solution For The Auction Houses?

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[Crypto & Blockchain](#) I explore the synergy between art, blockchain and tech.



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The art world witnessed an extraordinary auction on November 13th at the Christie's Auction House in New York. Not only the collection of the late Barney A. Ebsworth raised over \$300 million, setting the new world auction records for Edward Hopper and Willem de Kooning, but also for the first-time-ever, the results of the major auction sale were recorded using

blockchain technology. To do so, Christie's has collaborated with [Artory](#), the leading independent blockchain-based registry for the art market built on Ethereum Blockchain.

Artory's [Registry](#), built on the public blockchain, creates a system for vetting, memorializing and protecting transactional data, while simultaneously allowing the artwork's owner to stay completely anonymous. One of the critical differences between Artory and similar services is that the company uses third-party vetted service providers, such as auction houses, to supply the data for their registry, creating a reputational guarantee that the information is correct.

Weeks before the auction Richard Entrup, CIO at Christie's, commented in a press release: 'Our pilot collaboration with Artory ... reflects growing interest within our industry to explore the benefits of secure digital registry via blockchain technology.'

However, things weren't as optimistic just a few years ago. In 2016 when Jason Rosenstein, CEO of [Portion](#), a decentralized online auction house for luxury goods and rare collectibles, spoke with Christie's and Sotheby's auctions about a potential collaboration, both weren't ready to explore adding this technology to their authentication process. Both auction houses suggested that their brand and reputation ensured the authenticity of the works of art and didn't feel necessary to use a decentralized database.

Today, Portion offers an open market exchange of digital and physical works with a mission 'to cater to younger collectors by partnering with notable brands and establishing relations with living artists.'

So, why Christie's moved closer towards the use of the blockchain technology and collaborated with Artory to record the data from the Ebsworth sale?

The success of Bitcoin cryptocurrency and the attention to the blockchain it provoked, may be one of the reasons. Jason Bailey, the founder of [Artnome](#) and an advisor to Portion suggests that 'the lack of good data has led to a major problem with forgery and misattribution,' and the fact that Christie's used 'blockchain for the Ebsworth collection is an early step towards data transparency and improved provenance.' Bailey also suggests that 'the art market currently fails to support most working artists in any meaningful way.' Portion and similar services provide an opportunity for the artists to get royalties for the works of art they create.

Does it mean that all auction houses will now add blockchain tools to record auction data routinely? A lot will depend on the extent to which the big art market players, including Sotheby's, will adopt this technology in their operations and we are yet to observe how long it will take.