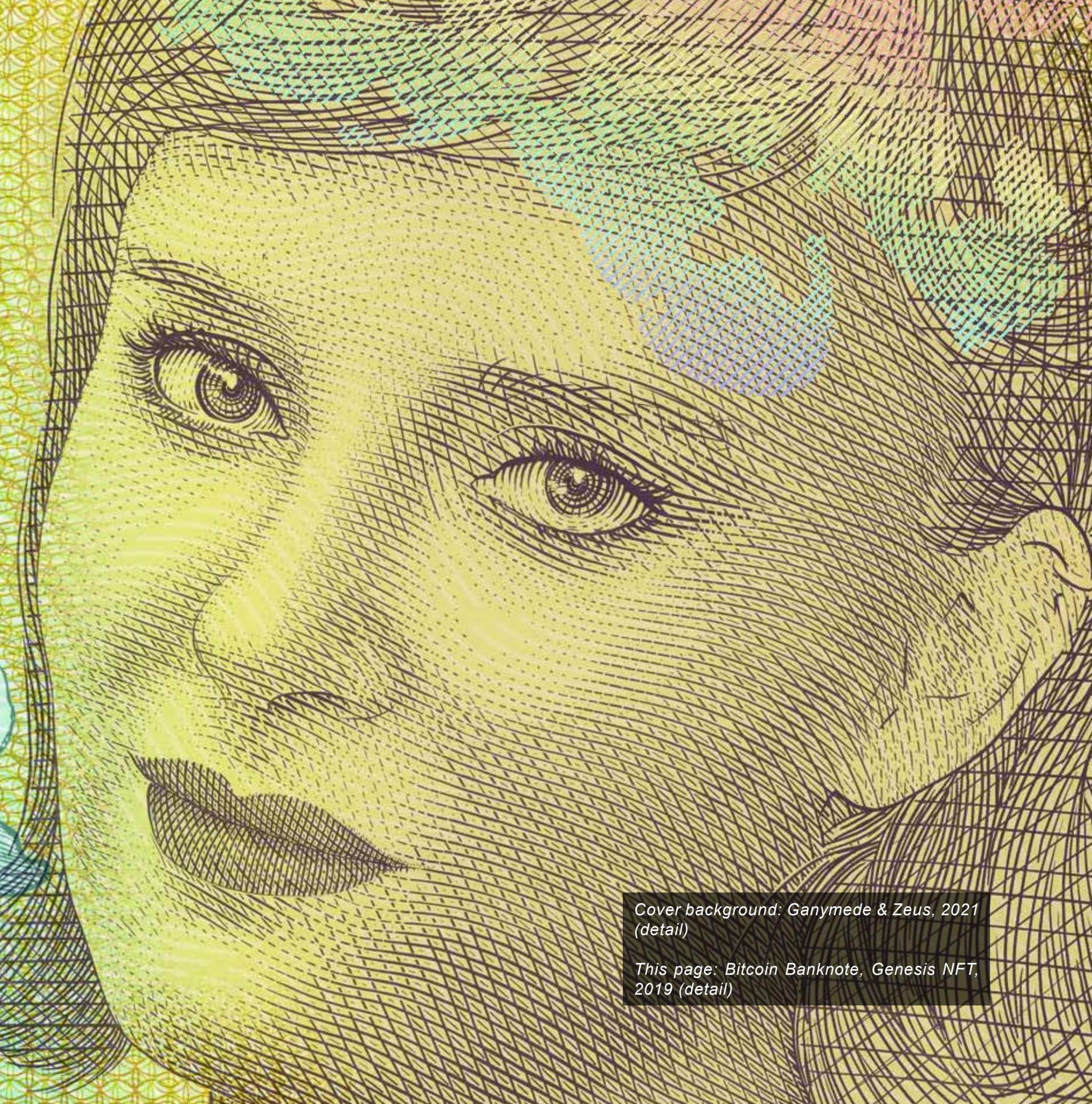


# THE MONEY MAKER

THE FORBIDDEN ART OF TOM BADLEY



Cover background: *Ganymede & Zeus*, 2021  
(detail)

This page: *Bitcoin Banknote*, *Genesis NFT*,  
2019 (detail)

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“Fiat money is the product of central banks, sold to governments, guarded by state military, and leveraged by the productive capacity of the people. The printing of money - cash - is a major arm of the fiat system’s apparatus - it is the only form of graphic design and print production that is given official sanction by governments, and is made in a high security environment.

To attempt to copy money is to undermine governments, militaries, societies, and the keystone on which the Human world relies upon: trust in fiat. Despite vast diversity in cultures and customs on planet Earth, counterfeiting money is universally regarded as illicit. Trust in fiat is the sacred heart of the system, and the production of cash is alchemy.

But what if a lone designer from the money printing industry escaped this high security environment? - carrying with him the alchemical recipe of trust, and artistic ambitions beyond the confines of small pieces of paper... you would have me.

Sometimes my work looks like money, sometimes it doesn’t, but uses similar processes to the actual production of cash. When all is said and done, those processes come down to the big four print methods: intaglio, lithography, letterpress, and silkscreen. When these processes are designed for with the same level of precision and standards as used in banknote production, you will have a final product that looks something like money.

To print a piece of paper that cannot be distinguished from real money is the most audacious artistic act possible: it is to fool the public, police, forensics departments, and governments. That’s not my intention, but to even come

close, is no less audacious. It requires very specific knowledge, taken from a never-ending training manual, and very specific methods that would be unnecessary for any other print application - from hardcore print know-how, to 19th century engraving techniques, to standards for designing for the partially sighted, to print tactility, and bespoke software for pattern generation.

Take portraiture, for example. The portraiture on banknotes is the last surviving example of hand engraving that is used at scale. Nothing says ‘money’ like an engraved portrait! Engraving consists of lines, dashes and dots that make areas of light and shade. If the line thickness is off, or the mark-making isn’t considered, or the line spacing isn’t correct, the end result will either look bad, or be impossible to print. Then the plate-making process has to accurately replicate the portrait design. When everything is perfectly aligned, the result is a crisp, detailed portrait, with a slightly raised print that is satisfying to touch, and impossible to produce with digital printing.

Another popular aspect to my work is the use of invisible inks that are only visible under UV. These types of ink are underused, mostly because you need a special lamp to view them. Yet, most banknotes have invisible UV inks somewhere on their surface. There is a magic to UV; their glow has a ‘high security’ aura.

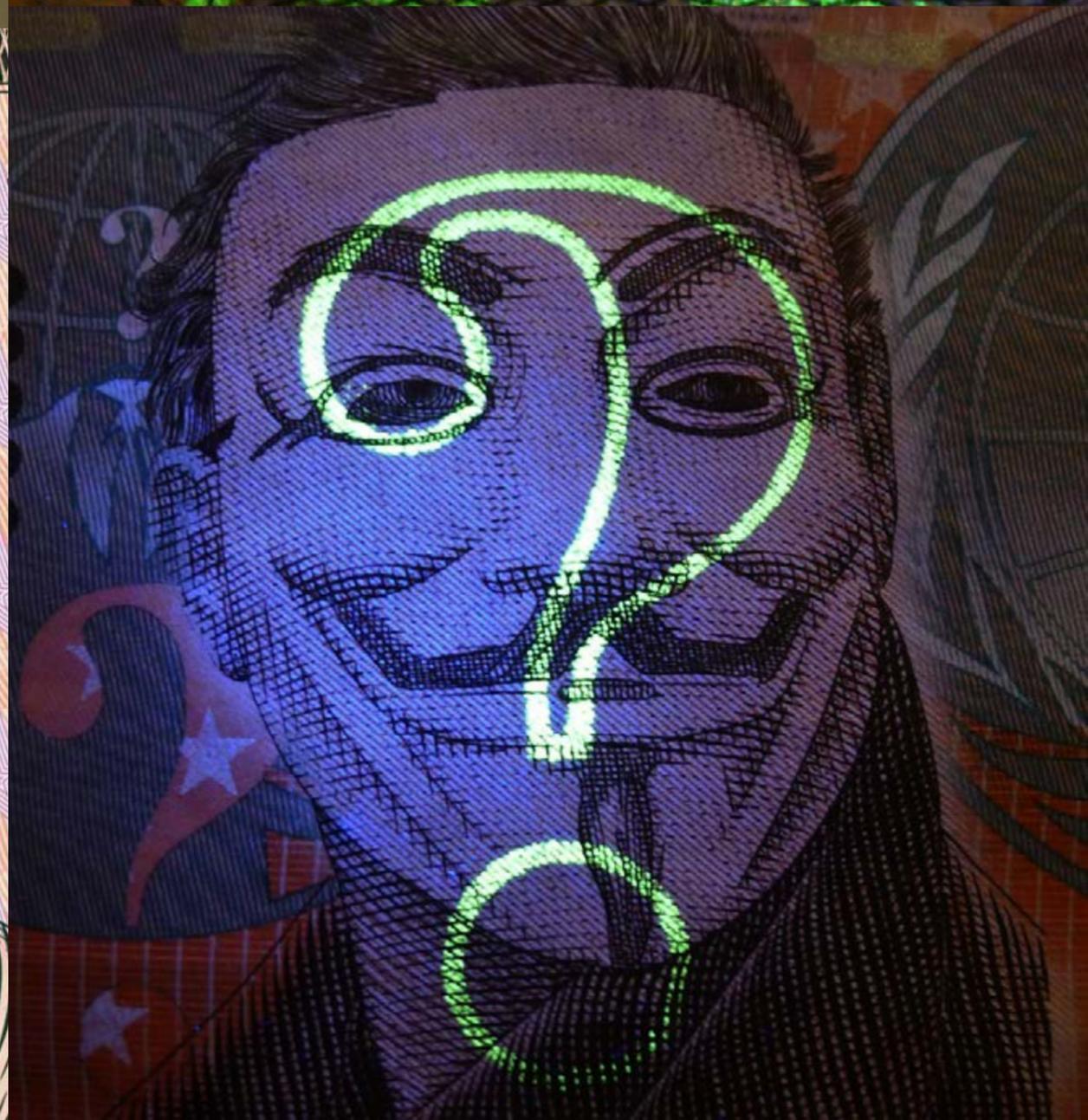
I want to use these techniques to reach unexplored artistic territory; central banks are mostly conservative customers, and their product is only a few inches wide. There is a lot of room to expand on the creative possibilities of this unique branch of art making.

More than that, I want to examine where trust lies in our money system, and how that trust is graphically and industrially generated. I want to blaze a trail, along with other artists, by generating a new self-awareness in the viewer, with regards to what money is, and what money could be. There is a shared knowing that money is changing, and with it, our self-perception.”

Portraits of Harriet Tubman and Gloria Vanderbilt for Dai Stablecoin Banknote series, a US Dollar banknote series from the future, 2020



Invisible UV ink under Intaglio portraits, 2019





*Real Money, private commission, 2020*



*Energy Flows Where Focus Goes  
[Winklevoss], Version 0, 2019*

*Hercules Kills Hydra With The Blockchain*  
(detail), NFT and print, 2021





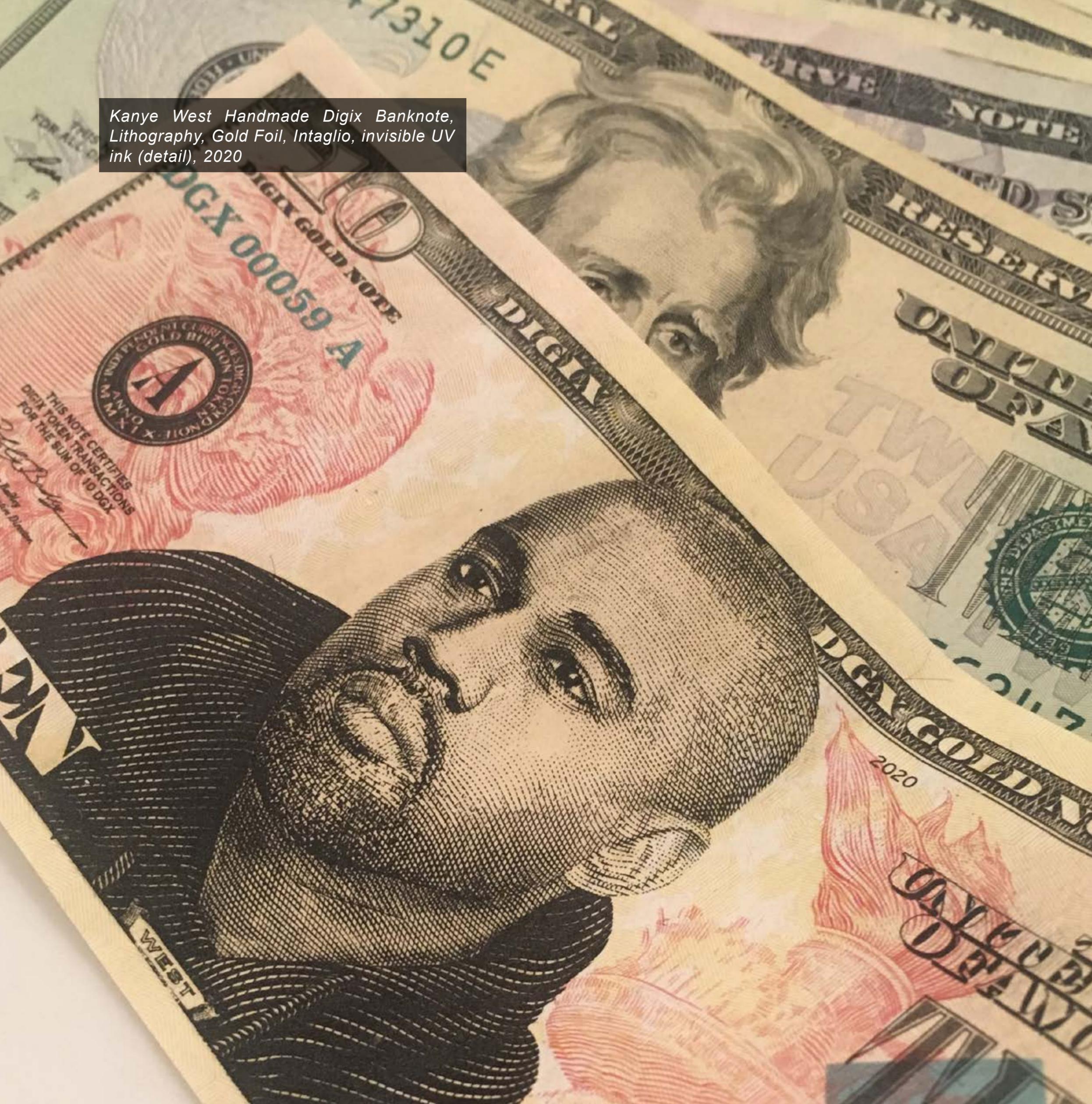
*Silk scarf, unique, (detail) 2020*



Kanye West Handmade Digix Banknote, Lithography, Gold Foil, Intaglio, invisible UV ink, 2020



Kanye West Handmade Digix Banknote, Lithography, Gold Foil, Intaglio, invisible UV ink (detail), 2020



# THE NFT ART OF TOM BADLEY

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Tom Badley is a British artist with a unique story: he creates art with the same style and techniques as used to print banknotes. Not only that, but he was one of the early artists to see the potential in NFT art – digital art on the blockchain.

Paper money has often inspired artists, such as Banksy and Warhol. But while other artists may appropriate banknotes as a material, or deface them, Tom Badley literally ‘makes’ money-like prints. The precise techniques of banknote production are a secret, for good reason. Tom owes this secret knowledge to his experience in the banknote industry; designing documents and banknotes for central banks and governments.

He attended Slade School of Fine Art, London, and the Cooper Union, New York. After graduating 2008, he continued to make art inspired by money, taking part in several group and solo exhibitions in London. But it wasn’t until he began working in the banknote industry that he found his ideal medium.

Often overlooked, the banknote is a jigsaw puzzle of print processes and artistic methods, designed to be counterfeit-proof – from engraved portraiture made of thousands of lines, precise pattern generation, typography, watermarked paper, and a myriad of other security features that aren’t commercially available. Not only does Badley know how to use these techniques, but this gives his physical prints anti-counterfeit properties too: the holy grail of the art world, which often struggles with provenance and authenticity issues.

While his physical pieces are provably authentic, his digital pieces are all verified and secured on the blockchain. He was among the early wave of artists to

seize blockchain as an artists’ tool, tokenizing his first NFT (Non Fungible Token) on the Ethereum blockchain, on June 27th 2019 – before anyone in the mainstream was looking at NFTs and ‘Crypto Art’.

He enjoyed early success in the Crypto Art community, creating a series of digital ‘banknote’ designs featuring champions of cryptocurrency, respected by those in the space. Since then, his work has featured in virtual exhibitions in the Metaverse – online worlds where digital assets are traded – and physical exhibitions, most notably in London in 2020, alongside compatriots of the Crypto Art space.

To date, Badley has tokenized over 100 NFTs across 4 of the biggest Crypto Art platforms: KnownOrigin, SuperRare, Rarible & BAE.

Badley’s use of security printing techniques offers a perfect synergy with crypto art, and cryptocurrency. As the ‘face’ of cryptocurrency is mostly a blank slate, having no jurisdiction or issuing body, Badley’s work creates a ‘face’ for the frontier of finance with the same gravitas as existing currency.

In this way, his work and story are comments on the humanistic impulse to make art – to escape the literal machine of the money printer, and become ultimately self-sufficient with the same ability to design, devise, and issue money in the form of art – whether physical pieces, or digital assets on the blockchain.

**Genesis NFT:** <https://knownorigin.io/gallery/67225-lucie-banknote>

**KnownOrigin:** <https://knownorigin.io/tom-badley>

**SuperRare:** <https://superrare.co/tombadley>

**OpenSea:** <https://opensea.io/assets/tom-badley>

**Instagram:** [http://instagram.com/tom\\_badley\\_cryptoart](http://instagram.com/tom_badley_cryptoart)

**Twitter:** <http://twitter.com/currencydesign>

**LinkedIn:** <https://uk.linkedin.com/in/tom-badley>



*HODL (Big Red)*  
*Giclee, 2019*

*Self Portrait for NFT and printed Banknote  
(detail), 2020*





*Anthony Bourdain Portrait, NFT, 2020*



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CURRENCIES**

INSIGHTS

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