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As told to Samantha Ayson, 1652 words.

Tags: Art, Mentorship.

On connecting with others through your creative work

Generative artist IX Shells discusses her foray into NFTs, the value of mentorship, and how the lessons she learned from her father fuel her spirit of generosity.

Do you remember when you first learned about NFTs? What did you think?

I first learned about NFTs from a friend from LA. He was on SuperRare and told me about how he was using Ethereum to sell his work. I was looking for extra income, so I sent in my application. I never heard back, so I disconnected from the whole thing for a long time. I was just working on Creative Code Art and surviving the pandemic.

In New York, I participated in an event at Lightbox with a bunch of artists. We wanted to collaborate with Lady PheOnix, but at the time, she was very busy. She was involved with the whole Bepple thing. Then Bepple happened.

I opened Twitter, learned about Foundation, and saw people selling their art there. I messaged Lindsay Howard and she sent me an invite to join Foundation, and that's how I got into NFTs.

I didn't have any money. My friend and artist Dmitri Cherniak collected my first piece, and with the ETH that I earned, I started minting NFTs on Foundation. Felt Zine wrote about my work. I began to understand the game, and started to see the patterns for how we were all growing in the space by supporting each other in a collective way.

It's like the stars aligning—all of these signs and people from across the world, spending a lot of time on the internet, during a time where you really couldn't even see anybody.

I don't know how else to explain it. I felt connected to everything. The rhythm that I was in wasn't normal. I felt like I was evolving in real time. I woke up—went on Twitter, Instagram, and Foundation to see what was happening. It's so much information in my face, but somehow I was absorbing it like a kid, like I was just being born. Finally, my brain got stimulated enough to just have fun while sharing so much and being on Twitter all of the time. We were all going crazy.

Everything changed for you very quickly. What has the past year been like?

At the beginning, I felt very overwhelmed, but happy at the same time. I just didn't want to lose the rhythm. I started just replying to all messages. Even now, I try not to miss any message because it might be really important. I knew there was a door that was opening for me, and I had to grow up. I'm the one who supports my family. I'm the center of it. I need to make sure I can keep bringing income into the house, and that my art is no longer just for fun, even though I still do it that way. Now, I have to do other things that may be out of my comfort zone—lots of emails, socializing, traveling, and trying to take advantage of the opportunities and the doors that opened.

I've gotten so much support from ARTXCODE's Sofia Garcia. She worked with me to meet more collectors, and helped to sell more of my artworks after Dreaming at Dusk. If anyone could be named in this whole success story, it's her, because she's always there for me. She doesn't really ask for anything back. She knows her position of privilege, and has been researching art for a long time. Sofia has vision and can see what's really going on with the art and where it's all heading. It feels great to be able to be alive while all of this is happening.



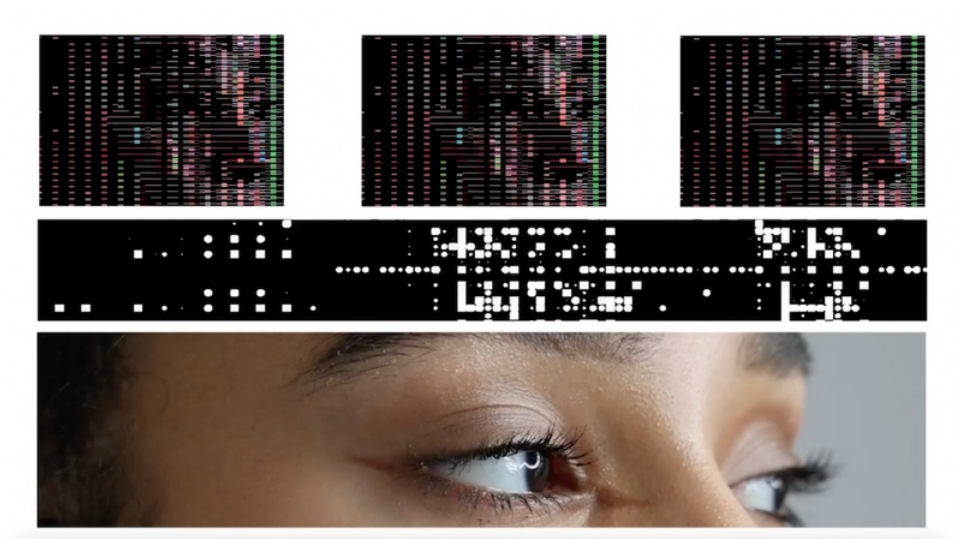
IX Shells with her family

You're very generous with your time and support, and with your family and friends. Where does this come from?

I think that comes from my father because he was the force that took care of my family. We grew up in a small town and he was always helping people around town. He's smart and I just remember him as someone wise that I needed to learn from.

He was also always switching between ideas because he was an engineer. All of my brothers are engineers. Even though I didn't grow up with them, my brothers all operate by putting the world on their shoulders, and knowing that they can actually do challenging tasks if they focus enough. I feel like I have that super power, too. If I focus enough, I can do something for myself and for others at the same time.

Before NFTs, I was just sharing a lot of art that I loved. I always felt that I was so connected to the internet—that I just feel really connected to people that I've never met. All of that creates this energy that I like to share and give back. That's one of my main goals in life is to connect with others. We all judge ourselves without noticing that people are actually paying attention to the good in you.



New Era Pending, IX Shells and Diana Sinclair

You have a lot of mentors and people who are looking out for you, and you're also a mentor to a lot of

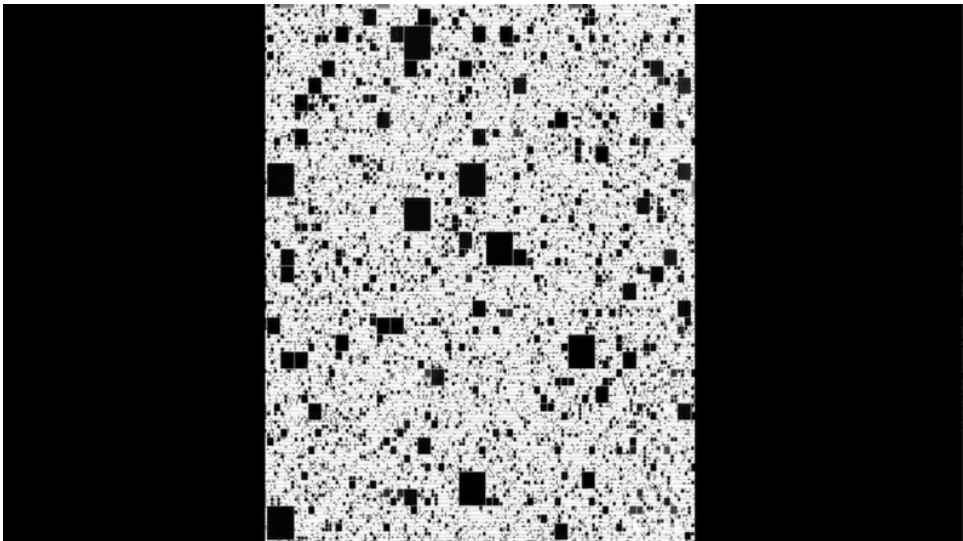
other artists. Why is mentorship a part of your practice?

Dmitri Cherniak is my unofficial mentor, because for the past three years, I've been watching his journey and learning from him. He's really good at project managing and simply sharing information that is important and dissecting it. He's very critical, too, about the space. He supports underrepresented artists early on in their careers. When I didn't have any money to buy a computer, he gave me a grant, and it just helped me so much. If I didn't have a computer that year, maybe I wouldn't have learned so many things that I use now, and I wouldn't be able to do that show I did for artists. It's a chain of positive effects when you help someone.

I've also been a mentor to other artists, just by being there and replying to their messages. Diana Sinclair, she was very skeptical about photography NFTs, and I remember just telling her that you don't have to wait for this to take off. You can create your own waves in what you're doing, just by loving it and being obsessed with it, like I am with my own work. I don't share anything that I don't really love. If you keep sharing what you love, someone will eventually take notice. Now, you see how much she's grown and she's never stopped. That makes me incredibly happy.

You're a member of a few DAOs (Decentralized Autonomous Organizations)—PleaserDAO, UnicornDAO, HerstoryDAO. What is a DAO to you?

A DAO, to me, is a group of people that support each other and support the ideas that they are focused on. Right now, DAOs are a work in progress, for people to learn how to cooperate in a collective manner without the rules we're used to seeing in corporations or startups. Everyone is just doing their own thing, and then you have to show up and really want to help grow the DAO.

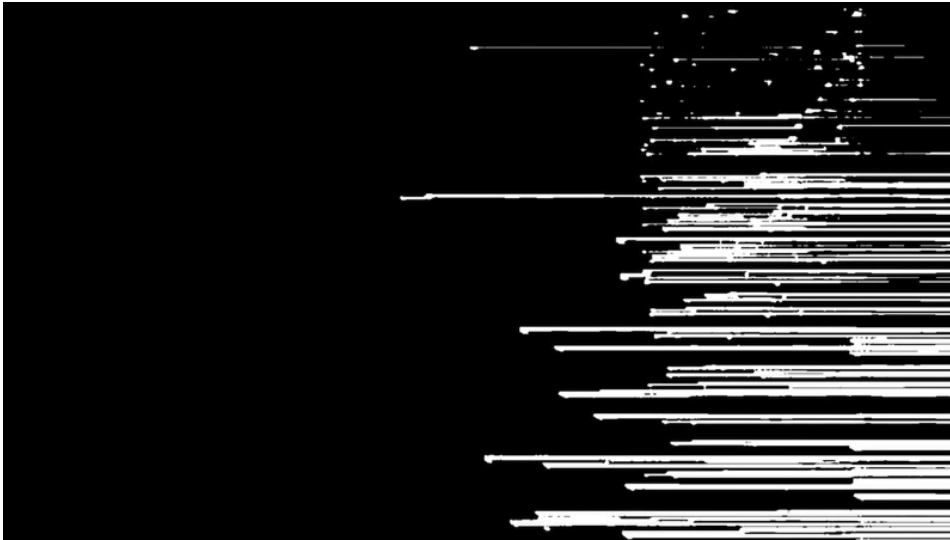


Dreaming at Dusk, IX Shells and Tor Project, collected by PleasrDAO

Has working with NFTs changed your relationship to music and art making?

Now, I can actually get attention from artists that I admire and I've gotten a lot of messages from musicians. We're all at the same level now. It doesn't feel like we are begging for an opportunity to make album art, or make a visual for a musician, because they think we're trying to take advantage of their popularity. Musicians see that we're into NFTs and are part of a community that they don't know about. We all want to learn from each other right now. So, it's like a win-win situation.

I love music so much and I want it to last forever. I want this technology to keep evolving, and help us create music that can just be on the internet forever. NFTs can be beneficial for musicians, because, from my experience, musicians are scared of going too far away from their brand. It's just very risky for them when they're actually not that independent.



'Illusion of Time (Teodor Wolgers Rework)', Daniel Avery and Alessandro Cortini with visuals by IX Shells

Why do you make art?

I make art because I love patterns. I can look at patterns all day without feeling bored. Just keep switching parameters and colors, or lack of color. I think that's part of my language. That's the way I communicate what I feel, what I think, how I'm like. So, it's like talking.

I don't really talk that much. I don't really like, go on the phone and talk to someone for hours. Even though I've become more social, to be honest. After this pandemic, I took for granted a lot of things that I can do with people around me. So, now I'm starting to just go out. Meet people. I make art for people to just feel connected to me in other ways, rather than through just words and my presence. Also, because I want to leave something behind. People can remember me when I'm not around. I'll live forever.

IX Shells recommends:

Dmitri Cherniak

Emily Xie

Manolo Gamboa Naon

Fingacode

Ayesha Kazim

Spongenuity

Auriea

Sofia Crespo

Iskra Velitchkova

Maya Man

Nicolas Sassoon

Val Schnack

Andreas Gysin

Paulina De Leon

Linda Dounia

Sougwen Chung

Freeform

Rosendo and Cisco Merel

Felipe Pantone

Soyun Park

Name

IX Shells


Vocation


artist

Fact

self-portrait by IX Shells

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