

The Information

Weekend

website read, cheekily promising that the ultimate goal was a "leveraged buyout of Darden Restaurants, Olive Garden's parent company."

"We were like, we'll send it to two people just

They severely underestimated the appetite of

investors in crypto, a category in which even

meme projects can bring in a lot of money. All

880 NFOGs, costing \$19.99—the price of

Olive Garden's Tour of Italy entree—sold out

in twelve hours. Moore said the Mossy team

"Some people who were buying Non-Fungible

made enough to breakeven on the cost of

Olive Gardens just seemed like they were

trying to ride a little bit of a wave and make

some money flipping it," said Thorne Melcher,

a Web3 developer and one of the buyers of an

NFOG for a restaurant based in Florida. "To

me, there was something that was strangely

alluring about the culture behind this project

project "Warholesque" and hopes to one day

Thousands of people flooded the project's

put it, role-play "as an Olive Garden

franchisee." There was a "host stand"

channel where a bot greeted each new

Discord channel, where they could, as Moore

member and promised "a table ready for you

as soon as we can," as well as a chat room

where ambient Italian music played in the

Part of the collection's charm was how closely

it resembled tried-and-true crypto strategies.

At the dawn of Bored Apes, a popular NFT

collection, owners would spend hours in

in Twitter Spaces to do their best goblin

Clubhouse rooms making monkey sounds.

And just two weeks ago, thousands gathered

impressions as part of a hot new NFT project

"Some people didn't even see it as a joke,"

Lacher said. "They thought that we were

One such person was a Minecraft streamer

describes herself as "staunchly anti-NFT," and

when she stumbled upon NFOG, she assumed

it was a crypto scam. She didn't budge on her

views of the project when she realized it was a

"Satire requires a clarity of purpose and target

lest it be mistaken for and contribute to that

"She couldn't tell it was satire?" Moore said

In an act of mild anti-crypto vigilantism, she

message alerting them to the project. "Thank

you for bringing this to our attention," the

Shortly after, Olive Garden's lawyers got

OpenSea to remove the NFT images of the

owners could no longer display and resell

their NFTs on the most popular marketplace,

making it significantly harder for them to turn

To some in the crypto world, the situation was

a profit or even just show off their franchise.

"It kind of revealed to me that actually, the

space is pretty centralized," said Giovanni

Sanchez, an NFOG owner. "It maybe took

Despite a letter from the Mossy team pleading

with them to allow the project to continue, the

Even though its first collection got shut down,

the Mossy team was hooked on crypto, with

its strange meme culture and rapid virality.

"It was a realization that people often post

almost like badges of honor," Moore said.

Blockedchain NFTs for, ranging from tech

leaders like Elon Musk and Jack Dorsey to

corporations like Wendy's and Pfizer. The

NFTs themselves were free, apart from the

crypto processing fee, also known as a "gas

fee." The Mossy team technically gets a cut of

any resale, but Moore says no one has resold

The project also subverted one of the most

important elements of a successful NFT:

scarcity. NFT projects generate hype from

is unknown, determined solely by a

organic marketing, with celebrities

NFTs.

their limited supplies. In this case, the supply

celebrity's block button. It made for brilliant

incentivized to chime in and determine for

themselves the value of their Blockedchain

famously prolific blocker, was thrilled at the

Moore (Andreessen deletes all his old tweets).

project, tweeting his support, according to

But whoever runs the account for the band

Smash Mouth seemed less enthused. "Just

tweeted. One person even created a CIA

Blockchained NFT after the intelligence

Marc Andreessen 🤣

🧥 Lucas Matney 🔮 @lucasmtny · 16h

12:32 AM · 1/26/22 · Twitter Web App

had to do to get blocked."

make fun of.

Business Insider.

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Turn being blocked by @pmarca into your very

A screenshot of a Marc Andreessen tweet, provided by

"He wouldn't say what he did to get blocked,"

getting blocked and not proud of whatever he

Lacher said. "He sounded both proud of

The crew is just getting started with their

crypto stunts, hinting at two more crypto-

related projects in the works. They've built up

work to that of famed artist collective MSCHF

—that's ready to help make their next drop go

flames, there will be no shortage of things to

viral. With the crypto world currently in

Despite Mossy's penchant for satire, the

artists have warmed up to the crypto world.

They welcome the crypto diehards in their

Discord channels. "They really saw something

said. "They're as much part of this as we are." •

big out of this and that's up to them," Moore

Information, covering tech culture. Previously,

she was a startups/venture capital reporter for

Margaux MacColl is a reporter for The

a fan base-one influencer compared their

Brian Moore.

agency blocked him.

@pmarca

Strong endorse.

unblocked everyone. Have a nice day," they

Venture capitalist Marc Andreessen, a

their Blockedchain NFTs yet.

Mossy chose 20 celebrities to design

screenshots of people blocking them. They're

chain said no. Someone even minted the

away a little bit of the idealism."

letter as an NFT, of course.

Blockedchain came next.

restaurants from its marketplace. Some other

NFT trading platforms kept the photos up, but

shot the Olive Gardens Twitter account a

incredulously when a reporter described

which it intends to criticize," she said,

quoting a popular meme.

Burssty's comments to him.

company replied.

a wake-up call.

who goes by Sarah Burssty online. She

really trying to scam people."

in kind of an ironic way." She called the

visit her franchise.

background.

called Goblintown.

parody.

to get their take on it and to see how dumb

this is," Moore said.

making it.