



BUKELE BUCKS

A US-style banknote gift to be given away to subscribers, featuring a portrait of El Salvador president Nayib Bukele.

Client: Bitcoin Magazine

2022

#bitcoin #banknotes #banknotedesign #design
#btc #bitcoinbanknotes #cash #securityprinting
#elsalvador #bukele #bitcoinbonds





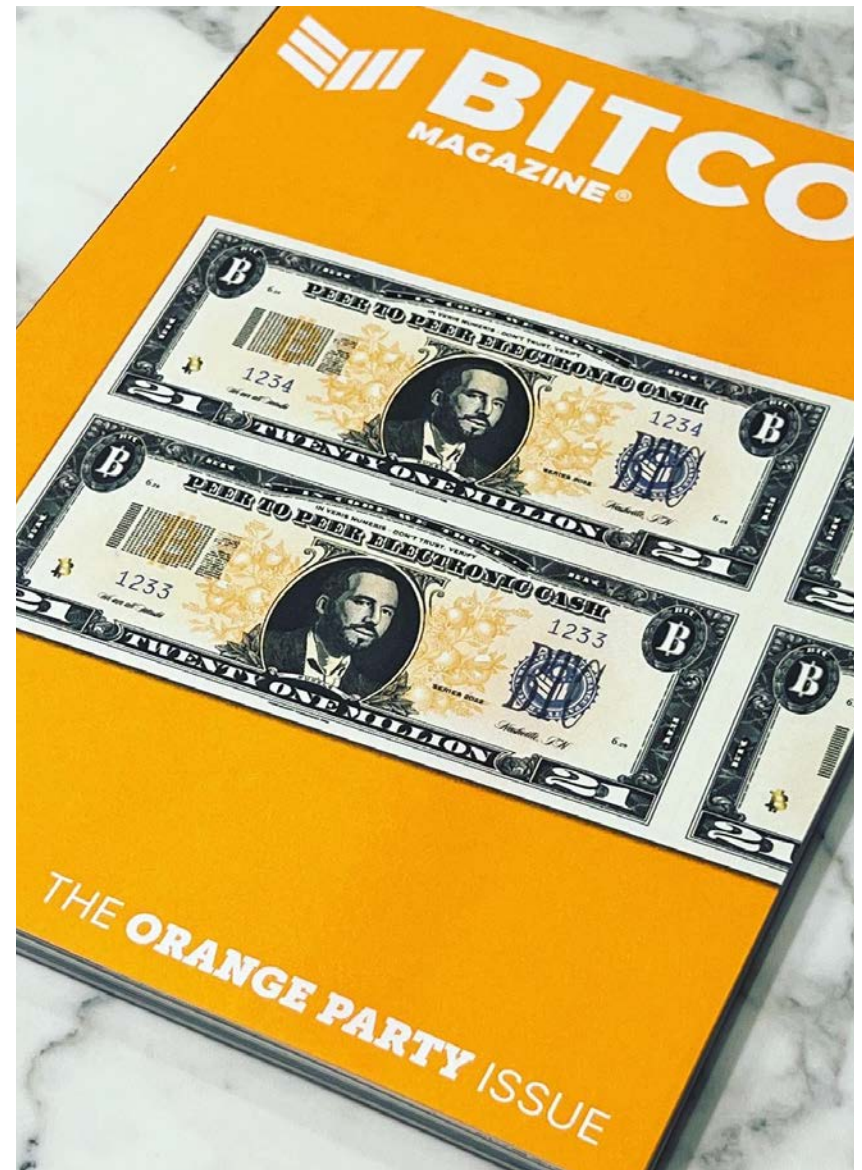
Project Outline

Tom Badley, artist & creative director

Bitcoin Magazine approached me to create a single bill that would accompany their 'Orange Party Issue.' The main feature was an interview with El Salvador President, Nayib Bukele. Bukele was introducing sweeping social reforms. Among them, making El Salvador a hub for Bitcoin legal tender, leading to the creation of a true Bitcoin-dominated financial system.

This project falls into the category of a collectible banknote, as opposed to a banknote that has to be used and transacted. This allows for more artistic licence, and a more playful approach.

Nonetheless, it was also an opportunity for me to add another design to an over-arching mandate in my work: give cryptocurrency the same visual gravitas as fiat money.





PRESIDENT NAYIB BUKELE

Brief

Tom Badley, artist & creative director

The brief was to create a 'Bitcoin bill' that would accompany Bitcoin Magazine's Orange Issue, which would feature a prominent interview with Nayib Bukele, El Salvador President. The bill would be given away to magazine subscribers, predominantly across North America. The purpose was to celebrate Bitcoin, and Bukele's bold moves to back his country with cryptocurrency.

I didn't feel the need to seek out El Salvadorian visual cues. I grounded the design in a recognizable US Dollar format, to honor the audience. This was also an opportunity to demonstrate some flare: my aim was to create a design that might rival the gravitas of the US Dollar which would thrill Bitcoin Magazine 'hodlers.'

Cryptocurrency is many things, but Bitcoin is specifically libertarian, anti-establishment, politically incorrect, and proud. When designing with this material, there's a danger to revert to protest, cartoon and satire in design. Since all these things undercut the gravitas of currency, I was careful to steer the brief towards the positivity and affirmation of Bitcoin adoption.

The only other requirement was that the notes should feature 'Bitcoin orange' in their design.





Style & Sizing

Tom Badley, artist & creative director

The US Dollar was the obvious format, with its guilloche border, central portrait, and green back. This was to honor the North American audience of Bitcoin Magazine, and to allow this gift to be instantly recognizable as 'money.'

To further emphasize the note's value, a larger format was chosen. Older US silver and gold certificates were used as guides, for their more ornate design, slightly larger format, and austere use of color. The decision also made sense as Bitcoin has some qualities of a hard asset, and is considered by many to be 'digital gold.' Any likeness to a US gold certificate is entirely intended.



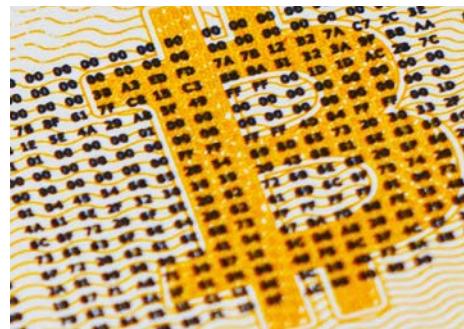


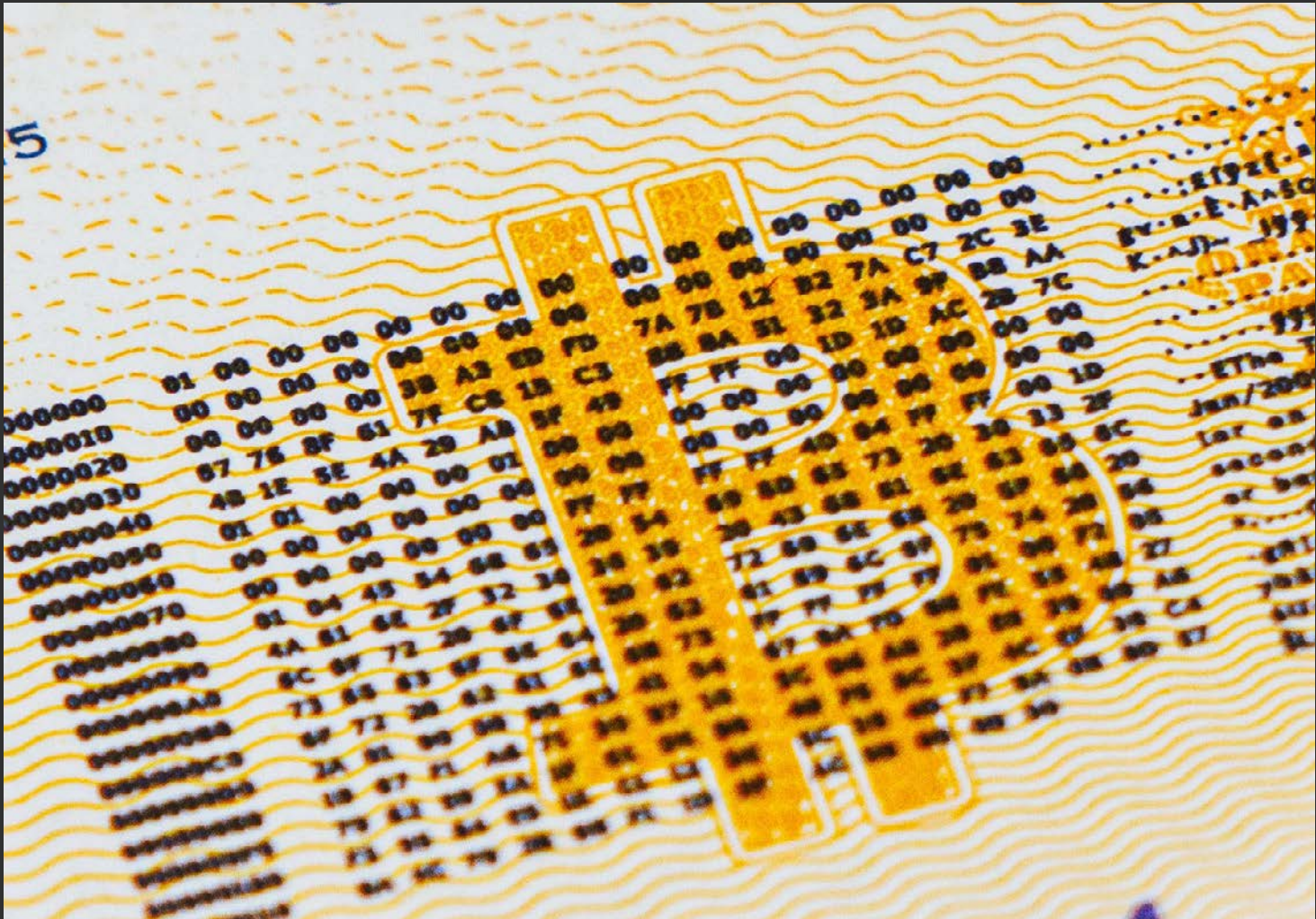
Design Elements

Tom Badley, artist & creative director

As well as the ornate border, the design features all the classic visual cues of the Dollar: the central portrait, legalese, the circular stamps that flank the portrait, microtext. The only figurative element outside the portrait is the 'orange tree' design that emanates from the center.

The back features Bitcoin's spirit animal, the Honey Badger, along the El Salvador beach, Conchagua volcano, and El Salvador's national bird, the Torogoz. UV inks were used to add a layer of security, but also offer another visual dimension to those who go looking for it.





Portraiture

Tom Badley, artist & creative director

The design is quite straightforward. Perhaps the most interesting and labor intensive element is the portrait - specifically, the way the portrait was made.

It could be said that the portrait is not an exact likeness of Nayib Bukele. This was intentional. Why?

One aim of the project was to produce a crypto design with the same gravitas as fiat. The level of heritage and recognition of the US Dollar is enormous, and cannot be denied. Every human is aware of the visual identity of the world's reserve currency, and the heads featured on them have been reproduced to the point that, like the Mona Lisa, they've taken on their own 'aura', separate from the real people they represent.

Failing to create this 'aura' in the portrait would have potentially downgraded a design that seeks to be as authentic as possible. This 'aura' is what I needed to capture with the portrait.

Consequently, the portrait was made by altering an original photo of Bukele, and slightly transposing it with the \$1 George Washington engraving. The result is enough Bukele to say that it is him, but with something unmistakably 'Dollaresque'. The mystique and aura of the founding of a 'Bitcoin nation' is preserved.



Feedback

They have become known as 'Bukele Bucks', and have received phenomenally positive feedback. It needs to be emphasised that designing banknotes in the realm of Bitcoin can draw derision, because banknotes represent all that Bitcoin is not. But the Bukele Bucks have served their purpose, to celebrate Bitcoin, and add to the visual lexicon of a currency that is vying for acceptance. Many have documented their 'Bukele bills' proudly framed, confirming security printing's continued ability to fascinate and entice.

