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Science News

Mona Lisa's smile analyzed: she was mostly happy

Dec 15, 2005, 14:10 GMT

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Paris - Mona Lisa's mysterious smile has apparently been deciphered, and it turns out that it expresses primarily happiness, the weekly New Scientist reported in its new issue.

According to the results of a computer analysis of the world's most famous - and most enigmatic - smile, the Mona Lisa was 83 per cent happy, 9 per cent disgusted, 6 per cent fearful and 2 per cent angry.

The results come from researcher Nicu Sebe of the University of Amsterdam, who tested emotion-recognition software on the smile of Leonardo da Vinci's model in what may be the world's best-known work of art.

Sebe's algorithm, which was developed at the University of Illinois, analyses key facial features such as the curvature of the lips and crinkles around the eyes and then rates each face according to six basic emotions.

Sebe used a database of young female faces to come up with an average 'neutral' expression which was used as a standard of comparison.

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Duane J. Lajoie

Dec 15th, 2005 - 04:32:00 PM

If the emotion-recognition software found only four emotions in Mona Lisa's smile and there are six emotions in the female gene pool, then the analysis can not be correct - Mona Lisa's mysterious smile must still be a mystery. I can not believe that the British News could ever print such an unfounded story when it is obvious that the study rebukes it's own credibility. If only four emotions were found of the six in the female gene pool, then a percentage of the other two emotions, however slight, must be inclusive. To claim that the Mona Lisa has only four of the six emotions found in the female gene pool is absurd. To claim that the Mona Lisa is 83% happy, 9% disgusted, 6% fearful and 2% angry is not a just analysis. Yes, 83+9+6+2=100, and so two emotions remain accounted for. As Nicu Sebe implies that two natural traits are void in the face of Mona Lisa, it is my belief that his emotion-recognition software is faulty or is not yet sophisticated or intelligent enough to detect the other components. When someone extorts the public with such an utterly unfounded claim, I must take dire exception. Who does he think he is? He is no Leonardo da Vinci, that's for sure.

Remember, people sometimes report what they think they know before they realize that they did not know much after all. For instance, five hundred years ago, people thought the world was flat. We still don't have a cure for the common cold.

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