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Mona Lisa smiling because she was happy, scientists say

02:12 2005-12-16

The mysterious half-smile that has intrigued viewers of the [Mona Lisa](#) for centuries isn't really that difficult to interpret, Dutch researchers said Thursday.

She was smiling because she was happy _ 83 percent happy, to be exact, according to scientists from the University of Amsterdam.

In what they viewed as a fun demonstration of technology rather than a serious experiment, the researchers scanned a reproduction of the painting and subjected it to cutting-edge "emotion recognition" software, developed in collaboration with the University of Illinois.

The result showed that the subject of [Leonardo da Vinci's](#) famous painting was 83 percent happy, 9 percent disgusted, 6 percent fearful and 2 percent angry. She was less than one percent neutral, and not at all surprised.

Leonardo began work on the painting in 1503, and it now hangs in the Louvre in Paris.

The work, also known as "La Gioconda," is usually believed to have portrayed the wife of Francesco del Giocondo. The title is a play on her husband's name, and also means "the jolly lady" in Italian.

Professor Harro Stokman said the researchers knew the results would be unscientific _ the software isn't designed to register subtle emotions. So it couldn't detect the hint of sexual suggestion or disdain many have read into Mona Lisa's eyes.

In addition, the technology is designed for use with modern digital films and images, and subjects first need to be scanned in a neutral emotionless state to accurately detect their current emotion.

But Stokman said with a reading of 83 percent, it's clear happiness was the woman's main emotion. Lead researcher Nicu Sebe took the challenge as seriously as he could, obtaining a base image by using a composition of faces from 10 women of Mediterranean ancestry.

"Basically, it's like casting a spider web over the face to break it down into tiny segments," Stokman said. "Then you look for minute differences in the flare of the nostril or depth of the wrinkles around the eyes."

Biometrics experts not involved with the experiment said the results were interesting even if they aren't the last word on the Mona Lisa.

"Facial recognition technology is advancing rapidly, but emotional recognition is really still in its infancy," said Dr. Larry Hornak, director of the Center for Identification Technology Research at West Virginia University.

"It sounds like they did try to use a data set, even if it was small, and that's typical of work in an area like this that's relatively new. It's an interesting result," he said.

Stokman said he knew the University of Amsterdam effort won't prove or disprove controversial theories about the painting. One is that it was actually a self-portrait of Leonardo himself as a woman.

"But who knows, in 30, 40, 50 years, maybe they'll be able to tell what was on her mind," Stokman said.

Hornak agreed the idea was entertaining.

"It's always fun to apply technology to areas of public interest, and sometimes you can come up with results that are very illuminating," he said, reports AP.

O.Ch.



Calendar

Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

[Nov/2005](#)

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Pravda.RU: Science and Culture

02:12

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01:44

Hairstylist charged with stealing actor Kevin Costner's laptop

An upscale hairstylist has been charged with stealing actor Kevin Costner's laptop computer, which had private photos of the actor's wedding. [More details...](#)

01:29

"Kong" takes in \$9.8 million in first day

"King Kong," Peter Jackson's remake about the giant ape in love, took in \$9.8 million (₮8.2 million) domestically in its first day, solid for a mid-week debut but far below the king-size premieres of other action epics [More details...](#)

01:18

Novelist Edith Wharton's library sold for \$2.6 million to her estate

The personal library of Edith Wharton, the aristocratic novelist and confidant of Henry James, was purchased this week by her estate for \$2.6 million (₮2.17 million) [More details...](#)

01:13

U.S. advisers give qualified "yes" to experimental shingles vaccine

Federal health advisers endorsed a proposed vaccine on Thursday to help battle an often-excruciating disease that afflicts as many as 1 million adults every year [More details...](#)

00:13

Britney Spears is most-searched for item on the Internet

Britney Spears didn't release an album of new material this year, but the new mom is still No. 1 on Yahoo's annual list of the most-searched for terms on the Internet [More details...](#)

20:06

Astronomers probe planet formation

Astronomers have spotted a swirling debris cloud around a sun-like star where terrestrial planets similar to Earth may be forming in a process that could shed light on the birth of the solar system. The star, located 137 light-years away, appears to possess an asteroid belt, a zone where the leftovers of failed planets collide. Terrestrial planets are those with rocky surfaces, as opposed to a gas composition [More details...](#)

19:28

Plumpy Japanese penguins do exercises

It's wintertime and the king penguins at a zoo in northern Japan are putting on weight. But the keepers there have a solution: exercise. The reason for weight gain is natural. "In order to withstand the cold, the penguins have a habit of standing very still during winter months" [More details...](#)

18:16

Mona Lisa turns out "83% Happy"

A computer has been used to decipher the enigmatic smile of Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa, concluding that she was mainly happy. Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa was 83 % happy, 9 % disgusted, 6% fearful and 2% angry, a test executed by a University of Amsterdam computer using "emotion recognition" software showed [More details...](#)

11:58

Helping others you help yourself

The Bible insists it's more blessed to give than to receive. Today scientists proved that giving increases the giver's longevity. And that receiving support isn't always an unmitigated blessing. Such a discovery was made

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by researchers from the University of Michigan. There are two main kinds of support - instrumental and emotional. Driving a friend to the doctor's, helping a sick or elderly neighbor with shopping, volunteering to deliver meals to the housebound or caring for a chronically ill family member - these are examples of instrumental help. When we speak about emotional help we mean things like making the other person feel loved, cared for and listened to when they need to talk [More details...](#)

02:01

Pandemic vaccine liability protection should include compensation for consumers

A number of health care groups have joined trial lawyers in opposing the version of liability protection that Republican lawmakers are crafting for drug manufacturers as part of pandemic flu preparations [More details...](#)

23:58

New York City's MoMA exhibition celebrates 20 years

For once, kids might be dragging their parents to the museum instead of the other way around. A new exhibition showcases some very recognizable images for anyone who has sat in a movie theater over the past decade [More details...](#)

19:11

Patients suffering spinal injuries on feet again

A new device created at the University of Toronto stimulates the muscles of patients with spinal cord injuries and helps enable walking function in those whose condition is not expected to improve. Researchers found that functional electrical stimulation, a process that sends controlled bursts of electricity through the skin and into muscles, will aid in patients recovery and improve their step frequency [More details...](#)

02:08

Korean's cloning research thrown into doubt

The validity of Hwang Woo-suk's pioneering human cloning work in South Korea is in question as a former collaborator tries to distance himself from the groundbreaking research. [More details...](#)

02:03

Maria Friedman, "Woman in White" star, has outpatient

Maria Friedman, the star of Andrew Lloyd Webber's "The Woman in White," has undergone exploratory surgery as part of her treatment for breast cancer, two of the show's producers announced Tuesday [More details...](#)

01:15

Sting to headline Tiger Woods benefit concert

Sting will headline next year's Tiger Woods benefit concert. The Grammy-winning singer will perform at Tiger Jam IX at the Mandalay Bay hotel-casino April 29 in Las Vegas [More details...](#)

00:21

Naomi Watts says screams in "King Kong" remake reflect modern woman

Naomi Watts knew the role of Ann Darrow in "King Kong" was one that demanded a strong set of pipes. Watts, who stars as Darrow in Peter Jackson's big-budget remake of the 1933 classic, says her character's screams are part of movie lore just as much as the big [More details...](#)

23:56

Face transplant on French woman gives hope to disfigured patients

In some circles, the partial face transplant performed on a woman in France is more than a medical oddity. It is an exciting new source of hope to burn victims like Bernhard Heitz [More details...](#)

23:40

Vignettes from the Golden Globe nominees

Alanis Morissette's reaction when calls began pouring into her home Tuesday morning was that "something must be wrong, somebody must be hurt." But it was a good thing: her first Golden Globe nomination, for best original motion picture song [More details...](#)

22:55

U.S. government considers vaccine against dangerous diarrheal infection

A new vaccine against a sometimes deadly diarrheal infection does not appear to cause the problems associated with an earlier vaccine, but more information on one trial is needed before the drug's effectiveness can be gauged [More details...](#)

19:09

Genetic map of cancer priced at \$100 mln.

The U.S. government is set to begin a \$100 million pilot project to unravel the genetic makeup of cancer, with the idea of speeding the discovery of culprits and treatments that today is largely a matter of scientific luck. It's an audacious project, said Dr. Francis Collins, the National Institutes of Health's genetics chief, who was announcing formation of the Cancer Genome Project on Tuesday [More details...](#)

17:50

How to lose weight in record-short time

It is widely known that to look fine one should get to the gym more, cut back on the biscuits and eat

watercress soup. But it is not so easy as it seems. The polls showed that weight problems are the most popular among women. And there are plenty of strategies to combat these problems, but what are you going to do with your weight if, for example, you have a party tonight? [More details...](#)

11:48

National Institutes of Health to discover map of cancer's genetic makeup

If all the ways genes run amok to cause cancer were laid out in a dictionary, scientists would be able to decipher only a small part of the first page. Hoping to change that, the government is set to begin a \$100 million (Т83.86 million) pilot project to unravel the genetic makeup of cancer, with the idea of speeding the discovery of culprits and treatments that today is largely a matter of scientific luck [More details...](#)

01:28

Mice grow human brain cells after stem cell injections

Add another creation to the strange scientific menagerie where animal species are being mixed together in ever more exotic combinations. Scientists announced Monday that they had created mice with small amounts of human brain cells [More details...](#)

23:38

Technology seeks new ways to improve life for older people

One day, people with Alzheimer's disease could have telephones that show them a picture of the caller and remind them who it is and when they last talked. [More details...](#)

22:48

Roche selects 12 potential partners to make Tamiflu

Swiss drugmaker Roche Holding AG said Monday it has chosen 12 potential partners for the production of Tamiflu and granted one sublicense for the antiviral drug to Shanghai Pharmaceutical [More details...](#)

19:47

Tea helps to fight ovarian cancer

Swedish researchers have found promising but far-from-conclusive evidence that drinking a couple of cups of tea every day might help reduce the risk of developing ovarian cancer. The study involved 61,057 Swedish women who answered a questionnaire about their diets and then were tracked for an average of 15 years through 2004 [More details...](#)

14:57

9 ways to reach your goal

Scientists say when people have goals, they feel happier and achieve more than those without them. Achieving a goal you've set produces dopamine, a neurotransmitter responsible for feelings of pleasure. Reciprocally, dopamine activates neural circuitry that makes you eager to pursue new challenges [More details...](#)

00:35

Comedian Richard Pryor dies at 65

Richard Pryor, the caustic yet perceptive actor-comedian who lived dangerously close to the edge both on stage and off, has died. He was 65. He died sometime late Friday or early Saturday of a heart attack at his home in the San Fernando Valley [More details...](#)

22:46

Nobel science and literature awards presented in Stockholm

Ten researchers received the highest accolade in the world of science Saturday, as they accepted Nobel Prizes from the king of Sweden in a ceremony [More details...](#)