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Computer decodes Mona Lisa's smile

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(CNN) -- Scientists analyzed the portrait of the Mona Lisa, a woman with famously mixed emotions, hoping to unlock her smile. They applied emotion recognition software that measures a person's mood by examining features such as the curve of the lips and the crinkles around the eyes.

The findings? Mona Lisa was 83 percent happy, 9 percent disgusted, 6 percent fearful, and 2 percent angry, according to the British weekly "New Scientist."

Still, scientists will probably never know what made her feel the way she did.

The computer software, developed by Nicu Sebe at the University of Amsterdam and researchers at the University of Illinois, examines key facial features, the journal reports.

Sebe loaded average, neutral expressions of female faces into a database, which the software used to compare the painting against, says the "New Scientist" Web site.

Leonardo Da Vinci's masterpiece is housed at the Louvre, in Paris, France, and is the museum's top draw.

The Mona Lisa -- called La Gioconda in Italian and La Joconde in French -- has captivated and mystified the art world for centuries.

The portrait was painted in Florence, Italy, between 1503 and 1506, according to the Louvre's Web site.

Historians have long debated Mona Lisa's identity, with theories ranging from being Da Vinci's mother, a self-portrait or a Florentine prostitute.

Research conducted in 2004 support a claim first made almost 500 years ago -- that she really existed and that she was the wife of a rich silk merchant.

The Mona Lisa is featured in author Dan Brown's best-selling novel "The Da Vinci Code."



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