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Mona Lisa smile? Take it 83% at face value, scientists say

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.

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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 Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece and subjected it to cutting-edge "emotion recognition" software.

The result showed the painting's famous subject was 83 percent happy, 9 percent disgusted, 6 percent fearful and 2 percent angry. She was less than 1 percent neutral, and not at all surprised.

Harro Stokman, a professor at the university, 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.

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

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