

Art & Exhibitions(<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/exhibitions>)

Can Art Reverse Aging? Lynn Hershman Leeson's New Show Defies the Limits of Time

The artist's new works, now on view at Altman Siegel in San Francisco, reckon with our age-old battle with mortality.



Lynn Hershman Leeson *Self-Portrait* (2025). Photo courtesy of the artist and Altman Siegel, San Francisco.

by Jo Lawson-Tancred (<https://news.artnet.com/about/jo-lawson-tancred-14118>) September 19, 2025

 (<https://www.addtoany.com/share?url=https%3A%2F%2Fnews.artnet.com%2Fart-world%2Flynn-hershman-leeson-about-time-altman-siegel-2681488&title=Can%20Art%20Reverse%20Aging%3F%20Lynn%20Hershman%20Leeson%2E2%80%99s%20New%20Show%20Defies%20the%20Limits>)
Share

The problem with making prescient art is that its relevance may only become apparent in hindsight. Time and again, this has proven the case for Lynn Hershman Leeson's many experiments in new media since the '60s. In 1984, she began her confessional "Electronic Diary" series with the musing that "we've become a society of screens, of different layers that keep us from knowing the truth." Who could have guessed that her words would so grimly foreshadow an era when fake news runs rampant across a social media landscape composed mostly of people talking to screens?

Agent Ruby (1998-), the female A.I. chatbot who later evolved into *DiNA* (2004), taps into the great knowledge bank of the internet to answer any questions she is posed. Both bots were a critical flop when they debuted. Or, as Hershman Leeson put it to me: "No one knew what they were, they didn't sell, no one wrote about them." I won't need to explain why they have recently received a sudden resurgence of interest.

The best of Artnet News in your inbox.

[Sign up for our daily newsletter.](#)

For once, however, Hershman Leeson's latest show—"About Time (<https://altmansiegel.com/exhibitions/lynn-hershman-leeson-about-time/>)" at Altman Siegel in San Francisco—feels right on time. Or is that because, as ever, the artist offers a high-tech twist on an eternal theme? In this case: our battle with mortality.

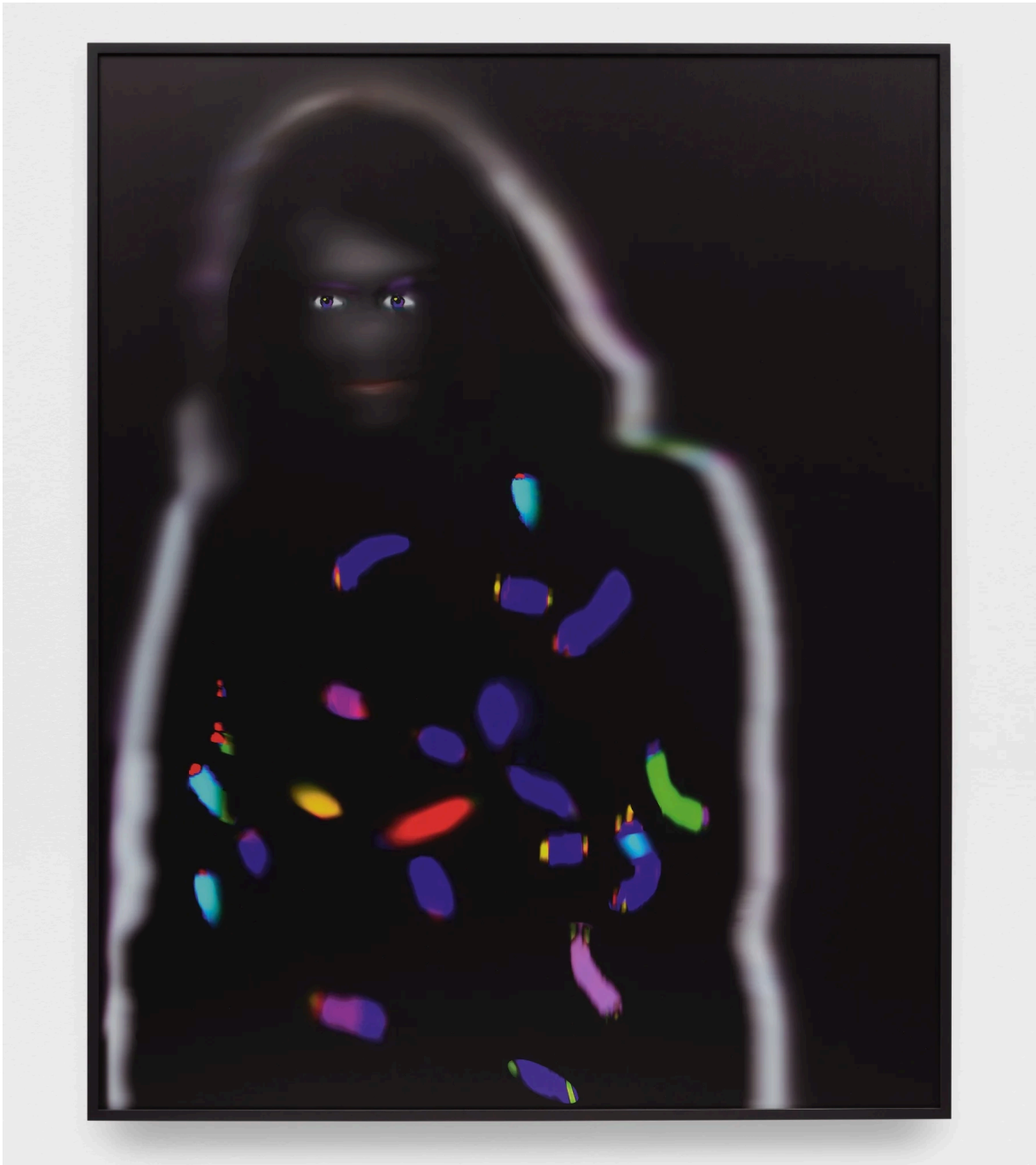


Lynn Hershman Leeson, *Eternally Yours* (2023). Photo courtesy of the artist and Altman Siegel, San Francisco.

The Effects of Time

The show, centered around the artist's injectable anti-aging serum, would have seemed like sci-fi fantasy just a decade ago. Today, it feels like the logical next step for a culture that has already embraced Ozempic for weight loss and facial filler for smoothing away wrinkles. Both quick fixes have been held responsible for the increasing ubiquity of a standardized beauty ideal commonly known as "Instagram face." The longer term drawbacks of such a Faustian bargain, as recently explored in body horror blockbuster *The Substance* (2024), remain a matter for speculation.

So, how has Hershman Leeson managed to do the impossible and serve up the elixir of eternal life? Since 2012, the gene-editing technology known as CRISPR has allowed for huge advancements in rewriting the DNA of living cells. So far, it has been banned for use on humans and can only be developed via experiments on lab rats. Working with long-time collaborator, Dr. Tomas Huber, Hershman Leeson has commissioned a private lab in China to create an illicit serum engineered to reverse aging. Her resulting new age sculpture, *Eternally Yours* (2023), features these syringes of serum stored at 38°F in a custom refrigerator. There are only three editions, and they come with an asking price of \$100,000.



Lynn Hershman Leeson, *Home Companions* (2025). Photo courtesy of the artist and Altman Siegel, San Francisco.

Hershman Leeson's own complex feelings around this potent serum and the effects of time are explored in the latest video from her ongoing "Electronic Diaries" series, which was commissioned for the 36th Bienal de São Paulo, currently on view through January 11, 2026. "When you're younger, life gives you things," she says. "It gives you a voice, it gives you the ability to move, to see, to discern, to have language. As you get older, things are taken away—your friends, then your movement, your vision, your ability to remember."

"It's a reverse way of learning how to manage with less," she concludes but, despite the cruelty of this, she has decided that, ultimately, she would not choose to take the serum. "I realized that all of us live in our time, and that's what time is about."

Hershman Leeson's radically confessional approach to analyzing the possibilities of new scientific developments foregrounds the question of how they might affect our psyches. That technology inevitably becomes tied up in identity, and the dystopic confusion that results, is further explored in "About Time" through a series of new digital prints on aluminum. In several, a monstrous woman's silhouette is overlaid with neon strands of DNA or medical bottles that have an almost radioactive sheen. In *Lynn as DNA* (2025), one clinical vial contains a sepia tone portrait of the artist as a young girl, then the image of Shirley Temple-esque innocence.



Lynn Hershman Leeson, *Lynn as DNA* (2025). Photo courtesy of the artist and Altman Siegel, San Francisco.

Alongside these sinister, futuristic visions are more DIY-style collages, a medium Hershman Leeson has turned to since the early days of her practice. Reminiscent of [feminist montages](https://news.artnet.com/art-world/linder-art-punk-provocateur-2501524) (<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/linder-art-punk-provocateur-2501524>) by British artist Linder, these cut up and embellished images pack a comical punch, as in *Double Click* (2020), when a woman appears transfixed by the blue birds that symbolize Twitter (now X).

“Life is about collage,” Hershman Leeson explained of her decision to return to this medium. “We collage time, energy, experience along with things we buy and co-exist with. Singular disciplines are extremely restrictive and deny the joy of merging unknowns together for a dynamically unknown result.”



Lynn Hershman Leeson, *Double Click* (2020). Photo courtesy of the artist and Altman Siegel, San Francisco.

The Art of Identity

Born in Cleveland in 1941, Hershman Leeson has lived in the Bay Area since the 1960s, when she moved there to pursue her MFA at San Francisco State University. Today, we might literally be able to alter our own DNA, but Hershman Leeson has long had an eye to various other ways in which we might reinvent or fictionalize our identity. These early projects also betray an audacious willingness to merge art and life, at times allowing the two to become nearly indistinguishable.

The most famous example is surely Roberta Breitmore. The performance art piece, which lasted most of the 1970s, saw Hershman Leeson create and, where necessary, become a blonde character who was brought to life as much by her distinctive beauty rituals as her bureaucratic records. As well as having particular mannerisms, Breitmore had her own bank account and even put ads in the local

newspaper to rent a room. Her existence, over nearly a decade, raised the question of what qualifiers make anyone real. The conundrum lives on in 2025, with Breitmore inspiring the "[Roberta Look Alike Contest \(https://altmansiegel.com/exhibitions/281-roberta-breitmore-look-alike-contest/\)](https://altmansiegel.com/exhibitions/281-roberta-breitmore-look-alike-contest/)" by Altman Siegel and di Rosa SF on October 4.



Lynn Hershman Leeson, *Roberta's Construction Chart #1* (1975). Image courtesy of the artist and Altman Siegel, San Francisco.

Hershman Leeson has described a long struggle to convince institutions to recognize her work as art. After all, it had no obvious precedent. It may be that work as daringly experimental as Hershman Leeson's could only have been made outside the glare of the mainstream market, but now it is now time for her to receive her due. Today, most discourse—positive or negative—around technology in art centers on A.I., but Lynn Hershman Leeson seems to think that the bigger story is our ability to reprogram our genes. With her track record for prophesy, we should probably sit up and listen before it's too late.

"Lynn Hershman Leeson: About Time (https://altmansiegel.com/exhibitions/lynn-hershman-leeson-about-time/)" is on view at Altman Siegel, 1150 25th Street, San Francisco, California, through October 11.

Jo Lawson-Tancred

European News Reporter



(<https://news.artnet.com/about/jo-lawson-tancred-14118>)

om/jolawsontancred)

Article topics

Exhibitions (<https://news.artnet.com/topic/exhibitions>)

Technology (<https://news.artnet.com/topic/technology>)

The best of Artnet News in your inbox.

[Sign up for our daily newsletter.](#)

Related Articles

More Trending Stories

Art History
(<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/history>)

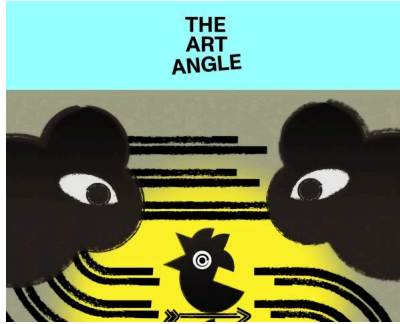
The Art Angle
(<https://news.artnet.com/multimedia/the-art-angle>)

Wet Paint
(<https://news.artnet.com/market/columns/wet-paint>)



This Fabulous Gustav Klimt Portrait Is Set to Smash Auction Records. Here's the Incredible Story Behind It

(<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/gustav-klimt-elisabeth-lederer-2688806>)



A Turning Point for the Art Market?

(<https://news.artnet.com/multimedia/a-turning-point-for-the-art-market-2689827>)

Art Market Minute
(<https://news.artnet.com/multimedia/art-market-minute>)



Warhol and Basquiat Are Back in the East Village—and More Juicy Art World Gossip

(<https://news.artnet.com/market/warhol-basquiat-east-village-2689861>)



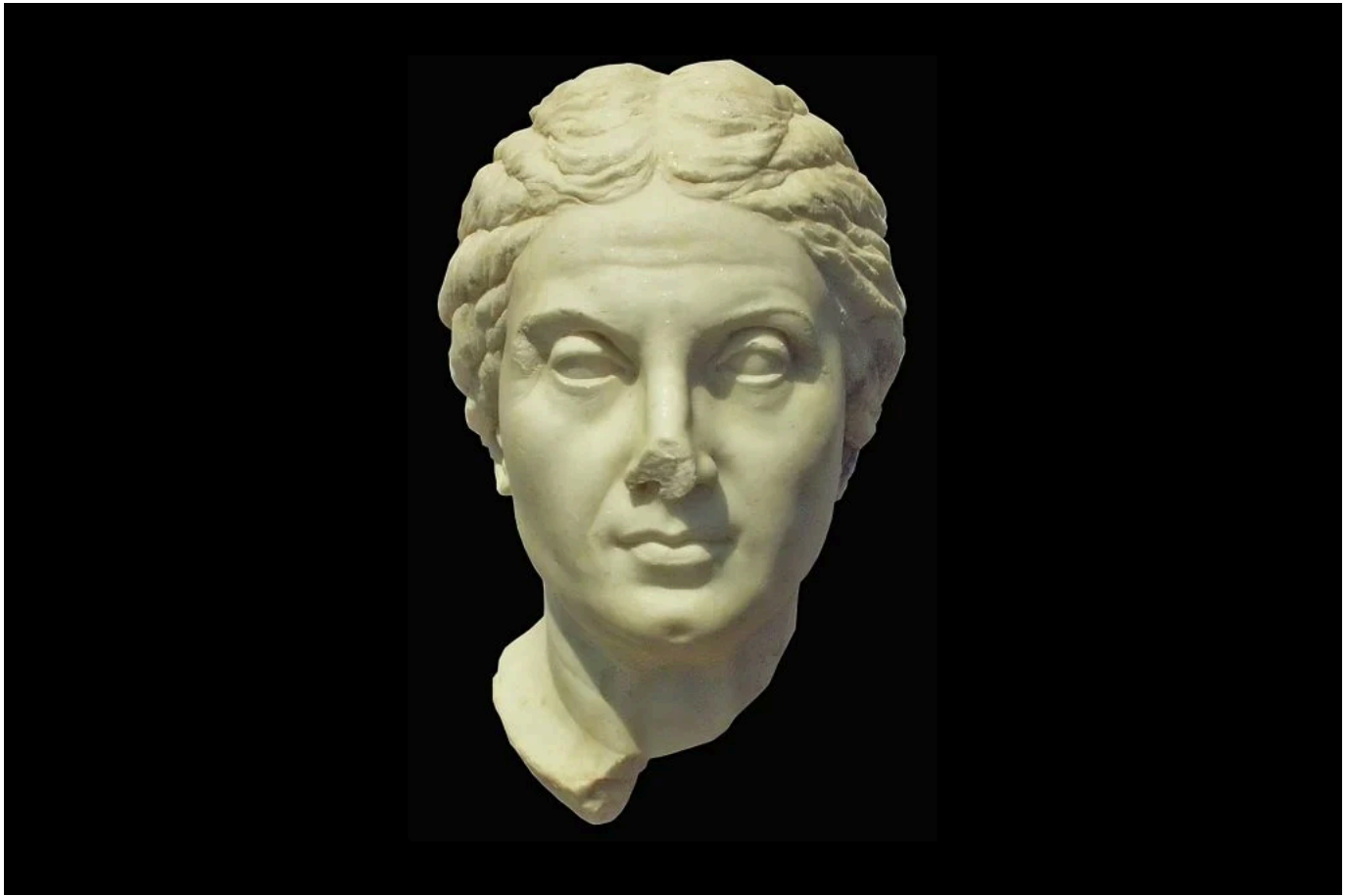
How to Sell

(<https://news.artnet.com/multimedia/how-to-sell-2682566>)

Archaeology & History(<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/archeology-and-history>)

Mysterious Roman Statue Identified 20 Years After Discovery

The marble statue was found in the ancient colony of Chersonesos.



Front view of the Roman marble head. Photo: A.B. Biernacki. Klenina, E., Biernacki, A.B., Claveria, M. et al.

by Richard Whiddington (<https://news.artnet.com/about/richard-whiddington-26560>) September 21, 2025

🔗 (<https://www.addtoany.com/share?url=https%3A%2F%2Fnews.artnet.com%2Fart-world%2Froman-stature-identified-laodice-2688579&title=Mysterious%20Roman%20Statue%20Identified%2020%20Years%20After%20Discovery>) Share

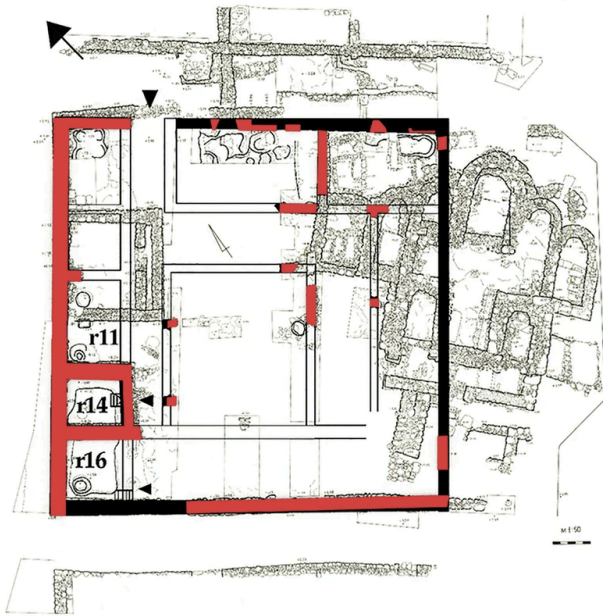
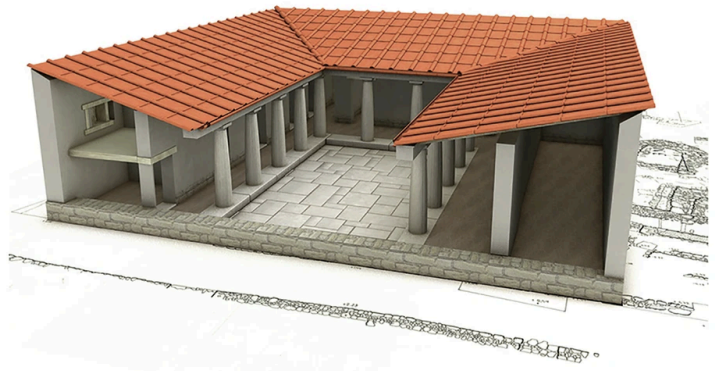
For a city in the hinterlands of the Roman Empire, attaining *eleutheria* was highly coveted. The word means liberty in Greek and granted a city the right to run its own administrative and legal affairs, mint coins, and levy taxes. When Chersonesos, a colony on the Crimean Peninsula outside modern-day Sevastopol, was awarded *eleutheria* around 140 C.E., celebrations were in order. This included erecting a statue to one of the arrangement's architects, a Roman matron named Laodice.

While Laodice's wrinkled brow and serene countenance would have been keenly familiar to the inhabitants of 2nd century Chersonesos, her identity has only now been rediscovered courtesy of some ingenious detective work from researchers at Poland's Adam Mickiewicz University.

The best of Artnet News in your inbox.

[Sign up for our daily newsletter.](#)

In 2003, archaeologists excavated what turned out to be one of the largest residential houses from ancient Chersonesos. It was located centrally near the theater and agora and revealed period coins, an altar dedicated to Artemis and Apollo, ceramics spanning 600 years, and the white marble head of a woman.

**A****B****C****D**

A: the plan of the residence in block. B: The 3D reconstruction of the residence. C: A semi-cellar room. D: the marble head.

The discovery of prized and exquisitely worked marble is extremely rare in Chersonesos: across more than 200 years of excavation, only five fragments of marble sculpture have been found. Lead researcher Elena Klenina knew the woman carved with elongated eyes and a distinctive Hellenistic hairstyle must have been someone of considerable status, but with limited written records for the Roman provinces, working out who she was proved challenging.

The answer has arrived two decades on in the archives of the Archaeological Museum in Odessa, Ukraine (<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/ukrainian-soldiers-discover-ancient-amphorae-2116374>), where researchers found a pedestal inscribed with Laodice's name. It described her as the wife of Titus Flavius Parthenokles, a city councilman and member of one of member Chersonesos' most influential families. Connecting the two, however, required some digging.



The marble pedestal of a statue with an inscription in Greek from the collection of the Archaeological Museum in Odessa, Ukraine. Photo: Klenina, E., Biernacki, A.B., Claveria, M. et al.

The pedestal was dated to the second quarter of the 2nd century, a timing that matched both the fashion choices and carving style of the sculpture. It was likely made in Rome's Eastern provinces, either by a workshop in the Greek East or by traveling artisans from there, a point supported by stable isotope analysis that revealed the marble comes from the Greek island of Paros.

The historical record showed that only one woman of Chersonesos had been honored with a statue during this period and the quality of the carving together with her dignified expression strongly suggested she belonged to the local elite. A further clue was its large-than-life size and unfinished back. Based on the portrait, researchers believe Laodice would have stood at more than six and a half feet and would have originally been placed in a niche in a public setting, possibly the agora.

"Roman matrons exercised significant influence and played an active role in political life both within the confines of Rome and beyond its borders in the first centuries C.E.," Klenina wrote in a paper published in *Nature* (<https://www.nature.com/articles/s40494-025-01975-6>) this August.

While Laodice's precise role in winning Chersonesos's freedom remains unknown, it's clear she succeeded where others had failed. In 135 C.E., a local aristocrat named Aristo was sent to Rome for the purpose of obtaining *eleutheria*, but was rejected. Five years later, the city was minting coins stamped with the words "Free Chersonesos."



Richard Whiddington

(<https://news.artnet.com/about/richard-whiddington-26560>)

([Instagram profile](#))

Article topics

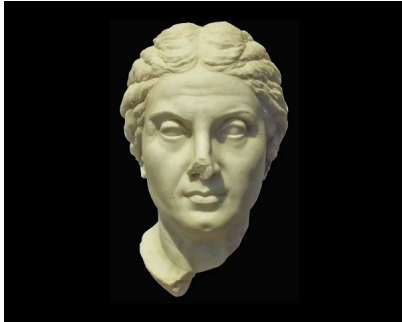
Archaeology (<https://news.artnet.com/topic/archaeology>)

The best of Artnet News in your inbox.

[Sign up for our daily newsletter.](#)

More Trending Stories

Archaeology & History
(<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/archeology-and-history>)



Mysterious Roman Statue Identified 20 Years After Discovery

(<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/roman-statue-identified-laodice-2688579>)

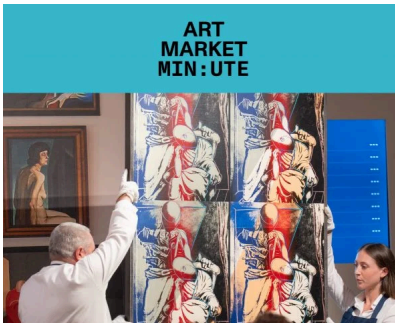
Art History
(<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/history>)



This Fabulous Gustav Klimt Portrait Is Set to Smash Auction Records. Here's the Incredible Story Behind It

(<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/gustav-klimt-elisabeth-lederer-2688806>)

Art Market Minute
(<https://news.artnet.com/multimedia/art-market-minute>)



A Surrealist Slam Dunk

(<https://news.artnet.com/multimedia/art-market-minute-sep-22-2690794>)

The Art Detective
(<https://news.artnet.com/market/columns/the-art-detective>)



Shoptalk: How Performa's RoseLee Goldberg Wields Soft Power on a Shoestring Budget

(<https://news.artnet.com/market/shoptalk-how-performas-roselee-goldberg-wields-soft-power-on-a-shoestring-budget-2688522>)

Artnet (<http://www.artnet.com>) Artnet Auctions (<https://www.artnet.com/auctions/>)

Advertise (<http://www.artnet.com/advertising/>) Press Releases (<http://www.artnet.com/about/press-releases.aspx>)

Terms (<http://www.artnet.com/about/terms-and-conditions-of-use>) Privacy (<http://www.artnet.com/about/privacy-formal.asp>)

Cookies (<http://www.artnet.com/about/privacy-formal.asp#Cookies>) About (<https://news.artnet.com/about>)

f
 (h
 tt
 p:
 s:
 //
 w
 w
 w
 .f
 a
 c
 e
 b
 o
 o
 k.
 c
 o
 m
 /
 a
 rt
 n
 et
)

@
 (h
 tt
 p:
 //
 w
 w
 w
 .f
 a
 c
 e
 b
 o
 o
 k.
 c
 o
 m
 /
 a
 rt
 n
 et
)

🐦
 (h
 tt
 p:
 //
 w
 w
 w
 .f
 a
 c
 e
 b
 o
 o
 k.
 c
 o
 m
 /
 a
 rt
 n
 et
)

📌
 (h
 tt
 p:
 //
 w
 w
 w
 .f
 a
 c
 e
 b
 o
 o
 k.
 c
 o
 m
 /
 a
 rt
 n
 et
)

in
 (h
 tt
 p:
 //
 w
 w
 w
 .f
 a
 c
 e
 b
 o
 o
 k.
 c
 o
 m
 /
 a
 rt
 n
 et
)

YouTube
 (h
 tt
 p:
 //
 w
 w
 w
 .f
 a
 c
 e
 b
 o
 o
 k.
 c
 o
 m
 /
 a
 rt
 n
 et
)

👁️
 (h
 tt
 p:
 //
 w
 w
 w
 .f
 a
 c
 e
 b
 o
 o
 k.
 c
 o
 m
 /
 a
 rt
 n
 et
)

©2025 Artnet Worldwide Corporation. All Rights Reserved.