

Resilience is Everything

Lynn Hershman Leeson's Lessons



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Being an artist is a very solitary pursuit...until you put your work out there, and then it's the opposite. That's the phase I'm in now: I'm one week out from the paperback tour of [The Motherload](#), and I hope to see as many of you as possible! Events are ticketed (and include signed books) at the links:

- * [April 19th in Miami](#): 630pm with Alana Oxfeld at Books and Books, Coral Gables
- * [April 20th in Philly](#): 630pm with Alex Auder at Main Point Books, Wayne, PA
- * [April 21st in Greenwich](#): 5pm with Nell Diamond at Hill House Home, Greenwich
- * [April 22nd in NYC](#): 7pm at 92NY with Chelsea Clinton
- * [April 23rd in LA](#): 630pm with Jordan Moblo at Diesel, a bookstore in Brentwood
- * [April 24th in Ojai](#): 4pm with Stephanie Danler at the El Roblar Hotel
- * [April 25th in Newport Beach](#): 3pm with Pia Baroncini at Lido Village Books at Hanahaus

The Motherload

paperback tour



April 19

MIAMI, FL

Books & Books, Coral Gables
with Alana Oxfeld

April 20

PHILADELPHIA, PA

Main Point Books
with Alexandra Auder

April 21

GREENWICH, CT

Hill House
with Nell Diamond

April 22

NEW YORK CITY, NY

92NY
with Chelsea Clinton

April 23

BRENTWOOD, CA

diesel, a bookstore
with Jordan Moblo

April 24

OJAI, CA

Hotel El Roblar
with Stephanie Danler

April 25

NEWPORT, CA

Lido Village Books
with Pia Baroncini

A lot has gone down since the book came out! It is now in [TV-land development at 20th Century Fox](#), my daughter turns two on Saturday, I'm writing another book—fiction—which is incredibly fun; I've met hundreds and hundreds of readers, and as such have been a repository for a lot of female trauma, which has only fueled my fire. I've submitted articles, put myself up for podcasts, pitched a TV show, begged for a thousand favors and owed a million people for a gajillion of them; been rejected multiple times daily, gotten a lot of no's, been hit with a fair amount of non-responses and then there's the straight up ghosting. I have to celebrate all the little wins because there are lots..of well, I wouldn't call them losses, but I might call them...non-wins.

I've been reading a beautiful, succinct memoir by the artist Lynn Hershman Leeson called [Private I](#), and it's been a really potent reminder about how much harder it was for the women who came before us. Lynn's story starts in the 1940s in Cleveland, where she grew up in a sexually and physically abusive household. She tried to commit suicide violently, by driving her mother's car into a wall, prompting a police mandate that she attend therapy. Her psychiatrist—whose office was next to the Cleveland Museum, and visits to the former often preceded visits to the latter—confirmed for Lynn that her trauma-induced, almost supernatural ability to read a room allowed her to spot developing cultural trends and innovations in technology, particularly in regards to online identity, privacy, the surveillance state, and AI—and as such she has made a lifetime of work about these topics, which are, of course, wildly apropos in our world.

She was one of the first artists to incorporate sensors, video, sound and other technology into her multimedia artwork—feats that resulted in curators telling her that what she made “didn't count as art” (despite her male contemporaries being allowed such innovations without question). She spent years dedicating her time and creative power towards organizing and producing the art of other artists, such as Christo and Jeanne-Claude—for which she was given absolutely no credit. She created *The Floating Museum*; a four year long curatorial project (1974-78) that defied the boundaries and restrictions of museums by organizing the exhibition of works in

nontraditional spaces (including inside prisons) by 350+ artists. She wrote lauded art criticism under a pseudonym, made activist documentaries about women artists and the feminist movement. She gave her work to other artists who used it as their own without naming or thanking her. Museums, galleries, curators and collectors ignore her for decades. And she still spent every day making her art and every dollar invest in her own practice. Today, her work is in the Museum of Modern Art, The Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Tate Modern. The book is not self congratulatory indulgent, but it explains all of this in a very matter of fact way, and it's a quick and easy read that I was excited to return to each of the five nights it took me to churn through it.

“I would make my work and wait for the world to catch up,” she says in the book. Her ability to believe in herself and her patience for the tides to turn is a remarkable thing to read about and a lesson in gratefulness. “We share a brief time together,” the book concludes. “...the challenge is in the moment. The time is always now.”

I admire so much that not one of the hoops she went through stopped her from becoming the artist she wanted to be. It really is not about the end goals, but about the journey. See you on the road!



Camerawoman, from the series “Phantom Limbs”, 1990. 45 x 50 inches. Gelatin silver print on baryta paper.



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