

ALTMAN SIEGEL

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ARTnews

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SFMOMA Acquires Its First NFT



BY **SHANTI ESCALANTE-DE MATTEI**  January 13, 2023 12:40pm



Still from "Conceiving Ada"
COURTESY ALTMAN SEIGAL

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art has acquired its first NFT, a work titled *Final Transformation #2* (2022) by artist Lynn Hershman Leeson.

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One of the two existing editions of the work was donated to SFMOMA by Altman Siegel gallery and Hershman Leeson to be auctioned in the museum's 2022 Art Bash Auction, an annual live auction that raises money for the institution's education and community programming. According to a report by Town and Country, the piece was bought by an unnamed winning bidder for \$9,000. The other edition was recently gifted to the museum by Leeson, an SFMOMA representative confirmed to ARTnews over email.

Final Transformation #2 is an NFT of a clip from Leeson's 1997 film *Conceiving Ada*, which stars Tilda Swinton in the role of Victorian mathematician Ada Lovelace. The title is derived by Swinton's last line in the movie.

"This visionary film about the legacy of Ada Lovelace, a mathematician who wrote the very first computer program in the nineteenth century, was made nearly thirty years ago but resonates today with the idea of NFTs," said Rudolf Frieling, curator of media arts at SFMOMA, in a statement leading up to last year's Art Bash. "Each generation recreates itself with the technological means of its time. Today, we witness a revolution based on artificial intelligence, NFTs, and DNA becoming the driving force of a new language for storage and communication."

Hershman Leeson, a Bay Area-based artist who has been creating art about humans' relationship to machines since the 1960s, has received renewed attention in recent years as 2021's NFT boom put the spotlight on new media artists. SFMOMA has a few of Hershman Leeson's photographs in their collection already, as well as *Room #8* (2006–18), a multimedia work that contains a vial of synthetic DNA.

The NFT was acquired alongside 62 other works, including pieces by Wayne Thiebaud, Sky Hopinka, and Cindy Sherman. Eighteen of the new acquisitions come from artists who hadn't previously been represented at the museum, among them Yolanda Andrade, Emi Anrakuj, and the New Red Order.

"These recent acquisitions represent an incredible range of artistic vision and capture SFMOMA's commitment to collecting works by artists from the region and across the globe," said Christopher Bedford, director of SFMOMA, in a press release. "I am grateful to SFMOMA's curatorial team for their vision and ongoing dedication to expanding the voices and narratives represented in our collection."