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SFMoMA acquires its first NFT, a work by tech art pioneer Lynn Hershman Leeson

The museum is one of the most prominent to date to acquire a blockchain-backed digital artwork for its permanent collection



Lynn Hershman Leeson, *Final Transformation #2*, 2022.

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the artist and Altman Siegel Gallery; © Lynn Hershman Leeson; photo courtesy SFMOMA

One of the foremost art museums in a US city synonymous with the cutting edge of technology is belatedly joining the **NFT** (non-fungible token) craze. The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMoMA) has acquired its first NFT, a piece by the Bay Area-based multimedia artist and film-maker Lynn Hershman Leeson,

whose work has questioned the role of technology in the human condition for nearly half a century.

Final Transformation #2 (2022) is one of Hershman Leeson's first forays into NFTs. Its titled references the last words spoken by the actress Tilda Swinton in the artist's 1997 feature film *Conceiving Ada*, a rumination on the feminist legacy of Ada Lovelace, the mathematician who wrote the first proto-computer program in the early 19th century. The piece pairs an excerpt of the 35mm film, converted to high-definition video, with a text-based reference to Hershman Leeson's 2006 installation *Room #8*, a piece that features a vial of synthetic DNA in a mirrored display.

The newly acquired NFT is one of an edition of two, the other edition having been [offered](#) at SFMoMA's annual Art Bash fundraising auction last year. The work now entering the museum's collection was donated by the artist. Hershman Leeson's digital innovations have long found a platform at SFMoMA: in 2002, the museum displayed [Agent Ruby](#) (1999-2002), an online commission on the subject of artificial intelligence, on its website.

In addition to the NFT, SFMoMA's recently revealed acquisitions [include](#) works by Marilyn Minter, Derek Fordjour, Cindy Sherman, New Red Order, Catherine Opie and Wayne Thiebaud, among others.

The NFT market has gone through a dramatic [boom-and-bust cycle](#) since the heady days of [early 2021](#), but relatively few museums have taken meaningful steps to collect the digital artworks during that time. The Institute of Contemporary Art in Miami is a notable exception, having acquired two [Cryptopunk](#) NFTs.