

The Mona Lisa is a half-length portrait painting by Italian artist Leonardo da Vinci. Considered an archetypal masterpiece of the Italian Renaissance, it has been described as "the best known, the most visited, the most written about, the most sung about, [and] the most parodied work of art in the world". The painting's novel qualities include the subject's enigmatic expression, monumentality of the composition, the subtle modelling of forms, and the atmospheric illusionism.

The painting has been traditionally considered to depict the Italian noblewoman Lisa del Giocondo. It is painted in oil on a white Lombardy poplar panel. Leonardo never gave the painting to the Giocondo family. It was believed to have been painted between 1503 and 1506; however, Leonardo may have continued working on it as late as 1517. King Francis I of France acquired the Mona Lisa after Leonardo's death in 1519, and it is now the property of the French Republic. It has normally been on display at the Louvre in Paris since 1797.

Lisa del Giocondo was a member of the Gherardini family of Florence and Tuscany, and the wife of wealthy Florentine silk merchant Francesco del Giocondo. The painting is thought to have been commissioned for their new home, and to celebrate the birth of their second son, Andrea.

The Mona Lisa is one of the most valuable paintings in the world. It holds the Guinness World Record for the highest known painting insurance valuation in history at US\$100 million in 1962, equivalent to \$1 billion as of 2023.

The painting's global fame and popularity partly stem from its 1911 theft by Vincenzo Peruggia, who attributed his actions to Italian patriotism—a belief it should belong to Italy. Vincenzo Peruggia was a Louvre employee, who had helped construct the painting's glass case. He carried out the theft by entering the building during regular hours, hiding in a broom closet, and walking out with the painting hidden under his coat after the museum had closed.

After having kept the Mona Lisa in his apartment for two years, Peruggia grew impatient and was caught when he attempted to sell it to Giovanni Poggi, director of the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. It was exhibited in the Uffizi Gallery for over two weeks and returned to the Louvre on 4 January 1914. Peruggia served six months in prison for the crime and was hailed for his patriotism in Italy.

If a person being photographed looks into the camera lens, the image produced provides an illusion that viewers perceive as the subject looking at them, irrespective of the photographs' position. It is presumably for this reason that many people, while taking photographs, ask subjects to look at the camera rather than anywhere else. In psychology, this is known as "the Mona Lisa illusion" after the famous painting which also presents the same illusion.