

Timeless Beauty

What makes a work of art timeless? Timeless is something that is defined as classic, ageless, immortal. When we think about timeless art, there is only once iconic work that comes to mind when we think about art. How has she been able to withstand wars, crises, theft, development and taste to be considered an iconic work of art?



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In this Art in Design section of Indonesia Design, **Deborah Iskandar** shares her knowledge and love for art. Regarded as a pioneer in the auction world in South East Asia, she knows how to navigate the current evolving market trends of the Art World.

After more than 20 years' experience collectively, within the art world, she founded her own advisory firm, ISA Art Advisory® in 2013. Being widely respected in Indonesia and Singapore ISA Art Advisory®, aims to aid buyers, sellers and collectors to approach the art world with ease and to build collections that will retain value over time.

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At the lotuspond by Adrien-Jean Le Mayeur De Merpres (IMAGE COURTESY OF ISA ART ADVISORY)

OPPOSITE PAGE

Mona Lisa by Leonardo Da Vinci. Currently displayed at The Louvre, Paris, France



Executed more than 500 years ago, in 1512, the Mona Lisa by Leonardo da Vinci has always been treasured. With her enigmatic smile, Leonardo's painterly depiction of the unknown sitter has mysticised art lovers for centuries. While to an unknown observer she may not generate excitement, but to artists and art lovers her serene countenance and ethereal beauty was very avant garde for the time. The Mona Lisa has an esteemed provenance, being in the hands of French royalty for a time, before finally being hung in the Louvre since 1797. It was an infamous heist in 1911, where the Mona Lisa was stolen, and then recovered for two years later that added to her legendary status. The Mona Lisa is considered to be in public domain, and therefore free for any artist to copy, without fear of copyright. She has influenced contemporary artists for hundreds of years.

In the early 20th century the Mona Lisa was an inspiration for the surrealist artists in developing their work. Marcel Duchamp in creating his concept of "art from mundane items", famously added a "goatee" to a Mona Lisa postcard. This pictorial reference was humorously entitled L.H.O.O.Q., which in English roughly translates to "she is a hot ass". In the art world, Duchamp's reference to the Mona Lisa is almost as famous as the grand lady herself.

From Duchamp's version of Mona Lisa, Philippe Halsman an American photographer collaborated with the Surrealist artist Salvador Dali to photograph Dali as the Mona Lisa, complete with moustache, goatee, and of course Dali's staring eyes.

Interest in the Mona Lisa in America reached a fever point, with her first and only trip to the U.S.A. arranged by the First Lady, Jackie Kennedy, the Mona Lisa reached rock star status in 1963. Inspired by this trip, Andy Warhol superlatively produced the Mona Lisa in 7 colourful silkscreens. The most famous version, coloured Mona Lisa sold at Christie's New York in May, 2015 for USD 56,165,000.


Paintings of young women have always been one of the most desired subjects in art, and also can fill the definition of "timeless beauty". The sensuous reclining nude by Amedeo Modigliani entitled "Nu Couché" became the 2nd most expensive artwork of all times when it was sold for USD170,000,000

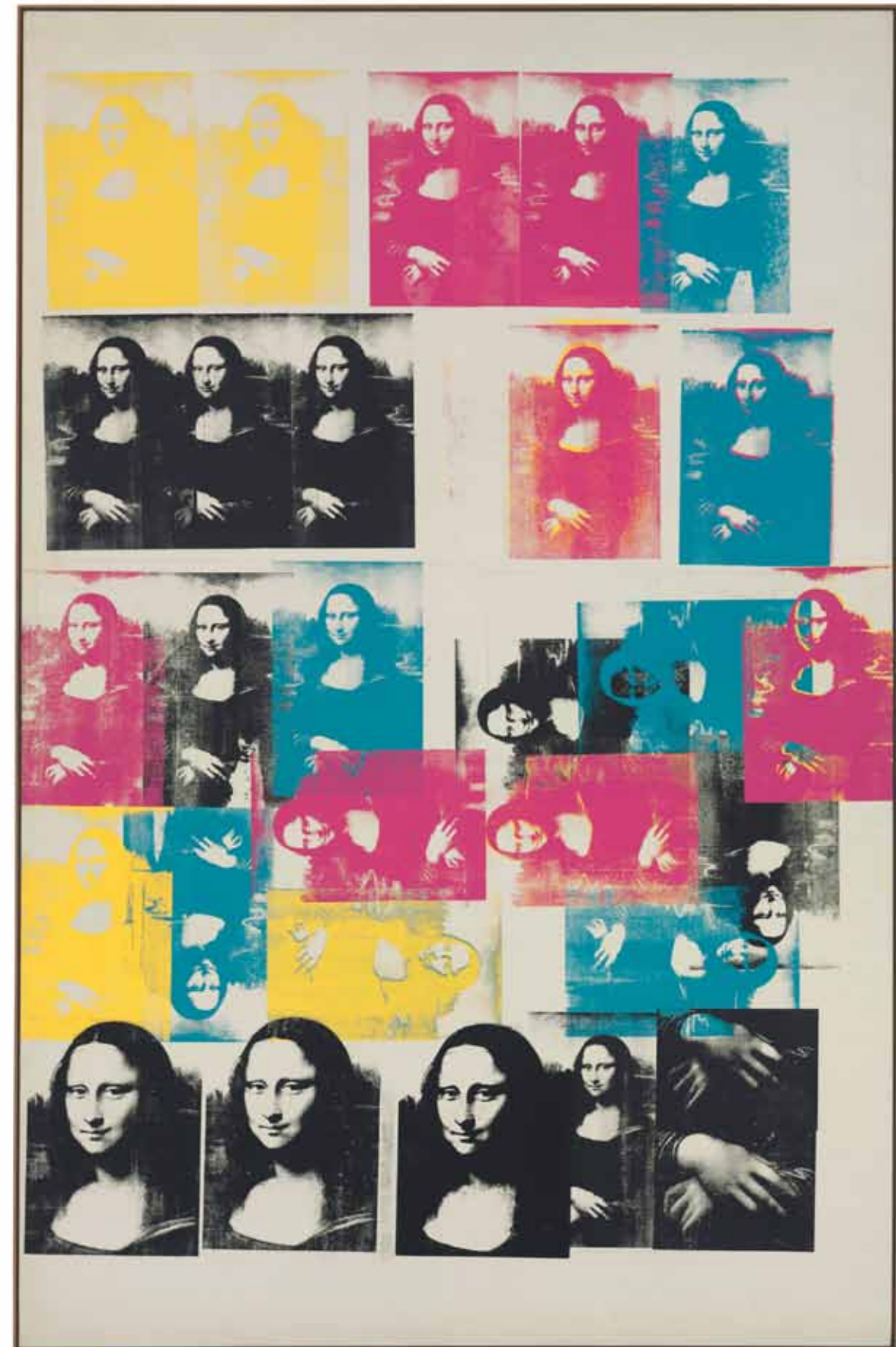


at Christie's this past November. Oozing sensuality, the unknown model is lying languorously on a red sofa. In 1917, Modigliani held the only exhibition during his life in a Berlin gallery. The entire show was of nude paintings including the Reclining Nude. The exhibition was closed by the police two hours later as being too controversial, despite a long queue outside the gallery window display.

Controversy almost always brings notoriety, so it's not surprising that this painting has entered the league of the most expensive and iconic works of art.

Do we have timeless beauties in Indonesia? The one that most comes to mind is paintings by Le Mayeur. Le Mayeur was a Belgian artist that came to Indonesia in 1932 where he met a 15 year old dancer named Ni Pollok. Using her as his model, Le Mayeur painted a series of paintings that were exhibited in Singapore in 1932. After 3 years of working together, Le Mayeur married Ni Pollok, and she became his muse for most of his paintings, and would be considered our "Timeless Muse".

So what makes art timeless? In my point of view, the timeless art should first have the extraordinary quality that able to set a new milestone in art history and second it should have the ability to speak directly to people's intuition. It has to have a universal quality that can tick over the common point of human experience. People may argue that this view is not entirely free from the possibility of different cultural interpretation. I think it is important to separate the notion of our inner and outer lives. While things like tradition, morals, and technology may change overtime, I believe the unity of our inner lives will stay the same. A smile will always keep its mystery. 



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CLOCKWISE FROM THIS PAGE

The infamous *Colored Mona Lisa* (1963) by Andy Warhol that sold for USD 56,165,000 at Christie's New York last May (IMAGE COURTESY OF CHRISTIE'S)

L.H.O.O.Q. by Marcel Duchamp, created in the early 20th century. (IMAGE COURTESY OF SOPHIE KITCHING)

Nu couché by Amedeo Modigliani, painted in 1917-18. The piece was sold at Christie's this past November for USD 170,000,000