

The Miami Herald

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2011
FINAL EDITION

'MONA LISA' MISCHIEF

EXHIBIT AT FREEDOM
TOWER QUESTIONS
LONG-HELD BELIEFS, 1B



LOCAL & STATE

The Miami Herald **H** FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2011

'MONA LISA' MISCHIEF

An exhibit presented by Miami Dade College reinterprets the historic painting

BY JON SILMAN
jsilman@miamiherald.com

Perhaps what keeps them coming back is the mystery.

The *Mona Lisa*, one of history's most famous paintings, is the subject of an exhibit at the Miami Dade College Freedom Tower in Miami. The exhibit — divided in two parts — features the historical aspects of the original and more contemporary reinterpretations.

"When you stare into her face it's kind of like you expect not to be moved by it," said Wanda Texon, associate director of MDC's art-gallery system. "But there's something about her features and pose that you can't delineate. It just grabs you."

That's part of what makes Leonardo da Vinci's painting so interesting. Good art raises questions, an exhibit of art about the *Mona Lisa* multiplies those questions by 10. The painting is believed to have been completed in the beginning of the 16th century, and purported to be the portrait of the wife of a wealthy silk merchant, but that explanation, although widely accepted, is al-



'MONA CAT': The acrylic on canvas was created by South Florida artist Romero Britto.



BY KEROZEN: The exhibition delves into 'Mona Lisa' history and new perspectives on the work.

IF YOU
GO

What: Mona Lisa Unveiled

Where: Freedom Tower, Biscayne Blvd. at NE Sixth St.

When: Noon-5 p.m., Tuesdays through Fridays through Oct. 7

Cost: Free

• TURN TO MONA LISA, 2B



PHOTOS BY AL DIAZ/MIAMI HERALD STAFF

'A REASON TO SMILE' Miami Dade College students Niouseline St. Jean and Jorge Charadan enjoy the work by artist J. Seward Johnson at the 'Mona Lisa Unveiled' exhibit at the Freedom Tower in Miami this week.

MDC exhibit examines mysteries of 'Mona Lisa'

• MONA LISA, FROM 1B

so completely boring.

"It's one mystery on top of another about who the model was and when it was painted, and, you know, 500 years is a long time," Texon said.

Other theories? She's a woman of the night. She's pregnant. It's da Vinci's mother. It's da Vinci himself, etc. But one of the most ignitable theories is that it's a portrait of a man who was not only da Vinci's appren-

tice, but his lover, Texon said.

Sculptor J. Seward Johnson's installation plays with this idea by showing a seated *Mona Lisa* behind a façade with hairy man legs.

LITTLE DEVIL

Gian Giacomo Caprotti, also known as Salai, or Little Devil, inherited all of da Vinci's works after his death, including the *Mona Lisa*. In fact, the exhibit's flagship painting is a 16th-century painting called

Nude Gioconda, thought to be conceived by da Vinci and painted in collaboration with Salai.

Along with exploring the chronology of the painting, the exhibit also covers its modern-day resurgence. When the painting was stolen from the Louvre in 1911, it shot back to the forefront of popular culture. Often thought to be larger than it is, the painting was tucked under a coat by a museum employee but was later recovered. The exhibit fea-

tures some of the day's newspaper covers of the theft.

COMICAL

Some of the contemporary works skewer the piece, and the contrast between the older and newer ones is striking and comical.

There's the dino Lisa painting called *The Mona Lisasaurus*, the brain-face *Mona* called *Cerebralisa*, and of course, the Salvador Dali impression of the painting complete with Dali's sig-

nature pencil mustache.

The exhibit is on loan from the Museo Ideale Leonardo da Vinci in Florence, Italy, and was created by its director, Alessandro Vezzosi, and Agnese Sabato, president of the museum's international association.

"There's a lot of mystery behind it," said Isabel Arias, 17, who was visiting the museum with her friend Tiffany Yanez for a humanities class at MDC.

"They don't know if she's smiling or sad."