

# Has the mystery of the Portrait of Maud Abrantes been solved?

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*The Portrait of Maud Abrantes*, by Amedeo Modigliani. A century after Modigliani painted the Portrait of Maud Abrantes, the mystery behind the painting might be solved. Ofra Rimon, Director and Curator of the Hecht Museum at the University of Haifa, discovered that hidden in the painting is the portrait of another woman. "Modigliani was probably not happy with that painting and decided to paint over it in favor of a portrait of Maud," she claims. Credit: Courtesy of the University of Haifa

A century after Amedeo Modigliani painted the Portrait of Maud Abrantes, the mystery behind the painting might be solved. Ofra Rimon, Director and Curator of the Hecht Museum at the University of Haifa, discovered that hidden in the painting is the portrait of another woman. "Modigliani was probably not happy with that painting and decided to

paint over it in favor of a portrait of Maud," she claims.

In 1908 Modigliani painted the [Portrait](#) of Maud Abrantes on the same canvas as he had painted Nude with a Hat earlier that year. Like many painters with limited means during that period, he turned the canvas over to use the other side. But unlike common practice, he also turned it upside down. Even though this was such an irregular act, and despite the fact that the two paintings are central to most Modigliani exhibitions over recent years, art researchers have not given their attention to this oddity.

Even at the Hecht Museum, where the canvas hangs in a special panel that enables viewing it from both sides, Maud Abrantes and Nude with a Hat have alternatively 'stood on their head' since 1989, without causing much wonderment over why the artist did such an unusual thing.



*Portrait of Maud Abrantes and Nude with a Hat.* Amedeo Modigliani painted the Portrait of Maud Abrantes in 1908, on the back of a canvas on which he had already painted Nude with a Hat. But for some reason, he did not only turn the canvas over for the new painting, but also turned it upside down. Ofra Rimon, Director and Curator of the Hecht Museum at the University of Haifa: "There was another woman there." Credit: Courtesy of the University of Haifa

As Rimon showed this unique work to guests at the Hecht Museum, she suddenly noticed another woman: In the area of Maud's neck and chest a sharp eye can make out the outline of the face of a woman in a hat.

"For years I have passed by the [painting](#) almost every day and have stood in front of it providing countless explanations. But I never noticed anything irregular about the portrait, and have only been frustrated by Modigliani's disregard for onlookers who are made to view one of the paintings upside down. Then, just out of the blue, when I was escorting guests in the art wing and drew their attention to this fantastic Modigliani piece, the mystery was solved. In my excitement, I shrieked, 'Here's the answer! The mystery is solved! There is another portrait beneath Maud's and this one is facing the other direction to Maud.' The eyes, facial outline and hat can be discerned. It turns out that Modigliani painted the portrait of this mysterious and hidden woman before painting the portrait of Maud Abrantes. He decided not to keep the first painting and blurred it with brushes of color. But that did not suffice: he also turned the canvas over and began to paint anew on the clean part of the canvas," she explained.

Provided by University of Haifa

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