



## Documentation Digital Art with SFMoma Case Study – *Agent Ruby* (1999-2002), by Lynn Hershman Leeson

Friday, 26 March, 18h00-19h30 CET  
Transformation Digital Art 2021 | LIMA

Workshop by Layna White (Director of Collections SFMOMA), Rudolf Frieling (Curator of Media Arts SFMoma), Mark Hellar (Technology Consultant, Hellar Studio) and Grace Weiss (Assistant Registrar, Media Arts - SFMOMA), moderated by Gaby Wijers (Director, LIMA).



Lynn Hershman Leeson, *Agent Ruby* (screenshot), 1999–2002; commissioned by SFMOMA; Collection SFMOMA, gift of bitforms gallery, Paule Anglim Gallery, and the artist; © Lynn Hershman Leeson

### Links:

[Agent Ruby website](#)

## Description:

*Agent Ruby* is an early exploration of an artificial intelligence web agent, shaped by and reflecting her encounters with users. The work features a custom-made code of artificial intelligence embodied by Ruby, an online bot that chats with users. This open concept of a learning environment and conversational structure mirrors an important step in participatory work. The bot Ruby was developed out of Hershman Leeson's feature film *Teknolust* (2002), in which a bio-geneticist models three self-replicating automatons after herself. Ruby is one of the automatons. With *Agent Ruby* Hershman Leeson created a new experience in expanded cinema, one in which Ruby can engage with real people and other bots in an otherwise lonely net frontier.

*Agent Ruby* is among the first web-based works commissioned by SFMOMA and was originally presented by the museum in 2002 on e.space -- the museum's then experimental online exhibition platform (2002-2008). SFMOMA subsequently acquired *Agent Ruby* for its collection in 2008, taking on the long-term maintenance, display, and preservation of the work. The museum's care of the work includes the [website](#), custom-code (written in an artificial intelligence markup language popular in the late 1990s), design prototypes, and an ever-expanding chat log of Ruby's conversations with users (2002-present).

## Some questions:

- What should we remember about the work?
- What about the work should we carry into the future?
- What kind of documentation do we need now and in the future to understand the work, how the work functions or functioned?

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