

The Jeffrey Epstein VI Foundation and MIT Media Lab Help Restore Five Astounding Rothko's

A set of large Rothko murals at Harvard are digitally and mathematically restored to their original splendor.

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Scientists at [MIT Media Lab](#) and Harvard University have restored five Rothko murals, stained over the years by light, smoke and cocktail debris. The unprecedented restoration method has an astonishingly accurate effect based on testimony from Rothko's own son, Rothko's other works and original photographs.

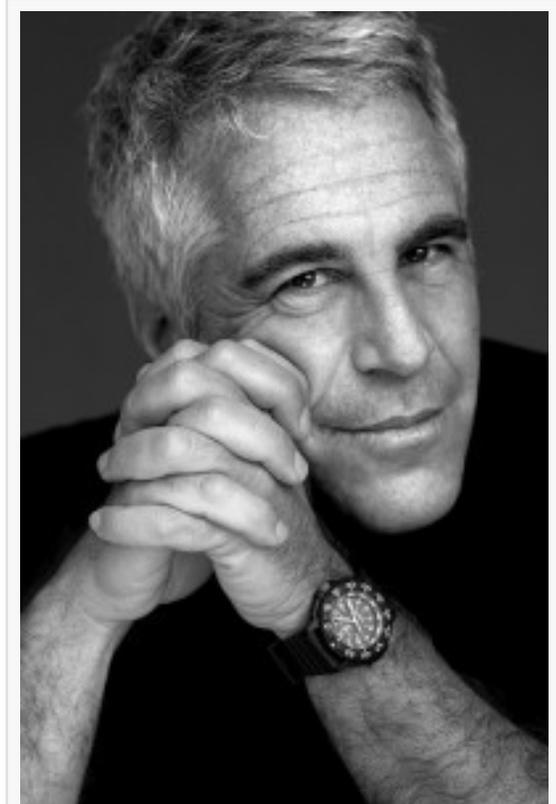
Critical funding for MIT Media Lab's innovation, came in part from the [Jeffrey Epstein VI Foundation](#), which sponsors science research and established the Program for Evolutionary Dynamics at Harvard with a \$35 million dollar gift. Its founder, [Jeffrey Epstein](#), is an avid supporter of MIT's Media Lab and MIT AI founder, Marvin Minsky.

The five murals were painted by Rothko in 1962 for Harvard's Graduate School of Design's dining room. Although Rothko insisted on fiberglass curtains to protect his work, excessive light flooded through the large windows and over the years, the murals were sloshed with cocktails, smoke and even graffiti. By the late 1970's, the murals were finally put into storage.

The innovative restoration was achieved with light projectors onto the paintings, restoring not the paintings themselves but capturing how they were originally viewed. The approach appeals to many art conservationists because the artist's elusive hand is left untouched. Leading the effort was Ramesh Raskar, Head of MIT Media Lab's Camera Culture research group. Raskar's team developed software that recorded the mural's original colors pixel by pixel. The original pixels came from digitally restored Ektachrome photos of the murals taken in 1964 and from a sixth mural that never made it to Harvard's dining halls. The original pixels were compared to contemporary photos of the murals and with the use of algorithms, the software created compensatory pixels to bridge the gap. The compensatory image was then projected onto the murals revealing their original splendor fifty years ago.

The extraordinary exhibit is currently on display at Harvard until July 2015.

"Although light projection is not new in art conservation, MIT Media Lab's ability to digitally and mathematically capture the difference between the faded paintings and the original sets an exciting precedent for art restoration around the world," Jeffrey Epstein noted.



Profile of Jeffrey Epstein

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