

## Document Citation

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## Conceiving Ada

**USA** 1997, 85 min.

**DIR** Lynn Hershman Leeson

**PROD** Henry S. Rosenthal, Lynn Hershman Leeson **SCR** Lynn Hershman Leeson, Eileen Jones **CAM** Hiro Narita, Bill Zachary **ED** Robert Dalva **CAST** Tilda Swinton, Francesca Faridany, Karen Black, Timothy Leary, John Perry Barlow

In her inspired crossover from video artist to feature writer-director, Lynn Hershman Leeson grafts past and future into an ingenious high-tech fantasy of time travel. Her subject is the legendary and real-life Lady Ada Lovelace, Lord Byron's daughter, who grew into a math genius and the inventor of computer language—a century ahead of schedule. Casting the inimitable Tilda Swinton as Ada, Hershman Leeson creates an aura of magic that plays against modern computer visions as it reconstructs a life dominated by love and mathematics. *Conceiving Ada* concerns the obsession of one contemporary hacker, Emmy, obsessed with inventing a mechanism that will enable her to enter the past and make direct contact with Lovelace, her object of fascination. Emmy is on a rescue mission: to connect with Ada and access her knowledge before her own premature death obliterates the legacy. Hershman Leeson is up to the task, from the virtual sets which the actors inhabit with digital ease to the ingenious casting that incorporates everyone from John Perry Barlow to the late Timothy Leary. Has there ever been a film so joyously about women, knowledge and mastery? *Conceiving Ada* brings a new vernacular to contemporary independent film. Its digitized sets take period filming low budget, while its video/computer language updates movie conventions. It's that rare sci-fi tale that actually leaves us wiser about our own time.

***B. Ruby Rich, Sundance Film Festival***

### **The Day When . . .**

"The day I decided to think about the future of cinema/I got out of bed on the wrong foot/I poured grapefruit juice on an upside-down glass/I let my bathtub overflow/I knocked over my coffee with a flourish of the hand/I put my T-shirt on back to front. . ." (Chantal Akerman, Belgium/France/Switzerland 1997, 7 min.)

***Selected Filmography:*** Lynn Hershman Leeson (b. Cleveland, Ohio, 1941) *Longshot* (SFIFF 1994), *Virtual Love* (SFIFF 1994), *Lorna* (1978)