

A 100-slide introduction to the mind of Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519)

by Piero Scaruffi 2021

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*"Léonard de Vinci, miroir profond et sombre,
Où des anges charmants, avec un doux souris
Tout chargé de mystère, apparaissent à l'ombre
Des glaciers et des pins qui ferment leur pays"*

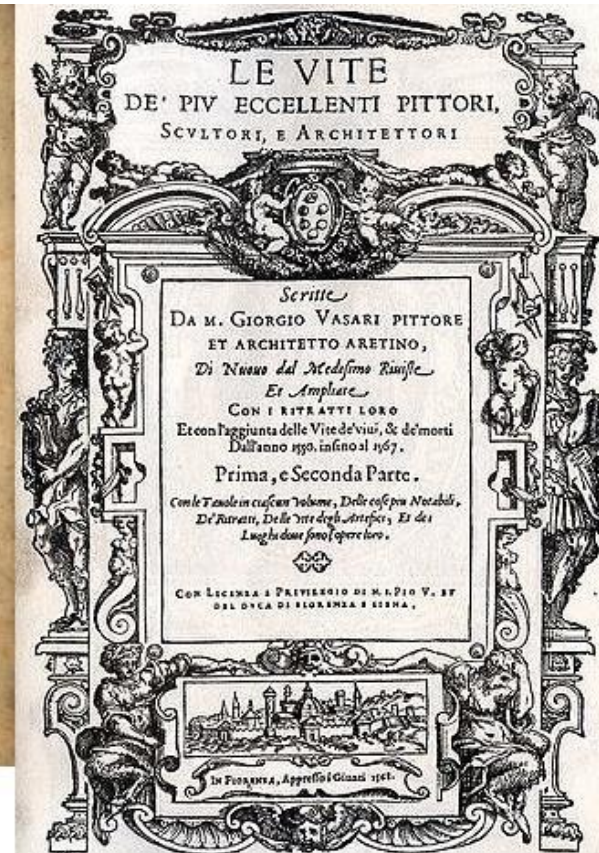
*("Leonardo, dark, unfathomable mirror,
In which charming angels, with sweet smiles
Full of mystery, appear in the shadow
Of the glaciers and pines that enclose their country")
(Charles Baudelaire, "Les fleurs du mal", 1857)*

Leonardo biographers

- Paolo Giovio (1527)
- Vasari's "Lives" (1550)



Giovio wrote a Leonardo biography in 1527



Leonardo's life

His life was sandwiched between two historical events

- 1453: The Ottomans conquer Constantinople/ Byzantium
- 1517: Luther publishes the “Ninety-five Theses”



Leonardo's Italy

Southern Italy: conquered by Aragonia (Spain)

Northern Italy: split among Venezia, Savoy, Milano and Genova

Papal states: after the Avignon papacy (1309–77) and the “great schism” (1378-1417), disintegrated into autonomous principati (eg the Este of Ferrara and the Montefeltro of Urbino)

Consolidation of the city states: the most powerful city-states annex smaller neighbors (eg Firenze takes Pisa, Venezia takes Padova and Verona, Milano takes Pavia)

Leonardo's Italy

- Italy is controlled by foreign powers
- The result of endemic warfare in previous centuries
- Rise of the merchant class: the landed nobility is becoming poorer than the urban bourgeoisie
- The trade routes become also major conduits of culture
- After the fall of Byzantium, immigration of Greek scholars
- Relative peace in Italy between 1454 and 1494

Firenze

- Firenze's original wealth: the manufacture of wool and silk
- Giovanni Bicci de Medici (died in 1429) introduces the double entry bookkeeping system, a system to record financial transactions that fosters international trade (cash-less commerce!)
- The Medicis become the bankers of the pope and of many monarchies
- 1437: Jewish bankers are formally granted the license to lend money at interest

Firenze's Culture

1414: The Florentine scholar Poggio Bracciolini discovers a copy of Vitruvius' "De architectura" in a Swiss monastery and brings it to Firenze

1462: Cosimo (Lorenzo's grandfather) decides to refound Plato's Academy and chooses Ficino to organize it at the Careggi villa

1469: Lorenzo il Magnifico becomes the head of the Medici family

1471: A printing press opens in Firenze

1478: Angelo Poliziano's "Stanze per la Giostra"



Marsilio Ficino



Physician, priest and musician

Chief tutor of Medici children, notably Lorenzo

1463: Ficino translates the “Corpus Hermeticum” (an unauthorized copy is printed in Treviso in 1471 and became Ficino's all-time bestseller)

1474 Ficino completes his treatise on the immortality of the soul which synthesizes Christianity and Platonism

1484 Ficino publishes the first Latin translation of Plato's complete extant works

1489 Ficino accused of magic by the Inquisition

1492: Ficino writes a letter about “Platonic love” to poet Giovanni Cavalcanti

Leonardo's role models

Role models (mentioned in Leonardo's notes) that epitomize what would be called "the Renaissance Man"

- Leon Battista Alberti (an illegitimate son): priest, artist, architect, poet and philosopher
- Paolo dal Pozzo Toscanelli: astronomer, mathematician, geographer, physician and philosopher (who in 1474 wrote a letter to a Portuguese friend in which he argued that the shortest way to Asia was to sail west across the Atlantic at the latitude of Spain, which is precisely what Columbus did in 1492)

Leonardo

“Veramente mirabile e celeste fu Lionardo figliuolo di ser Piero da Vinci; nella erudizione e principi delle lettere avrebbe fatto profitto grande, se egli non fusse stato tanto vario ed instabile. Perciocché egli si mise a imparare molte cose; e incominciate, poi l'abbandonava” (Vasari)



Andrea del Verrocchio

1467: The teenager Leonardo joins Andrea De Verrocchio's workshop in Firenze



Madonna del Garofano (c1475)

Paintings of the Madonna and Child are enormously popular across Italy



L'Annunciazione (1475)

Most likely done by Lorenzo di Credi but...



Homosexual?

1476: Leonardo da Vinci and three other kids are accused anonymously of engaging in sodomy with male prostitute Jacopo Salterelli

Leonardo never married but...

Petrarca never married

Donatello never married

Botticelli never married

Leon Battista Alberti never married

Michelangelo never married

Galileo never married

Madonna Benois (c1478)

- The happiness and sweetness of being mother (a euphoric Maria)
- A dynamic scene



(Note: Benois is the name of the old owner of the painting)

Ginevra de' Benci (1478)

- Leonardo's first secular painting
- Three-quarter view (Rogier van der Weyden's Lady of 1460)
- Background: mountains, water, town
- No jewels and she looks older
- Outdoors, not in her own house
- The junipers almost distract
- But the eyes are powerful

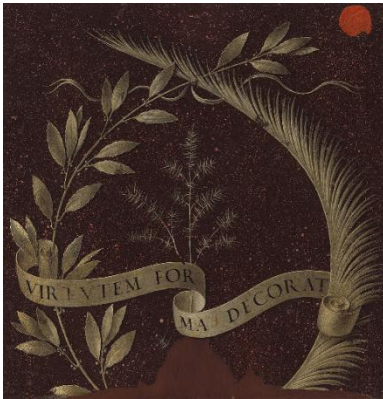


Van der Weyden
(c1460)



Ginevra de' Benci (1478)

- The painting has been cut
- Missing the hands!
- Back of the painting



The missing part of the painting probably had hands like these (sketch of 1474, which is when the painting was commissioned)



Ginevra de' Benci (1478)

A typical portrait of Florentine women of Leonardo's time: in their domestic environment (and profile)



Ginevra de' Benci (1478)

Jacometto Veneziano: "Portrait of a Nun" (148x)

- outdoors
- painted on both sides
- Not profile



Reverse

Drawings (1480)

"Shackled Prisoner" (c1480)

"Horserider" (c1480)

"Lady with a Unicorn" (c1480)



Adorazione dei Magi (1482)

- Unfinished
- A very dynamic scene
- Note the workers who are building (rebuilding?) a temple



Adorazione dei Magi

This is how Lippi finished it in 1496 for the same monastery
(San Donato in Scopeto)



Leonardo's rivals in Firenze

Sandro Botticelli

- 1481: Dante's "Commedia" is printed with illustrations by Botticelli
- 1481-2 Pope Sixtus IV summons Botticelli to paint the walls of the Sistine Chapel
- 1482-5 Large-scale paintings inspired by classical mythology: "La Primavera" (c1482) and "Nascita di Venere" (c1485) both seen by Vasari at the Villa di Castello, owned by Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici
- (Note: Venus was a central figure in Renaissance neoplatonism)



Leonardo's rivals in Firenze

- 1483 Botticelli, Domenico Ghirlandaio and Filippino Lippi (and Perugino) paint Lorenzo Medici's villa at Spedalotto near Volterra
- 1486 Ghirlandaio paints his Last Supper
- 1485-90 Ghirlandaio paints the Tornabuoni chapel
- 1487-1503 Lippi decorates the Strozzi family chapel in Santa Maria Novella
- 1484-86 Giuliano da Sangallo, Lorenzo Medici's favorite architect, works on the Medici villa at Poggio a Caiano and the church Santa Maria delle Carceri (both unfinished, like most of his designs)
- 1488-90 Michelangelo apprentice in Firenze
- 1490 Botticelli gives up painting (temporarily)

Sforza's Milano



Sforza's Milano

- In Milano (1482-99) serving Ludovico Sforza
- Milano is at war with Venezia (1483-84)
- Ludovico Sforza's budget is 70% for military expenses
- Leonardo in 1482 applies for a job as an artist but mainly introduces himself as a military architect:

"My Most Illustrious Lord...

1. ... 2. ...

3. ...I have methods for destroying every fortress...

4. I have also types of cannon, most convenient and easily portable...

5. ...

6. Also, I will make covered vehicles, safe and unassailable...

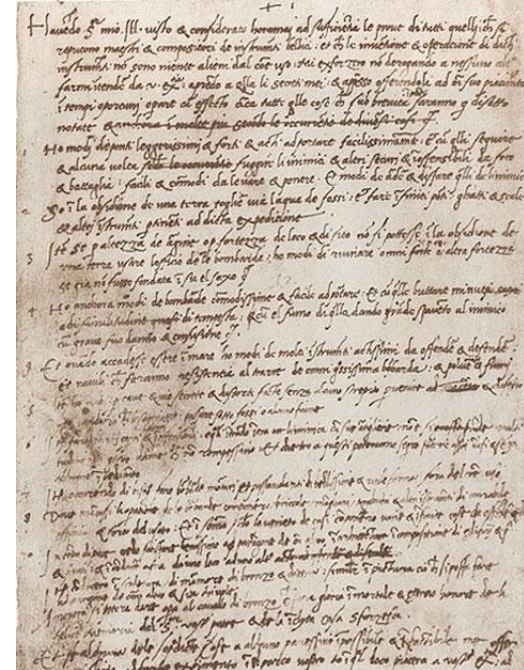
7. Also, should the need arise, I will make cannon...

8. Where the use of cannon is impracticable, I will assemble catapults, mangonels, trebuchets...

9. And should a sea battle...

10. In time of peace ... the construction of both public and private buildings

Also I can execute sculpture in marble, bronze and clay. Likewise in painting, I can do everything possible"



Leonardo musician

“Fu condotto a Milano con gran riputazione Lionardo al duca, il quale molto si diletteva del suono della lira, perchè sonasse; Lionardo portò quello strumento ch’egli aveva di sua mano fabbricato d’argento gran parte, in forma d’un teschio di cavallo, cosa bizzarra e nuova, acciocché l’armonia fosse con maggior tuba e più sonora di voce; laonde superò tutti i musici che quivi erano concorsi a sonare. Oltra ciò, fu il migliore dicitore di rime all’improvviso del tempo suo.” (Vasari)



Lira da braccio

Portrait of a Musician (c1485)

Is it a self-portrait?

(unfinished, but his best preserved work... if it's his)

(possibly painted by Bernadino Luini, Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio, Ambrogio de Predis...)

(possibly a portrait of Atalante Migliorotti because Leonardo wrote about "a portrait of Atalante")



St Jerome (c1482)

St. Jerome at prayer at the end of his life, a hermit in the wilderness, alone save for his lion companion staring up at his crucifix

Unfinished



Sforza's court

Donato Bramante was already there: architect, musician and poet

Engineers like Bergonzio Botta and Giuliano Guasconi who worked at the canals

The composer Josquin Desprez arrived in 1484

Ludovico Sforza married the 15-year-old Beatrice d'Este in 1491 (Leonardo may have been in charge of the wedding festivities) and she became a patron of poets and philosophers as well as the organizer of lavish balls and spectacles

Luca Pacioli arrived only in 1497, 3 years after publishing "Summa de arithmetica, geometria, Proportioni et Proportionalita"

The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian (c1483)

- Lost painting
- Eight studies known



The Hamburg
version



The 8th study,
discovered in 2016

Vergine delle Rocce (1484)

“E pregatolo, gli fece fare in pittura una tavola d' altare dentrovi una Natività, che fu mandata dal duca all'imperatore.” (Vasari)



Vergine delle Rocce (1484)

- St John Baptist and Jesus together as infants
- No father around during the birth of Jesus?
- Main theme: seclusion (Franciscan influence?)
- Second theme: water (especially in the second version)
- Sfumato technique
- Commissioned by the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception but sold privately by Leonardo to someone else, and then re-painted later and sold to the same Confraternity (we don't know why)



Vergine delle Rocce

The second version (1508), the one at the National Gallery of London, is possibly by Ambrogio de Predis like the two side panels



National
Gallery



National
Gallery



Louvre

War Machines

- Leonardo doesn't produce any paintings until the late 1480s
- 13,000 pages of drawings and notes
- Mostly he designs war machines (more fantastical than practical)



War Machines

1487-90: He works on a military treatise, which he never completed (1487–90)

The lords are good and just: *“per mantenere il dono principal di natura, cioè libertà, trovo modo da offendere e difendere, in stando assediati dalli ambiziosi tiranni; e prima dirò del sito murale e perché i popoli possino mantenere i loro boni e giusti signori”*

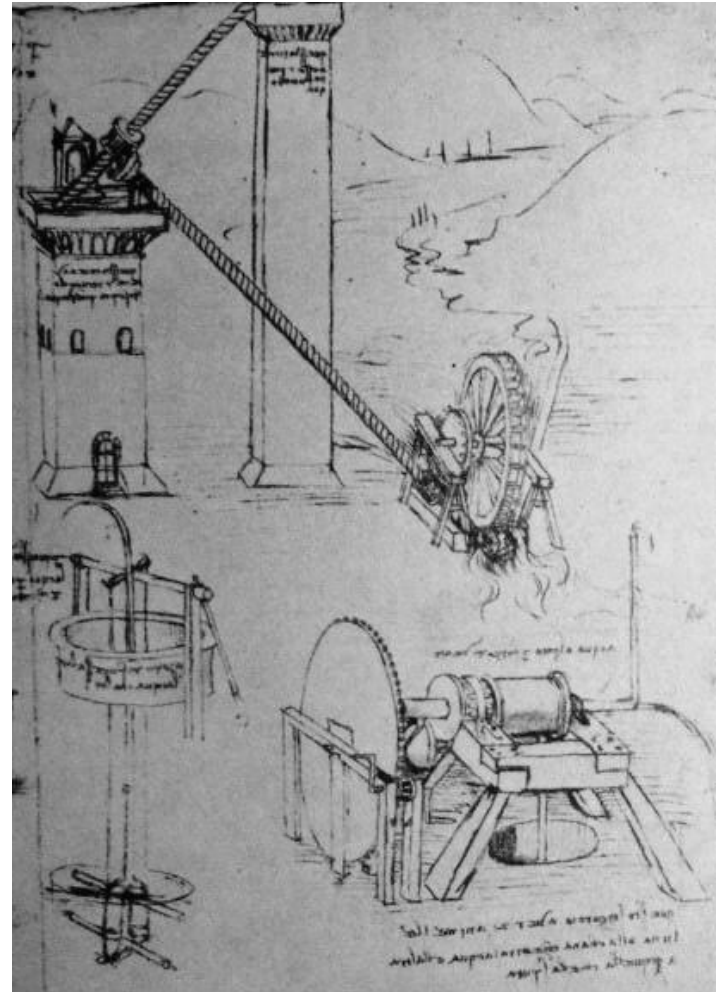
Architecture

- 1486: A pestilence kills half the population of Milano
- 1487-90: Leonardo sketches an “ideal city” (100s of drawings in “Paris Manuscript B”)



Architecture

None of his architectural models for buildings are built
Not clear how he pays his bills.



Entertainment

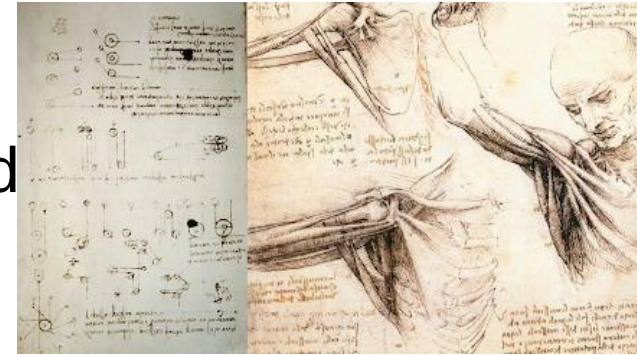
Leonardo was *“inventor of all beautiful things, especially in the field of stage performances, and (in addition) sang masterfully to his own accompaniment on the lira”* (Giovio)

pariter æneus superstante Francisco patre illustri imperatore runderetur, in
cujus vehementer incitati ac anhelantis habitu et statuariae artis et rerum
naturalium eruditio summa prehenditur. Fuit ingenio valde comi, nitido, liberali,
vultu autem longe venustissimo, et cum elegantiae omnis deliciarumque maxime
theatralium mirificus inventor ac arbiter esset, ad lyramque scite caneret,
cunctis per omnem ætatem Principibus mire placuit. Sexagesimum et septimum
agens annum in Gallia vita functus est, eo majore amicorum luctu, quod in tanta
adolescentium turba qua maxime officina eius florebat nullum celebrem

Entertainment

1495: Ludovico Sforza puts Leonardo in charge of a pageant at his court

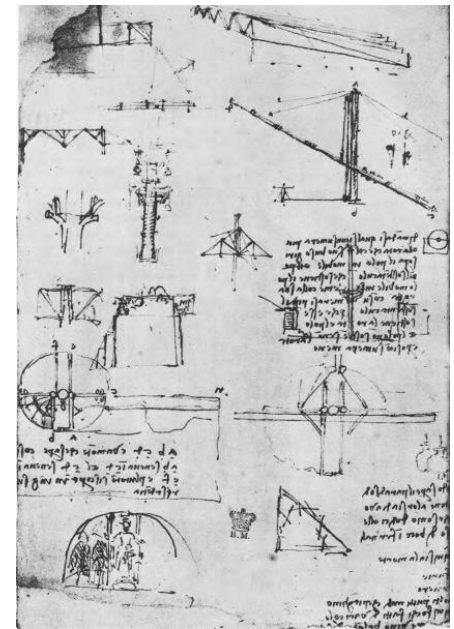
The Automa Cavaliere/ Mechanical Knight (a drawing discovered in 1957), operated by a combination of pulleys and cables, was probably built for this occasion



1496: the stage machinery for “Danae”

Were Leonardo's fantastic machines designed as stage machinery and scenery for stage performances?

Was he mainly a theatrical designer and producer at the court?



Entertainment

So many party boys and girls in costumes...

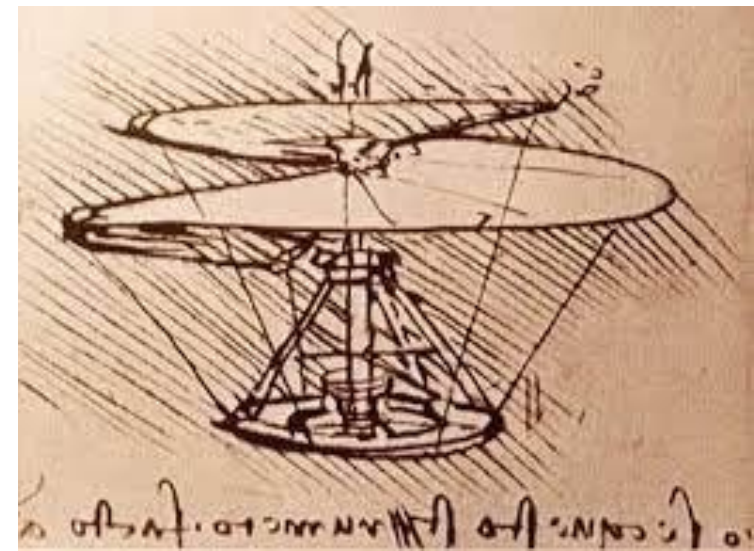
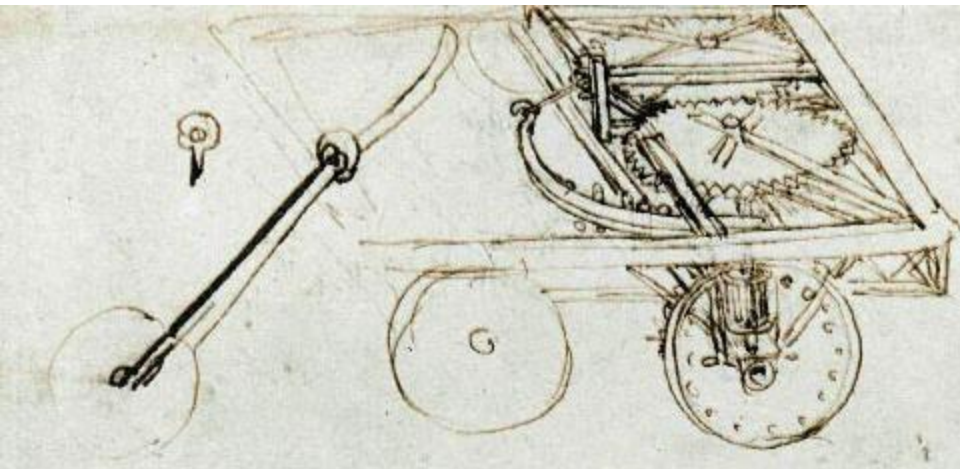
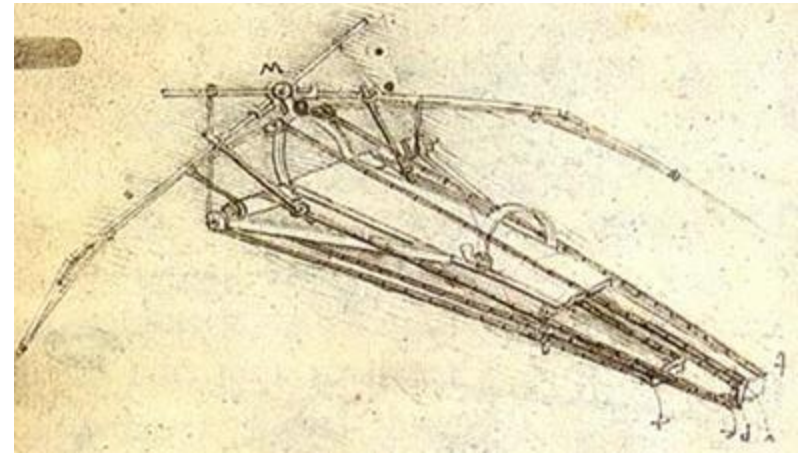


Engineering

- Leonardo never went to school (he grew up as the illegitimate son of a peasant woman)
- Leonardo never used mathematical formulas – his math was “visual” not numeric
- Leonardo ignorance of Latin made it impossible for him to correspond with the learned scholars of his time

Engineering

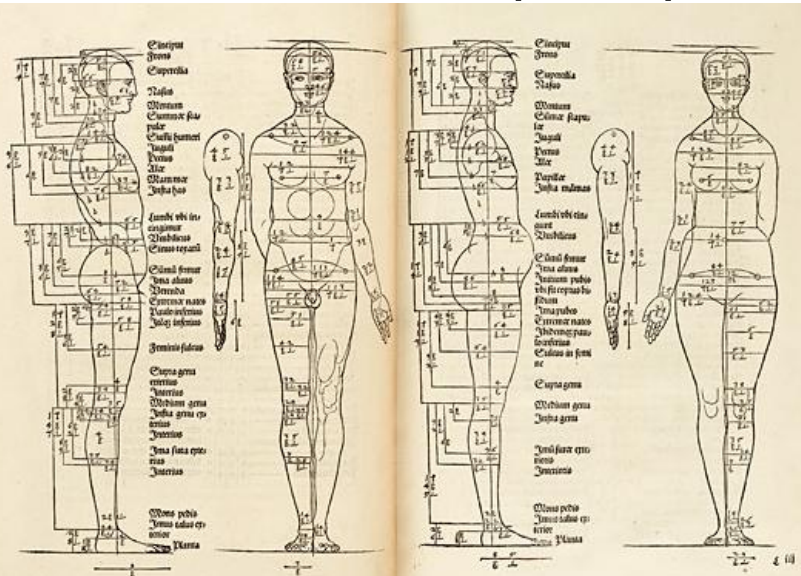
- A self-propelled car (1495)
- 100s of pages to avian anatomy
- The “ornithopter” with flapping wings inspired by birds
- A helicopter



No Math

Leonardo was not into math, but his contemporaries were:

- Piero della Francesca: "Libellus de de Quinque Corporibus Regularibus" (1480) →
- Albrecht Durer: "Four Books on Measurement" (1525)



q. ciru quadratu sunt in arculo factum / habent superficiem
que est radix ipsius 1200 $\frac{1}{2}$ deductis 24 $\frac{1}{2}$. Facias partes 4.
id est reduc. q. ad radicem / fiet 16. Partire 1200 $\frac{1}{2}$ p 16. e
uenient 75 $\frac{1}{32}$. Partire quoq; 24 $\frac{1}{2}$ p 4. euenient 6 $\frac{1}{8}$.
Et habes p. triangulu ABH. radicem 75 $\frac{1}{32}$. minus 6 $\frac{1}{8}$.
Diuide p. equa / habebis 18 $\frac{27}{128}$ minus 3 $\frac{1}{16}$. Repas num
q. tum superfici est extra quadrangulu BDEH. usq; ad cir
cumferentiam. Scis q. circuli superficies est 32 $\frac{1}{2}$ p x L. hui
Et p x L. habes q. quadrangulu huiusmodi arculi est circulus
24 $\frac{1}{2}$ quem subducas d 38 $\frac{1}{2}$ relinquitur 14. partire p 2. e
rit 7 $\frac{1}{4}$. Vnde subducas radicem 18 $\frac{27}{128}$ deductis 3 $\frac{1}{16}$. fiet. q.
13 $\frac{1}{16}$ dempta radice ipsius 18 $\frac{27}{128}$. tantu auferat de superficie
circuli / si octaua pars circumferentie auferatur.

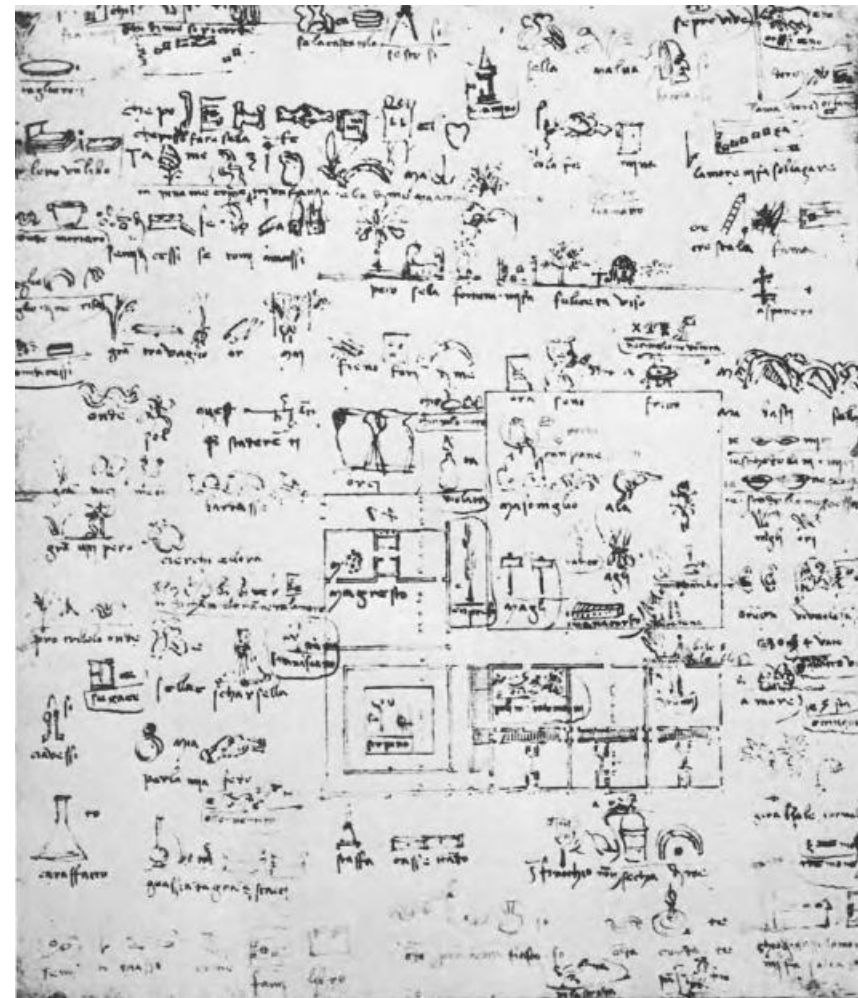
LIII. S 1 Linea auferat sextam partem circumferentie cui diameter
est 7. Quid auferat de superficie. querendum.
S 1 Linea que auferat sextam partem circumferentie ne
cessario est semidiameter illius circuli. & est 3 $\frac{1}{2}$. Ideo
fac triangulu cuius vertex sit in centro. G. circuli. Deinde
trahere AB. AG. & BG. & fiet triangulus q. equalis latera ha
bebit. quoru quodlibet erit. 3 $\frac{1}{2}$. Inuenias cathetu q. erit ra
dix 9 $\frac{3}{4}$. Mita cum i medietate basis / que 1 $\frac{3}{4}$. Et p. u
in se mulcetetur reddet 3 $\frac{1}{16}$. Mita cum 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ / reddet 28
35 / cui radix est triangulus ABC. Nunc sume $\frac{1}{6}$ de su
perficie circuli / que est 38 $\frac{1}{2}$. q. a $\frac{1}{6}$ est 6 $\frac{1}{2}$. Vnde auferat
radicem d 28. 35. Dic igr q. si auferatur $\frac{1}{6}$ de circun
ferentia circuli / cui diameter est 7. auferatur d superficie
LIII. S 1 Linea recta tollit decimam partem circumferentie circuli / cui diameter

Engineering

- Systematic experimentation (not just speculation)
- Not interested in tradition
- *“He really invented a new way of inventing, by combining his talent as an artist with his skill as an engineer”* (Claudio Giorgione)
- Manuscripts "lost" until the 18th century but widely circulated in his lifetime

Engineering

...but not easy to understand...



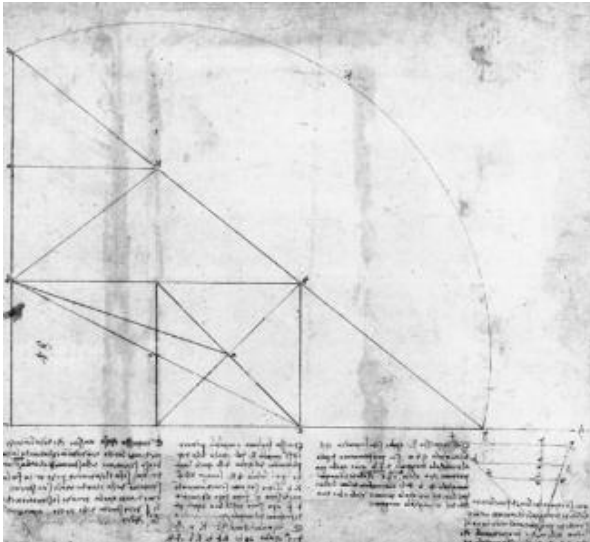
Engineering

Leonardo's influence:

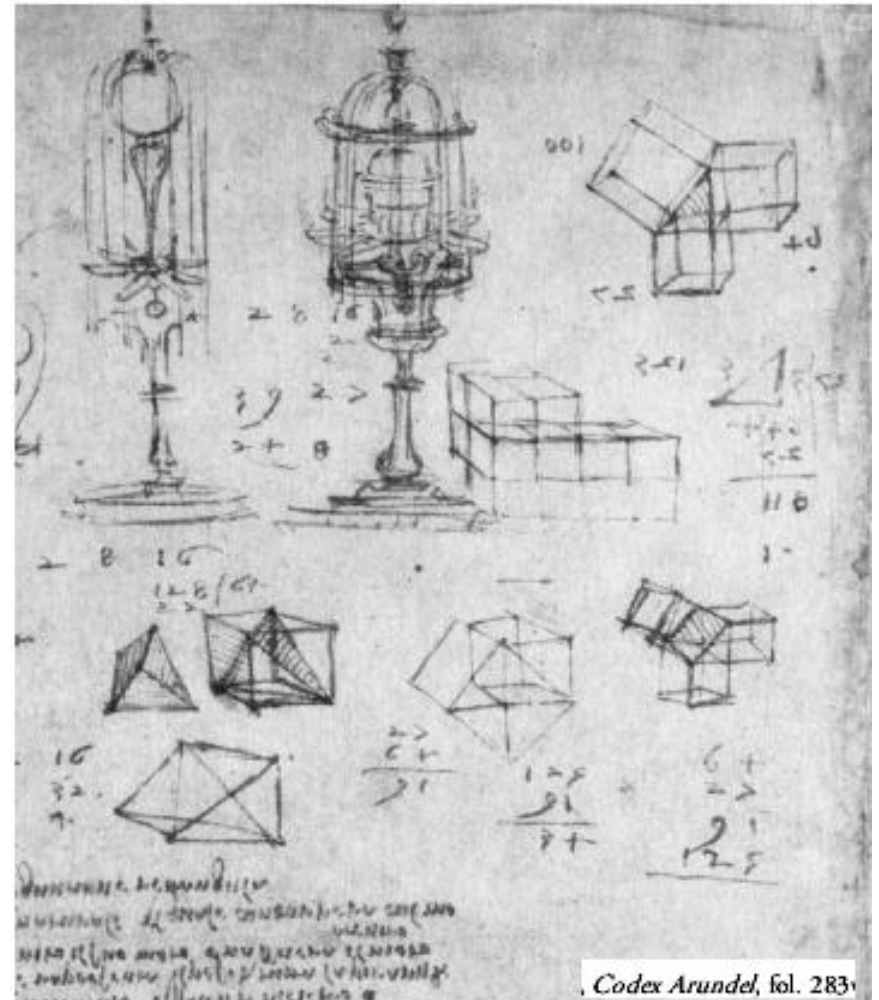
- Gerolamo Cardano's "Opus novum de proportionibus" (1570),
- Giambattista della Porta's "Magia Naturalis" (1558),
- Georg Bauer "Agricola"'s "De re Metallica" (1550), "founder of geology"
- Agostino Ramelli's "'Li diverse et artificiose machine del Capitano A. R." (1588),
- Vittorio Zonca's "Novo Teatro di Machine et Edificii" (1603)

Geometry

The Duplication of the Cube



3D Geometry



Geometry

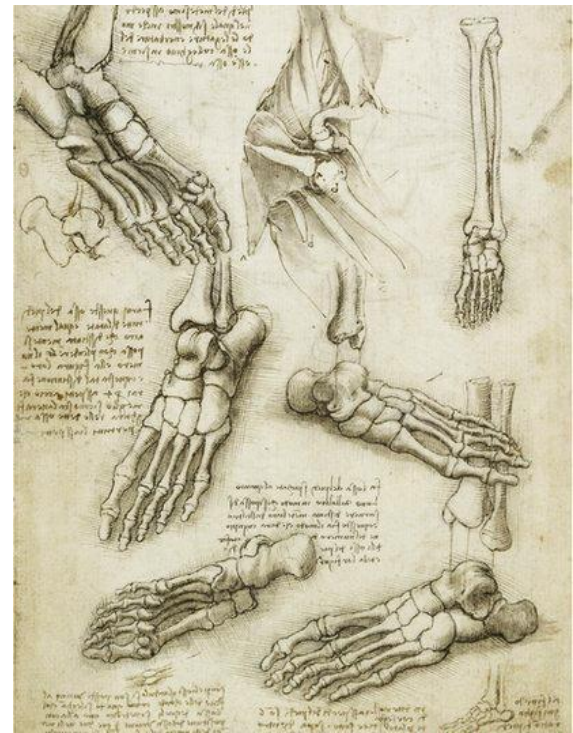
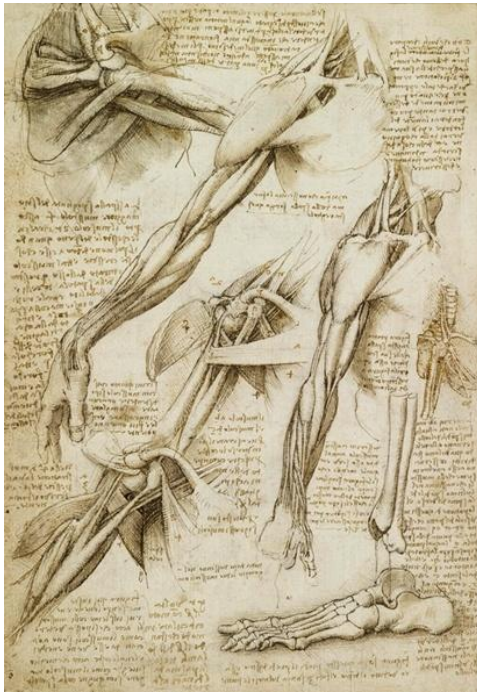
1482: Erhard Ratdolt in Venezia publishes
Johannes Campanus' 13th-century Latin
translation of Euclid, "Elementa Geometriae"
(the first printed edition of Euclid, with the first
ever printed geometrical diagrams)



Anatomy

He dissected corpses to study anatomy

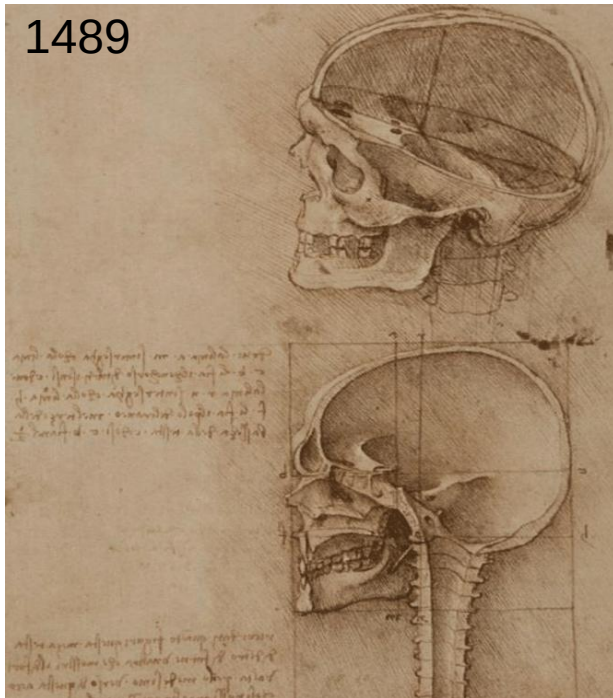
"Italian Renaissance artists became anatomists by necessity, as they attempted to refine a more lifelike, sculptural portrayal of the human figure"
(Carmen Bambach, 2002)



Anatomy

Where is the “senso comune”?

1489

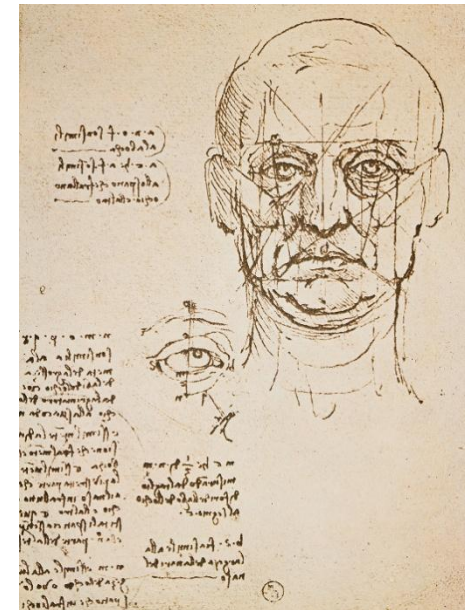
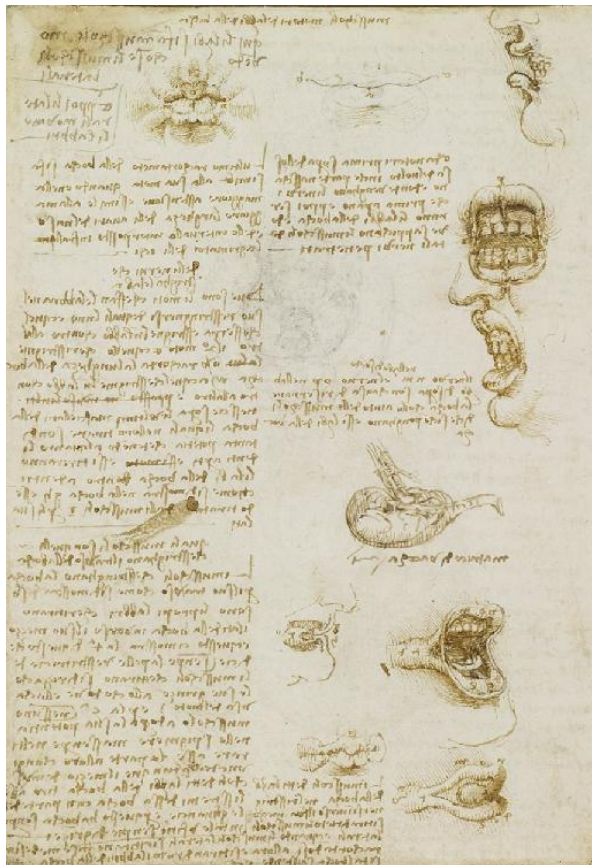


1490

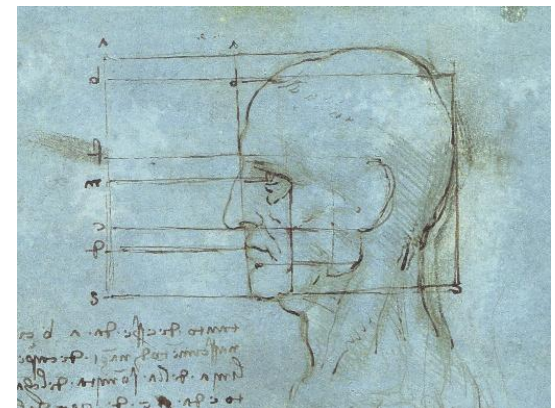


Eyes & Lips

These gruesome studies gave us those gentle eyes and lips



1489

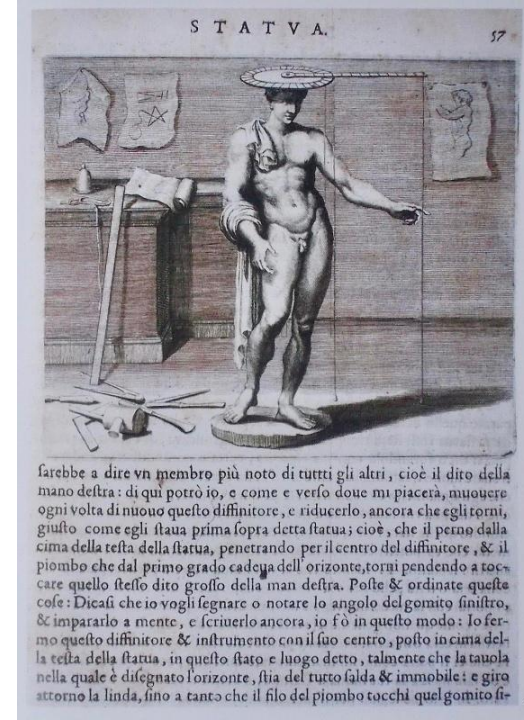


1489

Theory of Proportion

The theory of proportion is already popular before Leonardo

- ❖ Piero del Pollaiuolo: “Martirio di San Sebastiano” (147x)
- ❖ Leon Battista Alberti: “De Statua” (144x)



sarebbe a dire vn membro più noto di tutti gli altri, cioè il dito della mano destra: di qui potrò io, e come e verso doue mi piacerà, muouere ogni volta di nuouo questo diffinitore, e riducerlo, ancora che egli torni, giusto come egli staua prima sopra detta statua; cioè, che il perno dalla cima della testa della statua, penetrando per il centro del diffinitore, & il piombo che dal primo grado cadeua dell'orizzonte, torni pendendo a toccare quello stesso dito grosso della man destra. Poste & ordinate queste cose: Dicasi che io vogli segnare o notare lo angolo del gomito sinistro, & impararlo a mente, e scriuerlo ancora, io fò in questo modo: Io fermo questo diffinitore & instrumento con il suo centro, posto in cima della testa della statua, in questo stato e luogo detto, talmente che la tauola nella quale è disegnato l'orizzonte, stia del tutto salda & immobile: e giro attorno la linda, fino a tanto che il filo del piombo tocchi quel gomito fi-

Leonardo's workshop

He had many pupils starting from around 1490 and many had to pay for school and board

In 1496 he writes to Ludovico that he has to feed six people

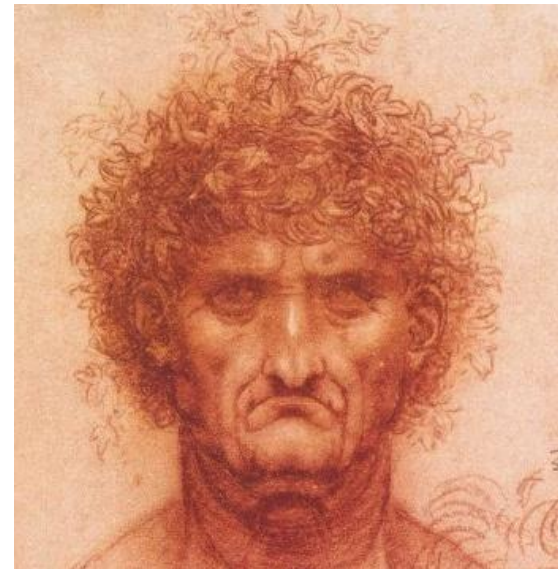


Grotesque Heads

A pastime? He never used them in his painting.
His paintings are full of angelic faces!



1493



1503

Grotesque Heads

Caricatures: Beatrice & Dante; Boccaccio, Petrarca & Dante, etc...



Windsor RL 12348



Venice R 1332

Grotesque

1480s: Pinturicchio discovers the ruins of Roman emperor Nero's extravagant residence whose walls are decorated with frescos of bizarre figures taken from Ovid's "Metamorphoses". These "teste caricate" are "grotesque" because they are in the "grotte" (caves).

Several painters (Ghirlandaio, Filippino Lippi, Perugino) enjoy copying them



Lippi, c.1488-93



Pietro Perugino,
Collegio del Cambio, 1500



Pinturicchio, Piccolomini Library, Siena (1502)

Grotesque

Raffaello's grotteschi for the Logge del Vaticano (1519)



Raffaello, Vatican, 1519

Grotesque Heads

Leonardo's grotesque heads were widely known and copied.

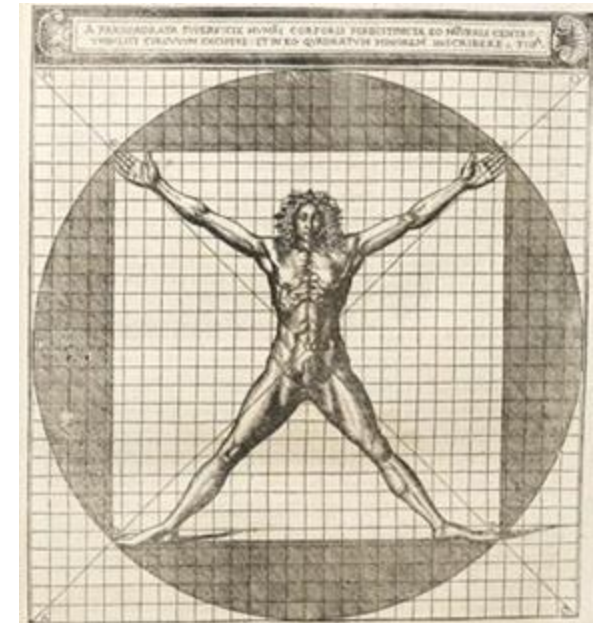
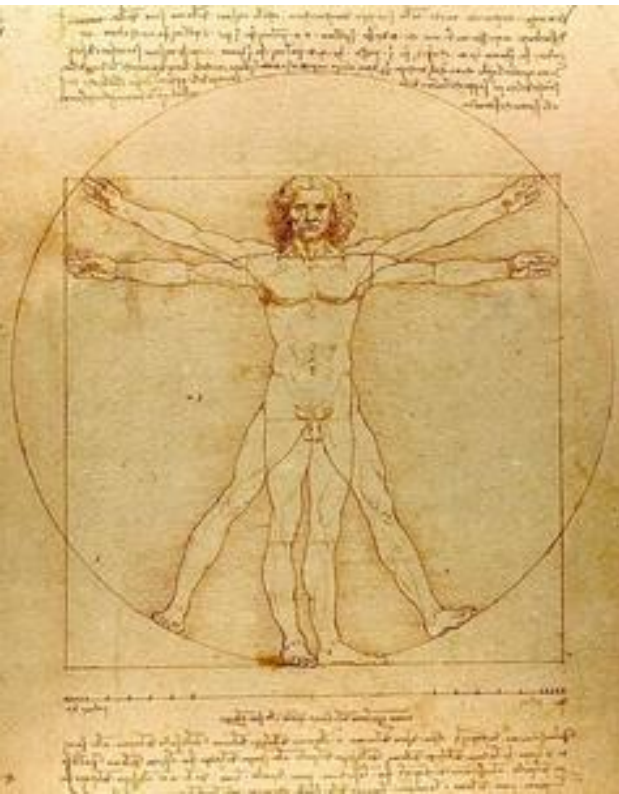
Until the 19th century they were more famous than Leonardo's paintings

Almost all of Leonardo's paintings were in private collections, and the "Cenacolo" was inside the Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie.



The Vitruvian Man (1490)

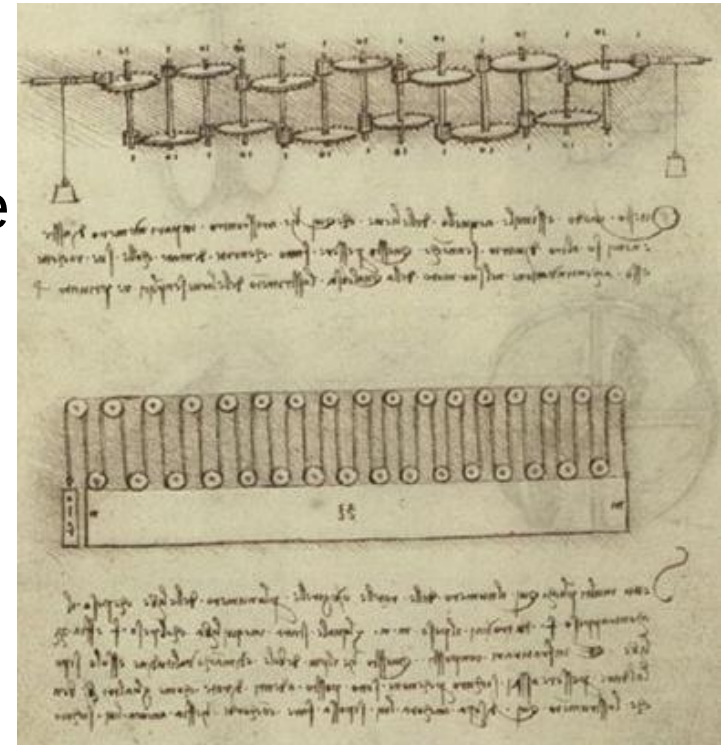
- Squaring of the circle
- Ideal human body proportions
- Taken from Vitruvius' "De architectura 3.1.2–3"



First printed and illustrated edition of *De Architectura*
(by Giovanni Giocondo, 1511)
First translation into Italian (by Cesare Cesariano, 1521)

The “Computer” (1493)

- A machine with 13 interlocking wheels and 10 faces
- "Leonardo was possibly studying the properties of gear trains in comparison with systems of levers" (Silvio Henin)
- Note: Roberto Guatelli's replica is mostly his own imagined device



(Madrid Codices I, discovered in 1965 in Madrid)

Madonna Litta (1490)

Really?!? This is a Leonardo?!?

More likely Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio



Based on this
design by Leonardo



Dama con l'Ermellino (1491)

- The duke's lover Cecilia Gallerani
- Black background
- She doesn't look at us
- Compare with Antonello's "Annunciata" (1476)



The Horse (1493)

- A colossal bronze monument to the duke's father Francesco Sforza, intended to be the largest equestrian statue in the world
- Commissioned in 1482
- The project is aborted in 1494 following technical complications (the pit can't support the weight) and for the need for bronze to make cannons against the French invaders
- Leonardo built a clay model in 1493, destroyed by French soldiers in 1499



1488

La Belle Ferroniere (1495)

Ludovico Sforza's wife Beatrice?

Trivia: in 1929 the art critic Joseph Duveen was sued for defamation by the owner of a similar painting for stating that it was an 18th century copy and had to pay a hefty fine; this copy was sold in 2010 for \$1.5 million.



Sotheby's EST. 1744

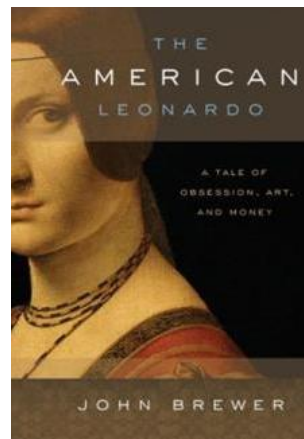
28 Jan 2010

181

Follower of Leonardo Da Vinci, probably before 1750

Estimate 300,000 - 500,000 USD

Sold 1,538,500 USD



1492

1492: Lorenzo "Il Magnifico" Medici dies

1492: Muslims and Jews are expelled from Spain

1492: Columbus discovers a route to the "West Indies" (America)

1492: Rodrigo Borgia is elected Pope Alexander VI in 1492 (and becomes a symbol of Papal decadence and corruption)

Meanwhile in Firenze...

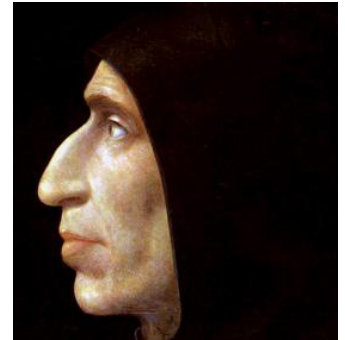
1490: The Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola preaches that the apocalypse is coming with the year 1500

September 1494: Savonarola's prophecies seem to come true when France invades Italy

1494: Savonarola's followers expel the Medici from Firenze

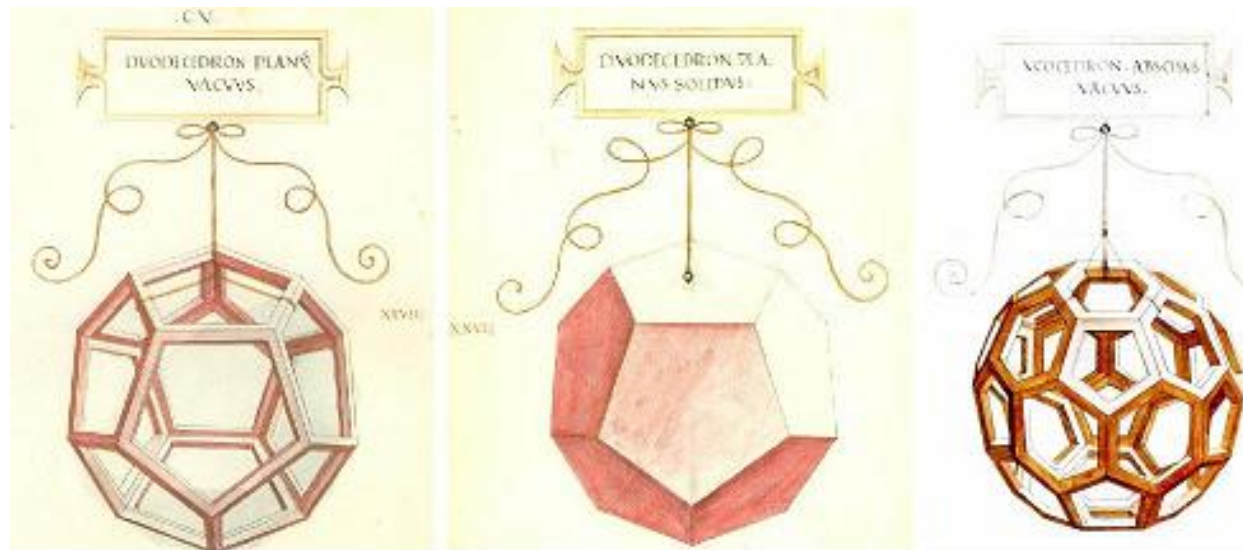
1497: Savonarola's followers burn paintings and books as heretical ("the bonfire of vanities")

1498: The Inquisition tries, condemns, hangs and burns Savonarola in Piazza della Signoria (he had refused to join Alexander VI's Holy League against France)



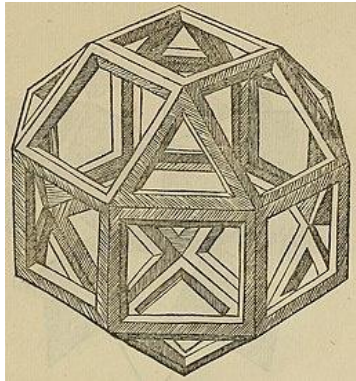
Pacioli

1497-98: Leonardo illustrates Luca Pacioli's "Divina Proportione" (published in 1509)



Pacioli

Portrait of Luca Pacioli (1500): author unknown

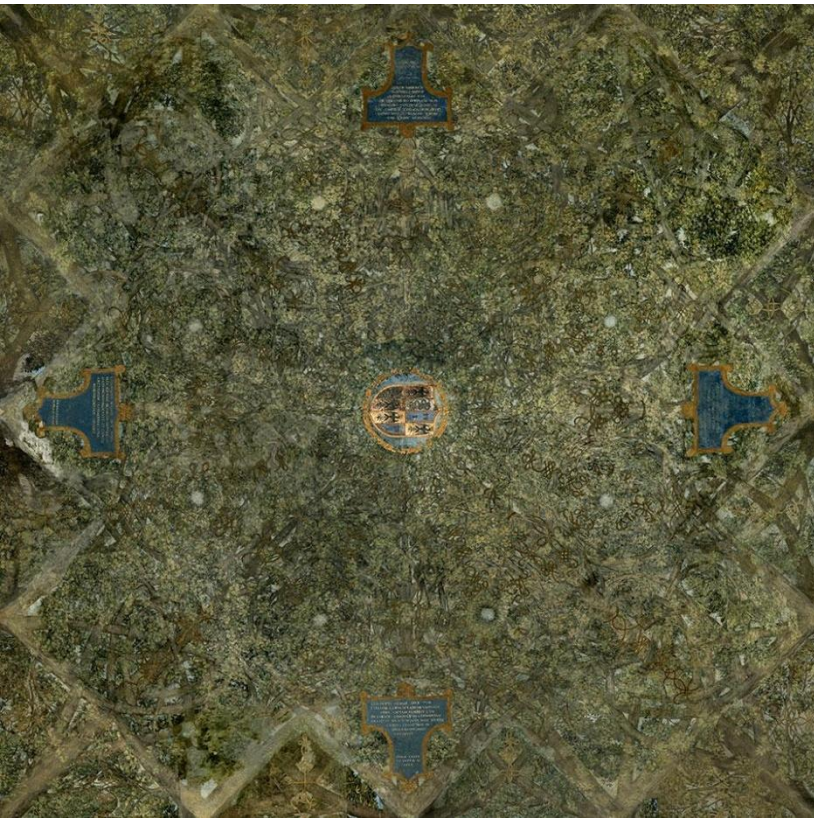


Similar to Leonardo's
illustration of a
rhombicuboctahedron



Sala delle Asse (1498)

1496-98: Leonardo works at the arboreal decoration for the ceiling of the Sala delle Asse in Sforza's castle (knots!)



Il Cenacolo (1498)

Commissioned in 1494 by Ludovico Sforza for his favorite church, Santa Maria delle Grazie, right after Donato Bramante finished renovation

Leonardo had just failed to build the horse so it's not clear why Ludovico gave him another chance

It took Leonardo 4 years to complete it



Matteo Bandello in 1497:

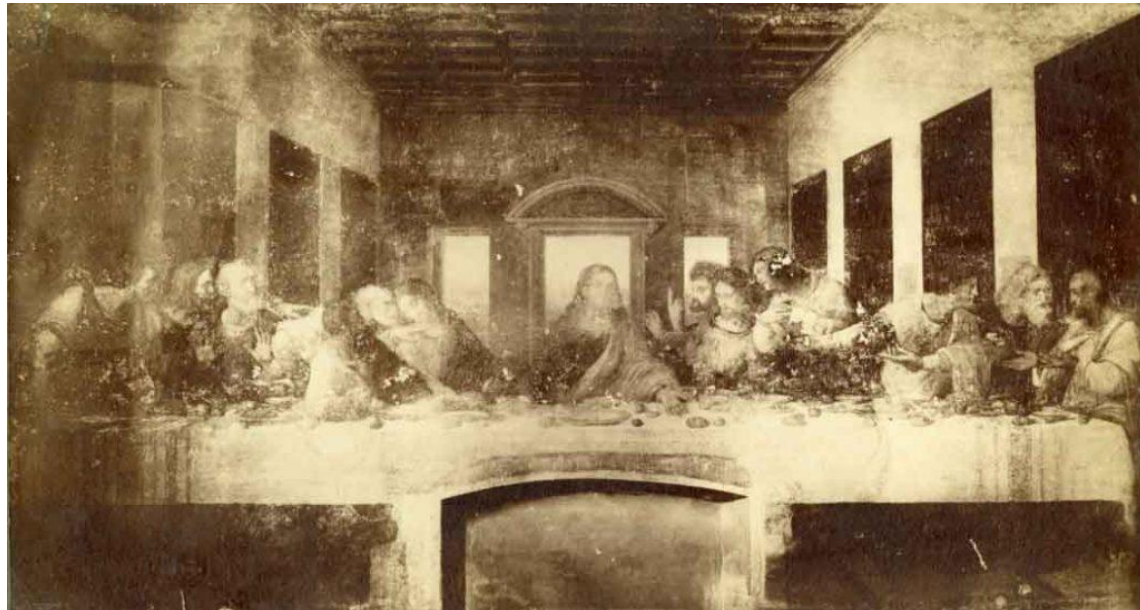
«Soleva [...] andar la mattina a buon'ora a montar sul ponte, perché il Cenacolo è alquanto da terra alto; soleva, dico, dal nascente sole sino a l'imbrunita sera non levarsi mai il pennello di mano, ma scordatosi il mangiare e il bere, di continuo dipingere. Se ne sarebbe poi stato dui, tre e quattro dì che non v'avrebbe messa mano e tuttavia dimorava talora una o due ore del giorno e solamente contemplava, considerava ed esaminando tra sé, le sue figure giudicava. L'ho anco veduto secondo che il capriccio o ghiribizzo lo toccava, partirsi da mezzo giorno, quando il sole è in lione, da Corte vecchia ove quel stupendo cavallo di terra componeva, e venirsene dritto a le Grazie ed ascenso sul ponte pigliar il pennello ed una o due pennellate dar ad una di quelle figure, e di solito partirsi e andar altrove.»

Il Cenacolo (1498)

The traditional, well-known method of fresco painting: tempera on wet plaster, and paint quickly before the plaster dries

Leonardo instead paints on dry plaster so he can take his time

The result:



Before Brambilla's restoration (1999)

Il Cenacolo (1498)

The Cenacolo decayed rapidly

The opposite wall of the refectory is covered by Giovanni Donato da Montorfano's Crucifixion fresco which is in much better conditions

Leonardo didn't know how to make a fresco, despite the fact that the technique was well known since Giotto's times?

Leonardo never thought of asking Montorfano how to make a fresco?



Last Suppers in Firenze

Taddeo Gaddi: Cenacolo di Santa Croce (1340)

Domenico Ghirlandaio: Cenacolo di Ognissanti (1480)



Last Suppers in Firenze

Andrea del Castagno: Cenacolo di Sant'Apollonia (1447)

Pietro Perugino: Cenacolo del Fuligno (149x)



Leonardo's Cenacolo in Milano

A faithful representation of John's Gospel 13:21, when Jesus tells the apostles that one of them will betray him

More traditional than you think: Leonardo had to paint the apostles according to stereotypes, so that they would be easily recognized (Peter angry and holding a knife, Judas with the purse of silver, John youthful and effeminate);

Leonardo had to “copy” the “last suppers” painted before him

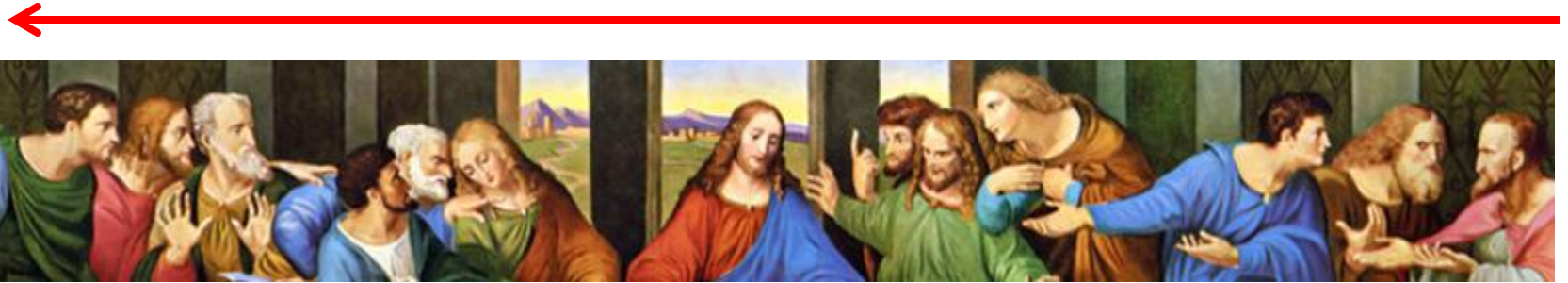
Leonardo's Cenacolo in Milano

- No halos: Jesus and the apostles are portrayed like common people
- A dramatic, dynamic scene compared with Ghirlandaio's
- 4 groups of 3 people



Leonardo's Cenacolo in Milano

Read it right to left (the way Leonardo wrote)



Leonardo's Cenacolo in Milano

Jesus is isolated

A calm, sorrowful pose

One hand up, one hand down



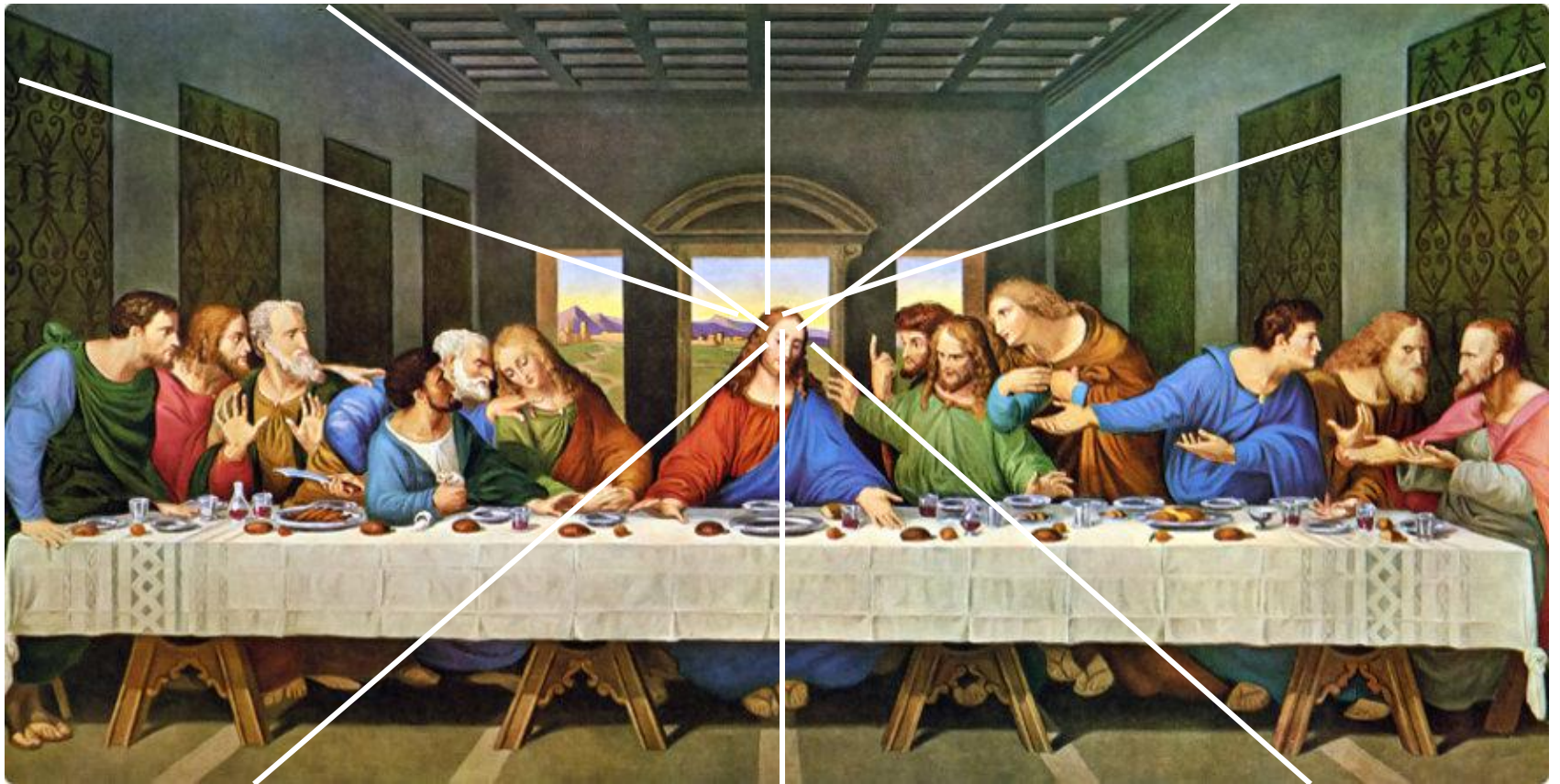
Leonardo's Cenacolo in Milano

Most of the action is in the hands



Leonardo's Cenacolo in Milano

A perfect example of one-point perspective: all elements of the painting converge into the midpoint: Jesus' head



Leonardo's Cenacolo in Milano

The effeminate John

Thomas

Peter whispering to John



Judas spilling salt while
while clutching a small bag

(No, St John is not Mary Magdalene:
women sat in the kitchen, and it would have
been blatant heresy: obviously his
customers didn't think there was anything
wrong with an effeminate John. Leonardo
wanted to convey drama, not heresies)



What is Peter telling John?

Isabella d'Este (1500)

Ludovico Ariosto and Leonardo shared a patron in Isabella d'Este

Isabella commissioned Leonardo a “Christ among the Doctors” but he only made a cartoon (lost)

Bernardino Luini (arguably the most “leonardesque” of his pupils) painted one in 151x



Portrait of Isabella d'Este, Leonardo da Vinci, 1499–1500

Out of Milano

- 1499: French king Louis XII invades Italy and captures Milan, driving Ludovico Sforza out of Italy
- 1500 Leonardo returns to Firenze (briefly a republic between the insurrection of 1494 against the Medici family and the Congress of Mantova of 1512 when the Medicis were reinstated)
- 1502-3: military architect for the ruthless mercenary Cesare Borgia, an illegitimate son of Pope Alexander VI who leads French armies in Italy and the inspiration for Machiavelli's "The Prince". For 10 months Leonardo travels across Borgia's territories and surveys them
- 1504: The Treaty of Lyon assigns northern Italy to France and southern Italy to Spain

Leonardo's rivals

1490 Sangallo begins work on Palazzo Gondi

1494 Domenico Ghirlandaio dies

1496 21-year-old Michelangelo moves to Roma

1496 Lippi's Adoration of the Magi (the one Leonardo left unfinished)

1500 Michelangelo's Pietà in Roma

1501-4 Michelangelo is back in Firenze and makes the statue of David (1504), the first colossal statue since antiquity

1504 21-year-old Raffaello moves to Firenze

1504 Lippi dies, mourned by the whole city

1505 Michelangelo is invited back to Roma by the newly elected Pope Julius II



Back in Firenze

1500: Leonardo is hired to paint for the altar of della Santissima Annunziata monastery but never finished it

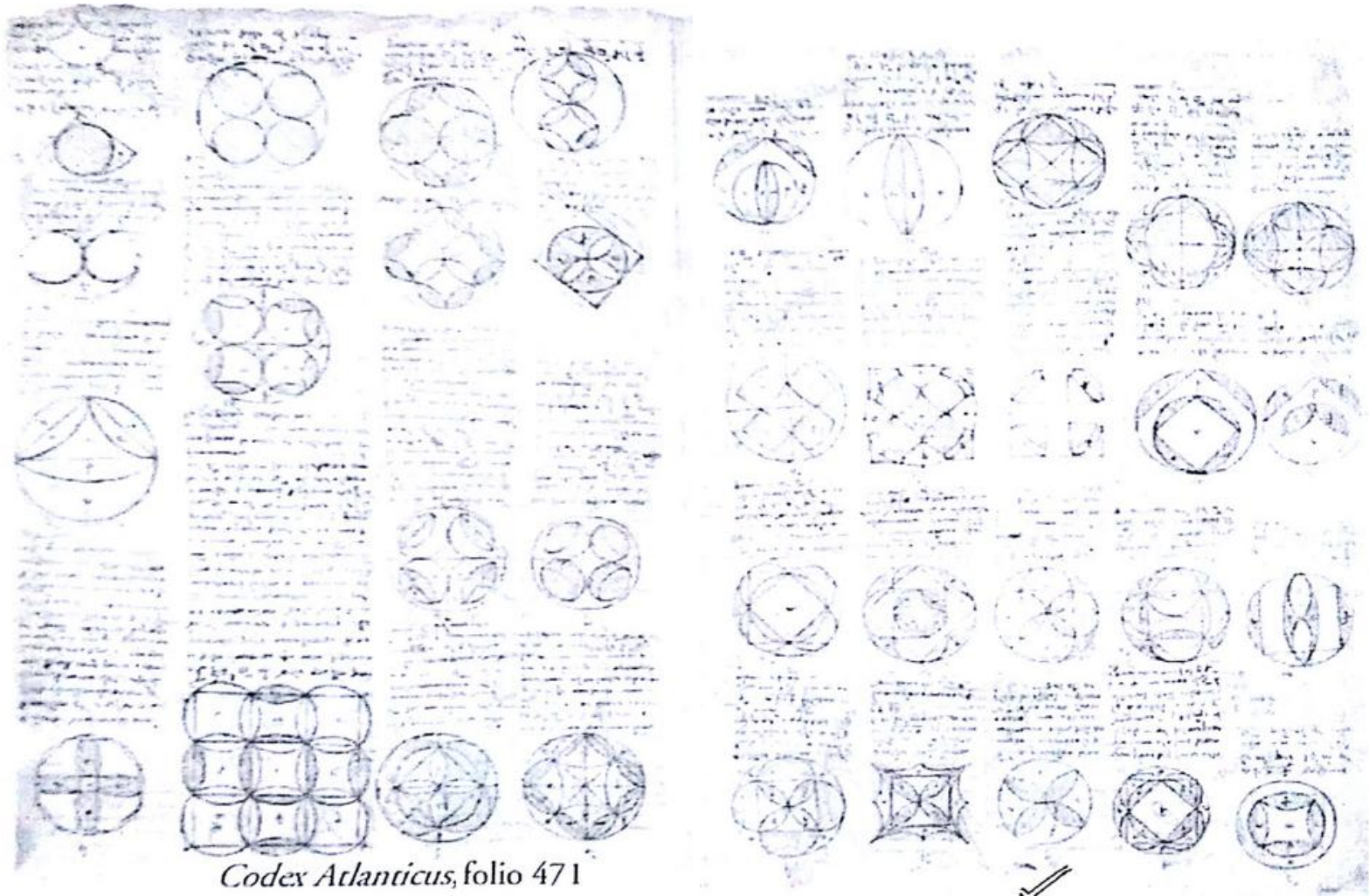
He draws a famous cartoon of St Anne (lost, not the one at the National Gallery):

"ma finita ch'ella fu, nella stanza durarono duoi giorni di andare a vederla gli uomini e le donne, i giovani et i vecchi, come si va a le feste solenni, per vedere le maraviglie di Lionardo, che fecero stupire tutto quel popolo" (Vasari)

1500-02: Leonardo lives and works in the monastery but seems to concentrate more on mathematical studies than on painting

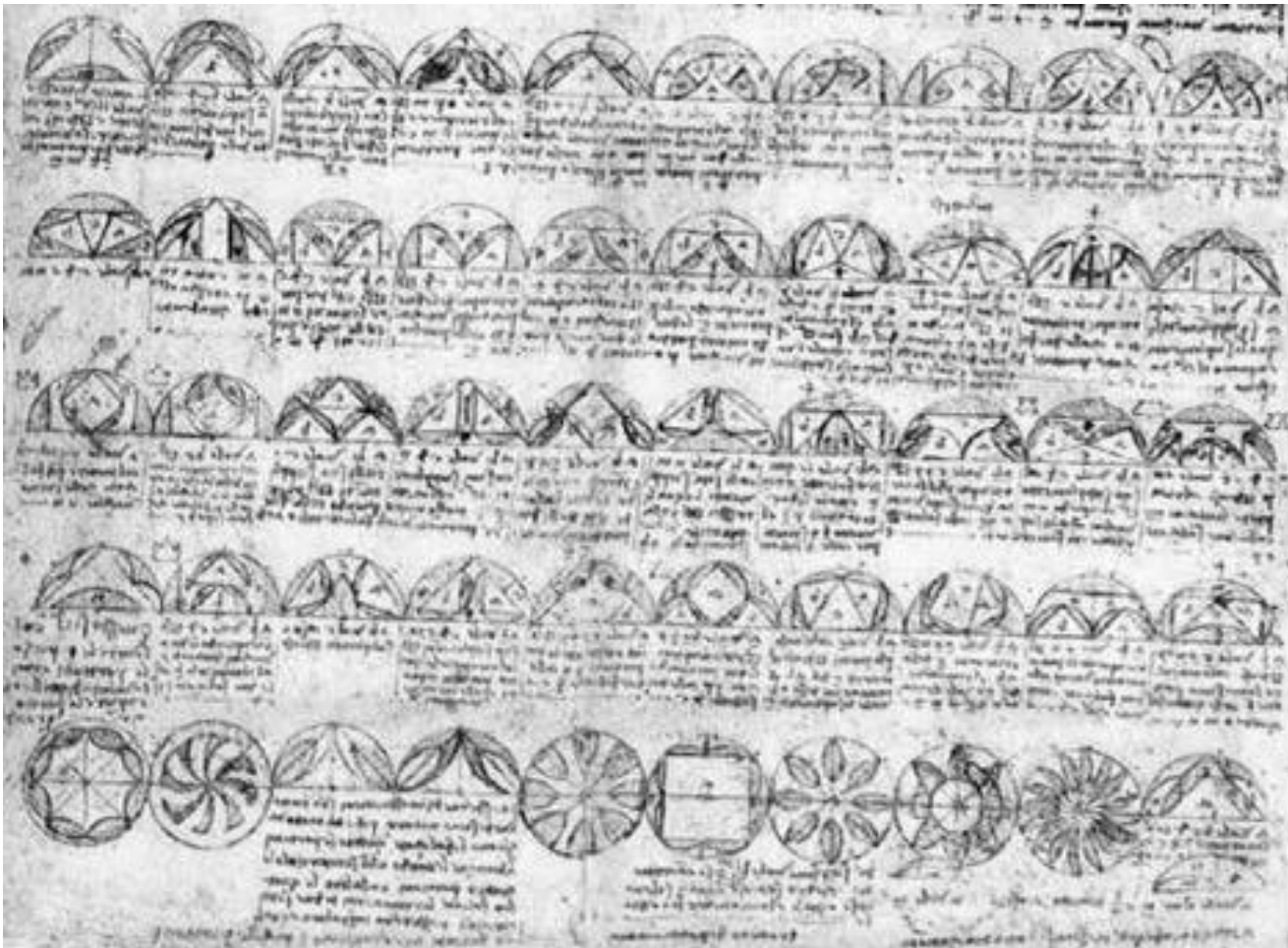
Back in Firenze

1504-...: 100s of pages are devoted to squaring the circle



Back in Firenze

1504-..: 100s of pages are devoted to squaring the circle



Back in Firenze

Leonardo tries to paint “The Battle of Anghiari”
(1505), the only time that Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo worked in the same place

Leonardo’s fresco was not completed because he messed up again the fresco technique and Michelangelo never completed his because the Pope called him back to Roma.



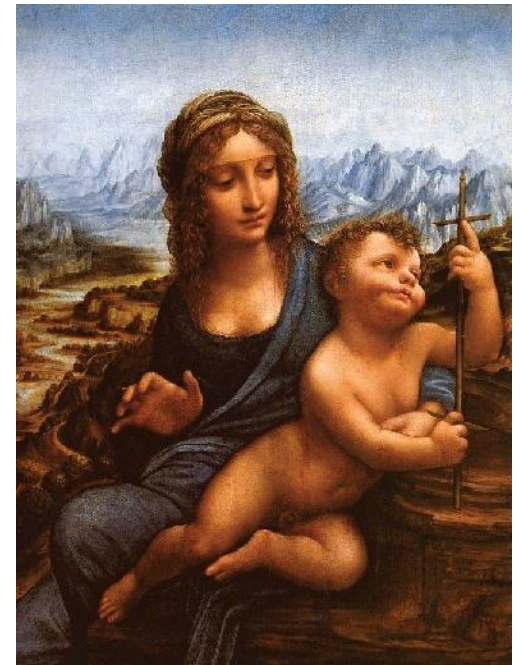
Back in Firenze

Large-scale drawing of “Madonna and Child with St Anne and the Young St John the Baptist” (1508) on eight sheets of paper glued together

Mary seated on the knees of her mother Anne holding Jesus while John the Baptist watches



(no, it is not a prototype of the Madonna dei Fusi, one of the many wrong Leonardo attributions)



Salvator Mundi (150x)

- Possibly painted by Bernardino Luini
- The Salvator Mundi depicts Christ holding a transparent crystal orb in his left hand...
- ...but the rendering of the orb is devoid of standard optical effects



Forbes

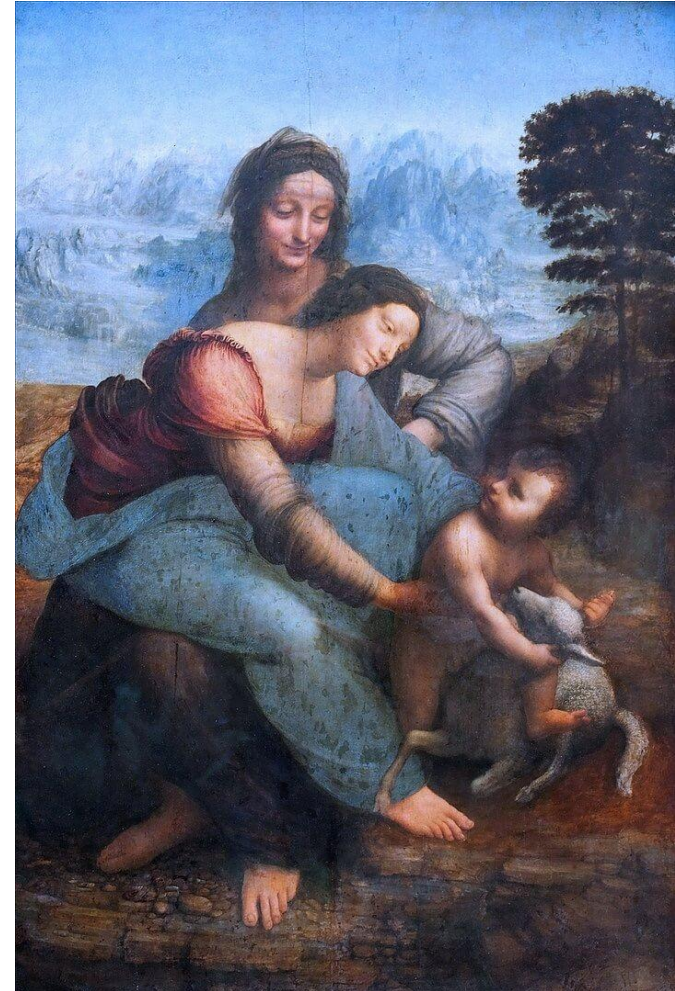
Nov 15, 2017, 08:43pm EST

**Leonardo Da
Vinci's
Salvator
Mundi Sold
For More Than
\$450 Million,
Breaking
World Record**

The Virgin and Child with St Anne (1503)

The faces of the Mona Lisa and of St Anne were painted as early as October 1503 (when they were seen in the artist's studio by Agostino Vespucci)

Unfinished painting (it was still in his possession upon his death)



Mona Lisa (1506?)

Lisa Gheradini, wife of merchant Francesco del Giocondo
("monna" = "my lady")



Mona Lisa

“Prese Lionardo a fare per Francesco del Giocondo il ritratto di mona Lisa sua moglie ; e quattro anni penatovi, lo lasciò imperfetto ; la quale opera oggi è appresso il re Francesco di Francia in Fontanableo” (Vasari)

Note about the smile: *“Usovi ancora questa arte : che essendo madonna Lisa bellissima, teneva, mentre che la ritraeva, chi sonasse o cantasse, e di continuo buffoni che la facessero stare allegra, per levar via quel malinconico che suol dar spesso la pittura a' ritratti che si fanno : ed in questo di Lionardo vi era un ghigno tanto piacevole, che era cosa più divina che umana a vederlo”*

Mona Lisa

The scene as imagined by Cesare Maccari (“Leonardo Che Ritrae la Gioconda”, 1863)



Mona Lisa

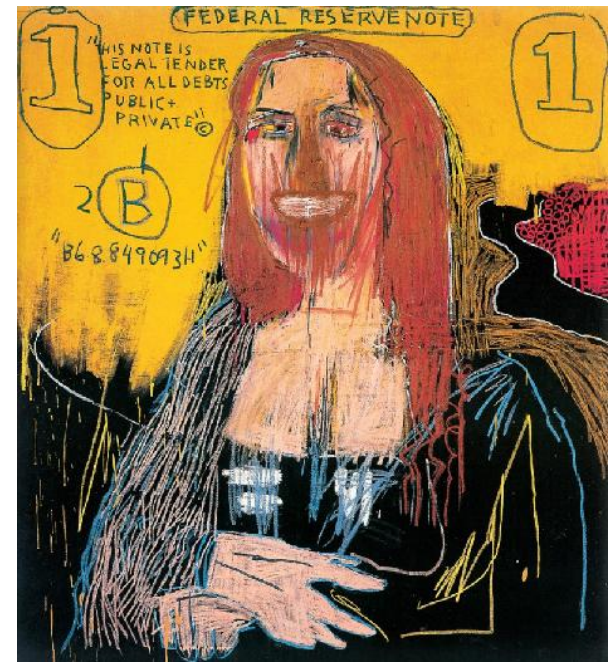
The greatest icon of painting after the painting was kidnapped by an Italian nationalist (1911)

Duchamp's Gioconda (1919) - L.H.O.O.Q = "Elle a chaud au cul"



Mona Lisa remixes

Dali, Warhol, Botero, Basquiat, ...



Mona Lisa remixes

Banksy, Nychos... Scaruffi!



Back in Milano

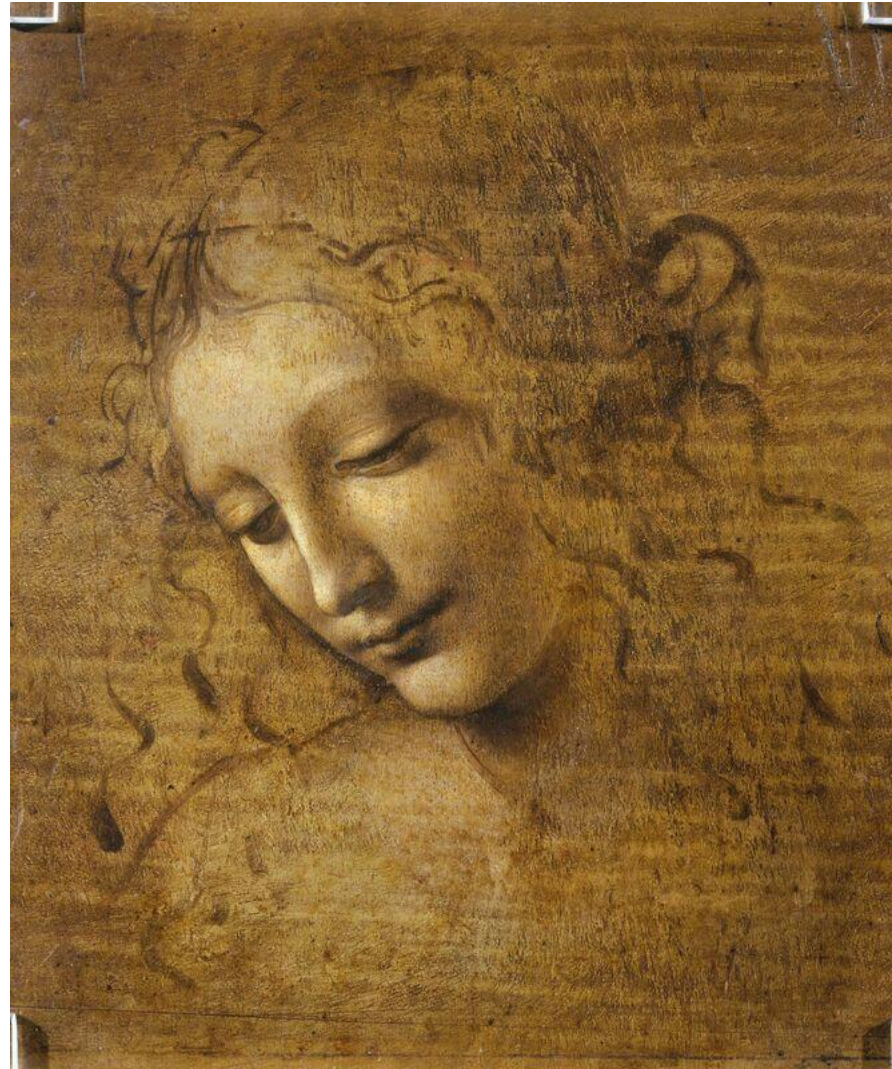
1506: Leonardo is summoned to Milano by the French governor Charles II d'Amboise

1506-8: Leonardo designs a villa outside Milano for d'Amboise

1512: The Sforzas briefly regain control of Milano

La Scapigliata (1508)

Similar to the Vergine delle Rocce



Leonardo's rivals

1508 Raffaello hired by the Pope in
Roma to paint the Stanze

1508-12 Michelangelo paints the Sistine
Chapel's ceiling in the Vaticano

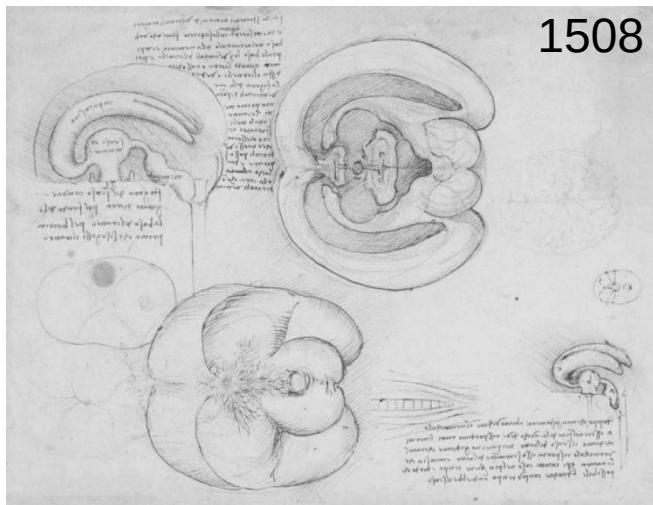


Anatomy

1510-1511: Leonardo collaborates with the anatomist Marcantonio della Torre (appointed to the chair of Medicine of the University of Pavia in 1509 and killed by plague in 1511)



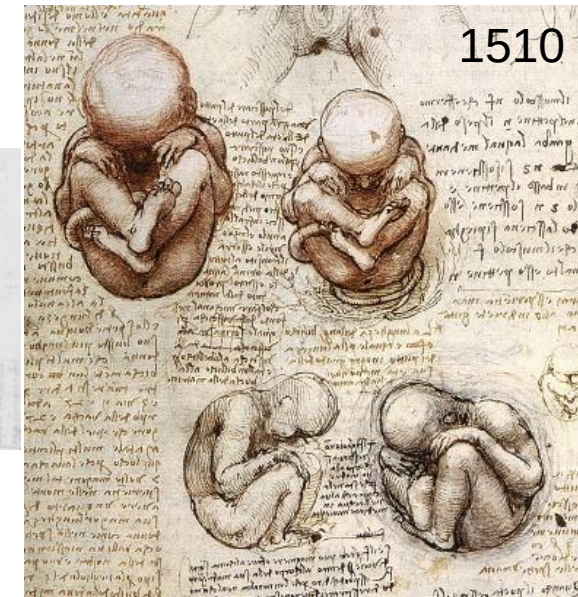
1508



1508



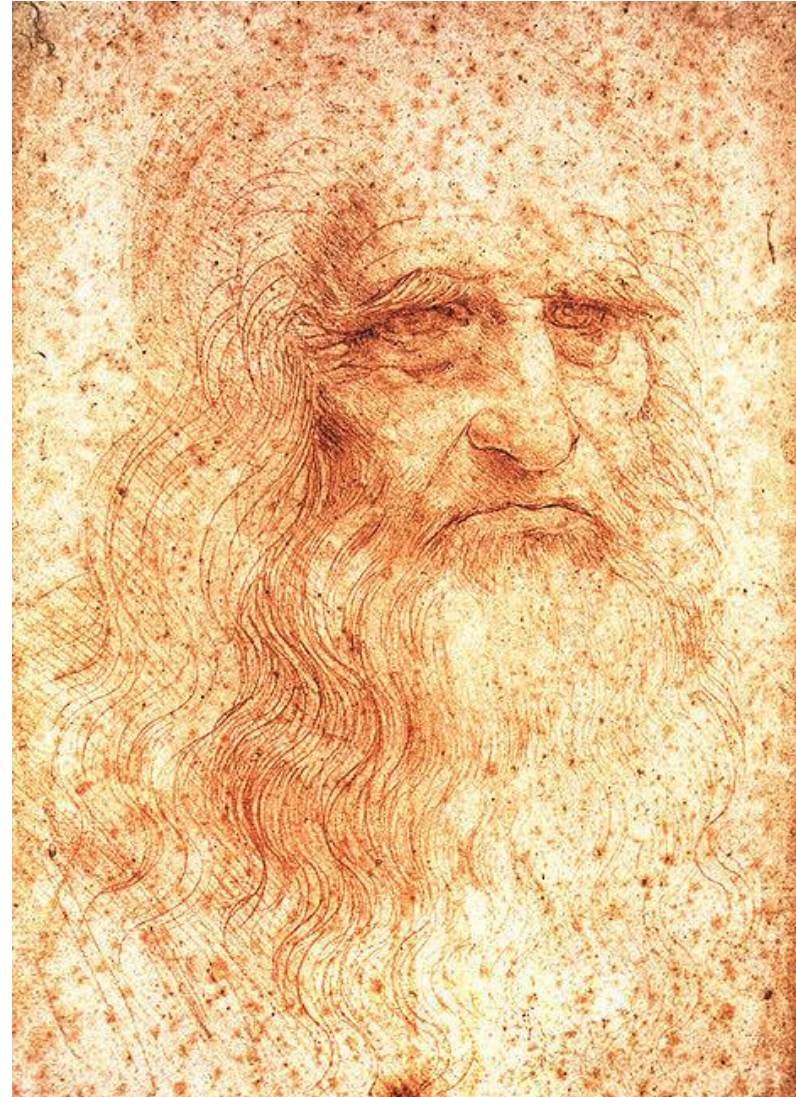
1508



1510

Self-portrait (1512)

One of the most depressing self-portraits of all times





Raffaello: "Scuola di Atene" (1511)



Plato

France

1513: Lorenzo de' Medici's son Giovanni is elected pope (as Leo X) and Leonardo is invited to Roma, where he meets Raffaello

1515: Francois I of France invades Italy and reconquers Milano

1516 Leonardo is hired by French king Francois I and moves to his castle



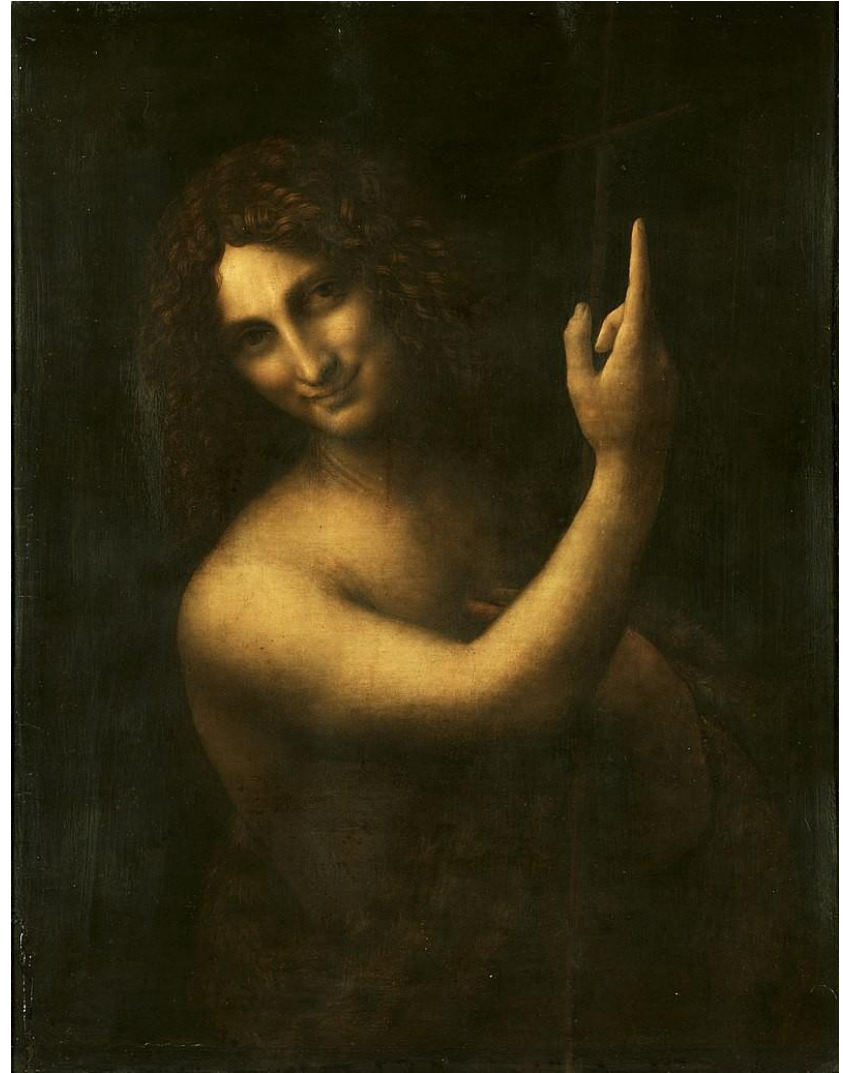
St. John the Baptist (1516)

Another effeminate youth

His finger raised towards
heaven

The body blurs with the black
background

The same enigmatic smile of
Mona Lisa and St Anne

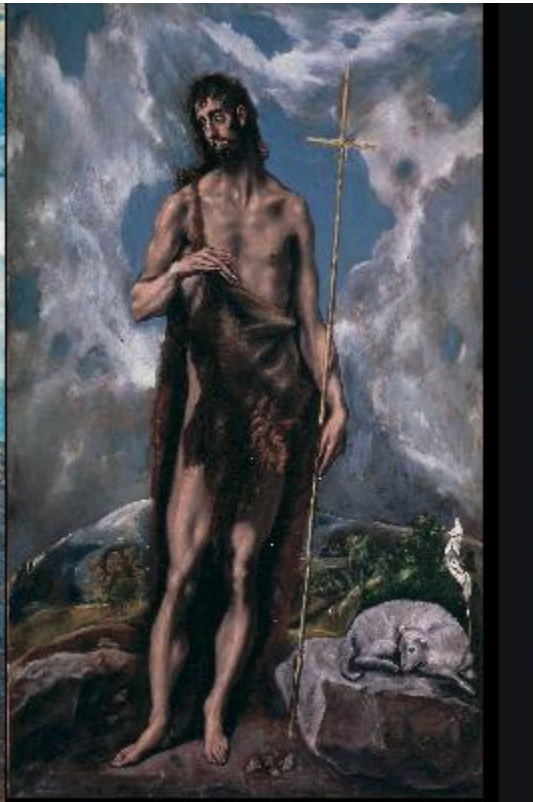


St. John the Baptist (1516)

This is how St John was usually represented:
as a hermit living in the desert



Tiziano



El Greco



Château Royal d'Amboise

1510 Botticelli dies

1516 Giuliano da Sangallo dies

Leonardo dies in 1519

Raffaello dies in 1520

The Platonic Academy is dissolved in 1523



Did Leonardo know about America?



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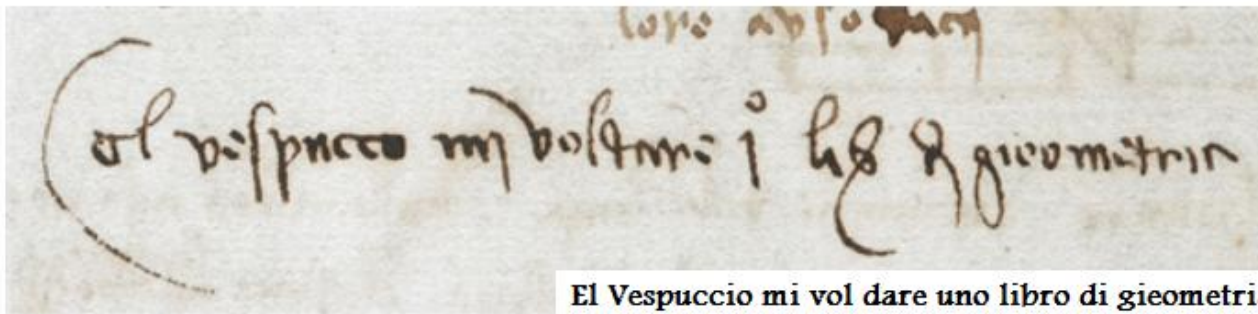
Advances in Historical Studies > Vol.8 No.4, September 2019

Leonardo Depicted America: Misread as the Moon

Stefaan Missinne^{1*}, Geert Verhoeven²

¹Royal Geographical Society, London, UK.

²Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Archaeological Prospection & Virtual Archaeology,
Vienna, Austria.



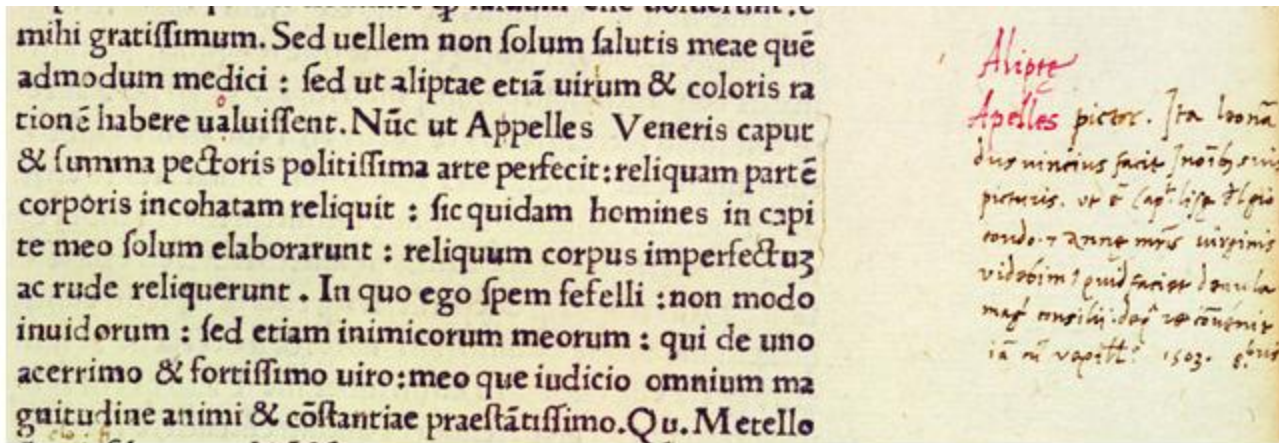
El Vespuccio mi vol dare uno libro di geometria

Figure 2. Leonardo's handwriting about Amerigo Vespucci (Codex Arundel page 132 verso; rotated 90° clockwise and mirrored vertically). Copyright: The British Library Board, Codex Arundel Ms. 263. (1503)

Did Leonardo know about America?

But “Vespucci” is a common last name and Leonardo knew at least two of them:

Agostino witnessed him working on the Mona Lisa in 1503



The handwritten comment, dated 1503, by Agostino Vespucci in the margin of one of Cicero's letters. Vespucci has witnessed Leonardo working on a portrait of Lisa del Giocondo.

Did Leonardo know about America?

And the one to whom Leonardo was referring is probably Amerigo's nephew Bartolomeo

GIORNALE STORICO
DELLA
LETTERATURA ITALIANA
TORINO
ERMANNNO LOESCHER
1908

LE FONTI DEI MANOSCRITTI
DI
LEONARDO DA VINCI

Edmondo Solmi

VESPUCCI BARTOLOMEO. Quando Leonardo scrive: « il Vespuccio
« mi vol dare un libro », si riferiva senza alcun dubbio a Bartolomeo Vespucci, figlio di Ser Nastagio e nipote di Amerigo, che fu uno dei priori del 1514 e dei dodici buoni uomini del 1520. È ovvio osservare, che noi non sappiamo qual fosse il libro consegnato a Leonardo.

Bartolomeo Vespucci scrisse un'*Oratio de laudibus astrologiae* habita in almo Patavino Gymnasio anno 1506, edita col Sacrobosco e Francesco Capuano di Manfredonia, con « annotationes nonnullae eiusdem Bartholomaei Vesputii, hic idem intersertae » (2),

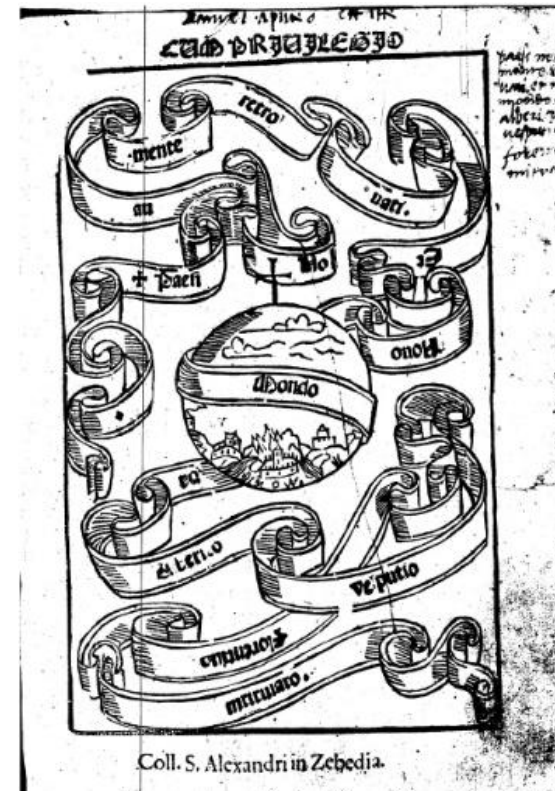
Did Leonardo know about America?

Vespucci never returned to Firenze after his American travels, so Leonardo could never have met him in person

Did Leonardo know about America?

Leonardo was certainly familiar with Amerigo's claim that Colombo had discovered a "new world" because

- Amerigo Vespucci's letter about the Mundus Novus to Vespucci's former schoolmate Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici (1503) was famous
- And even more famous was the book "Paesi novamente ritrovati et novo mondo da Alberico Vesputio Florentino" (1507)



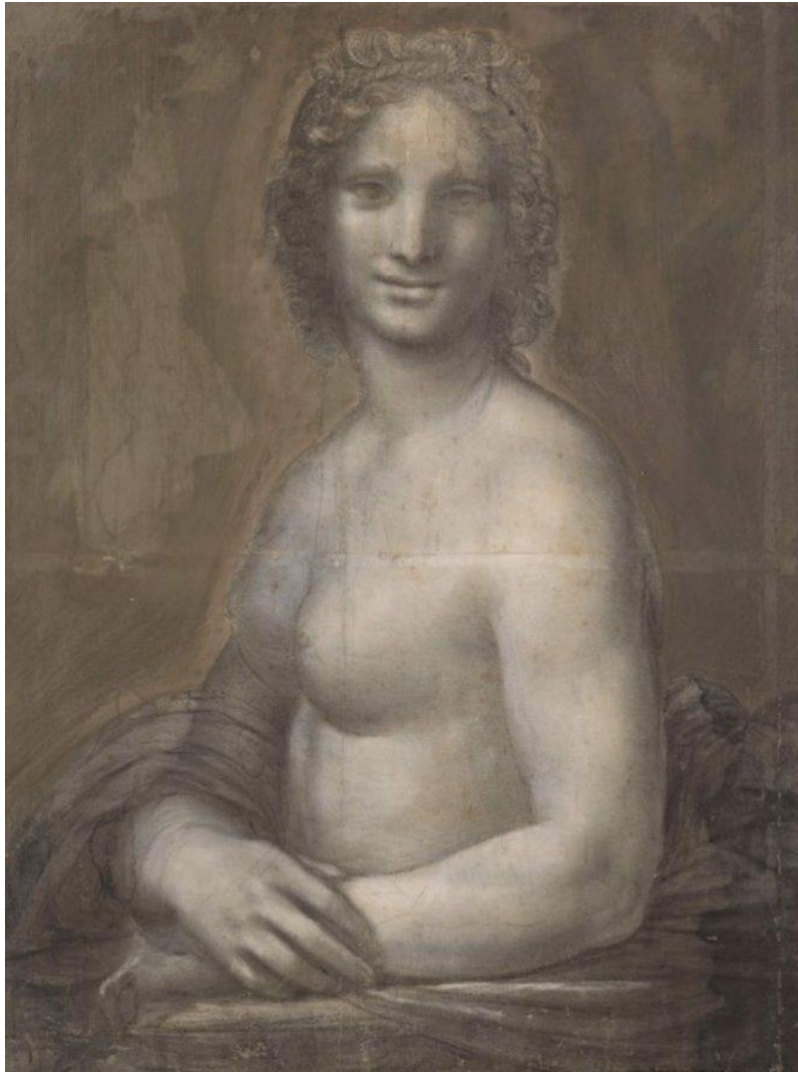
Did Leonardo know about America?

Small globe from Pavia (1504?), made from two halves of two ostrich eggs, engraved by a left-handed artist (discovered in 2012)



Figure 4. The Da Vinci Globe unfolded using an equirectangular map projection (Verhoeven & Missinne, 2017). This map depicts the world according to Leonardo da Vinci while in Florence (Italy) in 1504. Copyright Stefaan Missinne 2018.

The naked Mona Lisa



ART CRITIQUE

PAINTING YOU A PICTURE OF ALL THE NEWS FROM THE ART WORLD

16 March 2019

Researchers may have determined that the Monna Vanna was drawn by Leonardo



Domaine de Chantilly
@chantillydomain



Analyse de la Joconde nue au @c2rmf avec Bruno Mottin, conservateur du @c2rmf et @mathieudeldicqu conservateur du

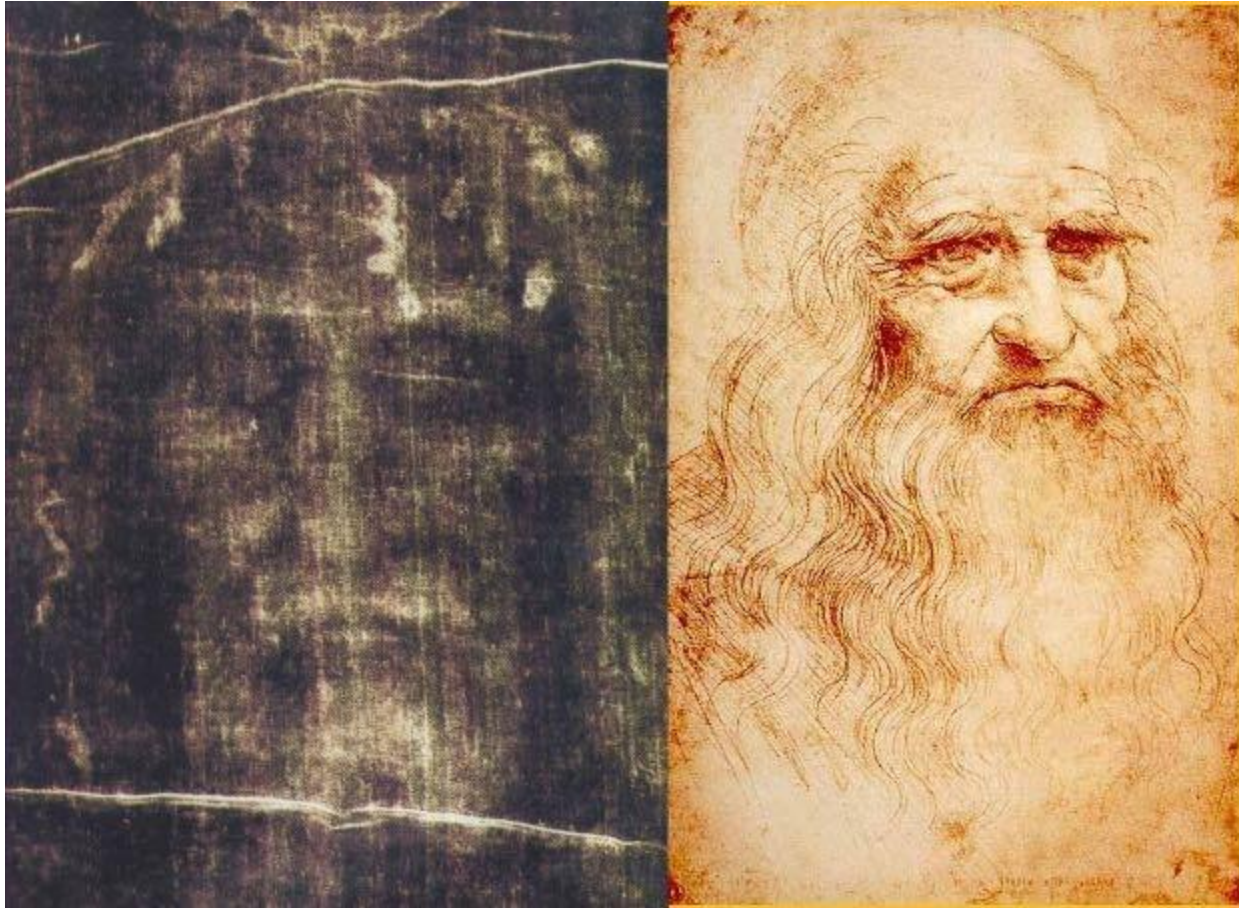
The naked Mona Lisa

Museo Ideale di Vinci (Firenze)



Andrea Salai's "Monna Vanna"

Sindone of Torino



List of Paintings

Madonna of the Carnation - Alte Pinakothek, Munich
Ginevra de' Benci - National Gallery, Washington
Benois Madonna - Hermitage, Saint Petersburg
The Adoration of the Magi (u) - Uffizi, Firenze
Saint Jerome in the Wilderness (u) - Uffizi, Firenze
Virgin of the Rocks - Louvre, Paris
Portrait of a Musician (u) - Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, Milan
Lady with an Ermine - Czartoryski Museum, Krakow
La Belle Ferronniere - Louvre, Paris
The Last Supper - Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan
Sala delle Asse - Castello Sforzesco, Milan
The Virgin and Child with Anne and John the Baptist - National Gallery, London
The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne (u) - Louvre, Paris
Mona Lisa - Louvre, Paris
La Scapigliata (u) - Galleria Nazionale, Parma
Saint John the Baptist - Louvre, Paris

English names of cities:

Firenze = Florence

Milano = Milan

Roma = Rome

Genova = Genoa

Napoli = Naples

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