Leonardo da Vinci is arguably the most famous artist in history, with his magnum opus – <cite>the Mona Lisa</cite> – being the most recognisable and highly valued painting in the world, with an estimated value of $867 million. He was an accomplished polymath, skilled in painting, drawing, engineering, science, philosophy, sculpting, and architecture. In addition, his notebooks document his notes on anatomy, astronomy, botany, cartography, painting, and palaeontology. As such, he is credited as one of the founders of the High Renaissance, a period of exceptional artistic production during the Italian Renaissance.

Facts

* Polymath during the High renaissance period
* Was a painter, draughtsman, engineer, scientist, theorist, sculptor, and architect
* Also became known for his notebooks, where he made notes on anatomy, astronomy, botany, cartography, painiting, and paleontology
* Born out of wedlocj to a legal notary (Ser Piero da Vinci) and a lower class woman (Caterina) in or near vinci
* Credited as the founder of the High renaissance
* Less than 25 attributed major works and many unfinished works
* Mona Lisa is his magnum opus

Florentine Period:

During this time Leonardo’s father had a workshop set up for him, but he continued to live and work with Verrochio. He also came to know the Medici at this time and was reported to have lived with them from 1480, working in the garden of Piazza San Marco. Thorough the Medici he came to know some of the artists, philosophers and writers of the Neoplatonic academy, who often met at the Piazza.

Dates

* 15th April 1452: Born Leonardo di ser Piero da Vinci in or near the town of Vinci, 20 miles from Florence (the exact location of his birth and childhood remains ambiguous).
* Mid 1460s: Family moved to Florence, the centre of Christian humanist thought and culture at the time.
* 1466: Joined the workshop of Andrea del Verrocchio at the age of 14 as a studio boy, at the time he was the leading painter and sculptor in Florence.
* 1469: Became an apprentice at Verrocchio’s workshop and worked alongside Botticelli, Perugino, and Ghirlandaio. Trained in chemistry, metal-working, leather working, mechanics, woodwork, and artistic skills such as drawing and painting. During this time, he assisted Verrocchio on his Baptism of Christ painting.
* First Florentine Period(1472-1482)
  + 1472: Qualified as a master at a guild of artists and doctors called the Guild of Saint Luke at the age of 20. This guild consisted of local painters and doctors.
  + 1473: Produced his first work, an ink drawing of the Arno River valley in Tuscanny.
  + 1478: Received a commission to paint an altarpiece for the Chapel of St. Bernard.
  + 1481: Received a commission for <cite>The Adoration of the Magi </cite>from the monks of San Donato in Scopeto. This painting would remain unfinished as Leonardo would later leave Florence to work for the duke of Milan. As such, the project was handed over to Filippino Lippi.
  + 1482: Sent as ambassador by Lorenzo de’ Medici to the Duke of Milan, Ludovico Sforza.

First Milanese Period

During this time Leonardo received many commissions from Duke Ludovico Sforza and other local organisations on projects such as wall paintings, altar decorations, as well as floats for special occasions.

Dates:

* 1482: Commissioned by Sforza to design a large horse sculpture in commemoration of his father, Francesco Sforza. Known as the Gran Cavallo, it was to be the largest horse statue in the world but was never built as the bronze intended for the project was given to the duke’s brother-in-law.
* 1483: Contracted by Prior Bartolomeo Scorlione and the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception to provide painted panels to decorate a large altarpiece produced by Giacomo del Maino, that would be displayed above the altar in the chapel. For this, Leonardo painted the Virgin of the Rocks.
* 1485: Sent to Hungary by Sforza to meet King Matthias Corvinus, where he was commissioned to paint a Madonna (a representation of the Virgin Mary).
* 1490: Took in a ten-year-old Gian Giacomo Caprotti da Oreno (better known as Salaì) into his household as an assistant. Under his supervision, Salaì became a capable artist, later creating several works such as the Monna Vanna, a nude version of the Mona Lisa.
* c. 1495: Contracted by Sforza to paint <cite>The Last Supper </cite>to decorate the mausoleum in the monastery of Santa Maria delle Grazie (Milan, Italy) that was under construction.

Second Florentine Period

When Ludovico Sforza was overthrown by France in 1500 Leonardo, along with his assistant Salaì and his mathematician friend Luca Pacioli, fled to Venice where he worked as a military architect and engineer until his later return to Florence.

Dates:

* 1500: Returned to Florence where he and his household were made guests at the monastery of Santissima Annunziata. He was given a workshop where he produced the drawing The Virgin and Child with St Anne and St John the Baptist.
* 1502: Entered the service of Cesare Borgia, son of Pope Alexander VI as a military architect and engineer, travelling throughout Italy. Upon creating for him a town plan for Imola, a city in the Metropolitan City of Bologna, Borgia promoted him to chief military engineer and architect.
* 1503: Left the service of Cesare Borgia and returned to Florence. Rejoined the Guild of Saint Luke. Began work on the <cite>Mona Lisa</cite>, hat would become one of the most famous paintings to date.
* 1506: Summoned to Milan by the acting French governor of the city, Charles II d’Amboise. Whilst there he took on Count Francesco Melzi as another pupil, who was thought to be his favourite student.
* 1508: Leonardo was in Milan living in his house in Porta Orientale. It was in Millan that many of his pupils either knew or worked with him, including Bernardino Luini, Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio, and Marco d'Oggiono.
* 1513: Received by Lorenzo de’ Medici’s son Giuliano in Rome after his brother assumed the papacy. Lived in the Belvedere Courtyard in the Apostolic Palace. Here he engaged in a number of projects, including botany in the Gardens of Vatican City and dissecting cadavers.
* 1516: Entered the service of King Francis I France, working in the manor house Clos Lucé near the king’s residence. Drew plans for a castle town and made a mechanical lion with a chest that opened to reveal lilies.
* 1517: Leonardo’s right hand became paralysed at age 65, he continued to work until falling ill and becoming bedridden.
* 1519: Died at his French residence of Clos Lucé at the age of 67, likely from a stroke.