

Leonardo Da Vinci

1452 – 1519

67

(duh VIN-chee)

Italian Painter



Leonardo di ser Piero da Vinci was a painter, sculptor, architect, musician, mathematician, engineer, inventor, anatomist, geologist, cartographer, botanist, and writer. He epitomized the Renaissance Man.

Born out of wedlock to a wealthy legal notary, Piero da Vinci, and a peasant woman, Caterina, in Vinci (near Florence), Leonardo's full name was "Lionardo di ser Piero da Vinci", meaning "Leonardo, (son) of (Mes)ser Piero from Vinci." The title "ser" indicated that Leonardo's father was a gentleman.

He spent five years in the home of his mother in Anchiano, then moved to the household of his father, grandparents and uncle, in Vinci. His father had married a sixteen-year-old girl who loved Leonardo but died young. When Leonardo was sixteen, his father remarried a girl who was twenty. Not until his third and fourth marriages did Ser Piero produce legitimate heirs.

Leonardo received an informal education in Latin, geometry and mathematics. The 16th-century Renaissance painters biographer, Vasari, tells of how a local peasant made himself a round shield and requested that Ser Piero have it painted for him. Leonardo responded with a painting of a monster spitting fire which was so terrifying that Ser Piero sold it to a Florentine art dealer, who sold it to the Duke of Milan. Having made a profit, Ser Piero bought a shield decorated with an arrow pierced heart to give the peasant.



From 1466-1476 (14-24), Leonardo was apprenticed to Andrea di Cione, an artist known as **Verrocchio**, whose



workshop was "one of the finest in Florence." Leonardo would have been exposed to theoretical training and technical skills including drafting, chemistry, metallurgy, plaster casting, leather and metal working, mechanics and carpentry as well as the artistic skills of drawing, painting, sculpting and modelling.

Much of the production of the workshop was done by employees. According to Vasari, Leonardo collaborated with Verrocchio on *The Baptism of Christ*, painting the angel holding Jesus' robe in a manner so superior to his master's that Verrocchio put down his brush and never painted again.

Self Portrait, 1512 (60). *Portrait of Leonardo* by Melzi. Leonardo's childhood home in Anchiano. *The Baptism of Christ*, (and detail) 1472–1475 (20-23), by Verrocchio and Leonardo. Main Source of document: Wikipedia. * N

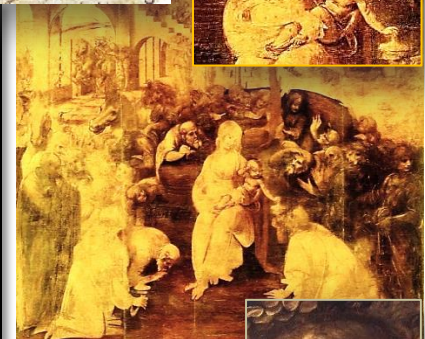


Leonardo may have been the model for Verrocchio's bronze statue of *David* and the Archangel Raphael in *Tobias and the Angel*.

By 1472 (20), Leonardo qualified as a master in the Guild of St Luke, the guild

of artists and doctors of medicine. In 1478 he no longer resided at his father's house and left Verrocchio's studio. His father set

him up in his own workshop but he continued to work with Verrocchio. Leonardo's earliest known dated work is a pen and ink drawing of the Arno valley (21).



In 1478 (26), he received his first independent commission, painting an altarpiece for a Chapel in the Palazzo Vecchio. His second came in 1481 (29), when he was hired to paint *The Adoration of the Magi*. Neither commission was completed.

In 1482 (30) Leonardo, a talented musician, (via Vasari), created a silver lyre in the shape of a horse's head. Lorenzo de' Medici sent Leonardo to Milan, bearing the lyre as a gift, to secure peace with Ludovico Sforza, Duke of Milan.

Leonardo worked in Milan 1482 - 1499 (30 -47).

Leonardo was employed on many projects for Ludovico, painting the *Virgin of the Rocks* and *The Last Supper*. He also prepared floats and pageants for special occasions, designs for a dome for Milan Cathedral and a model for a huge equestrian monument. Seventy tons of bronze were set aside for casting it. The monument remained unfinished for years, not unusual for Leonardo. In 1492 (40) the clay model of the horse was completed and he began making detailed plans for casting.



Michelangelo insulted Leonardo by implying that he was unable to cast it. In 1494 (42) Ludovico gave the uncast bronze to be used for cannons to defend the city from invasion.

During the Second Italian War, 1499 (47), the invading French used the life-size "Gran Cavallo" clay model for target practice.



Verrocchio's *David* (3), ~ 1473-75 and his *Tobias and the Angel* (2), 1470-80. LDV: Drawing of the Arno valley, 1473 (21).

The Adoration of the Magi (2), 1481-unfinished (29). *Annunciation* 1475-1480 (23- 28) - thought to be LDV's earliest complete work. *Virgin of the Rocks*, 1483-1486 (31-34) one of 2 versions. Angel detail is from other. LDV Study of horse. Full-size cast of Nina Akamu's (experienced animal sculptor) "Gran Cavallo" design-based on LDV design, located in Grand Rapids, MI.



With Ludovico Sforza overthrown, Leonardo fled Milan for Venice where he was employed as a military architect and engineer, devising methods to defend the city from naval attack. Returning to Florence in 1500 (48), Leonardo created *The Virgin and Child with St. Anne and St. John the Baptist*, a work that won such admiration that people flocked to see it "as if they were attending a festival."

In 1502 (50) Leonardo began to serve Cesare Borgia, son of Pope Alexander VI, acting as a military architect and engineer. He created a map of Borgia's stronghold, Imola, to win his patronage. Maps were extremely rare at the time, a new concept. Later in the year, Leonardo produced another map of Chiana Valley, Tuscany, to use on his other project of constructing a dam from the sea to Florence, in order to allow a supply of water to sustain the canal during all seasons.



Leonardo returned to Florence where he spent two years designing and painting a mural of *The Battle of Anghiari* for the Signoria, with Michelangelo designing its companion piece, *The Battle of Cascina*. This work of Leonardo's is lost. In Florence in 1504 (52), he was part of a committee formed to relocate, against the artist's will, Michelangelo's statue *David*.

From 1513-1516 (61-64) Leonardo spent much of his time living in the Vatican in Rome, where Raphael and Michelangelo were both active. François I of France recaptured Milan in 1515 (63). Leonardo was hired to make for François

mechanical lion which could walk forward, then open its chest to reveal a cluster of lilies. In 1516 (64), he entered François' service, spending the last three years of his life there, accompanied by his friend and apprentice, Count Francesco Melzi, and supported by a pension totaling 10,000 scudi. He became a close friend of François before he died in 1519 (67).



The Last Supper and *Christ Study*, 1495 – 1498 (43-46).

The Virgin and Child with St. Anne and St. John the Baptist c. 1499–1500 (43-46). LDV's map of Imola. Peter Paul Rubens' copy (1606) of the lost *The Battle of Anghiari* (1440) - LDV's painting (1505). *Francis I of France receiving the last breath of Leonardo da Vinci*, by Ingres, 1818.

Leonardo is renowned primarily as a painter. His *Mona Lisa* is a famous portrait and *The Last Supper* is the most reproduced religious painting of all time.

Leonardo's drawing of the *Vitruvian Man* is a cultural icon, being reproduced on various items including the euro coin. Only about fifteen of his paintings survived mainly because of his constant frequently disastrous, experimentation with new techniques, and his chronic procrastination.

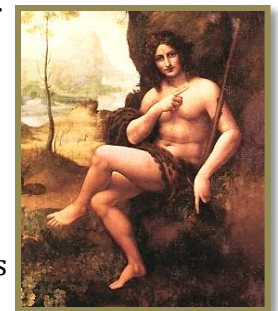
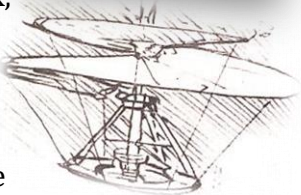
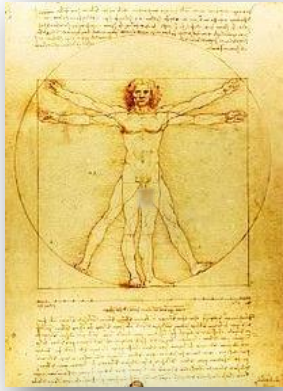
Nevertheless, these works, together with his notebooks, which contain scientific diagrams, drawings, and his thoughts on painting, are a contribution to later generations of artists.

Da Vinci lived in Italy during the Renaissance. He is called a "Renaissance Man" because he was a man of "unquenchable curiosity" with a "feverishly inventive imagination." He learned, asked questions, took things apart and drew pictures of the inside. His drawings of the human body were so good that doctors used his pictures in medical books for hundreds of years.

Devoted to thinking up new ideas in art and science, he left notebooks filled with his drawings of inventions and ideas that would change the world and make life easier or better in some way. He conceptualized a tank, a helicopter, concentrated solar power, a calculator, the double hull, and he outlined a rudimentary theory of plate tectonics. His sketchbooks have notes written backwards so the words must be read with a mirror. Relatively few of his designs were constructed or were even feasible during his lifetime, but some of his smaller inventions, such as an automated bobbin winder and a machine for testing the tensile strength of wire, entered the world of manufacturing unheralded.

He made discoveries in civil engineering, anatomy, hydrodynamics, optics, and but he did not publish his findings and had no direct influence on later science.

He was said to have a gentle nature and his respect for life was evidenced by his vegetarianism and his habit (Vasari) of buying caged birds and releasing them.



What Historical Timeline Who

1380 – Wycliffe begins English Bible translation

1438 – Gutenberg's printing press invented

1492 – Columbus arrives in North America

1396 – 1468 – Johannes Gutenberg

1475 – 1564 – Michelangelo Buonarroti

1483 – 1546 – Martin Luther



Mona Lisa or La Gioconda, 1503-1506 (51-54).

The Vitruvian Man, 1485 (33).

LDV's study of a fetus in the womb, c. 1510 (58).

Anatomy 1510–1511 (58-59). LDV Helicopter design.

St. John the Baptist, 1514 (62).

St. John in the Wilderness, 1510-15 (58-63).

The Lady with the Ermine, 1489–1490 (37–38).

Portrait of a Musician, 1490 (38).

Portrait of Ginevra de Benci, 1474-76 (22-24).

Madonna with the Carnation, 1475-78 (23-26).

