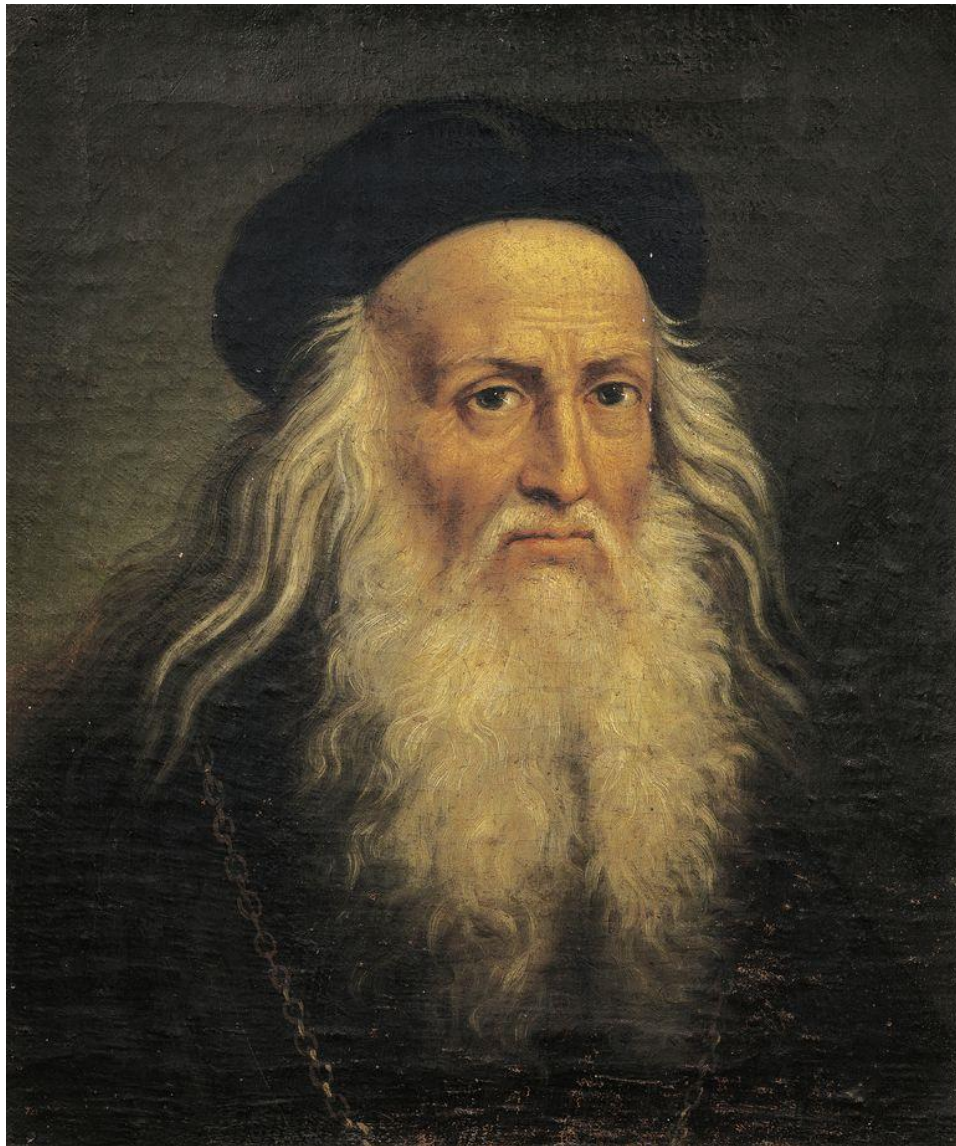


LIVING GODS WILL

Biblical Artists

DA VINCI



LEONARDO DA VINCI

Born: 1452 – Anchiano, Italy

Died: 1519 – Amboise, France

Leonardo Da Vinci

Leonardo da Vinci was a true genius who graced this world with his presence from **April 15, 1452 to May 2, 1519**.

He is among the most influential artists in history, having left a significant legacy not only in the realm of art but in science as well, each discipline informing his mastery of the other.

Da Vinci lived in a golden age of creativity among such contemporaries as **Raphael and Michaelangelo**, and contributed his unique genius to virtually everything he touched.

Like Athens in the age of Pericles, **Renaissance Italy** is a summit in human history. Today, no name better seems to symbolize Renaissance age than **Leonardo da Vinci**.

Early Years: 1452 to 1476

Leonardo da Vinci was born in a Tuscan hamlet near Vinci. He began a nine-year apprenticeship at the age of 14 to **Andrea del Verrocchio**, a popular sculptor, painter and goldsmith who was an important figure in the art world of the day.

At Verrocchio's busy Florence studio, the young **Leonardo** likely met such masters as **Sandro Botticelli** while working beside fellow apprentices **Domenico Ghirlandaio, Pietro Perugino and Lorenzo di Credi**.

Verrocchio, who had learned his craft under the master **Donatello**, was the officially recognized sculptor for the **Medici family**, the rulers of Italy during this era. Under Verrocchio's tutelage, **da Vinci** probably progressed from doing various menial tasks around the studio to mixing paints and preparing surfaces.

He would have then graduated to the study and copying of his master's works. Finally, he would have assisted Verrocchio, along with other apprentices, in producing the master's artworks.

Da Vinci not only developed his skill in **drawing, painting and sculpting** during his apprenticeship, but through others working in and around the studio, he picked up knowledge in such diverse fields as **mechanics, carpentry, metallurgy, architectural drafting and chemistry**.

In 1473, when he was more than halfway through his studies with Verrocchio, he completed Landscape Drawing for Santa Maria della Neve, a pen and ink depiction of the Arno River valley. It is the earliest work that is clearly attributable to **da Vinci**.

Leonardo da Vinci's drawings would become an essential part of his legacy. **Da Vinci** sketched prolifically, planning inventions, exploring human anatomy, drawing landscapes, and blocking out plans for paintings such as **The Virgin of the Rocks** and his sole surviving mural, **The Last Supper**.

Much of his other creative output during his time with Verrocchio was credited to the master of the studio although the paintings were collaborative efforts. Over the years, historians have closely examined such Verrocchio masterpieces as **The Baptism of Christ and The Annunciation** to weigh in on which specific figures **da Vinci** was responsible for.

In the "**Baptism of Christ**," which dates to 1475, experts speculate that one of the angels is **da Vinci's** own work, while in "**The Annunciation**," produced within the same time period, experts detect the work of the apprentice artist's brush in the angel's wings and the background.

In fact, historians x-rayed "The Annunciation" to definitively distinguish between Verrocchio's heavier brush strokes with lead-based paint from **da Vinci's** lighter, water-based paint strokes.

Although a member of the Florence painters' guild as of 1472, the artist continued his studies with Verrocchio as an assistant until 1476. The influences of his master are evident in the remarkable vitality and anatomical correctness of the **Leonardo** paintings and drawings.

Middle Years: 1477-1499

After leaving the Verrocchio studio to set up his own, **da Vinci** began laying the groundwork for his artistic legacy. Like his contemporaries, he focused on religious subjects, but he also took portrait commissions as they came up.

Over the next five years or so, he produced several notable paintings, including Madonna of the Carnation, Ginevra de' Benci, Benois Madonna, Adoration of the Magi, and St. Jerome in the Wilderness. The latter two pieces are unfinished.

Leonardo da Vinci received a commission to paint his "**Adoration of the Magi**" from Florence church elders who planned to use it as an altarpiece. This artwork is historically significant by virtue of the innovations **da Vinci** made that were unique among the art conventions of the 1480s.

He centered the Virgin and Christ child in the scene whereas previous artists had placed them to one side. **Da Vinci** improved on standard practices of perspective by making changes in clarity and color as objects became increasingly distant.

Unfortunately, he did not complete the commission due to a better offer from the Duke of Milan to become the resident artist at his court.

While in Milan, the artist called upon his varied interests and knowledge to create stage sets and military designs for the Duke as well as paintings. Early in his tenure at court, **da Vinci** produced his first version of **Virgin of the Rocks**, a six-foot-tall altarpiece also called the "**Madonna of the Rocks**."

In this painting, which dates to 1483, the artist experiments with blending the edges of objects in indistinct light to create a sort of smoky effect known as sfumato, a technique the artist would continue to develop in his future works.

It was perhaps because of his desire to fine-tune this technique that his other surviving painting from his years in Milan, **The Last Supper**, deteriorated so quickly.

The artist used oil-based paint on plaster for this scene of Jesus and his apostles at the table because his customary water-based fresco paints were difficult to blend for the sfumato effect he sought.

Within only a few decades, much of the painting had flaked away from the wall in its location at the Santa Maria del Grazie convent. The canvas of **Leonardo da Vinci's** "Last Supper" that now hangs in the Louvre is, in large part, a reproduction of the failed fresco.

Later Years: 1500-1519

Upon the French invasion of Milan, the artist returned home, via Venice and Mantua, to Florence. His reputation preceded him, and he was lauded by old friends and up-and-coming artists captivated with his innovations in art.

During this final era of his life, **da Vinci** completed a greater number of paintings than he had thus far. When he resettled in Florence in 1500, the artist made preliminary progress on his painting, *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne*, which he would set aside unfinished, not to be completed for another 10 years.

Leonardo began creating his most well-known and replicated work, **Mona Lisa**, a couple of years later when he received a commission from Francesco del Giocondo to paint his wife. The precise date of completion for "Mona Lisa" is still in question, but many historians agree that **da Vinci** began the masterpiece in 1503.

Leonardo da Vinci also accepted a commission for a mural to be installed in the Hall of 500 at Palazzo Vecchio in Florence. The subject was a battle scene at Anghiari, and the painting depicted a tangle of muscular horses and warriors.

It was, however, destined to be unfinished. Contemporary master **Michelangelo** received a commission to paint the Battle of Cascina on the opposite wall, also a work left unfinished.

Nothing of **da Vinci's** battle scene survived, except for a copy by artist **Peter Paul Rubens** and **Leonardo's** own preliminary sketches.

In approximately the same period, the artist created his second version of the painting, "Virgin of the Rocks," which was likely a commission for installation in a chapel at Milan's church of San Francesco Maggiore. Chief differences between the two versions include color choices, lighting and details of composition.

Leonardo returned to Milan in 1506 to accept an official commission for an equestrian statue. Over the course of this seven-year residency in the city, the artist would produce a body of drawings on topics that ranged from human anatomy to botany, plus sketches of weaponry inventions and studies of birds in flight.

The latter would lead to his exploratory drawings of human flight machine. All of his drawings during this time reflected **da Vinci's** interest in how things are put together and how they work.

Upon his departure from Milan in 1513, **Leonardo** spent time in Rome. In October 1515, King Francis I of France recaptured Milan. The monarch had conferred upon him the title of premier architect, artist and mechanic to the king.

In 1516, he entered Francis' service, and then journeyed to his last place of residence near the Fontainebleau court of French King Francis I. Many historians believe **Leonardo** completed his final painting, **St. John the Baptist**, at his rural home in Cloux, France.

This masterwork exhibits his perfection of the sfumato technique. **Leonardo died at Clos Lucé, on 2 May 1519 at the age of 67. The cause is generally stated to be recurrent stroke.**

Francis I had become a close friend. It was recorded that the king held **Leonardo's** head in his arms as he died, although this story, beloved by the French and portrayed in romantic paintings by Ingres, may be legend rather than fact. He was buried at Chapel of Saint-Hubert, Amboise, France.

Da Vinci's Influence on Life and Art

Within the artworks created by his own circle of peers, the influence of **Leonardo da Vinci's** works is readily evident. **Raphael** and even sometime rival Michaelangelo adopted some of **da Vinci's** signature techniques to produce similarly active, anatomically realistic figures.

His innovative breaks from the artistic standards of his day would guide generations of artists that followed. Although **da Vinci** painted the customary religious scenes of his era, such as the **Magi** and the **Madonna and child**, his unique placement of key figures, his signature techniques and his improvements upon perspective were all previously unheard of.

In The Last Supper, the way in which he isolated Christ at the epicenter of the scene and made each apostle a separate entity, yet at the same time united them all in the moment, is a stroke of genius that subsequent artists throughout history would strive to replicate.

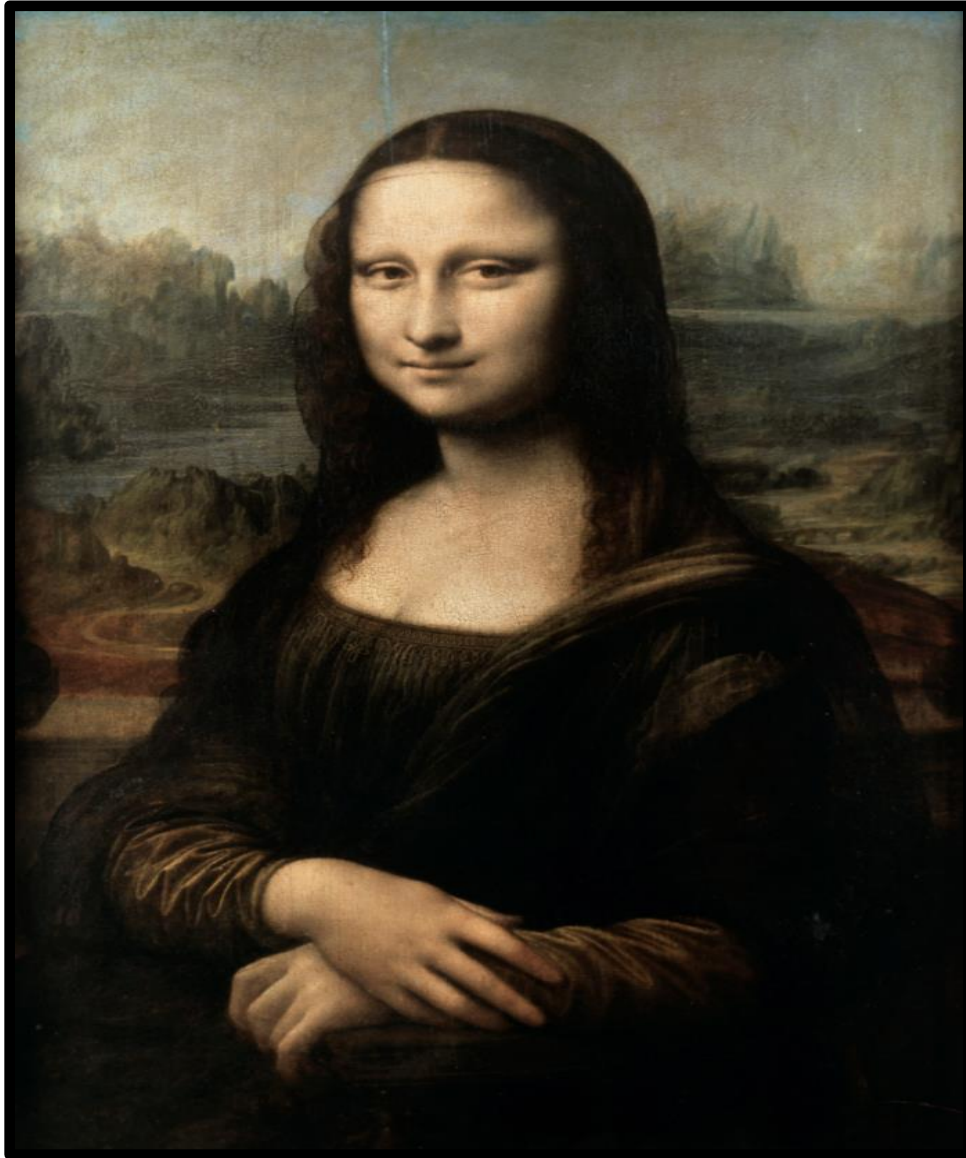
To the present day, art enthusiasts worldwide consider the iconic "Mona Lisa" to be among the greatest paintings of all time.

Her image continues to appear on items ranging from T-shirts to refrigerator magnets, and rather than trivializing the import of the masterpiece, this popularity serves to immortalize **Leonardo** paintings and drawings. They still remain at the forefront of people's hearts and minds centuries after his death.

Just like William Shakespeare on literature, and Sigmund Freud on psychology, **Leonardo's** impact on art is tremendous.

Throughout his life, **Leonardo da Vinci** avoided the intrigues of worldly ambitions and vanity. He was a reserved and withdrawn man, not concerned with glory, and yet absolutely sure of the value of his abilities.

Along with a small band of contemporary Renaissance figures, **Leonardo da Vinci** become the center of a movement of artists that has permanently enriched western culture.

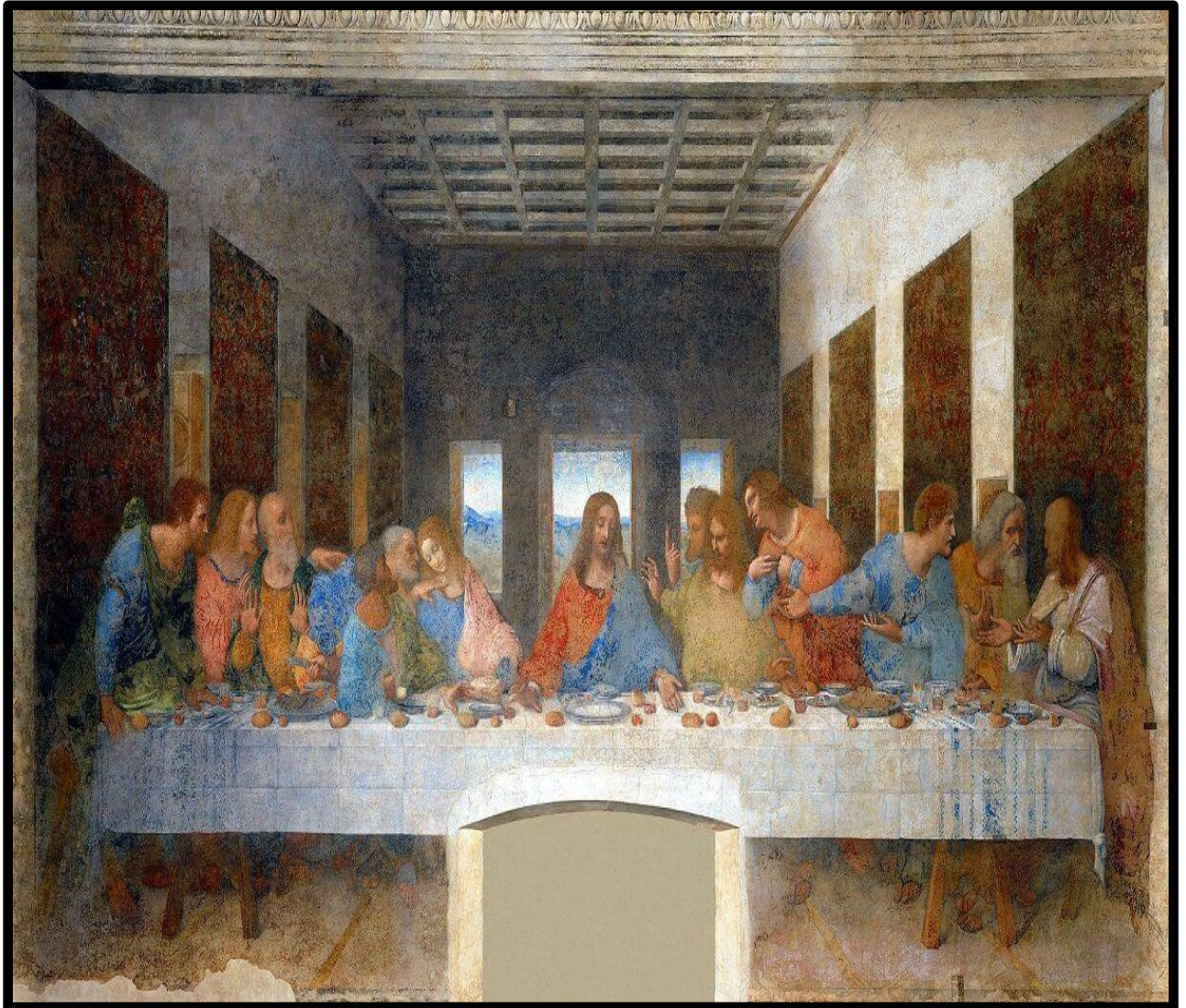
The Mona Lisa

oil on wood (77 × 53 cm) – 1503-1506

Mona Lisa, also known as La Gioconda, is the wife of Francesco del Giocondo. This painting is painted as oil on wood. The original painting is owned by the Government of France and is on the wall in the Louvre in Paris, France.

This figure of a woman, dressed in the Florentine fashion of her day and seated in a visionary, mountainous landscape, is a remarkable instance of Leonardo's sfumato technique of soft, heavily shaded modeling. The Mona Lisa's enigmatic expression, which seems both alluring and aloof, has given the portrait universal fame.

The Last Supper



oil and tempera on plaster (460 × 880 cm) — 1495 - 1498

The Last Supper is Leonardo's visual interpretation of an event chronicled in all four of the Gospels (books in the Christian New Testament). The evening before Christ was betrayed by one of his disciples, he gathered them together to eat, tell them he knew what was coming and wash their feet (a gesture symbolizing that all were equal under the eyes of the Lord). As they ate and drank together, Christ gave the disciples explicit instructions on how to eat and drink in the future, in remembrance of him. It was the first celebration of the Eucharist, a ritual still performed.

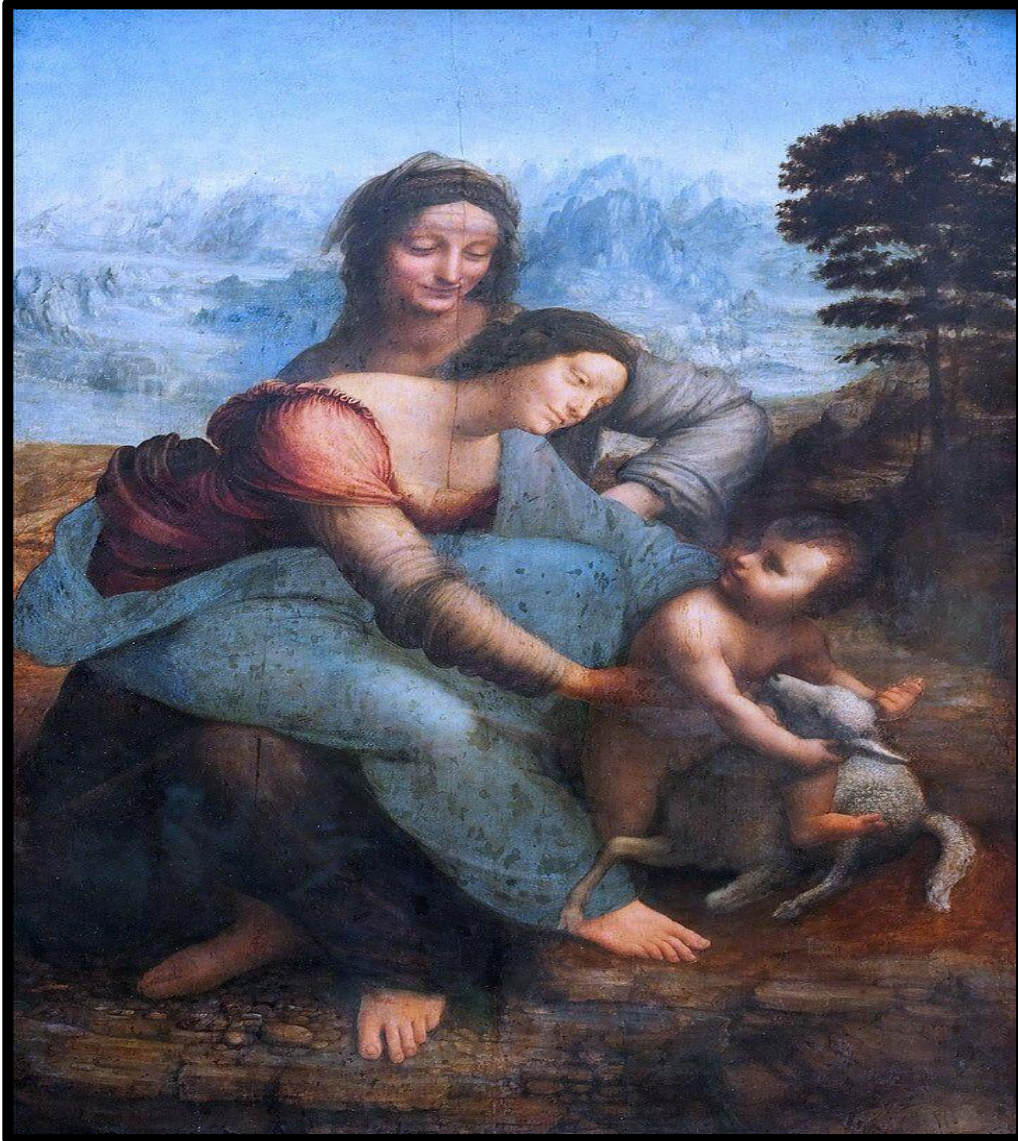
Specifically, **The Last Supper** depicts the next few seconds in this story after Christ dropped the bomb shell that one disciple would betray him before sunrise, and all twelve have reacted to the news with different degrees of horror, anger and shock.

The Baptism of Christ



oil and tempera on wood (177 × 151 cm) – 1472 - 1475

The Baptism of Christ was mainly done by Verrocchio using tempera on wood. The painting depicts St. John the Baptist during the baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ as according to the Gospels of Luke, Mark and Matthew. Two angels on the left side of the painting complete the four figures in the artwork. The scene illustrated by the painting includes God's extended arms painted with golden rays and dove with its wings widely spread, a halo with cruciform is painted on top of Jesus' head and another halo on top of St. John the Baptist. The two angels are holding Jesus' clothes. The angel on the left side is the part done by Leonardo da Vinci. He used oil, which was at that time a new medium in painting.

The Virgin and Child with St. Anne

oil on wood (168 × 130 cm) – 1510

The original one is now located at Musée du Louvre, Paris.

This painting depicted St. Anne, her daughter the Virgin Mary and the infant Jesus.

Christ is shown grappling with a sacrificial lamb symbolizing his Passion whilst the Virgin tries to restrain him. The painting was commissioned as the high altarpiece for the Church of Santissima Annunziata in Florence and its theme had long preoccupied Leonardo.

The Adoration of the Magi



oil on wood (246 × 243 cm) — 1481

The Adoration of the Magi is an unfinished early painting by Leonardo da Vinci. Leonardo was given the commission by the Augustinian monks of San Donato a Scopeto in Florence, but departed for Milan the following year, leaving the painting unfinished. It has been in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence since 1670.

The Virgin Mary and Child are depicted in the foreground and form a triangular shape with the Magi kneeling in adoration. Behind them is a semicircle of accompanying figures, including what may be a self-portrait of the young Leonardo (on the far right).

In the background on the left is the ruin of a pagan building, on which workmen can be seen, apparently repairing it. On the right are men on horseback fighting, and a sketch of a rocky landscape.

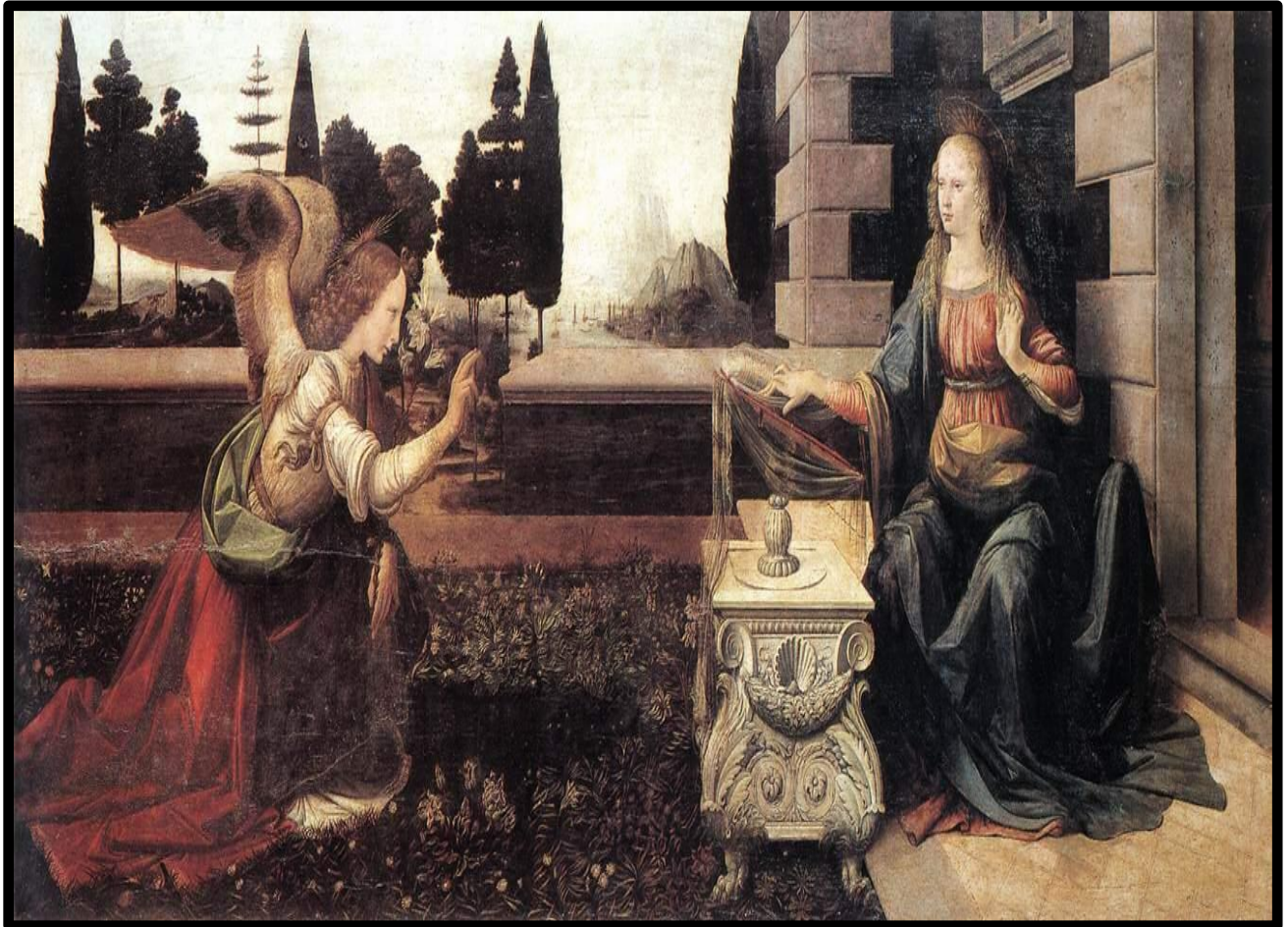
Saint John the Baptist

oil on wood (69 × 57 cm) – 1513 – 1516

St. John the Baptist was painted by Leonardo da Vinci during 1513 to 1516, when the High Renaissance was metamorphosing into Mannerism, it is believed to be his last painting. This is an oil painting on walnut wood. It is now exhibited at the Musée du Louvre in Paris, France.

The pointing gesture of St. John toward the heavens suggests the importance of salvation through baptism that John the Baptist represents. The work is often quoted by later painters, especially those in the late Renaissance and Mannerist schools. The inclusion of a gesture similar to John's would increase the importance of a work with a religious conceit.

The Annunciation



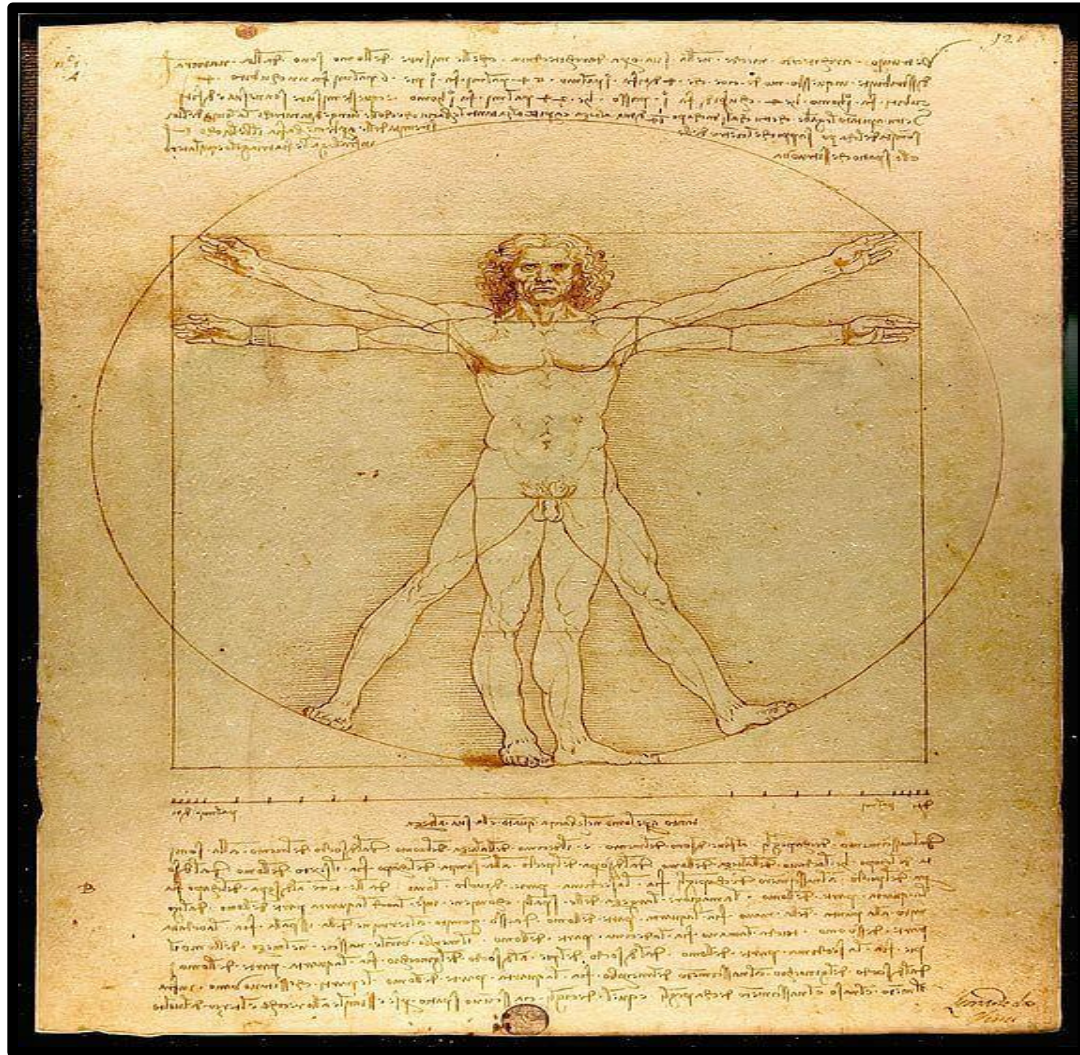
oil and tempera on panel (98 × 217 cm) — 1472 - 1475

The first work of the twenty-year old master, **The Annunciation** is not yet what one would call Leonardesque. It is housed in the Uffizi gallery of Florence, Italy.

The composition follows a centuries old model with the angel on the left, the Virgin on the right, and a lectern in between; the whole depicted in an architectural setting that opens out onto a landscape. The kneeling angel is magnificently youthful with his high forehead, stylized wings, rich clothing, and lily.

The Virgin, surprised while reading, raises her hand in a gesture of astonishment, and displays a fine-featured face which some have described as cold. Her pose, with knees evenly spread and covered with broad and supple drapery, gives her a strong monumental character.

The Vitruvian Man

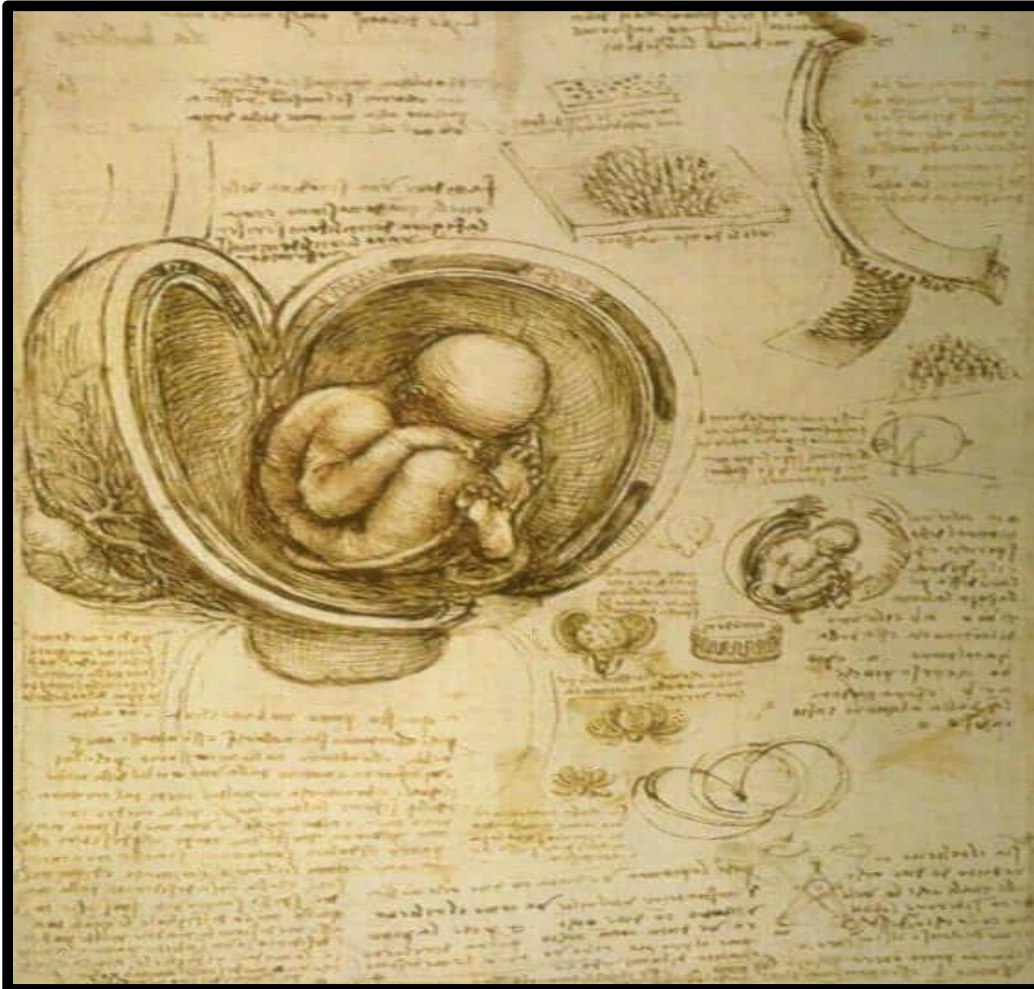


Pen and ink with wash over metal-point on paper (34.6 x 35.5 cm) – 1487

The Vitruvian Man was created by Leonardo da Vinci around the year 1487. It is accompanied by notes based on the work of the famed architect, Vitruvius Pollio. The drawing, which is in pen and ink on paper, depicts a male figure in two superimposed positions with his arms and legs apart and simultaneously inscribed in a circle and square.

The drawing and text are sometimes called the Canon of Proportions or, less often, Proportions of Man. It is stored in the Gallerie dell'Accademia in Venice, Italy, and, like most works on paper, is displayed only occasionally.

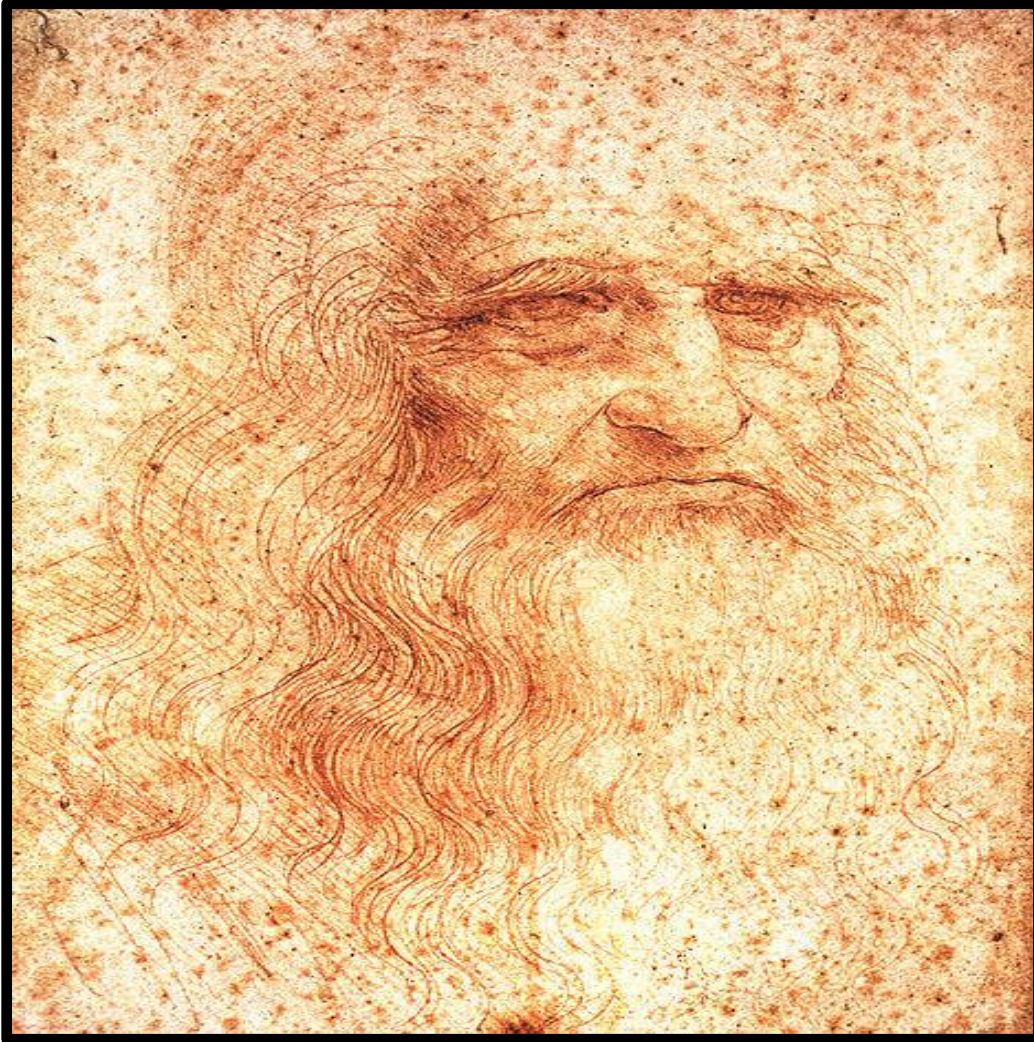
The proportional relationship of the parts reflects universal design. And a "medical" equilibrium of elements ensures a stable structure. These qualities are thus shared equally by God's creation of the human body and the human being's own production of a good building.

Embryo in the Womb

black and red chalk with pen and ink wash on paper (30.5 × 22 cm) — 1511

Leonardo da Vinci's embryological drawings of the fetus in the womb and his accompanying observational annotations are found in the third volume of his private notebooks. The drawings of Leonardo's embryological studies were conducted between the years 1510 - 1512. These groundbreaking illustrations of the fetus reveal his advanced understanding of human development and demonstrate his role in the vanguard of embryology during the Renaissance. His famous embryological drawings of the fetus have since been collected and held in the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle in England.

Leonardo first ventured into human anatomy with the purpose of depicting the human body more accurately in his artwork. Although there is some evidence of his intentions to do so, Leonardo never published his work. The ultimate distribution of his journals and drawings is attributed to Orazio, the son of Francesco Melzi who was the faithful disciple to whom Leonardo entrusted his notebooks in his last testament. With the death of Francesco Melzi, Leonardo's life work was scattered and lost, never to be fully rediscovered.

Self-Portrait, Old Man in Red Chalk**Red chalk on paper (33.3 × 21.3 cm) — 1512**

This self-portrait was painted in 1512 using red chalk, when Leonardo da Vinci was 50 and living in France. The original painting is now held in the magnificent collection of the Biblioteca Reale, Turin.

Leonardo da Vinci's thinking about the power of the artist can also furnish the clue to the famous enigmatic self-portrait in red chalk.

It has often been remarked that on it the master looks older than his age - he can have been only about sixty when he made this drawing - and in consequence some critics have doubted whether it is a likeness of himself.

This portrait perfectly fits the role in which Leonardo had cast himself. A venerable old man with a long white beard, the severe eyes shaded under bushy brows, was the traditional type for representing philosophers, prophets and also God.