



Leonardo da Vinci

To commemorate the 500-year anniversary of the death of Leonardo da Vinci in France, the Musée du Louvre is designing and holding a major retrospective of the painter's career.

The exhibition aims to illustrate how Leonardo placed utmost importance on painting, and how his investigation of the world, which he referred to as "the science of painting", was the instrument of an art through which he sought to bring life to his paintings.

Alongside its own collection of five paintings* by Leonardo, the largest in the world and 22 of his drawings, the Louvre will display nearly 120 works (paintings, drawings, manuscripts, sculptures, objets d'art) from some of the most prestigious European and American institutions, including, the Royal Collection, the British Museum, the National Gallery in London, the Vatican Pinacoteca, the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan, the Galleria Nazionale in Parma, the Gallerie dell'Accademia in Venice, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and the Institut de France.

*The *Mona Lisa*, however, will remain on display in the galleries of the permanent collection.

The extraordinary renown of this endlessly curious artist, who quickly came to be seen as the embodiment of universal genius and knowledge, the nearly surrealist aura of the *Mona Lisa*, and the considerable literature that has amassed from his lifetime to today, provide an ambiguous and fragmented vision of Leonardo's relationship to painting.

The exhibition is the culmination of more than ten years of work, notably including new scientific examinations of the Louvre's paintings, and the conservation treatment of three of them (the *Saint Anne*, *La Belle Ferronnière*, and the *Saint John the Baptist*), allowing for better understanding of Da Vinci's artistic practice and pictorial technique. The exhibition also aims to shed light on Leonardo's biography through the exhaustive reexamination of historical documentation, breaking with the canonical approach to the life of the Florentine master—based on six chronological periods punctuated by his geographical movements—and turning to a selection of keys that provide access to his universe. Thus emerges the portrait of an exceptionally free-spirited man and artist.

The exhibition concludes with a virtual reality experience developed in partnership with HTC Vive, allowing visitors to get closer than ever to the *Mona Lisa*.

Exhibition curators : Vincent Delieuvin, Department of Paintings, and Louis Frank, Department of Prints and Drawings, Musée du Louvre.

REMINDER: COMPULSORY BOOKING

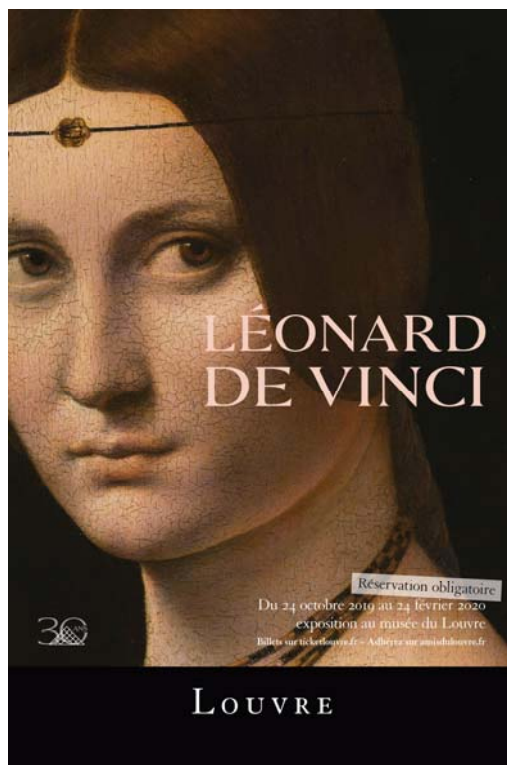
High visitor numbers are expected—a specific time slot must be booked, in order to ensure optimal visiting conditions. This applies to all visitors, including those entitled to free admission. **Bookings open on Tuesday, June 18 at 9 a.m. at www.ticketlouvre.fr and in partner stores (see practical information above).**

PRESS RELEASE

Exhibition

October 24, 2019–February 24, 2020

Hall Napoléon



Bank of America is the lead sponsor of the "Leonardo da Vinci" exhibition.

Additional support is provided by Kinoshita Group, Bouygues Bâtiment Ile-de-France, AXA, Deloitte, and Lusis.

Virtual reality experience developed in partnership with HTC Vive.

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PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Opening hours: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. (closed Tuesdays). Night opening until 9:45 p.m. on Wednesdays and Fridays. Additional night openings on Saturdays and Sundays for the exhibition only.

Admission: €17 (collections+exhibitions)

Compulsory time slot booking: www.ticketlouvre.fr

Also available at FNAC (165 outlets in France), and www.fnac.com, www.carrefour.fr, and www.francebillet.com.

Further information: www.louvre.fr/en
#ExpoLéonard

Musée du Louvre

External Relations Department

Adel Ziane, Director

Sophie Grange, Head of Communications Subdepartment

Nadia Refsi, Head of Press Division

Press Contact

Céline Dauvergne

celine.dauvergne@louvre.fr

Tel.: +33 (0)1 40 20 84 66 / +33 (0)6 88 42 35 35

Layout of the exhibition

Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519)

Lionardo di Ser Piero da Vinci was born to Ser Piero in the town of Vinci (near Florence) in the early hours of 15 April 1452, and died in Amboise (in the Loire valley of France) on 2 May 1519. He is one of the most prominent figures of the Italian Renaissance and the ultimate icon of European painting.

During Leonardo's youth in Florence, he was apprenticed to the sculptor Andrea del Verrocchio. Around 1482, he moved to Milan, where he painted the *Virgin of the Rocks*. While in the service of the duke of Milan, Ludovico Sforza, he created the *Last Supper* – a work that made him one of the most famous artists of his time. In 1500, he returned to Florence and produced a series of masterpieces: *Saint Anne*, the *Mona Lisa*, *The Battle of Anghiari* and *Saint John the Baptist*. In 1506, he went back to Milan, where he stayed until the election of the Medici Pope Leo X in 1513, which led him to move to Rome. He left Italy for France at the invitation of the French king François I in 1516, and spent his last years in Amboise, on the banks of the river Loire.

The essence of Leonardo's revolutionary approach to painting can be summarised as follows: to reproduce the reality of life within an infinite space made up of light and shade, he developed a uniquely free style of drawing and painting that enabled him to endow his figures with the nature of movement. He aimed to make painting a science encompassing the whole physical world, able to express the truth of appearances. Leonardo ushered in a modernity that would surpass antiquity and pave the way for future forms of art.

LIGHT, SHADE, RELIEF

In 1464, the young Leonardo began an apprenticeship in Florence with Andrea del Verrocchio, an accomplished draughtsman and one of the greatest sculptors of the 15th century. While in Verrocchio's workshop he studied the sculptural nature of form, movement (on which reality depends and all narratives are constructed) and *chiaroscuro* (the use of light and shade to create a sense of drama). His prime source of instruction was *Christ and Saint Thomas*, a monumental bronze sculpture cast by Verrocchio for the Florentine church of Orsanmichele. In this work, Verrocchio – who was also a painter – demonstrated a profoundly pictorial conception of sculpture, from which Leonardo drew the basis of his own art: the idea that space and form come into being through light and exist only in the play of light and shade. Leonardo's monochromatic *Drapery Studies*, painted on linen after clay figures covered with pieces of cloth dipped in clay, resemble Verrocchio's studies for the figures of Christ and Saint Thomas and were inspired by this innovative perception of space.

The Annunciation, the *Madonna of the Carnation* and the *Portrait of Ginevra de' Benci* reflect Leonardo's transition from sculpture to painting. This shift was boosted by his interest in the work of his contemporaries at a rival Florentine workshop run by the Pollaiuolo brothers, and in the innovations brought to Florence by Flemish painters – three quarter view portraits and the use of oil.

FREEDOM

Around 1478, building on what he had learned from Verrocchio, Leonardo began to explore new paths. To grasp the truth of form – which is illusory, being constantly broken apart by an ever-changing world – the painter needed to acquire an intellectual and technical freedom that would enable him to capture its very imperfection. In his drawing, this was expressed as a violent attack on form – a direct juxtaposition of incompatible states that sometimes produced nothing but black. This approach, required by the absolute necessity of conveying movement, was described by Leonardo as *componimento inculto* – 'intuitive composition'. The *Madonna of the Cat* and the *Madonna with a Fruit Bowl* are the first remarkable illustrations of this new compositional style.

Leonardo's art was transfigured by the freedom he found in *componimento inculto*. The reflectogram of *The Adoration of the Magi* shows a tumultuous charcoal and brush drawing with dynamic lines, chaotic washes, constant reworking and superimposition of ideas – *pentimenti* that plunge the protagonists into a turbulent, murky darkness. This creative freedom fostered a tendency to incompleteness which would become a characteristic of Leonardo's painting, exemplified by the poignant figure of *Saint Jerome*. This creative period continued in Milan, where Leonardo moved to in 1482 and where he painted the *Virgin of the Rocks*, the *Portrait of a Musician* and *La Belle Ferronnière*.

SCIENCE

For a person with extraordinary analytical vision, drawing is more than the mere reproduction of forms; it is also an expression of relationships between forms or, to put it differently, an act of thinking. In Leonardo's case, this intelligence was self-aware. Moreover, it was accompanied by a constant questioning of the world – an insatiable need to understand, which became a desire to demonstrate, then a systematic investigation of every aspect of the physical world. The result was a vast compilation of notes, studies, experiments, reflections and theories in which writing and drawing were inextricably linked; this body of work, though often wandering and imperfect, nonetheless represents one of the most fascinating chapters in the history of natural philosophy.

The comprehensive nature of Leonardo's quest for knowledge stemmed from the fact that he was no longer content to study appearances; in order to convey their truth, he needed an understanding of phenomena from the inside – an awareness of the laws that govern them which, like Pythagoras and Plato before him, he regarded as fundamentally mathematical in nature.

LIFE

Leonardo's rigorous scientific approach encompassed every field of knowledge, engendering an endless, multifaceted labyrinth in which the painter seems to have ultimately lost his way. This disappearance is illusory, however, as it was science itself that gave the artist the freedom to master shade, light, space and movement. In his painting, the turbulence of *componimento inculto* gave way to the merging of forms and the eradication of boundaries, made possible by the revolutionary medium of oil. The freedom acquired through knowledge of the natural sciences elevated painting to the status of a divine science able to recreate the world and, most importantly, convey movement – the essence of life and the defining characteristic of every living creature.

It was during these years of scientific inquiry that Leonardo painted the *Last Supper*, *Saint Anne*, the *Mona Lisa*, *The Battle of Anghiari*, *Salvator Mundi* and *Saint John the Baptist*. This period saw the dawn of the modern style, when the grandeur of Renaissance art was seen, by contemporaries, as having surpassed the nobility of antiquity.



Léonard de Vinci, *Étude de figure pour l'ange de la Vierge aux rochers*, Turin, Biblioteca Reale, inv. 15572 © Licensed by the Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali - Musei Reali - Biblioteca Reale di Torino