



# Leonardo da Vinci and the Idea of the Renaissance Man

*Dr. Aneta Georgievska-Shine*

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It would be hard to challenge the often-repeated claim that Leonardo da Vinci is perhaps the most diversely talented individual ever to have lived. Even to describe him as the prime example of the “Renaissance man” seems to fall woefully short for this polymath whose insatiable curiosity led him to so many discoveries in the arts and sciences. Against the dynamic backdrop of Renaissance Italy, **Aneta Georgievska-Shine** highlights some of the most remarkable aspects of Leonardo’s life, work, and creative thinking.

## Part 1: The Making of the Artist

*Leonardo’s artistic and intellectual development as shaped by the broader context of Renaissance Florence and his study with Andrea del Verrocchio.*

Leonardo (?), Self-Portrait(?), ca. 1512, Turin

Verrocchio, Head of a Girl, ca. 1475, British Museum

Leonardo, Head of the Virgin, ca. 1510-13, MET

Verrocchio, Madonna with Sts. John and Donatus, 1475-1483, Pistoia

Verrocchio, The Young David, 1473-75, Bargello, Florence

Verrocchio, A Sleeping Youth, Bode Museum, Berlin

Verrocchio, Giuliano de Pietro de Medici, 1475-78, NGA

Verrocchio, Lorenzo de Medici, NGA

Verrocchio, Ideal Portrait of Alexander the Great, 1480’s, priv. Coll.

Leonardo, Head of a Warrior in Profile, ca. 1472, British Museum

Verrocchio, Doubting Thomas, Orsanmichele, Florence, 1476-1483

Verrocchio, Baptism of Christ, 1472-5, Florence, Uffizi

Leonardo, Study for an Angel, Virgin of the Rocks, British Museum

Verrocchio, Lady with Primroses, 1475-80, Bargello, Florence

Leonardo, Ginevra de Benci, 1474-78, NGA, Washington

Leonardo, Study of Hands, ca. 1475?, Windsor Castle

Hans Memling, Portrait of a Man with a Roman Medal (Bembo?), ca. 1470?, Antwerp

Hans Memling, Diptych with Sts. John and Veronica, ca. 1480-83 (Washington and Munich)

## Part 2: The Idea of the Divine

*Leonardo as a painter of sacred subjects: The Holy Family, St. John the Baptist, the Last Supper, and the unfinished Adoration of the Magi.*

Leonardo, Annunciation, 1472-5, Uffizi

Fra Angelico, Annunciation, ca. 1440's San Marco

Botticelli, Castello Annunciation, 1489, Uffizi

Leonardo, Adoration of the Magi, 1480-82? Uffizi

Leonardo, Studies for the Adoration of the Magi, ca. 1480's

Filipino Lippi, Adoration of the Magi, 1480's, Uffizi

Leonardo, St. Jerome, ca. 1480, Vatican

Verrocchio, St. Jerome, Uffizi

Leonardo, Virgin of the Rocks, 1483-86, Louvre

Leonardo, Studies for various parts of The Last Supper, ca. 1494-98, various collections

Ghirlandaio, Last Supper, Abbazia di San Michele, Tavernelle

Ghirlandaio, Last Supper, 1480, Ognissanti, Florence

Leonardo, Last Supper, ca. 1498, Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan

Leonardo, Virgin of the Rocks, 1498-1508, London

Leonardo, Madonna and Child with St. Anne, ca. 1510, Louvre

Master of St. Bartholomew Altar, Madonna and Child with St. Anne, 1480, Munich

Leonardo, Studies for Madonna and Child with St. Anne, various collections

## Part 3: Mastering the Universe: From Microcosm to Macrocosm

*At the basis of Leonardo's artistic enterprise was a desire to understand the motions of the universe, from the most delicate of creations such as flower petals to the most formidable manifestations of nature's power.*

Leonardo, Study for the Star of Bethlehem, ca. 1507, Windsor Castle

Leonardo, Flower study, metal point, pen and ink, Venice

Leonardo, Female head, charcoal, red chalk, white lead on paper, Florence

Leonardo, Diagrams of machinery and faces, ca. 1508-10

Leonardo, Grotesque head in profile, c. 1490-95

Leonardo, Anatomical studies, (larynx and legs) 1510, Windsor castle

Leonardo, Anatomical studies of shoulders, 1509-10, Windsor castle

Anon. anatomical drawing, English, 15<sup>th</sup> c.

Leonardo, Drawing of a female torso, Ambrosiana, Milan  
 Leonardo, Section of a human head and onion, 1489, Windsor castle  
 Leonardo, Studies of embryos, 1509-14, Windsor castle  
 Leonardo, Profile of a man and study of two riders, 1490/ 1505, Venice  
 Leonardo (Rubens) Battle of Anghiari, ca. 1608  
 Leonardo, The Vitruvian Man, 1492, Venice  
 Leonardo, Bird's eye view of the sea coast, 1515, Windsor castle  
 Leonardo, Sketches of rivers and towns along the coasts, ca. 1510  
 Leonardo, Storm over a landscape, ca. 1500, Windsor castle  
 Leonardo, Natural disaster, 1517-18, Windsor castle  
 Leonardo, Study of effects of light on the eye, 1487-90, Florence  
 Leonardo, Seated Old Man, date???, pen and ink, Windsor castle

## Part 4: Leonardo's Mysteries

*Despite Leonardo's fame, many of his greatest masterpieces, such as The Lady with the Ermine and Mona Lisa, remain full of unanswered questions. This is even truer of paintings that have occasionally surfaced in the art world whose attribution remains a subject of scholarly debate, such as La Bella Principessa and Salvator Mundi.*

Leonardo, Mona Lisa, ca. 1505-1510, Louvre  
 Andrea Salai, Mona Vanna, Louvre  
 The legacy of Mona Lisa – workshop replicas from The Walters, The Prado, Singapore, etc.  
 Leonardo, Lady with the Ermine, ca. 1498, Krakow (formerly Czartoryski coll.)  
 Leonardo (?) La belle Ferroniere, ca. 1517, Louvre  
 Leonardo, Madonna Litta, ca. 1490-91, St. Petersburg  
 Giovanni Boltraffio, Portrait of Francesco Melzi  
 Francesco Melzi, Flora/ Columbina, Hermitage  
 Leonardo (?) La Bella Principessa (Bianca Sforza) private coll.  
 Giovanni Boltraffio, Portrait of a Lady, Columbia, S.C.  
 Giovanni Boltraffio, Portrait of a Boy as St. Sebastian  
 Giovanni Boltraffio, Head of the Young Savior, Madrid, Lazaro Galdiano  
 Giovanni Boltraffio, Madonna and Child, Budapest  
 Giovanni Boltraffio, Head of a Woman, Clark Institute (signed Leonardo)  
 Salvator Mundi(???), Abu Dhabi (???) – sold for 450.3 million USD on Nov. 15, 2017  
 School of Leonardo, Salvator Mundi, Naples  
 Andrea Previtali, Salvator Mundi, 1519

Leonardo, Portrait of a Young Man (Salai?), drawing  
Leonardo, St. John the Baptist, 1513-16, Louvre  
Leonardo (workshop), St. John in the Wilderness (Bacchus), 1510-15, Louvre  
Andrea Salai (?), Young Christ – Salvator Mundi  
Bernardino Luini, Conversion of the Magdalene, ca. 1520, San Diego  
Bernardino Luini, The Magdalene, ca. 1525, NGA

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### **Some additional resources:**

Giorgio Vasari, Life of Leonardo da Vinci, Part III of the Lives of the Artists (illustrated)  
[https://christophertyler.org/CWTyler/Art%20Investigations/ART%20PDFs/Vasari\\_Leonardo\\_Illustrated\\_Draft.pdf](https://christophertyler.org/CWTyler/Art%20Investigations/ART%20PDFs/Vasari_Leonardo_Illustrated_Draft.pdf)

Leonardo on painting, poetry and sculpture – the *Paragone* (from his notebooks)  
<https://www.italianrenaissanceresources.com/units/unit-3/sub-page-03/leonardo-on-painting-versus-poetry/>

Sigmund Freud, Leonardo and a Memory of his Childhood, (full text)  
[https://www.sas.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Freud\\_Leonardo.pdf](https://www.sas.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Freud_Leonardo.pdf)