Leonardo da Vinci
(1452 - 1519)

Biography

Leonardo di ser Piero da Vinci was an Italian Renaissance polymath: painter, sculptor, architect, musician, mathematician, engineer, inventor, anatomist, geologist, cartographer, botanist, and writer. Leonardo has often been described as the archetype of the Renaissance Man. He is widely considered to be one of the greatest painters of all time and perhaps the most diversely talented person ever to have lived. Born out of wedlock to a notary, Piero da Vinci, and a peasant woman, Caterina, at Vinci in the region of Florence, Leonardo was educated in the studio of the renowned Florentine painter, Verrocchio. Much of his earlier working life was spent in the service of Ludovico il Moro in Milan. He later worked in Rome, Bologna and Venice, and he spent his last years in France at the house awarded him by Francis I.

Creative works

Leonardo is renowned primarily as a painter. Among his works the Mona Lisa is the most famous portrait and The Last Supper is the most reproduced religious painting of all time. Leonardo's drawing of the Vitruvian Man is also regarded as a cultural icon. Most of his paintings are still kept in different countries. Moreover, all Leonardo’s works with his notebooks, drawings, scientific diagrams and his thoughts on the nature of painting compose a contribution to later generations of artists.

Leonardo is also revered for his technological ingenuity. He conceptualized a helicopter, a tank, concentrated solar power, a calculator, the double hull and he outlined a rudimentary theory of plate tectonics. Relatively few of his designs were constructed or were even feasible during his lifetime. He made important discoveries in anatomy, civil engineering, optics and hydrodynamics, but he did not publish his findings and they had no direct influence on later science.
Leonardo's youth was spent in a Florence which was the centre of Christian Humanist thought and culture at that time. In 1466 Leonardo moved there, where he entered the workshop of Verrocchio and came into contact with such artists as Botticelli, Ghirlandaio and Lorenzo di Credi. Early in his apprenticeship he painted an angel and perhaps portions of the landscape in Verrocchio's *Baptism of Christ* (Uffizi). In 1472 he was registered in the painters' guild. The culmination of Leonardo's art during his first period in Florence is the magnificent unfinished *Adoration of the Magi* (Uffizi) commissioned in 1481 by the monks of San Donato a Scopeto. In this work the integration of dramatic movement and chiaroscuro are revealed that characterize the master's mature style.

After the fall (1499) of Ludovico Sforza Leonardo again returned to Florence from Milan in 1500. He engaged in much theoretical work in mathematics and pursued his anatomical studies at the hospital of Santa Maria Nuova. He was commissioned to execute the fresco of the *Battle of Anghiari*. This work, like its companion piece assigned to Michelangelo, was never completed, and the cartoons were subsequently destroyed. The work exerted enormous influence on later artists and some impression of the original may be had from anonymous copies in the Uffizi and Casa Horne (Florence) from an engraving of 1558 of Lorenzo Zacchia and from a drawing by Rubens (Louvre). From about this time dates the celebrated *Mona Lisa* (Louvre), the portrait of the wife of a Florentine merchant.

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Early Life and Work: Vinci and Florence


Leonardo da Vinci

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonardo_da_Vinci#Florence:_Leonardo.27s_artistic_and_social_background

Leonardo da Vinci Encyclopedia of World Biography


List of works by Leonardo da Vinci