

Leonardo da Vinci Society Newsletter

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Recent and forthcoming events

The Annual General Meeting and Annual Lecture 2012

The AGM and Annual Lecture for 2012 were held as usual in the Kenneth Clark Lecture Theatre at the Courtauld Institute of Art, on Friday 27 April 2012. The Annual Lecture was given by Dr Matthew Landrus, whose title was 'New Evidence of Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper* as a Humanist Contribution'.

Dr Matthew Landrus writes: Although one sees Leonardo's approaches to humanist scholarship throughout his notebooks, and especially in his notes for a comparison of the arts (his *paragone*), direct humanistic engagements in his paintings are relatively unconfirmed when one considers his modes of musical and dramaturgical engagement. This lecture offered new evidence of Leonardo's development of his *Last Supper* as a humanistic discourse, as an adaptation of moral, rhetorical, musical, geometrical and poetical categories. For Leonardo, the *Last Supper* was ultimately an *istoria*, a humanistic narrative honouring Ludovico Sforza. It is a kind of Ciceronian *enargia* – the vivid recreation of a vision with words – albeit as a mute painting, a more informative expression and *demonstratio*. It is Leonardo's visual oration to the Sforza Court, to the Dominican friars, and to the many visitors to Santa Maria della Grazie, in which he argues that perspective painting is the ultimate artifice of Nature, reason, experience and humanistic historiography.

As a basis for this moral dialogue, Leonardo contrasted Latin and Greek discourses, the former exploiting precision rhetorical devices such as perspectival coherence and narrative expressions, and the latter Pythagorean harmony and Aristotle's *Poetics*. Before 1497, scholars familiar to Leonardo in Milan and Pavia included the famous Greek scholar, Demetrios Chalcondyles, humanist historiographers Giorgio Merula, Giovanni Simonetta, and Bernardo Corio,



talented lawyers Giasone del Maino and Franceschino Corte, masters of pageantry and music Antonio Cornazzano, Josquin des Prez, and Gaspar van Weerbeke, poet/dramatists Gaspare Ambrogio Visconti and Galeotto del Carretto, not to mention very close associates Donato Bramante, Bernardo Bellincioni, Francino Gaffurio and Luca Pacioli. Though relatively little is known of Leonardo's direct engagement with most of these individuals, he regularly requested advice and information on a broad range of projects. For two of the most celebrated aspects of the *Last Supper* – the naturalistic 'truth' of the figural emotions and the fictive space – he referenced Latin scholarship, as well as the Latin tradition in painting that extended from Giotto and Masaccio. Referring to the 'strife' discussed in Luke 22: 21-24, Leonardo presents contrasts in movements of the mind similar to what one reads in Seneca, *On Anger* 2.4.1, such as the initial involuntary interpretations of shock and denial by John and Philip, followed by the voluntary 'ascent of the mind' to anger by James Major, and then the third movement: the blind insistence to act, by Peter with his knife, and by Philip asking if the traitor is himself.

Leonardo arranged this space with a geometric diagram on Windsor RL 12542r, mapping a central space that corresponds to both perspective and grid plans (this analysis was one of the lecture's new assessments). The vanishing point extends through Christ's right temple – the *tempia* – a reference to him as *tempio*, a temple (or church). Orthogonal lines extend the perspective space toward the refectory, starting at the centre of his brain, the traditional location of his soul and sensory judgement in the *sensus communis* ventricle. In this manner, '*spiritus domini replevit orbem terrarum*' (the spirit of the Lord filled the world), as noted in a Gradual (Getty MS. Ludwig VI 3, fol. 62v) illustrated by Antonio da Monza, one of several produced for the Sforza Court in the 1490s.

Recent studies of stylus preparatory incisions in the wall surface locate the vanishing

point and portions of the perspective and grid plans. These results correct previous studies while also providing further evidence in support of other arguments, such as Thomas Brachert's 1971 article, 'A musical canon of proportion in Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper' (Art Bulletin 53:4, pp. 461-66). Measurements of the incisions and preparatory marks assisted in the discovery of the preparatory grid of 24 by 12 squares, proving that the mural proportions are exactly 2:1, and that its groups of figures fit proportionally within the grid. The first interior group of squares, between Bartholomew, Thaddeus and Simon at the ends of the table, are within a portion of the grid consisting of 12 by 8 squares, a proportion of 3:2. The only face in the second interior group of squares is that of Judas, in a type of exclusion grid of 8 by 6, a proportion of 4:3. The faces of John, Thomas, James Major, Peter and Philip are in the third interior group, a grid of 6 by 4, a proportion of 3:2. A central grid section has only the head and shoulders of Jesus framed by a square portion (a 2 by 2 grid) of the upper window, all within a grid of 4 by 2, a proportion of 2:1. Thus the figures are arranged according to Pythagorean proportions of an octave (2:1), fifth (3:2), fourth (4:3), fifth, and an octave.

This recalls Leon Battista Alberti's definition of beauty (*pulchritudo*) in his *De re aedificatoria* (IX 5: 302-303) as a harmonious approach to number (*numerus*), measured outline (*finito*) and arrangement (*collocatio*). He referred to a complete product of this approach in musical terms, as a *concinntitas* that resonates with one's soul. Here we have Leonardo's link between the Latin humanist *istoria* and its Greek roots in Pythagorean music theory. So important was this connection for him that he reemphasized musical proportions in the progression of widths of the tapestries toward the back of the Last Supper's fictive space. Diminishing proportional widths start at the foreground, from 2:1 (widths of first and second tapestries), to 3:2 (second and third), to 4:3 (third and fourth). This approach to harmony is nonetheless at odds with the 2 by 2 perspective *braccia* measurements of each of the coffers. Coffer proportions remain consistent, whereas the tapestries increase in width toward the background. Leonardo also appropriately calculated the human proportions, so that the perspective height of each figure, if standing, would be 5'9", or 3 *braccia*, as previously

recommended by Alberti. The figures are 4 perspective *braccia* away from the wall surface. For Leonardo, a narrative painting in the Latin tradition required a precision perspective system, though he also applied two relatively independent Pythagorean (Greek) systems, the first concerning the arrangement of figures within proportions of the preparatory grid, the second as a chorus of tapestries in harmonic proportion. These are clever discourses about the mute performance of painting, which can resonate with the viewer in a manner similar to Apelles' painting of Calumny. Leonardo referred to this popular narrative as 'a harmonic proportion... because it serves the eye, a sense more noble than the ear' (Codex Urbinas 10r).

In the early 1490s, Marsilio Ficino, Angelo Poliziano and Girolamo Savonarola argued for the inclusion of painting within the Liberal Arts, as Leonardo may have heard from their colleague, Chalcondyles. Leonardo noted around 1492 that painting 'extends into natural philosophy', as compared with poetry that 'extends into moral philosophy', and that both arts can 'create a fiction that will signify great things' (MS A 99v). His novel approach to the Last Supper nonetheless engages with moral philosophy, both as Latin vernacular *poesia* and as Greek tragedy. Starting with a new approach to the narrative, he advances the moment of action beyond the time of Jesus stating that 'one of you will betray me' and the disciples were sorrowful or doubtful, as in Matthew 26: 21-22, Mark 14: 18-19 and John 13: 21-22. Waves of figural movement and the undertow of hand gestures suggest a new kind of enactment of the extended, more active moment in Luke 22: 21-24, when 'there was also strife among them'. This is close to Aristotle's definition of tragedy as 'an enactment of a deed that is important and complete, and of magnitude, by means of an enriched language... in different parts... and through pity and fear it effects relief [catharsis] to such emotions' (Poetics VI 1449b 2-3). Reactions among the disciples are complex with regard to recognisable involuntary and voluntary motions of the mind, though they are unified with regard to their general strife; Jesus and others are in the process of *anagnorisis* as they critically consider their own identities, and in the process of *peripeteia*, a reversal of expectations and a turning point in the *istoria*.

By virtue of the vanishing point extending through Christ's *sensus communis*, he is telling this story that focuses on him. This is almost Leonardo's *Calumny*, his moral discourse regarding the unjust deed against Christ, as if 'the whole field appeared in a single moment', recalling Ficino's reference to Apelles' desire and 'divine madness' to paint *Calumny (Platonic Theology, c. 1469-74)*. And Ludovico Sforza, considered the Lord and saviour of Milan, possibly valued the painting's allegory of personal sacrifice, as he had in the mid-1490s gained as many important allies as he had gained powerful enemies. Instead of the traditional interpretation of the disciples' sorrow or doubt, Leonardo renders an *enargia* of the ascent of their minds. This approach would appear again in Raphael's Loggia for the Papal Palace, wherein the *Last Supper* 'strife' in Luke 22: 21-24 was painted on vault thirteen around 1519, possibly by Giovanni da Spoleto. Around 1490, Bellincioni recited sonnets that praised Leonardo as the Florentine Apelles, referred to Milan as 'today's Athens', and invited scholars to Ludovico Sforza's 'Parnassus' (*Rime, 1493*). Leonardo's *Last Supper* addressed Greek scholars, humanist poets, friars, musicians, Ludovico Sforza, and others at the Sforza Court with a variety of systematic intellectual ornaments, arguing in visual terms that only the science of narrative painting could engage instantly with the harmony of the soul.

Dr Landrus is grateful for the questions from members of the audience, and for additional comments from Martin Kemp and Claire Farago, all of which he hopes to have briefly addressed in the present summary of his talk.

A Study day on 'Anatomy in the Renaissance': Friday 7 September 2012

A Study day organised by the Leonardo da Vinci Society, in association with the Royal Collection Trust, on 'Anatomy in the Renaissance' is to be held on Friday 7 September 2012 at the Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace. This has been planned to coincide with the current exhibition of 'Leonardo da Vinci: Anatomist' on display at the Queen's Gallery until 4 October 2012. There will be a private view of the exhibition exclusively for participants at the end of the study day.

Presentations will be: Professor John Henderson (Birkbeck, University of London), 'Anatomising hospital medicine in Italy at time of Leonardo da Vinci'; Dr Domenico Laurenza (bgC3 Seattle/Kirkland and Museo Galileo, Florence), 'Aspects and problems of Leonardo's anatomical studies: an overview'; Professor Helen King (Open University), 'Leonardo and the female body'; Francis Wells (Papworth Hospital, Cambridge), 'Leonardo's study of the lungs, diaphragm and gastro-intestinal tract'; Kenneth Wise (Wycombe and Stoke Hospitals, Oxford Region), 'The mistakes in the anatomy of the back by Leonardo, and others, explained'; Dr Sachiko Kusukawa (Trinity College, Cambridge), 'Vesalian images and their relationship to his text and to the human body', and Martin Clayton (Royal Library), 'What we don't know about Leonardo's anatomical work'.

The cost of the Study day will be £ 35.00 per person (students/unwaged £ 25.00), to include the private view. Space in the Queen's Gallery's Redgrave Conference room is limited, so members are advised to book early. To reserve your place online, please visit www.royalcollection.org.uk, or telephone 020 7766 7323.

Leonardesque News

A conference on Leonardo da Vinci's Technical Practice: Paintings, Drawings and Influence

Professor Claire Farago (University of Colorado and Fulbright-York Scholar, Visiting Distinguished Professor, University of York) writes: This conference, organized by the CHARISMA project (Cultural Heritage Advanced Research Infrastructures: Synergy for a Multidisciplinary Approach to Conservation/ Restoration) at the National Gallery, London, was held on January 13-14, 2012. Bruno Brunetti (University of Perugia), coordinator of the EU-funded consortium, reported that CHARISMA involves eleven countries and twenty-two institutions, and provides transnational access to conservation studies and joint research. The line-up of expertise, both among the speakers and the

audience, was unprecedented: briefly stated – and to quote Martin Kemp (University of Oxford) – this was one of the most extraordinary conferences many of us had ever been to.

The papers, organized into three thematic topics, were devoted to individual paintings by Leonardo; some workshop copies and paintings by Boltraffio; and selected groups of drawings. Much new and surprising information was presented by the scientific community, in terms accessible to a lay audience. Martin Kemp's plenary panel attempted some concluding generalizations, in keeping with the spirit of collaborative research that the conference stressed as a whole. Ashok Roy (National Gallery, London) called for more research on organic and inorganic materials, such as binding media. In the future, Kemp said, it will be possible to tease out this kind of information from non-invasive examination of the layer structures. Luke Syson (formerly National Gallery, London) offered the possibility of bringing connoisseurship and teaching issues together. Carmen Bambach (Metropolitan Museum, New York) stressed the need to integrate the evidence of drawings on paper and new information about underdrawings, keeping in mind that they are independent activities.

Almost everyone, including Bruno Mottin (French Museums Research and Conservation Centre, Paris – C2RMF), emphasized the need to share work openly. Kemp insisted that scientific analysis be separated from conservation, which can quickly become politicized – as recently with the Louvre *Virgin and Child with St Anne*, to be exhibited at the Louvre from March 29; a Scholars' Study day is planned for June 20. In his closing remarks CHARISMA coordinator Brunetti added that independent studies belong to the past: in both scientific analyses and art history, collaboration and group work are the order of the day. These concluding desiderata were preceded by many revelations concerning Leonardo's technique and working processes. Among the most exciting concerned the rediscovered *Salvator Mundi*, the *Belle Ferronnière*, the Prado copy of the *Mona Lisa*, and technical analysis of Boltraffio's paintings. This report will now present some of the main findings of the individual papers.

Chaired by Luke Syson, the first session, devoted to Leonardo's autograph paintings, was

opened by Cecilia Frosinini (Opificio delle Pietre Dure, Florence – OPD) who offered a brief overview of connoisseurship studies involving non-invasive imaging technology. Frosinini called for a history of technical analysis and stressed the need to overcome the current “lack of solid inter-professional exchange”. Marco Ciatti (OPD) presented a preliminary review of the current *Adoration of the Magi* project: this combines research on previous conservation treatments, imaging techniques, and spot-testing of materials. The condition of the painting is not good – there is strong craquelure obscured by non-original materials, including numerous layers of varnish. The support is made up of ten poplar panels of mediocre quality joined by metal brackets (*ponticelli*), typical of later fifteenth-century Florentine painting. The lower part of the joined panel has no support, as if it had been cut, although this does not correspond to the design on the surface. More varnish has been removed from the figures and bright areas. The underdrawing is crisp.

Jan Schmidt (Alte Pinakothek, Munich) spoke on the c. 1475 *Madonna with a Carnation*, the subject of extensive scientific analysis carried out at the Doerner Institut before the 2006 Munich exhibition. The conservators' crucial question was whether and how Leonardo used oil paint. The materials were found to be conventional, but unconventionally used. The slightly reduced panel has at least three layers of gesso, then a layer of linseed oil priming similar to both *Virgins of the Rocks*, offering insulation and a reflecting surface for the paint layers. There is some brown undermodelling, but IR reflectography detected no underdrawing. The drapery was laid out with modelling and a series of stylus incisions. A compass and rule were used to lay out the architecture, including unexecuted geometric forms comparable to those on CA 224r. Partly translucent layers of colour were applied over the modelling, and gold was used decoratively in many details such as the curls of the child's hair and the rim of the Virgin's veil. Distinctive wrinkling in the flesh tones suggests the use of drying oils, and documents Leonardo's struggle to achieve technical mastery of his medium.

Elizabeth Walmsley (National Gallery of Art, Washington) spoke on the portrait of Ginevra de' Benci, where no craquelure has developed, suggesting a later date than the Munich painting.

Walmsley offered three scenarios, the latest being 1478-80, corresponding with the hypothesis that the painting was commissioned by Bernardo Bembo, who chose this young female poet as his platonic lover. Walmsley reviewed the evidence that the painting was cut down, suggesting the use of a cartoon for the head only, based on black underdrawing visible in the final painting. In addition to the evidence of fingerprints and pouncing, she discussed the probable presence of finger wipes and suggested that the massing of the juniper bush was intended to cover *pentimenti*. Discussion at the end of the first session stayed close to the physical evidence. Kemp made a plea that equipment be synchronized, because differences create incommensurable sets of data.

The second session, chaired by Ashok Roy, was comprised of papers on the Paris *Virgin of the Rocks*, *La Belle Ferronière*, *The Last Supper*, and the newly conserved *Salvator Mundi*. Pietro Marani's (Politecnico di Milano, Milan) presentation on *The Last Supper* assessed Leonardo's imitation of panel-painting procedure, and described Pinin Brambilla's sometimes controversially received restoration as a model worthy of imitation. The other papers presented entirely new evidence. Vincent Delieuvin (Louvre, Paris) spoke on the Paris *Virgin of the Rocks*, outlining its seven significant restorations between 1763 and 1996, the C2RMF investigation of 2001-2, and more recently the reflectograms made in 2008. Referring to the recent discovery of a second composition beneath the London version, Elisabeth Ravaud (C2RFM) explained how the cartoon for the young Baptist's head in the Paris version was re-used for the Christ Child's head in the first underdrawing in the London painting. The Paris underdrawing is intact, but there is no correlation between the two compositions: the figures were developed separately, and the angel in the London version is 10% larger. The Virgin's hand was significantly modified. Analysis conducted in 2009 included micro-reflectograms of faces: Christ's head is of high quality, while the Baptist's body is abraded and his limbs re-positioned, although his head is well-preserved. The most exciting new finding is that the Angel's hand with pointing finger was added at a very late stage, after the background was painted. Delieuven hypothesized that this new emphasis on the Baptist might be understood as due to an unknown patron's request. However,

given the Baptist's historical association with the Immaculate Conception subject, and the lack yet of an established iconography for the new devotion, it might be more feasible to explain the changes on different grounds. Thanks to the new evidence provided by recent improvements in imaging technology, we now have to account for four rather than two compositions for the *Virgin of the Rocks*, with all iconographical changes revolving around the changing emphasis on the Baptist.

One of the most highly anticipated reports concerned the new scientific data for *La Belle Ferronière*, presented by Elisabeth Ravaud. Her analysis of the single walnut panel focused first on whether it was taken from the same board as the *Cecilia Gallerani* portrait. The most surprising technical finding was that the painting is built up over a lead white ground, without gesso underneath, on dark wood to help establish the modelling. There is evidence of pouncing in the eyes and nose; incisions indicate the parapet; and shadows mainly in ochre-coloured lead white with highlights painted in two layers of light and lighter pink, with dark shadow added on top. In this respect the technique is in line with the flesh modelling in *The Musician*, the London *Virgin of the Rocks*, and portraits by Boltraffio included in the exhibition. Importantly, the troublingly harsh highlight on the figure's chin is due to an inappropriate past cleaning.

The most exciting new attribution included in the exhibition was presented by conservator Dianne Dwyer Modestini, who discussed the condition of the newly conserved *Salvator Mundi*, in advance of full documentation to be published in spring 2013. Scientific study started in 2005 found that the painting, on a single, thinned-down walnut panel that had cracked vertically the entire length of the panel, was heavily repainted except on the right. Previous attempts to align the two sides on either side of the crack included planing the panel from the front and covering original paint with gesso. Initially the panel was sealed with what was probably animal glue, over which lies a double ground of lead white in a walnut oil binder, the upper, finer layer mixed with tin yellow. Little trace of underdrawing was found, although part of an arc inscribes the head. The surface is built up using black wash and a rich underpaint of black and vermilion glaze similar to the *St Jerome*. The lapis mixture of the robes

must have initially been translucent. At least three paint layers were identified with no brush marks visible. The shadows of the flesh tones are complex, consisting of four layers of vermilion, black, and lead white. Both eyes are abraded, making the gaze of the face difficult to assess. The orb is rendered in a manner typical of rock crystal. In the restoration tiny fissures on the face and forearm were covered with glazes and scumbles to make the surface softer. The colour palette is strikingly simple, and the pigments are conventional although the mixture of different-sized particles is innovative. There are numerous *pentimenti*: the position of the stole was lowered, the right hand was shifted slightly to the left and the fingers moved, and the left hand was lowered. According to Modestini, one of the details most convincingly arguing for a Leonardo attribution was the appearance, when the overpainting was removed, of a second solution for the right thumb finished to the stage of pink underpainting. These changes are entirely consistent with Leonardo's revisions in other autograph paintings and the figure follows his canon of ideal proportions exactly.

In the discussion that followed this session, Jill Dunkerton suggested that Leonardo may have learned the faulty oil-painting technique of Piero Pollaiuolo who eliminated gesso and maybe *imprimatura*; this may also explain the cryptic passage on how to prepare a panel (Ms. A, 1r, c. 1490-92). Ravaud noted that the links between the Ms. A passage and the *Belle Ferronnière* were suggestive. Responding to questions from Syson, Marani confirmed his position that on the basis of surviving drawings the *Last Supper* was begun in the early 1490s, contemporary with the execution of the London *Virgin of the Rocks*.

The second section of the conference was devoted to Leonardo and his workshop, beginning with a session chaired by Michel Menu. Maria Teresa Fiorio (Ente Raccolta Vinciana, Milan) spoke on the *Portrait of a Musician* and the Milanese workshop; Thereza Wells (Central Saint Martin's, London) spoke on Leonardo's Lansdowne *Madonna of the Yarnwinder*; Cristina Acidini (OPD) gave a second paper on this subject; and a paper on the Prado copy of the *Mona Lisa* was presented jointly by Ana González Mozo (Prado, Madrid) and Bruno Mottin (C2RMF). Fiorio reviewed evidence prepared for

a 2010 exhibition on *The Musician*, comparing it with two portraits attributed to Boltraffio, and arguing that the new attribution of one of these to Marco d'Oggiono is not justified on stylistic and technical grounds. Wells reviewed the visual history of the *Lansdowne Madonna* in relation to the Buccleuch version, comparing more than 40 versions of the *Yarnwinder* composition, mostly by unknown artists. She argued that preliminary features in the Lansdowne underdrawing are preserved in some of these copies, particularly in features such as the baby-walker group in the middle-ground, the architectural and landscape surround, the presence of a spindle, and the different positioning of the Christchild's legs kicking a second basket, as described by Pietro da Novellara in 1501. The existence of so many copies testifies to Leonardo's extraordinary influence across Europe where "he was a brand". Acidini reviewed evidence for the provenance of the Buccleuch and Lansdowne versions of the *Yarnwinder*, and the recent scientific examination of the *Lansdowne Madonna*, discussing motifs that appear only in the underdrawing previously mentioned by Wells. Superimpositions of tracings show that the cartoon for the Madonna's head was re-used for the head of the Virgin in the Louvre *St Anne*. She also commented on the hypothesis that drawings and cartoons "leaked out" from the workshop, leading to so many copies.

It appears from this presentation and many others that the nature of the workshop, particularly how apprentices and independent painters might have interacted, is far from settled. The new evidence of underdrawings made visible by IRR and multi-NR scanner types of reflectography and emissionography has opened up the possibilities in exciting new ways awaiting further investigation and discussion. Nowhere did new evidence cause more excitement than in the presentation of the hitherto practically unknown Prado copy of the *Mona Lisa*. Mozo discussed details of costume and a curved chair recently revealed in the Paris *Mona Lisa* underdrawing which led to the hypothesis that the Prado copy was painted in front of the original. The sequence of execution also follows the original, and Mozo argued that the copy may be based on the same cartoon, because so many details correspond, including the drapery line, shoulders and hands, line of the chest, and folds of the sleeves – lines that were corrected freehand with a brush. The

landscape includes similar details; the colour and transparency of paint layers is similar; and there are many minor corrections that were not included on the surface of the Paris *Mona Lisa* – all clearly indicating that the Prado portrait was made in Leonardo's workshop. Mottin further noted that the underdrawing suggests the Prado portrait was painted either by Francesco Melzi or Salai. Eager questioning at the end of this session focused on the relationship between pupils and master, and original and copies, leading to a lively debate on the structure of the workshop, the validity of terminology distinguishing originals from copies, and the need to produce comparable scientific evidence as problems of connoisseurship escalate.

The second session of the second day, chaired by Marco Ciatti, continued the theme of studio practices, focusing on Leonardo's early Milanese follower Boltraffio. Carlotta Beccaria, an independent restorer, presented a paper on the Poldi Pezzoli *Madonna and Child*; and Sue Ann Chui (Getty Museum, Los Angeles) spoke on the Esterházy *Madonna and Child* in Budapest. Beccaria, who examined four Boltraffio paintings on walnut panel supports, reported in detail on the condition of the Milan *Madonna and Child*, focusing on the restoration of the drapery based on a preparatory drawing at Christ Church that can be superimposed on the painting. Exciting was her discussion of Boltraffio's use of a lead white ground worked with his fingers – close to and yet distinct from Leonardo's technique, as defined in new evidence emerging at the conference. Chui discussed how in the Budapest *Madonna and Child*, Boltraffio drew upon Leonardo's painting methods. The *Esterházy Madonna* is on poplar wood, unusual in Leonardo's Milanese practice; the *imprimatura* is similar to Leonardo's description in Ms. A; and the cycle of dry and wet mediums, the presence of a cartoon used by both Boltraffio and Leonardo, and the presence of finger and palm prints in the *imprimatura* all suggest the close relationship of both artists. More specifically, the use of grey undermodelling for drapery folds creates a complex structure that is here particularly close to Leonardo's techniques. The evidence that Chui presented has important implications, calling for a re-evaluation of attribution criteria.

The final session of the conference was devoted to drawings, chaired by Hugo Chapman (British Museum, London). Carmen Bambach

presented an extensive set of reflections on the role of technical evidence in the study of Leonardo's graphic practices. She discussed the use of ultraviolet light and other scientific instruments that have revolutionized the way Leonardo's drawings are understood; the need to clarify the role of past restorers, and to study watermarks in connection with other contextual evidence; and the organization of ideas in Leonardo's manuscripts, questioning the recent practice of dismembering the notebooks because of its destruction of historical evidence. The highlight of her presentation was a close analysis of the coloured chalk drawing of the Virgin's head for the Louvre *St Anne* (Metropolitan Museum), describing tonal subtleties difficult to capture in photographs that embody his mature research on colouristic effects.

Judith Rayner (British Museum, London) presented a paper on drawings in the museum, also focusing on the multi-layered character of Leonardo's drawing technique, with special attention to his use of stylus and of varied types of paper that are identifiable through a combination of transmitted light, raking light, and IR imaging. André Le Prat and Franck Louis' (Louvre, Paris) innovative paper on the drapery studies on linen in the Louvre combined philological research with connoisseurship. They argued that past translators of Vasari have misconstrued his use of the word "medagli" (medallions) as a misprint of "modagli" (models), thereby missing the crucial point that the drapery studies were developed over clay reliefs, rather than fully in the round, so that lighting can be made consistent and the objects themselves can be more easily stored in a crowded studio. The conference's final paper, presented by Alan Donnithorne (Royal Library, Windsor) and Joanna Russell (British Museum, London) was devoted to the problem of the "faded" metalpoint drawings in the Royal Collection. From a series of chemical and Raman spectography analyses, it appears that the results are still inconclusive, but the best hypothesis to date is that lines that have disappeared but are still visible under ultraviolet light do not contain silver. Since silver is inert the implication is that the disappearance of lines is connected with the occasional absence of silver in Leonardo's metalpoint process. A brief discussion followed the session, before Kemp's round-table described at the beginning of my report.

A Conference on ‘Leonardo da Vinci: Painting as Philosophy’

This one-day conference, organised by Peter Mack (Warburg Institute, London) and Luke Syson (National Gallery, London), was held at the Warburg Institute on 2 February 2012. Speakers asked how Leonardo set about expressing visually different and sometimes competing ideas about the universe and its causes, in a Christian era. What did Leonardo mean by promoting painting as a science, as knowledge, and how should we understand the scientific painting of traditional (or novel) devotional subjects? How did his theory of painting affect his treatment of secular commissions, such as portraiture? How did his thinking change? How did he react to classical thought and the ideas of his contemporaries and what impact did this have on his art?

The first speaker was Alessandro Nova (Kunsthistorisches Institut, Florence), on ‘Air, Wind and Atmosphere in Leonardo’s Graphic Oeuvre’. In his drawings of storms and deluges Leonardo abandoned conventional methods of representation and developed new graphic patterns. In RL 12376 he still shows two putti blowing into trumpets to indicate wind, but also begins to develop the spiralling, abstract vortices of storm-driven air that pervade the series of ten or so ‘deluge’ sheets. The function and subject of these are mysterious, but they parallel (though they do not illustrate) his written descriptions of storms and tempest. The curved, spiral signs for turbulence are analogous to the highly evocative language of his text, and lead the way towards an aesthetic of the Sublime – as for example in the work of Fuseli. The spirals suggest thick, dense, perhaps dust-filled air; parallel lines suggest a lighter, breezier air. His long, pseudo-scientific reflections on the natural phenomenon of wind may have metaphorical value, for instance of Victory. Leonardo’s theoretical interest in turbulent weather conditions is fundamental to the later tradition: as shown in Poussin’s *Pyramus and Thisbe* (Frankfurt-am-Main), painted in 1651, the year of publication in Paris of Leonardo’s *Treatise on Painting*, in which both Poussin and his patron Cassiano dal Pozzo were involved. Ovid’s telling of the story is set in a windless night, but Poussin uses storm motifs to show his ability to represent natural phenomena; and bad weather is a metaphor for ill-fated love. Pliny tells

us that Apelles painted thunder and lightning: Poussin seeks here to emulate both Apelles and Leonardo.

Francesca Fiorani (University of Virginia) spoke on ‘Leonardo and Optics’. Painting as a science is based in optics, so no study was more important to Leonardo than that of optics. His early notes include very few on this subject: only from the late 1480s did he write extensively on optics, basing his theories on the work of Aristotle, Bacon, Pecham and especially Alhazen. These notes are fragmented, scattered: some are based in observation, some on his textual sources, some in his imagination. He was fascinated by ‘polluted shadows’ even as early as the celebrated 1473 landscape drawing (Uffizi, Florence); and they are evident in early landscapes such as that for the *Annunciation* (Uffizi, Florence). Early notes of the 1470s – the earliest seem to be on a sheet in the Codex Atlanticus – on the eye are derived from Alhazen, and show that he already accepts the intromission theory of vision. In extensive writings in MS.C (c.1490) he accepted Alhazen’s theory of the surface of the eye as the site of vision. He proposed that his intensive optical research in MS.C should result in seven books on shadows – in parallel with the seven books of Alhazen’s *de Aspectibus*. It is not clear how or when Leonardo read Alhazen, but the text was known in Italy from the late fourteenth century, and underpins both Alberti’s *de Pictura* and Ghiberti’s third Commentary. Leonardo knew Buonaccorso Ghiberti, the inheritor of Ghiberti’s writings; and he was deeply indebted to Alhazen for his optical theory and its application to painting, in reproducing natural phenomena such as shadows, blurred edges and atmospheric perspective. In his early *Annunciation* Leonardo’s shadows are both metaphorical – as commentary on Luke I, 35: ‘the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee...’ – and real at the same time.

Martin Clayton (Windsor, Royal Library) discussed ‘The Context of Leonardo’s Anatomical Studies’. These studies fall into two phases, those of the later 1480s, when he had no access to human dissection but worked mainly on animals, external observation of human anatomy, and proportion, and the period 1504-13, with greatest intensity of study around 1507, during which years he dissected some 30 cadavers. The first outline of his *Treatise on Anatomy* comes in

Anatomical MS.B of c.1489 (contemporary with the skull studies), with studies of veins, muscles and the skeleton: these studies soon went beyond the needs of the painter. The role of the nervous system in life was an early preoccupation, and he sought also to include the study of human emotion within these empirical investigations. In 1507-13 Leonardo conducted a sustained campaign of dissection and anatomical study: the centenarian dissection was in winter 1506; around 1508 he intensively studied the brain; in around 1510 his collaboration with Marcantonio della Torre led to Anatomical MS.A, with the finest examples of his dissection diagrams. In 1511 and his move from Milan he lost access to human corpses, so worked on the hearts of oxen. The Vatican *St Jerome* relates the movements of the body to the movements of the mind, a preoccupation of the early 1490s. But the subtle inflections of the contours of the right arm correspond to the c.1510 diagrams of the dissected arm; and the musculature of the neck, especially the pectoralis major muscle, is identical with the c.1510 diagrams, whereas it is inaccurately rendered in the c.1495 Head of Judas study for the *Last Supper*. The profound and accurate understanding of the muscles of St Jerome's face parallels that reached only in the dissection drawings of 1510. Although the painting may have been started around 1490, the musculature of the right arm, shoulder, neck and face cannot date earlier than 1510: he seems to have returned to the painting at that time to rework the anatomical detail.

Robert Zwijnenberg (University of Leiden) spoke on 'Walls and Bridges'. A crucial issue is how we relate to historical (as opposed to contemporary) painting, for which knowledge of the artist and his intentions is inevitably lacking. A work of art has a special visual presence: it captivates through its visuality; it is a work of art because of the aesthetic experience that it prompts. Most art historians strive for objectivity, refusing to acknowledge their engagement with the work of art, or the role of their personal experience; but the approach to a work of art depends of the self-reflective capacity of the historian. Zwijnenberg admits to feeling uneasy before the *Mona Lisa*, feeling that something is not right: the bridge in the right landscape, which 'is a carbuncle disfiguring the painting'. The landscape is connected with the sitter only by the bridge; there is no other sign of human activity.

Mona Lisa is a microcosm within the macrocosm of the landscape; the bridge 'bridges' the microcosm and the macrocosm; it is a meta-pictorial element within a hostile landscape. The bridge derails the universality of the landscape, which is no longer self-contained, no longer has autonomy and trans-historical validity. In the *Madonna and Child with St Anne*, on the other hand, there is strict distinction between the foreground and the background landscape, which is remote and unattainable. Its palette is distinct; there is no human activity; it is a wasteland of nature untamed, a challenge to humankind within the reassuring context of Christian iconography. Here we experience what it truly means to respond to a painting, a trans-historical image.

Mary Pardo (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) discussed 'Leonardo's *nuova inventione di speculatione*'. In his writings on composition and compositional invention Leonardo suggests that the painter learn from the stains or mould patterns on walls, as stimuli to the imagination. Reading such indefinable patterns helped Leonardo to develop pictorial compositions and figural interplay, unlike Alberti's rational approach to compositional construction. In the early 1490s he correlated methods of composition with mental faculties: judgement, memory and imagination stimulate different sorts of drawing. Examining stained walls, or variegated conglomerate stones, rouses the *ingegno*, serves as a 'new invention for speculation'. Brainstorm drawings were Leonardo's portable stained walls: drawing constantly stimulated new designs and composition, exploiting the versatility of the quill pen. He took with him to Milan many designs and sketches, such as sketches of a child and a cat, from which the 'Madonna and Child with a Cat' compositions derive. These were of enduring value as stimuli for later works and compositions by members of his circle. The cat, and its fluent movements, as demonstrations of organic flexibility kept Leonardo returning to the motif. A child may have similar flexibility as a cat: in MS.A Leonardo considers the different movements of figures according to their age. A seated child, for example, should be restless and dynamic, whereas a standing child should be timorous. Stains on walls can stimulate not only harmonious and playful movements, but also violent ones, such as battles. A Leonardo child

also can be in tension, even violent, as it seizes a cat, or leaps to escape its mother's grasp, as in the *Madonna of the Yarnwinder*.

Finally, Frank Fehrenbach (Harvard University) spoke on 'Leonardo's point'. In the first paragraph of the *Treatise on Painting*, painting is defined as a science because it is founded on the point, the 'ultimo principio'. The point is not material, but mysteriously creates the image. The point is a zero, spiritual but not substantial. In meditations in the *Codex Arundel*, c.1505-08, Leonardo conceives of the point as the third liminal quantity lying somewhere between nothing and something: the point is the beginning of the line but not of it, because it is infinitely small although differing from nothing. A line is generated by the movement of a point, and a surface is generated by the transversal movement of a line: a body is therefore created by movement (this is also stated in the first chapters of the *Treatise*). Hence the point is the basis of Leonardo's theory of movement; it is identified with the principle of movement. On *Codex Arundel* 132r a series of five diagrammatic sketches culminates in the representation of a point shown distorting the positiveness of space, although an infinitely small element. Leonardo's point is linked with absence in nature, oscillating between being and not being: 'where nothing ends, the thing is born, and where the thing disappears, nothing emerges' (*Codex Arundel* 159r). Creations of the painter originate in the movement of a point: the point is therefore at the inception of pictorial art.

The discussion that followed highlighted Leonardo's struggle throughout his career to get theory and painterly practice to come together, the one to follow the other, 'helping and being helped'. His scientific interests emerged from his practice of picture-making, but the tension between painting and science was ultimately irresolvable. The symbiosis was noted between his graphic practice and his creative thinking: thought was amplified by image-making and vice versa; the act of drawing forced clarifications in thinking, and served as a spur to further thought. Leonardo's activity as a maker of sacred images was highlighted. His optics relate with the world of Arab scholarship, which had a very different view of representation. The historical moment around 1500 allowed artists increasingly more licence to reinterpret the sacred; but Leonardo

never reached fixed solutions: for him, questions were always open. Nevertheless, he established iconic examples in all genres to fuel the work of his followers and circle.

A Personal View by Martin Kemp in the aftermath of the National Gallery's exhibition of *Leonardo da Vinci. Painter at the Court of Milan*

With the permission of Martin Kemp and the *Art Newspaper*, we are able to reprint here his article published in the *Art Newspaper* in February 2012.

Leonardo mania officially ends on Sunday 5th February at 10.00pm – at least as far as London is concerned. That is when the National Gallery's *Leonardo da Vinci. Painter at the Court of Milan* closes its doors. Gone will be early-morning queues shivering in the winter gloom of Trafalgar Square. The ticket touts and event agencies, trading tickets on the internet for £100s, will have to turn elsewhere. The press stories will calm. Or will they? Leonardo breaks all the rules. The silly season never ends where he is concerned. My email inbox testifies that the "Leonardo loonies" never tire of the ahistorical quest to discover some bizarre secrets hidden in paintings, just waiting for some smart-alec decoder to come along 500 years later. They never tire of sending images of new Leonardos. The "weekly Leonardo" is generally remote and absurd, even when accompanied by barrages of so-called evidence. At the end of the day I suppose it is better that Leonardo lives in today's imaginations, however fevered, than lies in an obscure corner of desiccated history.

The exhibition has left us with a lot to digest and some serious thinking to do, not least in relation to the important if uneven catalogue. We could carp about the convenient re-dating of works to Leonardo's years (c.1492-1499) at the Sforza court in Milan. The *Madonna of the Yarnwinder* is securely dated to the following Florentine period. The newly discovered *Salvator Mundi* is post-1500 for a number of reasons. The Gallery's own cartoon for the *Virgin, Child and St Anne* has been redated to c.1499, although the hydraulic engineering on the preparatory drawing in the British Museum belongs with the *Codex*

Leicester of c.1507-8. This last is typical of art historians' propensity not to take into account datable scientific and technical studies on sheets containing drawings for works of art. There was also the bizarre spectacle of the catalogue entry for the Hermitage's *Madonna Litta* being written by Tatiana Custodieva – presumably a condition of the loan – who unquestioningly attributes the whole painting to Leonardo, when the catalogue entries for related drawings demonstrate that it was executed by Boltraffio (who emerges as something of a star of the show).

But it is worth looking forward with gratitude rather than niggling. After this intense experience, where does Leonardo scholarship go from here? The major advances unquestionably are being made through technical examination, the subject of a superb public conference organised by Ashok Roy on 13th and 14th January. Most of the major desiderata of the next few years involve scientific analysis to lesser or greater degrees. Technical examination rarely solves attributional issues in a definitive manner – unless some horrible anachronism emerges. But it often shows that our questions and presumptions are much too simple and stereotyped. The underdrawings in the two versions of the *Madonna of the Yarnwinder*, the New York version of which was arbitrarily excluded from the show, demonstrate that the commercial categories of “original” and “copy” simply will not work where the production of paintings in a Renaissance workshop is concerned. The overall situation regarding how we calibrate the assertions of the connoisseur's eye in relation to the scientific evidence is currently disastrous. This is one of the biggest issues in the current study of works of art, and I hope to write something on this in due course.

Much light is being shed on Leonardo's techniques in general. I say “techniques” advisedly. It is become evident that he tended to tackle the job of making each panel painting or mural on a fresh and experimental basis. It seems from the portraits of women, including possibly the *Mona Lisa*, that he abandoned white gesso plaster grounds in favour of a tinted white lead preparation, but later reverted to priming his panel with gesso. Generalisation is hazardous. He certainly was not a pragmatic picture-maker in the mode of Raphael. We need each picture to be intensively examined in its own right, not least using comparable apparatus, methods of analysis

and modes of publication. At present there is too often a chaos of incompatibility in the results issued by each laboratory. The kind of international collaboration signalled by the European CHARISMA project needs to be sustained and extended (<http://www.charismaproject.eu/>).

Examination of pictures from Leonardo's circle is yielding real results, although the often dispiriting pastiches by the Leonardeschi tend not to encourage galleries to devote resources and time to their examination. Martin Bailey [in the *Art Newspaper*, February 2012] draws our attention to the revelations produced by the Prado's *Mona Lisa* variant. The yields go beyond questions of attribution. They reveal much about the sociology of the production and patronage of paintings, particularly with respect to multiples on a small scale and the series of devotional pictures compiled from mixing-and-matching the resources of drawings, cartoons and unfinished paintings in his own studio. The scientific study of drawings, as Carmen Bambach of the Metropolitan showed, trails far behind the examination of paintings, even though techniques that deliver basic results are readily available, including microscopic scrutiny and multispectral scanning. There also is a big and largely unexamined question about the deterioration of the legibility of drawings that have been much exhibited. I subjectively sense that there are things I could once see in some of the drawings that are no longer visible. Systematic, non-subjective study is urgently required.

We also need to pay much more attention to the original format of Leonardo's bound manuscripts (including those now dismembered), reconstructing sequences of drawings and notes, and cross-dating from one manuscript to another. This is a big and slow task, unattractive in the context of academic research reviews, which prioritise productivity. We can also ask demanding questions about the fashion for unbinding the manuscripts so that the double sheets can be mounted separately, vitiating the eccentric coherence of Leonardo's thought processes.

There are also a series of “political” desiderata, which cannot in practice be separated from the intellectual endeavours. In the aftermath of the conference there was a warm feeling of cuddly cooperation between the various experts

and institutions involved. How long will it last, before we revert to the partisan default position of the exercise of national, institutional and personal self-interest? I have a wish list to add to the hopes outlined above. It is produced here as much in hope as expectation.

Let us move the debate about restoration, which is intricately tied into questions of scientific analysis, on to a more rational and less fevered basis. The Louvre and the Centre de Recherche and Restauration in Paris have been doing much in this respect, but it is all too easy for galleries to retreat into defensive mode when faced by the same set of noisy opponents who generate effective news stories. Let us untie the quest to examine works of art scientifically from the process of restoration. Too often a work is only examined as part of a programme to conserve it or as a justification for such a programme. Knowing and intervening are different things. Let us eliminate the virtual ostracism of accomplished private researchers. Pascal Cotte in Paris and Maurizio Seracini in Florence, to name just two privateers who are virtuosi of technical examination, have undertaken analyses that should have been acknowledged in the conference.

Let us try to separate the stances taken about attribution from the ownership and circumstances of emergence of individual works. The contrasting fortunes of the *Salvator Mundi* (hanging proudly in the National Gallery exhibition) and the portrait of a young woman on vellum – *La Bella Principessa*, the origins of which in a Sforza manuscript effectively eliminate the silly things that have been said about it – demonstrate vividly how what something looks like is radically coloured by non-visual factors. Whereas the sober owner(s) of the former carefully and quietly secured opinions and facilitated long-term research outside the glare of publicity, the latter underwent a series of premature and ill-judged exposures (in some of which I was personally involved) that have greatly prejudiced its status. It is not the fault of the object how it is handled.

These issues extend beyond Leonardo but are sharply focussed by him. And of course there is question of his name. Can we hope (probably unavailingly) that the ugly Americanism, “Da Vinci” will be abandoned? “Da Vinci” is not a

surname. In Milan he was called “Leonardo da Firenze”.

An exhibition of ‘Leonardo da Vinci: Anatomist’ at the Queen’s Gallery, Buckingham Palace, until 4 October 2012

Currently on display at the Queen’s Gallery is the largest exhibition of Leonardo da Vinci’s anatomical drawings ever mounted. Eighty-seven sheets of drawings are spread throughout the Gallery’s three main rooms, a large proportion of them displayed double-sided; a group of modern anatomical models are displayed in the two small cabinet rooms. In the first room, which is painted a rich deep blue, the early studies are displayed, those dating between around 1485 and 1494 and including the 1489 studies of a sectioned skull, and the group of studies of a dissected bear’s foot, in metalpoint on blue-grey prepared paper. One of the 1489 studies has on the verso a first outline of the contents of Leonardo’s proposed Treatise on Anatomy; a later sheet of studies of the bladder suggests in its relatively formal layout what a page of the Treatise might have looked like. Another early drawing, of the leg shown in cross-section, foreshadows the range of diagrammatic techniques that Leonardo exploits in the anatomical drawings. A sequence of drawings shows the shoulder from a series of different angles; another the shoulder gradually built up element by element; another the shoulder stripped down. Leonardo used the architect’s system of plan, elevation and section, and the engineer’s ‘exploded view’ in which elements are pulled apart to show how they fit together.

The second room, in deep green, opens with the renewal of Leonardo’s anatomical study around the time of his work on the *Battle of Anghiari*. This phase culminates with the dissection of the centenarian in winter 1507-08 and the studies that make up the bulk of Anatomical MS B, which opens with the 1489 skull studies. Twenty-one pages of Anatomical MS B, all dating around 1508, are displayed here, along with the superb, large-scale study of the principal organs of a woman which stands as the culmination of his series of studies of internal anatomy.

The final room, painted in rich blood red, opens with sheets dealing with the bones and muscles, making up Anatomical MS A on which Leonardo worked around 1510-11. At this time he collaborated with Marcantonio della Torre, professor of anatomy at the University of Pavia, who had good access to human material: Leonardo may have dissected as many as twenty corpses during this period. However, Marcantonio died in 1511, and with the fall of Milan to the French at the end of that year, Leonardo retreated to stay with Francesco Melzi in his villa not far from Milan. In 1512-13 Leonardo no longer had access to human material. For the 'Villa Melzi studies' Leonardo used dogs, birds and oxen in a series of sheets which culminate in the magnificent studies of the heart. Here he made innovatory observations on the structure and functions of the heart valves and the passage of blood through them. Many of the drawings displayed in this room are not only sophisticated explorations of anatomy but also masterworks of graphic art. As a whole, the exhibition is of great interest from both the scientific and the visual points of view.

An exhibition of *La Sainte Anne: l'ultime chef-d'oeuvre de Léonard de Vinci*

On display at the Musée du Louvre, Paris, until 25 June 2012, is an exhibition that centres around Leonardo da Vinci's recently cleaned *Madonna and Child with Saint Anne*. Cleaning and conservation have been delicate and sensitive, bringing out both the quality and beauty of the painting, and refined details that have for centuries been scarcely visible under layers of yellowed varnish. The conservator was painstaking in the removal of varnish layers, which had to be gradually thinned to a uniform level throughout the painting, to preserve a degree of patina, and to ensure that the solvents did not make contact with the paint layers. The result reveals the soft blue-greys of the distant landscape, picked up in the glowing, light lapis-lazuli blue of the Madonna's robe; the caressing *sfumato* light falling on the Christ Child's face and right arm; the subtle tonal and colouristic differentiation between the highly expressive

faces of the Madonna and of Saint Anne; the deep slate-purple drapery over Saint Anne's lower legs; the delicacy of the veil-like fabric that creates rippling rings of folds around the Madonna's right arm; the elaborate folds of crimson drapery across the Madonna's back, clearly painted over the diagonal edge of her blue robe; the carefully detailed crimping curls of the Christ Child's hair, and of the lamb's fleece; the complex, stratified formation of the rocky plateau on which the figures sit; and above all the fine modelling and play of light on the light-blue robe across her the Madonna's right leg.

The conservation has also made clearer the areas of lack of finish, such as the light brown middle-ground, and Saint Anne's left sleeve. It also revealed a peculiarity of Leonardo's technique, his use of a red lacquer underpaint before the application of the light lapis-lazuli pigment on the Madonna's robe. The faulty and uneven drying of this lacquer caused shifts in the lapis layer, leading to the paint losses that prompted many disfiguring retouches. Cleaning has in particular greatly improved this area, which had hitherto been deepened to a muddy blue-grey by varnishing, de-varnishing and re-varnishing over later centuries. Also on display for the first time are the three recently-discovered sketches on the reverse of the panel, the head of a horse (perhaps to be associated with the *Battle of Anghiari*), a skull (not unlike the skull drawings of 1489 in Anatomical MS B), and a child with a lamb, posed in reverse of the group in the painting. Better seen in infrared reflectograms, these drawings are very hard to read and to interpret.

The *Madonna and Child with Saint Anne* is displayed alongside the National Gallery's 'Burlington House' cartoon, highlighting the issue of their relationship. The first sections of the exhibition are largely devoted to the question of the genesis of the painting's design. Controversially, it is argued that the National Gallery cartoon is the first of three cartoons drawn by Leonardo in the process of preparing the composition, and that it dates to 1499-1500. This work, it is argued, was left unfinished by Leonardo when he set to work on the cartoon made in SS Annunziata, Florence, and seen in April 1501 by Fra Pietro da Novellara, whose letter to Isabella d'Este in which he describes it in some detail is also on display. This now-lost

cartoon showed the group in reverse, along a descending diagonal from upper right to lower left, as is shown in the copy made around 1515 by the Brescianino brothers. Another cartoon, possibly the one used for the transfer of Leonardo's design to the panel for painting (or perhaps an early, workshop copy) disappeared during World War II; an old photograph is reproduced in the exhibition catalogue and several early copies are displayed. Also on show is the recently-discovered marginal note written by Agostino Vespucci in a copy of Cicero, which implies that by October 1503 the head of Saint Anne was complete. It is proposed that on his return to Milan in 1506 Leonardo returned to work on the panel, and new drawings for the Madonna's draperies were made at this time. Further drawings, for Saint Anne's drapery, were made after Leonardo moved to France in 1516, since they were drawn on paper with a French watermark. As can plainly be seen, the painting was still unfinished at the time of Leonardo's death in 1519.

A number of the Louvre's other paintings and drawings by Leonardo are displayed, such as the late *Saint John the Baptist*, which would appreciate the care and attention of a conservator such as the one who worked so sensitively on the *Madonna and Child with Saint Anne*. Also on exhibition is the Prado copy of the *Mona Lisa* (regrettably not however shown next to the original) which is discussed by Claire Farago in her report, elsewhere in this *Newsletter*, on the conference on Leonardo's technical practice at the National Gallery in January. The exhibition continues with several sections dealing with the legacy of Leonardo's *Madonna and Child with Saint Anne*, including works by Raphael, Michelangelo and many other sixteenth century artists, both Italian and North European; and it concludes, perhaps unnecessarily, with works by such twentieth-century painters as Odilon Redon and Max Ernst.

A new publication: *Isabella d'Este and Leonardo da Vinci*, by Francis Ames-Lewis

Dr Jill Burke writes: Francis Ames-Lewis's elegant and beautifully produced new book is the

first in-depth study of a relationship that has generated much art-historical discussion, between Leonardo da Vinci and Isabella d'Este – Marchioness of Mantua, famous collector and patron, and shrewd politician. Like Leonardo, in his famous black chalk portrait of Isabella that adorns the cover, Ames-Lewis carefully and sympathetically delineates Isabella's character, amply aided by selections from her huge surviving correspondence (28,000 letters to Isabella, and 12,000 copies of letters from her are housed in the Mantuan archives).

Given the wealth of textual sources, it is perhaps frustrating for the modern audience, as Ames-Lewis points out, that this famous portrait drawing is the only visual survival of Leonardo and Isabella's relationship. Leonardo did other drawings for the marchioness, of antique vases she was interested in buying; and she commissioned further work from him. She hoped he would give her a completed portrait painting, as well as an image of the young Christ, but these were either never finished or are lost. The portrait drawing then, is used as a kind of fulcrum around which to discuss broader art-historical questions. We gain an insight in the first chapter into Isabella's intellectual world, considering her *studiolo* and *grotta*, where she housed her famed collections of antiquities and contemporary painting and sculpture. The second chapter explores how Isabella's "refined and experienced eye" may have developed in her youth in Ferrara. Her use of *paragone*, or comparison, as a means of discussing artistic elegance, is highlighted. Isabella has had a mixed press regarding her relationship with artists – she has been portrayed both as imperious and demanding in her relationship with Perugino, and obsequious in her letters to Leonardo and Giovanni Bellini. Through a balanced analysis of the available documentation Isabella here comes across as a sensitive and perspicacious viewer of Renaissance painting, who adapted her letters to suit her audience. The third chapter constitutes an overview of artistic culture in Mantua around 1500. Mantegna was the key figure, and his work reflects the intense fascination with art *all'antica* that characterised the city. Mantegna's major works – including the Hampton Court *Triumphs of Caesar* – are discussed, alongside Mantuan small bronzes by Antico amongst others. The portrait drawing, in chapter 4, is discussed both in

technical terms (it was pricked for transfer, and several copies survive) as well as being placed in the tradition of female portraiture in this period. The influence of Netherlandish art on the shift in Italy from the profile to the full-face portrait around the 1460s and 70s is convincingly shown.

The next chapter focuses on now lost drawings that Leonardo made for Isabella of some antique hardstone vases she was interested in purchasing from the former Medici collection. This glimpse into the use of drawings as a means of visual communication surely, as Ames-Lewis notes, indicates the importance of this medium for the spread of artistic knowledge and the workings of the art market. Like Leonardo's images, most of these drawings no longer survive, having served their original use – and we are lucky to have documentary testimony of their existence, as in this case. In chapter 6, the image gets dimmer still, as Isabella's request to Leonardo for a painting of a youthful Christ may never really have got underway. However, there are several paintings of this subject by followers of Leonardo – so the influence of Isabella's request may have had ramifications beyond one artist and one patron.

Francis Ames-Lewis, *Isabella and Leonardo. The Artistic Relationship between Isabella d'Este and Leonardo da Vinci, 1500-1506*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012. ISBN 978-0-300-12124-7.

Raccolta Vinciana XXXIV (2011)

Volume XXXIV of *Raccolta Vinciana* has recently been published. It includes an article by Juliana Barone, a member of the Society's committee, a comprehensive Leonardo bibliography for 2009-2011, and for the first time two articles devoted to the results of laboratory analysis of leonardesque paintings. The contents are:

- 1-52 Marino Vignano, 'Gian Giacomo Trivulzio e Leonardo. Appunti su una committenza (1482-1518)'
53-102 Edoardo Villata, 'Intorno a Leonardo scultore: una proposta di metodo e un'ipotesi di applicazione'

103-120 Luisa Cogliati Arano, 'Un'aggiunta ad Ambrogio de' Predis'

121-136 Giovanni Battista Sannazzaro, 'Per la Chiesa di San Maurizio al Monastero Maggiore di Milano: il piccolo affresco con paesaggio nel presbiterio di clausura'

137-186 Mauro Pavesi, 'Una proposta per il Maestro di Ercole e Gerolamo Visconti'

187-222 Anna Sconza, 'Tracce di trasmissione indiretta del *Libro di pittura* di Leonardo in lettori di ambito milanese'

223-286 Juliana Barone, 'Cassiano dal Pozzo's manuscript copy of the Trattato: new evidence of editorial procedures and responses to Leonardo in the Seventeenth Century'

287-340 Francesco Saracino, '*Passionis Mysteria*, una visione di Marco d'Oggiono'

341-384 Pietro C. Marani, 'Sotto la pelle di Bramante e Bramantino: radiografie e riflettografie dei dipinti di Brera, Urbino e Madrid. Confronti e deduzioni a seghuito di vecchie e nuove riprese'

385-428 Maria Teresa Fiorio, 'Sotto il colore: leonardeschi all'infrarosso'

431-597 ed. Monica Taddei, 'Bibliografia internazionale leonardiana (BIL) 2009-2011'

The *Lettura Vinciana* LII, 21 April 2012

The fifty-second *Lettura Vinciana* was delivered on 21 April 2012 by Juliana Barone, one of the Society's committee members. Her title was 'Leonardo nella Francia del XVII secolo: eredità paradossali' ('Leonardo in 17th century France: paradoxical legacies'). How was Leonardo received in seventeenth-century France? It was in France, in 1651, that his Treatise on Painting was published for the first time. The publication took the form of two editions: one in French by Roland Fréart de Chambray and the other in Italian by Raphael Trichet du Fresne. Although questions remain about the precise relationship and sources of these two editions, both provided illustrations based on a set of drawings designed by Nicolas Poussin. This 'visual' Leonardo has shaped the reception of his teachings not only at the time, but also in the following centuries. Poussin's intervention in the visual form in which Leonardo's ideas were conveyed was deliberate and involved a careful process of selection and reconfiguration of the human figure, one which

had radical implications for forging a new way in which Leonardo's ideas were transmitted, notably on human motion. However, does this new view of Leonardo, mediated through Poussin's eyes, actually convey what was thought to be a Leonardo in the seventeenth century? Which were the paintings known at the time and believed to be original 'Leonardos'? Seemingly, none of his paintings was the subject of the famous *conférences* in the French Academy. The visual exemplars in the Academy were provided by Poussin and Raphael. Although the theoretical Leonardo offered in the Treatise did not pass totally unchallenged, his text held a canonical status in the Academy. Moreover, it is the image of the theoretical Leonardo which emerges as praiseworthy throughout contemporary French biographies. Even his most admired painting in seventeenth-century France, the *Last Supper*, was overshadowed by a Poussin painting. The paradoxes between the visual and theoretical legacies of Leonardo are not accidental. The dichotomy that emerges helps us assess the historical process of the construction of an 'authorised' image, a process which had its climax in seventeenth-century France and which, nevertheless, is modern not only in its mechanisms but also in having filtered our own views of his teachings.

The Leonardo da Vinci Society

The Secretary is very grateful for the comments and suggestions made by members and very much regrets that he has not had time to reply to them individually.

We would always be grateful for suggestions of material, such as forthcoming conferences, symposia and other events, exhibitions, publications and so on, that would be of interest to members of the Society for inclusion in this *Newsletter* or on the webpage, which can be visited at the following address:

< <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/hosted/leonardo/> >

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