Leonardo da Vinci Society Newsletter

editor: Francis Ames-Lewis

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Recent and forthcoming events

1993 Annual Lecture

The Society's 1993 Annual Lecture, entitled 'Leonardo da Vinci and the concept of the ben\n\textit{finito} cartoon', was given on Friday 28 May 1993 by Professor Carmen Bambach Cappel, of\nFordham University, New York. Patricia Rubin (Courtauld Institute of Art) writes:

In a fascinating and scrupulously documented talk that combined microscopic scrutiny of detail\nwith macroscopic vision of the general questions, Carmen Bambach Cappel outlined the\ndevelopments in the use of pricked cartoons in Central Italian renaissance drawing practice.\nShe examined Leonardo's creative procedures within the Florentine workshop tradition that both\nformed him and which he subsequently transformed. She showed how there came to be\ntwo types of \textit{cartoni}: a functional cartoon, with coarse outlines, whose purpose was that of\ntransferring a design to a final surface and which perished or was discarded, and a \textit{ben finito} or\nfinished cartoon, much praised in 16th-century art theory and valued by collectors as expressing\nthe ideal of \textit{disegno}. Not necessarily part of the working process, finished cartoons could serve\nas demonstration pieces. Among such cartoons, Professor Cappel argued, was Leonardo's for the\n\textit{Battle of Anghiari} - an ambitious and costly drawing possibly produced entirely at the\ninsistence of Leonardo's patrons, the Signoria of Florence, as a form of manifest guarantee of the\ndesign for their Council Hall. Examination of the underdrawings on panels and of the wall surfaces\nof Leonardo's surviving works so far has yielded evidence of cartoon transfer only on portraits.\nProfessor Cappel suggested that for Leonardo and for other artists the orderly model of sketch\nto cartoon propounded in texts was subject to variations resulting from the contexts both of a\npainting's execution and of a painter's reputation.

Leonardo - A Portrait of Love

As announced in Issue 2 last May, a musical entitled 'Leonardo - A Portrait of Love' opened at\nthe Strand Theatre on 3 June 1993. Not surprisingly, in the Editor's view, it closed a few\nweeks later. The music was at best indifferent; the singing was for the most part frankly weak;\nand the acting was not of high standard. Leonardo da Vinci Society members will,\nhowever, be primarily interested to hear about of the reconstruction of Leonardo's life and loves\nproposed in the script. While Lisa sits for him for a now-lost betrothal portrait made very early in\nhis career, Leonardo falls in love with her, and - it later transpires - she produced a daughter by\nhim. In despair at the loss of his beloved when she married Signor Giocondo, Leonardo flees\nFlorence for Milan - as good an explanation, perhaps, as any yet offered by art historians for\nhis move north? Returning to Florence (as indeed he did) some 18 years later, Leonardo witnesses\nhis beloved's death at the hands of her husband, he fights a duel (with his sword in his left hand, I\nwas pleased to see) with Signor Giocondo, and in an emotional final scene he recreates the\nportrait of Lisa as a composite fantasy synthesised from the Ambrosiana \textit{Portrait of a\nMusician} (here claimed as a self-portrait) which he overpaints with his romanticised\nmemory/vision of his sitter. Hence of course the Louvre \textit{Mona Lisa} - but how come the\nAmbrosiana portrait survives?

The irrelevant sub-plots included Giovanni (not Francesco, inexplicably) Melzi whose\ncharacterisation was a tasteless parody of the devoted but querulous, hypochondriac\nhomosexual. The lyrics and the staging were full of absurd anachronisms. A very early reference\nto Donatello's \textit{Doors of Paradise} was an ominous hint at what might be to come. At one point we\nheard that Leonardo 'only did big pictures - altarpieces, murals, that sort of thing', and true to\nthis claim the Uffizi \textit{Annunciation} appeared divided into two square canvases each about 9\nhigh. The stage set for Florence Duomo ca. 1480 included a replica of Michelangelo's staircase in\nthe Biblioteca Laurenziana vestibule. Most surprising of all was the scene in Leonardo's
*bottega* when he was visited by the Abbot of San Donato a Scopeto who was getting anxious about the delays in completion of his *Adoration of the Magi*. He entered to find Leonardo on a mural-painter's scaffolding working on a canvas some four times the size of the Uffizi panel. But the most remarkable hypothesis advanced by the writers of the musical was that work was also in progress at this same time on chasing and finishing two large sections of the Sforza Horse. We now gather that the Horse *was* cast in bronze after all, despite rumours to the contrary - and, indeed, was cast several years before it was commissioned!

However, readers will be pleased to know that there is one benefit to be gained from the musical: as part of the publicity package, Alitalia are offering £50 towards any flight ticket to Italy for travel before 31 March 1994. Please apply to the Editor for a voucher if you wish to take up this offer.

**Leonardesque News**

**A new museum at Vinci**

A new private museum, the Museo Ideale Leonardo da Vinci di Arte Utopia e Cultura della Terra, has recently opened at Vinci. This is an entirely new initiative, spearheaded by Alessandro Vezzosi: it is in no respect a reconstruction of the Museo Leonardiano Comunale, which remains unchanged. It has been established in the former Gallery and Cellars of the medieval Castello of Vinci.

The primary objectives of the new museum are to demonstrate the complexity of Leonardo's work and his relationship with Vinci and the surrounding area, and to explore the relationships between both Renaissance and contemporary art forms. It is a multi-media museum that includes data banks, computerised images and a video library as well as exhibitions of original works of art, models and holograms, paintings, drawings, manuscripts, replicas of sculptures and fountains, and archaeological and other artefacts. The intention is to create an innovative interdisciplinary and avant-garde international centre, covering a broad range of subjects from the arts and sciences to agriculture. It will work to protect and enhance cultural and environmental assets; to promote study and experiment in the fields of contemporary art and design and technological and educational innovation; to rediscover local historical traditions; to implement and expand artistic crafts; to give new impetus to agricultural art and the 'culture of the earth'; and to raise the level of tourism. Alessandro Vezzosi hopes to develop contacts between the new museum and the Leonardo da Vinci Society, to which end Martin Kemp has been invited to join the museum's *comitato d'onore*. We offer the museum all good wishes for its immediate success and future development.

**Leonardo da Vinci Society Annual Lecture 1994**

The 1994 annual lecture will be given by Dr Paul Hills (University of Warwick) on Friday 6 May 1994 at 6.30 pm. His title will be 'The *Adoration of the Magi* for San Donato a Scopeto'. As usual the lecture will take place at the Italian Cultural Institute, 39 Belgrave Square, London SW1, immediately after the Society's AGM at 5.30 pm.

**Leonardo's Vatican *St Jerome***

The unfinished *St Jerome* has recently been cleaned at the Vatican: the treatment involved principally the removal of a substantial and darkened layer of varnish. The panel is included in an exhibition of works of art in the Vatican collections which has recently opened in Japan.
Recent Publications

Books, dissertations and exhibition catalogues


Articles and essays


Raccolta Vinciana

The Raccolta Vinciana issued its 23rd volume in 1989. It can be obtained from Prof. Augusto Marinoni, II presidente, Ente Raccolta Vinciana, Castello Sforzesco, 20121 Milano, Italia. The contents are:

Rosalba Tardito, 'Il Cenacolo di Leonardo e il suo recente restauro';
Gisberto Martelli, 'Restauri al "Cenacolo Vinciano" dal 1978: rechiamo di testimonianze vecchie e nuove';
David Alan Brown, 'Some observations about the exhibition Disegni e dipinti leonardeschi dalle collezioni milanesi';
Pietro C. Marani, 'Per il Giampietrino: nuove analisi nella Pinacoteca di Brera e un grande inedito';
Maria Teresa Fiorio, 'Un relievo referibile a Bambaia e qualche osservazione sull'incidenza della pittura leonardesca sulla scultura lombarda';
Giulio Bora, 'Da Leonardo all'Accademia della Val di Bregno: Giovan Paolo Lomazzo, Aurelio Luini e i disegni degli accademici';
Janice Shell and Grazioso Sironi, 'Documents for copies of the Cenacolo and the Virgin of the Rocks';
ibid., 'The Berlin Resurrection of Christ with Sts Leonard and Lucy';
ibid., 'Some documents for Francesco Galli "Dictus Neapolus"';
Alberto C. Carpinecci, 'Per una "Schedatura" dei disegni architettonici di Leonardo';
Enrico Cabella, 'Leonardo nelle carte del "Fondo Bossi" all'Ambrosiana';
Enzo Macagno, 'Experimentation, analogy and paradox in Leonardo da Vinci';
Augusto Marinoni, 'Il "Trattato delle sei quantità"';
ibid., 'Le proporzioni secondo Leonardo';
ibid., 'Noterella geometrico-linguistica (con appendice) "Lunona"';
ibid., 'The Place of the Codex Hammer in the development of Leonardo's thought';
Vittorio di Girolamo Carlini, 'La ciudad de Leonardo en las exposiciones de Chile';
Mauro Guerrini, 'Bibliografia leonardiana 1986-89';
Kim Veltman, 'In memoriam K.D. Keele, M.D., F.R.C.P.;;
Augusto Marinoni, 'Bern Dibner';

Edoardo Majno, 'Ricordo di Luigi Belloni'. Summaries of volumes I-XXII, and Index of Authors from volumes I-XXII.

Book and exhibition reviews


The Leonardo da Vinci Society

President: Professor Martin Kemp, Department of Art History, University of St Andrews, St Andrews, Fife, Scotland, KY16 9AL.
Vice-President: Dr Francis Ames-Lewis, Department of History of Art, Birkbeck College, 43 Gordon Square, London WC1H.0PD, UK.
Secretary/Treasurer: Dr Richard Schofield, Department of Art History, University of Nottingham, University Park, Nottingham NG7 2RD, UK.

Please send items for publication to the editor of the Leonardo da Vinci Society Newsletter, Francis Ames-Lewis, Department of History of Art, Birkbeck College, 43, Gordon Square, London WC1H.0PD, UK.