

# Leonardo da Vinci Society Newsletter

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## Recent and forthcoming events

### The Annual General Meeting and Annual Lecture, 2006.

The Society's Annual General Meeting was held on Friday 5 May 2006 at 5.30 pm, in the Kenneth Clark Lecture Theatre at the Courtauld Institute of Art, Somerset House, and was followed by the Annual Lecture at 6.00 pm. We are deeply grateful to the Courtauld Institute for their hospitality of these events.

*Frank A J L James writes:* This year's lecture, entitled 'The Mathematical Heart: An Analysis of some of the Cardiac Studies of Leonardo da Vinci' was delivered by Francis Wells, an eminent heart surgeon at the Papworth Hospital near Cambridge. Wells was mainly concerned to demonstrate the accuracy of the large number of drawings by Leonardo of the heart. Leonardo worked mostly with hearts of oxen, but was also able to have access to a few human hearts. It is however very unlikely that he ever saw a working heart. Thus, Wells argued, he had to deduce function from form working within the Galenic orthodox medicine of the time. In part Leonardo's understanding was helped by his knowledge of the behaviour of fluids flowing in pipes. Thus using some rather graphic photographs of hearts and comparing them with Leonardo's drawings, Wells was able to make the audience see what Leonardo saw and illustrated how medically accurate they were contrary to the views of some scholars who have suggested the contrary.

All this raised the question of why Leonardo did not discover the circulation of the blood driven by the heart as a pump, to which, other than the context of medical knowledge in which he was working, there is no satisfactory answer. It is clear that these unpublished drawings were unknown until the late eighteenth century (Harvey would certainly not have seen them while he was at Padua). But thereafter they have exercised influence on both artists and medics, not least the lecturer himself who is trying to get a new heart procedure named the 'Leonardo operation'. He also drew attention to the influence of this aspect of Leonardo's work on Edvard Munch who said that he wished to dissect the human soul in his paintings in the same way as Leonardo dissected the body.

Delivered in an engaging manner, Wells's lecture was a very good example of the way specialist scientific knowledge, usually inaccessible to historians, can be used to help understand aspects of the history of art. A better illustration of the purpose of the Leonardo da Vinci Society would be hard to find.

### The forthcoming symposium on 'Lives of Leonardo'

Organized by Rodney Palmer under the auspices of the Leonardo da Vinci Society, the 'Lives of Leonardo' symposium will be held at the Warburg Institute, Woburn Square, London on Friday 15 September, 2006, between 10.15 am and 6.00 pm. The symposium will explore biographical, fictional and psychological approaches to Leonardo. What light do these different narratives shed on Leonardo himself, and on the cultures in which they were written? Why has Leonardo's life story attracted so much attention? How did anecdotes about Leonardo affect Leonardesque art theory up to the eighteenth century? When and why were myths of Leonardo created, and in what ways have they biased responses to his art?

The provisional sequence of speakers will be: Charles Hope (Warburg Institute, London), on the sources and composition of Vasari's life of Leonardo; Paul Taylor (Warburg Institute, London), on Karel van Mander's selective translation of Vasari's life, and Dutch art theorists' responses to Van Mander's text; Rodney Palmer, on variations upon Vasari's characterization of Leonardo in Italian art literature up to Luigi Lanzi's history; Juliana Barone (St John's College, Oxford) on Raphael Du Fresne's life of 1651; Thomas Frangenberg (University of Leicester), on Felibien's 'Vie' and its influence on Leonardo studies in eighteenth- and nineteenth century Germany; Matthew Craske (Oxford Brookes University) on eighteenth-century English versions of Leonardo as empiricist; Rosamund Bartlett (European Humanities Research Centre, University of Oxford / University of Durham), on Dmitri Merezhkovsky's *Leonardo: The Forerunner* (Russian 1901, English 1902); and Bradley Collins (New School University, New York), on 'Freud's Leonardo: its Cultural Moment and its

Legacy'. Additionally, Martin Kemp (University of Oxford) intends to revisit his earlier contribution, 'Does Biography Matter', on Charles Nicholls' *Leonardo da Vinci: the flights of the mind* (London 2004) and other recent biographical and non-biographical approaches.

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### **Leonardesque News**

#### **Leonardo da Vinci and his *Treatise on Painting*: a digital archive**

Francesca Fiorani (University of Virginia) writes: The goal of the 'Leonardo Da Vinci and his *Treatise on Painting*' project is to create an innovative electronic archive focused on the *Treatise on Painting*, the text mainly responsible for the dissemination of Leonardo's thoughts on art in Renaissance and Baroque Europe. Printed for the first time in French and Italian in 1651, the *Treatise on Painting* circulated widely among Renaissance and Baroque artists, natural philosophers and writers before its publication, and indeed it survives in over forty manuscript copies currently dispersed in repositories around the globe.

Modern scholars who have access to Leonardo's original manuscripts know that the *Treatise on Painting* is only a selective and, in many respects, misleading compilation of Leonardo's precepts on painting. But famous readers of the past, such as Annibale Carracci, Nicholas Poussin, André Félibien and Galileo Galilei, who knew Leonardo's writings only through this text, regarded the *Treatise on Painting* as an original book by Leonardo.

The intricate history of the making, diffusion and use of this fundamental text for the dissemination of Leonardo's legacy remains tentative and basic questions are still unanswered. Why was the *Treatise on Painting* compiled in the first place? Why was it done the way it was? And who was it that compiled thus? A better understanding of Leonardo's legacy to art theory can emerge from the analysis of the invaluable, and thus far neglected, internal evidence provided by the pre-publication manuscripts of the *Treatise on Painting*, which are characterized by meaningful textual and graphic variations. The analysis of these manuscripts demands the crafting of innovative interpretative frameworks and methodological skills that integrate traditional scholarship in art history, philology and cultural

history with new research tools in information technology.

This project, directed by Francesca Fiorani and supported by the Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities (IATH) at the University of Virginia, is the first attempt to study the textual and visual evidence of the pre-publication manuscripts of the *Treatise on Painting* systematically, comprehensively, and comparatively. The electronic archive will present – both in facsimile and in a modern electronic edition – the first Italian and French editions of the *Treatise on Painting* (Paris, 1651), individual pre-publication manuscripts and other significant historical editions. It will also include, among other features, a search engine to connect texts and images of individual manuscripts to each other, to the printed editions, and to Leonardo's original notebooks; a search engine to analyze Leonardo's precepts topically; bibliographical resources on the history of the *Treatise on Painting*; topical essays on Leonardo's artistic theory; and references to relevant artistic writings of the period.

The main contribution of the electronic archive to scholarship will be in making it possible to document historically the diffusion of Leonardo's legacy in Renaissance and Baroque Europe from manuscript to manuscript, from scholar to scholar, and from city to city, up to the first publication of the *Treatise on Painting* in 1651.

The project was launched in 2004, when Francesca Fiorani was awarded a fellowship by IATH. In the past two years Fiorani and IATH have designed the overall design and structure of the archive, which is now moving to the implementation phase. The first materials to be available to the general public will be the Italian and French editions of 1651 and the manuscripts Belt 35 and Belt 36, thanks to an agreement signed between IATH and Special Collections at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) that granted to the project the rights to digitize and publish electronically manuscripts and volumes from the Elmer Belt Library of Vinciana at UCLA.

A research group, which includes Juliana Barone, Claire Farago, Cristina Favretto, Pauline Maguire, Anna Sconza, Victoria Steele and Carlo Vecce, contributes actively to the scholarly development and implementation of the project. The research group met in October 2005 in an international workshop sponsored by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, IATH, and the Carl H. and Martha Center for Art History at the University of Virginia.

#### **The Lettura Vinciana 2006**

The forty-sixth Lettura Vinciana was delivered at Vinci on Saturday 22 April 2006 by Jonathan K. Nelson. His title was 'Leonardo e la reinvenzione della figura femminile: Leda, Lisa e Maria'. In portraits, religious and mythological works, and in anatomical

studies, Leonardo explored and reinterpreted the female figure. The lecturer considered the poses and body types of women represented in Leonardo's paintings and drawings, in association with his writings on female decorum and on the correct ways of depicting women and girls. Nelson also discussed the representation of the *Standing Leda*, an early example of a painting that shows a completely nude female figure, as it reflects Leonardo's anatomical interests and his critical response to Michelangelo.

### **'Una piazza per Leonardo': a new layout for the Piazza dei Guidi in Vinci**

Since 1953 the Museo Leonardiano has occupied space in the Castello dei Conte Guidi in Vinci. In 2002 the Comune of Vinci decided to provide the Museo with more accommodation, expanding the exhibition space in the Palazzino Uzielli, which now houses the new entrance to the unified museum. It therefore became necessary to create alongside the Castello dei Conte Guidi a new, visually and symbolically forceful, image to provide the new museum access with a marked, recognizable identity. As a result of an international competition, the Piazza dei Guidi project was entrusted to Mimmo Paladino. His design enlivens the new urban space, which was inaugurated on 19 March 2006.

### **The problem of Leonardo's botanical illustrations**

*Dr E. Charles Nelson, FLS*, formerly horticultural taxonomist in the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin, writes: In the *Burlington Magazine* (September 1979), Dr Brian Morley quoted Professor Carlo Pedretti as writing that 'the problem of Leonardo's botanical illustrations is still to be assessed properly'. Morley set out to rectify this in a valuable but sparsely illustrated account of Leonardo's plants. Another botanist to be encouraged by Pedretti was Dr William A. Emboden; his studies appeared in 1973, 1976 (in *Hortulus aliquando*) and in his well-illustrated book, *Leonardo da Vinci on plants and gardens* (1987).

It might be considered, therefore, that there was no more to say; that all the plants have been identified and named; that Pedretti's 'problem' had been resolved. I thought so too, until I read Charles Nicholl's excellent biography, *The flights of the mind* (2004).

As is commonplace, scholars depend on the work of their predecessors and colleagues in other disciplines, taking their works on trust as irreproachable, especially when they are acknowledged specialists. I have done exactly this, often; for example, accepting that art historians provide accurate details of the paintings and manuscripts which are the basis of any account of

Leonardo's botanical illustrations. However, being a botanist with a broad range of experience of the cultivated and wild flora of Europe, I became uneasy when reading Nicholl's book because it seemed to contain anomalies that should have been eliminated a long time ago.

The recent flurry of books on Leonardo, including Nicholl's *The flights...* and Zöllner's *Leonardo da Vinci. The complete paintings and drawings* (2003), prompted me to take a critical look at Leonardo's plant drawings and also the identifications of the plants depicted in his paintings. This study, which continues, reveals that the botanists themselves have not helped, leaving both a confusion of nomenclature that non-botanists are unlikely to be able to untangle – and also quite a few misidentifications!

During the five centuries since Leonardo was working, plant nomenclature has changed radically and, in some ways, has been stabilized. Leonardo spoke and wrote in Mediaeval Italian. He did not use the Latin which is today the universal language for botanical nomenclature: plants should be denoted by their Latin names, not by vernacular ones which will have very limited application. Alas, it seems that art historians and botanists rarely communicate about nomenclature. Moreover, the need to ensure accurate, up-to-date scientific nomenclature does not seem to be fully appreciated in the art history community. Axiomatically, a wrong or out-of-date plant name may lead to other misrepresentations and errors.

It must not be assumed that when Leonardo himself used a name, the plant can be identified simply by looking up that name (or its translation) in a dictionary. For example, the drawing labelled by Leonardo 'Acero frutti di corallo' (Windsor, RL 12421) indubitably depicts *Viburnum opulus* (guelder rose), not a maple (*Acer*), despite his vernacular label; it is not even a member of the maple family Aceraceae. This was clearly stated by Morley and Emboden, so why do authors still state that it is a maple? Another misidentifications relates to the reed, which undoubtedly is *Arundo donax*, the giant reed that is common along rivers and streams in the Mediterranean. This is the plant held by Pleasure in the *Allegory of Pain and Pleasure* (Christ Church, Oxford). This gigantic reed is certainly *not* a weak, flimsy thing like *Phragmites australis* (common reed, formerly *Phragmites communis*). The giant reed, which Leonardo must have known, can beat olives from trees, and form beds and even clarinets and organ-pipes.

When we come to Leonardo's paintings the situation is, if anything, worse. One case is the flower held by the *Benois Madonna*, once identified as jasmine. Emboden suggested it was *Eruca sativa* (garden rocket) but it is not that either. Morley's identification, as *Matthiola incana* (Brompton stock), is most likely correct. This immediately disrupts the iconographic interpretation of the flower prefiguring the bitterness of the Passion and Cross: stock has very

sweetly-scented flowers and it is not eaten as a bitter herb. Was the Virgin signalling to the infant that his Cross would have a sweet perfume?

The greatest difficulties relate to *the Virgin of the Rocks*, where wishful thinking has often misinformed the identification of the plants. To complicate matters, the two well-attested versions in London and Paris have almost entirely different floras which suggests that any iconographic interpretation is going to be nonsense. Why should the floral symbolism of the two paintings be different? A particularly confusing example is ‘mapello’ which is equated with *Aconitum napellus* (common monkshood) – Leonardo recorded this in the Valsassina in the early 1490s. Nicholl tells us this plant is ‘at the left shoulder of the Virgin’ in the *Virgin of the Rocks*, but it certainly is not. In the Paris version, in which the plants are more accurately painted, the plant in that position is *Aquilegia vulgaris* (columbine); in the London version the relevant plant is flowerless and unidentifiable. Nicholl, using Emboden as his source, also stated that yellow-petalled *Hypericum* (St John’s wort) is to be seen ‘in the cornices of the rock’: neither the London nor the *Paris Virgin of the rocks* includes the flowers of any *Hypericum*.

My conclusion is that Pedretti’s lamentation that ‘the problem of Leonardo’s botanical illustrations is still to be assessed properly’ remains unresolved. The botanical work – identification, nomenclature – can, I believe, be accomplished especially given that images of almost all the relevant drawings and paintings are now available in the public domain. The more difficult part, ensuring that the non-botanical community understands and takes notice, is not in my hands. When one considers that authors from museum curators or art historians – but *not* ferret enthusiasts – persist in using an incorrect label “Lady with an ermine” for the portrait of Cecilia Gallerani, when the animal in her arms is beyond any shadow of doubt a ferret (a rather similar but very different animal), I am not sanguine about attaining universal accuracy with regards to Leonardo’s flora.

### Recently published books on Leonardo da Vinci

We have received for review a number of recent books on, or including reference to, Leonardo da Vinci. Perhaps the most important of these is a second edition of Martin Kemp’s now classic study, *Leonardo da Vinci. The Marvellous Works of Nature and Man*, published this year by Oxford University Press (the book was originally published by J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd, London, Melbourne and Toronto, 1981). To those of us for whom Kemp’s book has been our first point of reference over the past 25 years, it has worn well, but a new edition is much to be welcomed, and not just because the book has been out of print for some fifteen years. The author has recognized the need to make considerable revisions, which ‘range from simple

corrections and the updating of information to more substantial adjustments, both insertions and deletions, based on changes of mind or the emergence of new evidence’. Thus, the *Portrait of Ginevra de’ Benci* is now dated somewhat later than in the first edition, and the Vatican *St Jerome*, ‘a distinctly odd omission’ from the first edition, is now discussed (Kemp is ‘inclined to favour the traditional dating of c.1481’). Kemp describes his book as ‘a cultural biography, looking at the nature of [Leonardo’s] career, art and thought at key stages of his life... As a concerted attempt to make sense of the diversity of his work in terms of an inner unity within the narrative of his career’, Kemp writes, ‘this book still seems to stand alone amongst modern monographs’.

Rather different is *The Treasures of Leonardo da Vinci*, with a text by Matthew Landrus, published by Carlton Books Limited (a subsidiary of Andre Deutsch). The ‘landscape’ format book consists of a series of 28 double-page spreads dealing with themes, more or less chronologically ordered, pursued by Leonardo in his art, science and thought. Within the limitations imposed by such a structure, the text is interesting and perceptive, highlighting some unusual aspects of Leonardo’s output, such as his work for ‘Theatre and Fests’, and his interest in ‘Burning Mirrors’. The illustration captions are less reliable (Verrocchio’s *Colleoni Monument* is not in Bergamo, but in Venice) and often facile. The double-page spreads suffer from the publisher’s preoccupation with design: ‘30 rare removable facsimile documents’ are tipped in to pouches or envelopes stuck onto the pages, creating the same impression as a child’s pop-up book; titles are written in faux-Renaissance italic script; and illustrations, principally of Leonardo’s works, are cast apparently randomly across the pages. On the whole, the colour illustration is good, though the black chalk Neptune drawing (RL ) becomes Cambridge blue, and other chalk drawings are reproduced in sepia, as though in pen and ink. The book’s appearance suggests that it is intended for a youthful audience, but the text is sophisticated and scholarly.

Different again is the small-format *Leonardo da Vinci: the Complete Works*, by Simona Cremante (an English translation published by David & Charles Limited of the book published last year by Giunti Editore). Called a ‘small monograph’ by Carlo Pedretti in his introduction, this book could be described as pocket-sized, were it not an inch-and-a-half thick and much too heavy for a pocket. ‘It is addressed’, writes Pedretti, ‘to the general reader who is looking for an introduction to [Leonardo’s] work...’, but this is also ‘a book that even specialists can appreciate as a practical, reliable work of reference’. The division into five sections, ‘The artist’s life’, ‘The paintings’, ‘The drawings’, ‘The collections’ and ‘The manuscripts’ discourages interrelation between drawing and painting, for example, or between artistic and scientific pursuit. Oddly, the section on ‘The drawings’ covers drawings in Italy, Europe and America, while the

section on 'The collections' includes the Codex Atlanticus (dissociating this from the rest of the manuscripts) and the 'Windsor Collection' dividing the Royal Library drawings from the rest of the drawings reproduced. The colour illustrations are small, because of the book's format (although there are many details), but mostly of good quality. The text is clear and unexceptional; especially useful perhaps are the introductory discussions of the manuscripts.

Mention should be made of the reissue (by Edizioni Sylvestre Bonnard of Milan) of a classic study from the beginning of the twentieth century, Alessandro Luzio and Rodolfo Renier's *La coltura e le relazioni letterarie di Isabella d'Este Gonzaga*. The original series of articles published between 1899 and 1903 in the *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* was issued in book form in 1903, but this publication is now very rare. Although Leonardo da Vinci features only peripherally in this great book, it is essential for a full understanding of the cultural and intellectual ambitions of Isabella d'Este, and therefore of her rather under-fulfilled artistic relationship with Leonardo.

Finally, *Leonardo's Machines: Da Vinci's Inventions Revealed*, edited by Mario Taddei and Edoardo Zanon, text by Domenico Laurenza (translated by Joan M. Reifsnnyder); David and Charles Books, (F+W Publications Inc. Cincinnati), 2006 (originally published by Giunti, 2005). *Caroline Brooke writes*: In this book computer graphics give tangible form to more than thirty of Leonardo's machines. Leonardo's descriptions and sketches are morphed into clear and three-dimensional representations that illustrate the operating mechanisms and simulated functions of each machine. Each mechanism is introduced by Domenico Laurenza in a clear and informative manner, and accompanied by high quality reproductions of key manuscript pages and drawings. In addition to the more famous flying machines, weapons of war and industrial machines, lesser-known inventions are also included, such as musical instruments from the Codex Atlanticus. The visual interpretations created by Taddei and Zanon under the guidance of Carlo Pedretti provide fascinating insights regarding the working mechanisms of the machines, some of which have hitherto been poorly understood despite their fame. Moreover, the computer-generated images provide a detailed breakdown of each device, isolating all the individual components and representing each machine as a 'kit of parts', enabling viewers to apply their imagination to assemble each mechanism. Overall, the approach is very much in the spirit of Leonardo, taking as it does a three-dimensional approach to create dynamic images in a similar mode to his own drawings. The book will appeal not only to a young audience by bringing Leonardo's work into the remit of those accustomed to video games and playstations, but to all those who are fascinated by Leonardo's technology and keen to understand the functional aspects of his designs.

## **Universal Leonardo's programme of exhibitions between March 2006 and January 2007**

Funded by the Council of Europe, the Universal Leonardo initiative is the largest series of linked exhibitions, in five cities across Europe, ever devoted to Leonardo da Vinci. Each exhibition will celebrate and explore a different aspect of Leonardo's work and thought. The forthcoming exhibition in London is fully outlined below; that at the Gallerie degli Uffizi in Florence, *The Mind of Leonardo: the Universal Genius at Work*, opened in March and will remain on display until 7 January 2007 (see below for a review of this exhibition). The 'Oxford Trail' presents four exhibitions: that in the University of Oxford Botanic Garden, on *Leonardo's Plants*, opened on 1 April and will close on 30 September; three more, *Leonardo and the Mathematical Arts* at the Museum of the History of Science, *Leonardo and Milan: Drawings from the Guise Collection* at Christ Church Picture Gallery, and *Imagining Leonardo* at the Ashmolean Museum, will all be on view from 9 August to 5 November this year. See below for more detail on the Oxford exhibitions. The exhibitions on *Leonardo da Vinci and Associates: Sculpture and Drawing* at the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest, and on *Leonardo: the Madonna with the Carnation* at the Alte Pinakothek, Munich, will open on 1 September; the Budapest exhibition will be on display for two months, the Munich show for three months.

Universal Leonardo is also preparing to launch a new, enhanced website which has been created to support all aspects of the initiative and to provide a long-lasting educational resource. Using cutting-edge technology, the site explores the core concepts of Leonardo's work and the connections he drew between art and science, through a series of trails graphically illustrated on an interactive timeline. It also provides essays on aspects of Leonardo's work and thought, a gallery of more than one hundred images, an introductory bibliography and links to other websites. It may be accessed at <[www.universalleonardo.org](http://www.universalleonardo.org)>.

### **The exhibition at the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence: *La mente di Leonardo: Nel laboratorio del Genio Universale* (28 March 2006 – 7 January 2007)**

*Dr J.V. Field writes*: Some years ago, in search of mathematical figures, I spent a day turning the pages of a facsimile of the *Codice Atlantico*, which contains Leonardo drawings on various subjects, largely scientific or technological. The cumulative effect was the visual equivalent of being eaten alive, of being absorbed into someone else. A few days later I recognized something similar at an exhibition of drawings made by the insane. The difference seemed to be purely technical: the takeover of my visual system was the same except that Leonardo was incomparably the better draughtsman. The viewer was seeing private worlds. The insane merely did not, or

could not, protect themselves; Leonardo had intended his drawings for no one but himself. I would not say I had entered the Mind of a Genius – let alone a ‘Universal Genius’ – but the experience is a fair indication that I am not an ideal reviewer for the exhibition of drawings and models currently on show at the Uffizi. I tended to look at the drawings rather than the models.

The basic premise of the exhibition is that understanding of Leonardo’s mind benefits by explanation in the form of solid models, sometimes working models, or computer animations, of what Leonardo drew. Sometimes I found this to be true. After a display of tiny sketches, frameworks swung to and fro on the screen and the huge bronze Sforza horse emerged (though one rather lost the sense of scale). For machines of all kinds, the solid model would have been the next stage in the design process, had the objects concerned actually been made, so there was a historical interest in seeing such models. In other cases, such as anatomical models, the usefulness was only explanatory, the models serving instead of a mass of words.

There is an excellent, abundantly illustrated catalogue, edited by Paolo Galluzzi, which contains detailed and learned essays by recognized experts including Carlo Pedretti and Paolo Galluzzi himself. Paolo Galluzzi (ed.), *La mente di Leonardo: Nel laboratorio del Genio Universale* [exhibition catalogue], Florence: Giunti, 2006.

*Thereza Wells adds:* One of the most illuminating contributions to the ‘La Mente di Leonardo’ exhibition is the section devoted to the scientific examination of the *Adoration of the Magi*. Located apart from the main exhibition downstairs, this exhibition includes video footage of some of the examination results, as well as three of Leonardo’s drawings which are shown in a room adjacent to the permanent gallery which houses the Verrocchio workshop *Baptism*, Leonardo’s *Annunciation*, and his *Adoration of the Magi*. Accompanying them is his *St Jerome*, on loan from the Vatican, one of the star features of the exhibition.

The scientific examination of the *Adoration* was undertaken during 2001 and 2002 by Maurizio Seracini of Editech, Florence, an independent laboratory situated just across the river from the Uffizi. The series of comprehensive examinations included images taken under ultra-violet light, x-ray radiography and infrared reflectography. It gets more complicated. Samples were taken, a 3-D rendering of the surface of the panel was made, and x-ray fluorescence (xrf) and micro raman spectroscopy examinations, amongst others, were also undertaken. The data from these examinations have provided us with a wealth of information to interpret and to instruct us about Leonardo’s working practice. However, they have not come without some controversy. For example an analysis of the state of the wooden support has led Seracini to conclude that the painting, unfinished by

Leonardo when he left Florence for Milan, was some decades later painted over in many parts. He believes that the quickly applied dark brown brushstrokes are not by Leonardo.

Controversial conclusions aside, a short movie shows the sometimes dramatic results of the infrared reflectography exam used to reveal the underdrawing. Amongst the crowds of figures and objects filling the scene that are readily visible on the surface are a number of images later covered over. These include men at work at the top of the second set of stairs, more clearly depicted battling horsemen, and a rocky outcrop where the Virgin’s feet rest. The movie also very usefully explains the layout of Leonardo’s perspectival map of the composition based on the Uffizi’s Study for the *Adoration*. This drawing is one of three Uffizi drawings present in the room which also include the Landscape drawing dated 1473 by the young Leonardo, and his ‘Study for a Madonna and Child with a Cat’. It is a great pleasure to see this trio of drawings intimately assembled, though one could miss them if one were paying too much attention to the movie.

A further great pleasure is the joining of *the St Jerome* to the other early works in the Uffizi collection, making this group the largest representation of Leonardo’s early work anywhere. It is a wonderful opportunity to see the *St Jerome*, also unfinished, a few feet away from the *Adoration*. Both paintings were executed during roughly the same time of Leonardo’s first Florentine period and both reveal moments in the artist’s creative process. The *St Jerome* has also undergone a series of examinations, most recently discussed last July (L. Syson and R. Billinge, Leonardo’s use of Underdrawing in the ‘Virgin of the Rocks’ in the National Gallery and ‘St. Jerome’ in the Vatican, *The Burlington Magazine* July 2005, pp.450-463) and worth a read before seeing this exhibition.

***Leonardo da Vinci: Experience, Experiment and Design: a forthcoming exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, from 14 September 2006 to 7 January 2007***

Featuring sixty drawings from British collections, some of which have never before been seen on public display, this exhibition will provide an unrivalled insight into the mind of Leonardo da Vinci. Also on display will be the Codex Forster (London, Victoria & Albert Museum) and sheets, separated from their binding, from the little-known Arundel Codex (London, British Museum). The exhibition explores for the first time how Leonardo thought on paper: how he used paper as a laboratory for thinking. Further to cast light on his vision, the drawings and notebook pages will be complemented by several large-scale models of his designs, and by sophisticated computer animations. These animations will enlarge the intricate diagrams that describe Leonardo’s thought processes,

offering visitors a new way of understanding his imagination and vision.

The exhibition will be divided into four themed displays. 'The Mind's Eye' will, inter alia, explore Leonardo's researches into the relationship of the eye to the brain, and into the proportional relationships between parts of the human figure; 'The Lesser and Greater Worlds' will illustrate Leonardo's belief that the human body contains within itself in miniature all the operations of the world and of the universe; 'Making Things' will focus on the range of tasks that Leonardo undertook for his court patrons, such as his water clocks and fountains and other entertaining inventions; and 'Force' highlights Leonardo's fascination with the applications of force in nature, and will examine Leonardo as an engineer and his investigations into the possibility of man-powered flight.

Curated by Martin Kemp and Thereza Wells, this show is one of the series exhibitions being mounted across Europe under the auspices of Universal Leonardo (see below).

### **The 'Oxford Trail': *Leonardo and Oxford***

At the Ashmolean, Britain's oldest museum, the exhibition *Imagining Leonardo* (16 August – 5 November 2006) will have at its core a group of Leonardo drawings and will focus on how his work was visualized and interpreted by artists and collectors over the centuries. Other parts of the collection such as the famous painting, *The Forest Fire*, by Piero di Cosimo, will be highlighted to show how other artists explored Leonardo's ideas on art.

At the Botanic Garden (one of Europe's oldest Botanic Gardens) *Leonardo's Plants* will offer activities for all the family focused on Leonardo's investigation of different species of plants. For younger visitors there will be a trail on which they will find examples of plants studied and drawn by Leonardo (1 April – 30 September 2006)

The collections at Christ Church Picture Gallery are founded on the major bequest of old master paintings and drawings from the 18<sup>th</sup>-century military figure, General John Guise: this includes an impressive group of drawings by Leonardo and many by his close pupils and followers. The exhibition *Leonardo and Milan: Drawings from the Guise Collection* (9 August – 5 November 2006) will look at Leonardo's artistic achievements and practice.

The Museum of the History of Science will host an exhibition on *Leonardo and the Mathematical Arts* (16 August – 22 October 2006). Instruments for astronomy, time-telling, surveying and drawing illustrate the mathematical culture of Italy in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Leonardo would have been taken for a 'mathematician' as the term was understood at the time. The display will show what this meant in the period, and how Leonardo both worked within and moved beyond the accepted understanding of 'the

mathematical arts.' The museum's outstanding collection of mathematical instruments from that period will help to illustrate the innovative achievements of the time.

In addition, at Magdalen College, Oxford, the copy of Leonardo's *Last Supper*, attributed to a close Milanese follower of Leonardo, Giovan Pietro Rizzoli, called Giampietrino (active c.1495-1549), is a remarkable and intriguing early version on canvas of Leonardo's composition. Purchased for the Royal Academy teaching collection in 1821, this large painting is on loan to Magdalen College, where it hangs high in the ante-chapel so that the perspective works successfully, and it is in an appropriate religious setting in a building that dates from 1474-80.

### **A Leonardo da Vinci Day School at Christ Church, Oxford**

To coincide with the group of Leonardo exhibitions in Oxford and London, Jacqueline Thalmann, Curator of Paintings at the Christ Church Picture Gallery, and of the exhibition of Leonardo drawings there, will chair a Day School on Saturday 23 September 2006. This will offer an insight into the life and work of Leonardo da Vinci as well as the after-life of his work. Talks will be given by Professor Martin Kemp (University of Oxford; on 'Experience, Experiment and Design – How Leonardo thought on paper'), Dr Catherine Whistler (Ashmolean Museum; on 'The Afterlife of Leonardo: Collecting Leonardo Drawings in England') and by Dr Juliana Barone (University of Oxford; on 'The painter's power of creation: Leonardo's drawings and paintings')

The Study Day coincides with several exhibitions concentrating on Leonardo da Vinci. There will be time during the day to visit some of them, or participants can make a weekend of it and stay overnight in Christ Church. Please contact Ms Alex Webb (01865 276174, or at her email address [Alexandra.webb@chch.ox.ac.uk](mailto:Alexandra.webb@chch.ox.ac.uk)) to book and to inquire about the possibilities. Participants of the Study Day are also invited to join a private tour through the Leonardo exhibition at Christ Church led by the curator of the exhibition on Sunday morning 24 September. The tour is included in the price but needs to be booked.

### **A travelling exhibition of Royal Library drawings**

As part of the celebration of the Queen's eightieth birthday this year, an exhibition of ten Leonardo da Vinci drawings in the Royal Library, Windsor Castle, will be mounted at four venues in the UK. It is currently on display at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery, Exeter; it then travels to Aberdeen Art Gallery (until 28 August), to Leeds City Art Gallery (until 19 November) and finally to the National Museum & Art Gallery, Cardiff, until

February 2007. The exhibition includes well-known sheets such as the *Study of a woman's hands* (in metalpoint with white heightening on pale buff prepared paper), and also a number of sheets that have very seldom been displayed in recent decades. These have been selected to show the range of interests that Leonardo pursued through the medium of drawing at all stages of his career.

### **Mrs Mary Keele**

We have learned with sadness of the death at the end of March 2006 of Mrs Mary Keele, aged 89, the widow of the Society's founder, Dr Kenneth Keele, who himself died in 1987. Mary Keele was a great supporter of her husband's work on Leonardo da Vinci's medical work, typing and re-typing his many books and lectures. She was also a loyal supporter of the Society, serving on the committee for several years after Kenneth Keele's death.

### ***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. An electronic copy of this *Newsletter* will be sent to everyone who has requested it. If you have requested an email copy but have not received it by the time that you read this, please could you convey to the Secretary (at <A.Mann@gre.ac.uk>) your current email address either in case he misread it or if it has changed.

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/hafvm/leonardo>>

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