

Leonardo da Vinci Society Newsletter

editor: Francis Ames-Lewis

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Recent and forthcoming events

The Annual General Meeting and Annual Lecture, 2010.

The Society's Annual General Meeting 2010 will be held on Friday 7 May 2010 at 5.30 pm, in the Kenneth Clark Lecture Theatre at the Courtauld Institute of Art, Somerset House. It will be followed by the Annual Lecture at 6.00 pm. Members of the Society may have read in the Press reports of the discovery and authentication of a hitherto unknown portrait by Leonardo da Vinci. For the forthcoming Annual Lecture Professor Martin Kemp and Dr Pascal Cotte will give an account of their research, both historical and scientific, on this newly-discovered portrait.

The Society's forthcoming conference on 'Approaches to art and Science since Berenson'

Members of the Society will know that this conference, originally scheduled to be held on Friday 13 November 2009, had to be postponed due to our inability thus far to secure the funding necessary to cover the expenses of participants coming to Oxford from abroad. It is now intended that the conference will take place on Friday 22 October 2010, at St. John's College Oxford and the Ashmolean Museum. We are actively seeking the finance needed. Entitled 'Approaches to art and science after Berenson', the conference will address the results of forty years of progress in approaches to the histories of art and science. The main reason for this conference is to honour Emeritus Professor Martin Kemp, a former Hon. President of the Leonardo da Vinci Society, who retired from the University of Oxford in 2008. The conference is being organized by Dr Matthew Landrus and Dr Juliana Barone, both former doctoral students of Martin Kemp.



At issue is the role of Professor Kemp's research and collaborations in bringing together historians of art and science (as well as artists and scientists) in an interdisciplinary dialogue that is now considered a crucial discourse in both fields of historical inquiry. Essays presented at the conference will be published in a monograph of the same title in 2011. Reference to Bernard Berenson (1865-1959) in the title evokes a contrast between foundations of the history of art favoured until as late as the 1970s, and the interdisciplinary foundations of the field today. In a number of ways, speakers invited to the conference have collaborated with Professor Kemp on studies of the sciences of optics, anatomy, natural history, art theory, and technology during key episodes from the Renaissance to the twentieth century. Increasingly this collective body of work has addressed issues of visualisation, modelling and representation common to science and art.

Professor Kemp has summed up these approaches as addressing "structural intuitions," a way of understanding shared starting points in art and science. A pioneer in this approach, Professor Kemp is now joined by numerous colleagues in Europe, the US and Asia who are also devoted to what he calls a "New History of the Visual," which embraces the wide range of artefacts from science, technology and the fine and applied arts that have been devised to articulate our visual relationship to the physical world. He notes that "a scientific diagram or computer graphic model of a molecule is as relevant to this new history as a painting by Michelangelo". History of Art degree programmes have been slow to adopt these approaches over the past forty years, though the significance of this multidisciplinary role of the field is now the standard at research universities worldwide. Moreover, there are no significant monographs that address the results of this combined approach to the histories of art and

science. Now, at Professor Kemp's retirement, there is an opportunity to draw needed attention to this development in the fields of the histories of art and science.

We hope that the speakers will include: Professor Claire Farago (University of Colorado), on the use and abuse of the early modern art treatise; Dr Carmen Bambach (Curator, Department of Drawings and Prints, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), on the technology of drawing in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; Dr J.V. Field (Birkbeck, University of London), on 'Panofsky on Perspective'; Francis Wells (Papworth Hospital, Cambridge), on accuracy in Leonardo's anatomical studies; Professor Domenico Laurenza (University of Florence), on sixteenth-century anatomical drawings and Leonardo's comparative anatomy; and Professor Philip Steadman (University College, London), on Renaissance and early modern optical tools. Finally, David Hockney, CH, RA, will offer some 'Reflections on the Lost Techniques of Old Masters'.

We hope that you will want to join us at the conference: please ensure that the new date, 22 October 2010, is firmly recorded in your diary now.

Leonardesque news

A conference entitled “1952” *Leonardo e la cultura dell'Europa nel dopoguerra*

This international conference, organized by Romano Nanni and Maurizio Torrini, was held in Florence (Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento) and Vinci (Biblioteca Leonardiana) on 29-31 October 2009. In 1952-53, at the time of the 500th anniversary of Leonardo da Vinci's birth, there was a flowering of scholarly initiatives involving a range of fields of intellectual endeavour, primarily in Europe and the United States. The recent conference was designed to contribute to the reconstruction of this delicate period of European culture since 1952, focusing on the study of Leonardo da Vinci. Presentations were gathered into sessions that corresponded with the main fields of interest that characterized this period of scholarship: 'Filosofia e storiografia', 'Leonardo nella storia della

scienza e della tecnica', Leonardo tra estetica e storia dell'arte', 'Lingua, scrittura e letteratura', and finally 'Il Cinquecentenario fuori d'Europa'.

In the first session Romano Nanni (Biblioteca Leonardiana) spoke on 'Il concetto di Rinascimento e Leonardo: Lucien Febvre, Eugenio Garin, Erwin Panofsky', Fabio Frosini (Università degli Studi di Urbino) on 'Cesare Luporini e la mente di Leonardo. Meccanica e scienza della pittura tra temporalità e spazializzazione', Ginevra de Majo (Université de la Sorbonne – Paris IV) on 'André Chastel e il "mito leonardiano": la storia dell'arte nella storia della cultura', and Stéphane Toussaint (CNRS/CESR, Tours) on 'Leonardo tra Umanesimo ed antiumanesimo'. In the session on 'Leonardo nella storia della scienza e della cultura', Maurizio Torrini (Università degli Studi Federico II, Naples) spoke on 'La storia della scienza e Leonardo', Gianni Micheli (Università degli Studi di Milano) on 'La meccanica di Leonardo nella storiografia', Sven Dupré (Centre for the History of Science, Ghent University) on 'Ronchi's Leonardo. Leonardo's Optics then and now', Oreste Trabucco (Università degli Studi Federico II, Naples) on 'Anatomia, fisiologia, patologia. Lo stato degli studi', and Luisa Dolza (CDHTE-CNAM, Paris) on 'La storia della tecnologia: una riflessione sulla storiografia dagli anni Trenta agli anni Cinquanta del Novecento'.

The third session, 'Leonardo tra estetica e storia dell'arte' comprised papers given by Pietro C. Marani (Politecnico di Milano) on 'Leonardo nella storia dell'arte, nella critica artistica e nel restauro', Jean Guillaume (Université de Paris-Sorbonne and CESR, Tours) on 'Léonard et l'architecture française: le tournant du congrès 1952', Francesco Galluzzi (Accademia delle Belle Arti, Palermo) on 'Utilizzare Leonardo nel 1952: tra estetica e critica d'arte', Annalisa Perissa (Accademia, Venice) on 'Wittkower e la riscoperta dell'Uomo Vitruviano', Frank Fehrenback (Harvard University) on 'A new paradigm: The Deluge, Clark, Gantner (and Jaspers)', Matthew Landrus (Wolfson College, Oxford) on 'Re-reading Heydenreich's positivist assessment of Leonardo's achievement', Martin Kemp (Trinity College, Oxford) on 'Gombrich's Leonardo', and Antonio Natali (Uffizi, Florence) on 'La lezione tradita'.

In the session on 'Lingua, scrittura e letteratura', Carlo Vecce (Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale") spoke on 'Leonardo nella critica e nella letteratura italiana di metà Novecento', Anna Sconza (Université de Clermont-Ferrand) on 'Ripristinare le fonti. Ricognizione degli studi sulla tradizione manoscritta leonardesca', and Massimo Fanfani (Università degli Studi di Firenze) on 'Augusto Marinoni e gli "Appunti grammaticali e lessicali di Leonardo da Vinci"'. Finally, the last two speakers were Nadejda Podzemskaya (CNRS/EHESS, Paris) on 'L'opera di Aleksandr Gabricevskij all'origine degli studi leonardiana in URSS' and Carmen Bambach (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) on 'Leonardo in USA tra storia dell'arte e storia della scienza'.

Leonardo da Vinci, Hand of a Genius, an exhibition at the High Museum, Atlanta Georgia

Curated by Gary Radke (Syracuse University), the exhibition entitled *Leonardo da Vinci: Hand of a Genius* opened in Atlanta GA on 6 October 2009. In connection with this exhibition, an interdisciplinary study-day on 'Leonardo and Sculpture' was held on Saturday 7 November. This event was introduced thus: 'Leonard and Sculpture will examine a select group of original drawings by Leonardo da Vinci and works of sculpture associated with him, his teacher Andrea del Verrocchio, and his followers. Speakers will focus attention on three master drawings indisputably by the master and three sculptural works intriguingly but problematically associated with Leonardo, all featured in the High Museum of Art's exhibition *Leonardo da Vinci: Hand of a Genius*. This dynamic and interactive study day will provide important new insights into Leonardo's creative process and sculptural thinking, as well as reveal how his highly original works depended upon and inspired the work of others.' Speakers included Martin Kemp (University of Oxford), Julian Brooks (Associate Curator of Drawings, the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles), Annalisa Perissa (Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice), Shelley Sturman (Head of Object Conservation, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC), Annamaria Giusti (Palazzo

Pitti, Florence), and Gary Radke (Syracuse University). Sessions were chaired by Carmen Bambach (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) and Andrew Butterfield (Andrew Butterfield Fine Arts, New York).

Leonardo a Milano: San Giovanni Battista, an exhibition at the Palazzo Marino, Milan

From 27 November to 27 December 2009 Leonardo's *St John the Baptist* (Paris, Louvre) is on display in a special monographic exhibition, curated by Valeria Merlini and Daniela Storti, at the Palazzo Marino in Milan. A series of didactic panels, images and video provide information of value in understanding this enigmatic, late painting. It is only the second time the painting has travelled to Italy: it was first exhibited in Milan in a Leonardo da Vinci exhibition mounted there in 1939.

Leonardo da Vinci 'ANATOMY TO ROBOTS', an exhibition at the Da Vinci Pavilion, Southbank, Melbourne, Australia

The first showing of a new exhibition created by Teknoart S.R.L. of Florence is currently open in Melbourne, Australia, until 31 January 2010. The exhibition falls into three parts, Leonardo the anatomist, the scientist, the artist. Anatomical drawings by Leonardo are reproduced and provide the raw material for a series of 'startlingly real' models created by the Florentine special effects company, CreaFx. 'Leonardo the scientist' is illustrated with a series of models based on Leonardo drawings for robots, mechanical arms, wings, the flying machine and other mechanisms explored by Leonardo, models created by the Artisans of Florence, Teknoart S.R.L. In the 'Leonardo the artist' section are displayed a series of copies of paintings by Leonardo da Vinci, painted by Antonio de Vito. These include a reconstruction of the 'Fight for the Standard', the central part of the *Battle of Anghiari*, and de Vito's new version of the *Last Supper*. The latter undertaking is a work in progress, to be completed as the exhibition tours the world.

Further news on attempts to reveal Leonardo da Vinci's Battle of Anghiari

In his attempt to obtain permission from the Florentine authorities to undertake further work in scanning Vasari's *Battle of Marciano*, which in 1563 was painted over Leonardo's *Battle of Anghiari* in the Sala del Cinquecento in the Palazzo Vecchio, Dr Maurizio Seracini has developed two new non-destructive scanning techniques. The first piece of instrumentation can detect neutrons that bounce back after colliding with hydrogen atoms, in which the organic materials, such as linseed oil and resin, experimentally used by Leonardo for the *Battle of Anghiari* are rich. The second can detect the distinctive *gamma*-rays produced when neutrons collide with atoms of different chemical elements. Here the aim is to locate the sulphur in Leonardo's ground layer, the tin in his white priming layer, and the chemicals in the pigments (such as mercury in vermilion and copper in azurite blue). These neutron-beam devices have been developed with help from physicists in the United States of America and in Dutch and Russian universities, and from Italy's nuclear energy agency. The hope is that by using these techniques a colour 'map' of any painting that lies beneath Vasari's fresco can be revealed. If such a 'map' were to resemble the *Battle of Anghiari*, further evidence would exist to encourage the authorities to sanction further operations, perhaps including removal of Vasari's fresco. First, however, permission has to be given by the Mayor of Florence, Matteo Renzi, for the scanning devices to be deployed in the Sala del Cinquecento.

The Leonardo da Vinci Society

The Secretary is very grateful for the comments and suggestions made by members and very much regrets that she 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/hafvm/leonardo>>

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