

An Interview with Leonardo Da Vinci

Our life is made by the death of others; I have not been learning how to live, I have been learning how to die.

I remember very little of Anchiano when I was born in 1452, but my memories of Vinci are clearer, such as my father, Piero and my mother, Catarina and the small church there. However, when I was 14 years old, my family and I moved to Florence, where I received the best education possible there, for which Florence was the intellectual and artistic centre of Italy. I soon became the apprentice of Andrea del Verrocchio and began to experiment with painting in oils, soon becoming a young painter. In 1481, I painted The Adoration of the Magi. This was one of the first large paintings that I created, and although I didn't realise it at the time, my painting skills were far above that of the other European painters. My similarity to Verrocchio could be seen, yet I tried to give it my own touch. My realism and new approach to composition gave my pieces an atmosphere never before seen.

During my early years as a painter, I began to experiment with mechanical studies, science and anatomy and so on, using my drawing skills as a key way of enhancing my understanding. Some may say that I was the best scientist in Europe, above all my contemporaries. I studied the circulation of the blood and the anatomy of the human eye, the moon, tides, continent formation, hydrodynamics and aerodynamics – areas of research that have found fruition today, five hundred years later. However, my notes and most of my technical work never found conclusion, and it seems were eventually deciphered in the 16th century. My only regret is that no one ever thought it suitable to publish them, they would have revolutionised the era, or perhaps brought the bearer the criticism I fortunately avoided.

In 1482 I moved to Milan as an independent painter, as well as an architect to the Duke of Milan and it was here I painted The Last Supper. It painted it as a traditional theme in an innovative way. But although it became one of my most famous and mysterious works, yet I felt there was a considerable difference between this work, which really was a “job” and other works I painted out of enjoyment.

After 18 years of constant work, I returned to Florence to paint and become an architect for the duke of Romagna, and during my time here, I painted my most famous surviving portrait, La Gioconda or the Mona Lisa. This was my most famous painting and it was the one that I enjoyed the most. The atmosphere of the piece, the woman behind the smile, the smoky haze, and the contrast of light make it the world's most famous painting. It was a work of my own; I strove to go against the established norms. As I often say, the most praiseworthy form of painting is that which most resembles that which it imitates. Michelangelo and Raphael were happy to paint for the Pope; they didn't really care to paint for themselves.

Later, in 1506, I travelled to Milan again to be the court painter for Louis XII of France, and during the years I divided my time between Milan and Florence, before finally travelling to Amboise, where my life finally came to its end. I never had any children, or much of a relationship. The art of procreation and the members employed therein are so repulsive, that if it were not for the beauty of the faces, nature would

lose the human species and the aspect of marriage is like putting your hand into a bag of snakes in the hope of pulling out an eel.

I can say, that I certainly had the potential to influence the entire world, and in many ways I have, the Mona Lisa is the most famous painting ever, and my name has become synonymous with excellence. I can say that I had researched and investigated into many scientific areas that today you find impossible to live without. For I have been impressed with the urgency of doing. Knowing is not enough, we must apply. Being willing is not enough. We must do. That was the essence of my work and my life. It has long since come to my attention that people of accomplishment rarely sat back and let things happen to them. They went out and happened to things.