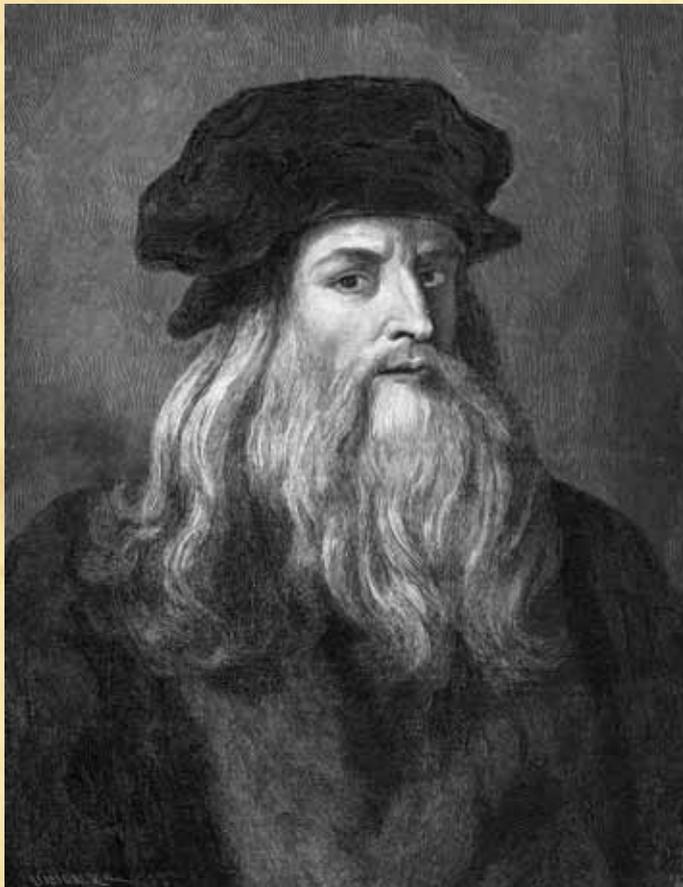


The Jewel in the Hub

Leonardo da Vinci

Starting out

Leonardo was born in 1452 near the village of Vinci, close to Florence (which, today, is part of Italy). As a 15-year-old boy, he was sent to Florence to work for Andrea del Verrocchio. Verrocchio was a sculptor, painter and goldsmith, and as Verrocchio's apprentice, Leonardo got a good introduction to many different types of art.



Leonardo's links

Leonardo began to make a name for himself in Florence, but he wanted to move on and learn more. In 1482 he took a job with the Duke of Milan, as a 'painter and engineer'. That sounds like an odd combination of jobs today, but in Leonardo's time it might not have been so surprising! In those days, the arts and sciences were not seen as completely different things. People saw lots of links between arts such as painting, and sciences such as medicine and engineering.

Leonardo himself helped to develop those links, as he realised that the same skills could help someone be a good painter *and* a good scientist. Leonardo looked carefully at the world around him and made sense of it through pictures as well as through words.

It's not surprising, then, that Leonardo became famous both as a great artist and as a scientist and inventor

Leonardo's art

Famous paintings

Amazingly, although he was one of the most important artists of all time, there are only 17 surviving paintings which are definitely by Leonardo. However, even though there are not many of them, Leonardo's paintings are among the most famous and best-loved



pictures in the world. His famous paintings include *The Last Supper*, *The Mona Lisa* and *The Madonna of the Rocks* - all of which can still be seen today. Leonardo also worked as a sculptor throughout his life, though sadly none of his sculptures have survived.

Fact **Lost paintings?**

Leonardo may have created many more paintings - paintings which he started but didn't finish, or which were destroyed or lost over time. Maybe there are more pictures by Leonardo out there, waiting to be found!

A window on the world

As well as paintings and sculptures, Leonardo also drew beautiful and detailed pictures of the world around him. Leonardo recorded his ideas in notebooks, which he illustrated with thousands of sketches. Sometimes his drawings helped him prepare for a painting, sometimes they were a way of looking closely at the natural world and understanding it, and sometimes they were designs and sketches of real or imaginary inventions.



Science and inventions

Finding out how the world works

Leonardo's notebooks are full of scientific drawings of the world. He liked to draw familiar everyday things

such as a flower, or the way water flows around rocks. He also drew pictures of things which would have been much more difficult to see, such as a baby growing inside its mother's womb.

Impressive inventions

Leonardo also worked on designs for a range of mechanical tools, such as screw threads, gears, hydraulic jacks etc. He was fascinated by machines that could move, and drew up plans for a flying machine, a tank and a 'helical airscrew' that is a bit like a modern helicopter.

How Leonardo still influences us

Amazing abilities

Leonardo has always fascinated people because of his amazing range of abilities - from painting and sculpture to science and invention. He loved learning and discovering things, and throughout his life he continued to create, observe and explore the world around him.

The legend lives on...

In recent years, people have become very interested in Leonardo's notebooks, uncovering lots of ideas that seem to look ahead to modern inventions (like Leonardo's tank and helicopter). And people who love art will never get tired of looking at Leonardo's paintings and drawings.

Some more websites to explore

- An overview of Leonardo's life and some of his main achievements:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/science/leonardo/>
- A site where you can look at lots of Leonardo's drawings in detail:
<http://www.drawingsofleonardo.org/>
- A useful collection of links to articles, images etc. related to Leonardo:
http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/leonardo_da_vinci.html