

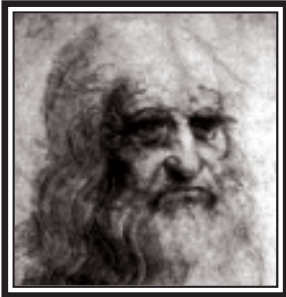
Artists' Monthly

The Newsletter for Students of Art

Volume I, Number 1

September

Leonardo da Vinci



A Letter From The Artist

Dear Student,

As a young artist you have wonderful discoveries waiting for you. I enjoy doing artwork very much. When I was a young man of 17 my family and I moved to Florence in our home country of Italy. I studied art, engineering, geometry and architecture. It took 7 years of studying art before I signed my first painting. It is *The Annunciation* and shows the angel telling Mary that she will be the mother of Jesus.

In addition to my artwork, I design buildings and military equipment, I study animals, and I am working on a design for a flying machine! Much of this work involves drawing. I draw the animals I study, and I draw my ideas for new inventions. Once when I was a little naughty I even designed a way to make and launch stinkbombs! (I did not *do* it, however!) I hope you enjoy learning about art.

Yours very truly,

L. da Vinci

Who Was Leonardo?

He was a painter, musician, sculptor, writer, mathematician, inventor, scientist, engineer, designer of buildings (architect) and great thinker. Does it seem possible that one person could be all these things? Leonardo (*lay-o-NAR-do*) da Vinci (*VIN-chee*) was. He was born in 1452 in Vinci, Italy. (In Italian, *da* means *from*. The da Vinci part of his name simply tells where he is from, so we call him Leonardo.) He was most famous for his artwork, but the other things he knew had a great effect on his art. He was the first artist to draw people and animals exactly the way they were, something not done in his time. He studied anatomy (the structure of a living thing) and used that knowledge to draw his subjects. Leonardo believed that an artist should understand the structure of any thing in order to paint it. He made many drawings, or studies, of objects as he prepared to paint them. His drawings of animals and people were so good that they are still used by scientists and enjoyed for their beauty. Many examples of Leonardo's drawings are still available for us to enjoy.

In one of Leonardo's important notebooks he wrote that his aim as a painter was to show a person's inner life, not just to describe a moment. In other words, he wanted to show his subject's feelings and thoughts. When he painted he did not use a strong outline, but made his subject come out of the background into the light. He used light and shadow to draw attention to something, create a feeling, or even make a person look alive on the

(Please see **Who Was Leonardo**, other side)

ASK the ARTIST

Student: *Mr. Leonardo, I like to draw. Could you tell me what you use to make your drawings?*

Leonardo: I use pen and ink, metal points and chalk (I like black and red). I have invented another drawing material that I enjoy using. I call it pastel. Perhaps you have seen some of my drawings in pastel?

Leonardo's Pulley Design

(Who Was Leonardo, continued)

canvas. In his most famous painting, *Mona Lisa*, Leonardo used light to create the look of a living person. He also showed the inner feelings of the lady in the painting. (She was, by the way, Madame Lisa, the wife of a local government official.) For hundreds of years people have wondered just what the *Mona Lisa* is thinking. Is her "half smile" just momentary or is it a deeper expression of caring, maybe even in a motherly way?

In the *Mona Lisa* and in many other of Leonardo's paintings, you will find a pyramid or triangle shape as the basic structure. This will usually draw your eyes to the most important part of the work. In Leonardo's great wall painting, *The Last Supper*, you will find Jesus in the center in a triangle shape. The apostles are at the table with him, and Leonardo took special care to show the strong feelings of each of them. Leonardo used experimental paints to do this work. Although it can still be seen as a great achievement, the paint did not stay on the wall very well and the work has faded badly. When you study *The Last Supper*, be sure to look at drawings, or studies of it, as well as looking at the painting. This will help you to see the figures of the apostles. *The Last Supper*, which is in Milan, Italy, has been restored by a process that took many years and very careful cleaning, one inch at a time.

Leonardo da Vinci, who was good at so many things, lived until the year 1519. He was 67.

HOW WELL DID YOU READ?

1. What effects did Leonardo try to create with light in his paintings? How do you think the right use of light could make a subject look alive in a picture?
2. Name several reasons why Leonardo made drawings. What did he study about his subjects that other artists of his time did not? What is the importance of his drawings today?
3. How did Leonardo use the pyramid or triangle shape in his paintings?
4. Who was the model for Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*? What does it seem that Leonardo tried to do in this work? What have people wondered about over the years?
5. What went wrong with *The Last Supper*?

Leonardo kept detailed notes of his work. He wrote them left-handed and backward, so that they could be read only in a mirror. These famous notebooks of his work are kept in Milan (Italy), France, and England.

AN ART WORDGAME

Directions: Fill in the blanks with the correct answers. Use the boxed letters to answer the bonus question.

1. In 1452, Leonardo was born in the town of:
_ _ _
2. One who designs buildings is an:
_ _ _ _ _ _ _
3. The drawing material invented by Leonardo:
_ _ _ _ _
4. Leonardo studied the structure of a living thing, which is called:
_ _ _ _ _ _
5. Leonardo wrote his notes this way:
 _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

BONUS QUESTION: Who is next month's artist? (He painted portraits of many famous people.)