Good example of leonardo da vinci in florence research paper

Art & Culture, Painting

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Introduction

Leonardo da Vinci (1452 – 1519) was around 13 years old when his family moved to Florence from the Tuscan village of Vinci. In youth he was an apprentice of the Florentine painter and sculptor Verrocchio. In 1481 or 1482 Leonardo travelled to Milan to work for the ruling Sforza family. There he spent much of his time on “ military and civil engineering projects, including both urban-renewal and fortification plans for the city”. At the same time he created few key paintings of the Renaissance: the altarpiece “ The Virgin of the Rocks” (1483) for the chapel in the church of San Francesco Grande in Milan, which is an excellent early example of the technique, called sfumato (smoky), in which there are subtle, almost imperceptible, transitions between light and dark in shading, as if the picture were seen through smoke or haze; and the painting “ The Last Supper” (1495 – 1498) that has two levels – a scene from a life story and the symbolic evocation of Jesus

sacrifice for the humans – created at Duke Ludovico Sforzas request for the monastery of Santa Maria delle Grazie. In 1500 Leonardo returned to Florence where he created paintings, such as “ Mona Lisa”, “ Madonna and Child with Saint Anne” etc., that are not less famous than the ones painted in Milan. In 1508 he returned to Milan where he lived till 1513 since in that year he moved to Vatican. In 1516 da Vince accepted an invitation of French king and went to France where he lived the rest of his life.

Mona Lisa

Probably, the most famous Florentine work of Leonardo is “ Mona Lisa” (fig. 1), a portrait created between 1503 and 1506. The subject might have been a wife of a Florentine merchant – a 24-year-old Lisa Gherardini del Giocondo. The portrait was painted in non-traditional way since a young woman does not wear any jewelry, and her half-length figure was painted in the solid pyramidal form and is limited to the upper torso that is silhouetted against distant mountains, which evokes a feeling of mystery. “ Mona Lisa’s facial expression has been called enigmatic because her gentle smile is not accompanied by the warmth one would expect to see in her eyes, which have boldly, perhaps flirtatiously, shifted to the side to look straight out at the viewer”. What makes the innovative portrait so fascinating and melancholy, even today, is the expressive complexity and the sense of psychological presence.

The “ Mona Lisa” is the painting that is the best possible example of Leonardo’s synthesis of nature, architecture, human form, geometry, and character. The point of view of the spectator is made to change from figure

to landscape, and “ while Mona Lisa is seen from the same level as the observer, the viewpoint shifts upward in the landscape”. The light also changes: the figure of the woman is in dark-yellow colors and the landscape is in a blue-gray sfumato. The contrasts of viewpoint and light help to distinguish the landscape from the figure. Additionally, Leonardo has made parallels between figure and landscape. For instance, the figure of Mona Lisa imitates the triangular mountains, and her transparent veil echoes the oozing light of the hazes; the curved aqueduct continues into the highlighted drapery fold over her left shoulder, and the spiral road on her right reoccurs in the short curves on her sleeves; these, in turn, match the line of her fingers.

The enigmatic smile of the Mona Lisa has been the subject of scholarly interpretation for many years. Vasari states that Leonardo employed singers and entertainers to keep the smile on the woman’s face while he was painting. According to Freud, the smile could resemble the vaguely remembered smile of Leonardo’s mother. The unspoken challenge of her direct stare, comparing to her obvious serenity, has made “ Mona Lisa” one of the most studied and written about, perhaps even the best-know painting in the history of art. Leonardo was unwilling to part with the picture and took it with him to the court of Francis I of France. It then became part of the French royal collection and was later trimmed by about an inch on either side.

Madonna and Child with Saint Anne

Nature, as well as geometry, is a significant aspect of Leonardo's paintings. In the uncompleted " Madonna and Child with Saint Anne" (fig. 2) that was painted around 1503-2506, Leonardo positions the figures to create a pyramid set in a landscape. The three generations, represented by Mary's mother Ann, Mary, and Jesus, correspond to the triangulation of their formal organization. The triple aspect of time – past, present, and future – is also a feature of Leonardo's integration of geometry with landscape and narrative. In this painting, past unites with future to painting and sculpture. The theme is essentially medieval, designed to illustrate the genealogical relationship of grandmother, mother, and child, a diagram of meaning and not a report of the visible.

But Leonardo liked it as a token of processes of growth, like the theme of " Leda and the Swan" that he was also working on. In both subjects the figures twine among each other or among plants, a sinuousness accompanied by a further reduction of the edges between forms and air.

The Battle of Anghiari

The newly formed republican government of Florence commissioned a Cavalry Battle (1503-1506) (fig. 3) to be painted in its assembly room in the city hall, a work intended to show off both a military victory and the specialty of the leading Florentine artist. Horses leap against each other, fighting men are interlocked, the dust rises, and an anatomical detail is absorbed into speedy motion. However, this painting was never finished.

Scientific Drawings

Leonardo da Vinci's various anatomical drawings illustrate the Renaissance synthesis of art and science. An example of one of his most intriguing scientific drawing is " Embryo in the Womb" (fig. 4), which was drawn around 1510. Many Renaissance artists studied human anatomy, but Leonardo went far beyond the usual artistic interest with musculature and studied the digestive, reproductive, and respiratory systems. In the main image, Leonardo portrays an opened uterus, a fetus in the breech position, and the umbilical cord. A smaller drawing to the right shows the fetus as if seen through the amniotic membrane. Other drawings on the page depicts the systems by which the fetus is connected to the mother's blood supply. Except for showing his superb draftsmanship, such drawings reveal Leonardo's fervent curiosity about the origins of life and interest in discovering scientific explanations for natural phenomena. The thousands of studies, which cover almost every aspect of scientific and artistic efforts, contrast remarkably with the small number of finished paintings by his hand. Therefore, Leonardo's artistic nature may be described as analytical, preliminary, and new. Only on rare occasions he really complete a work and deliver it to a patron. He obviously aimed at collecting his anatomical drawings into a treatise, but, unfortunately, never completed the project.

Conclusion

Leonardo stated that the best way to create an illusion of the natural world is painting. In creating a painted illusion, Leonardo considered color to be secondary to the depiction of sculptural volume, which he achieved through

his virtuosity in sfumato. He also unified his compositions by covering them with a thin, lightly tinted paint that improved the overall smoky mist. Because early evening light re likely to produce a similar effect naturally, Leonardo believed dusk the finest time of day and advised painters to set up their studios in a courtyard with black walls and a linen sheet stretched overhead to imitate twilight. Leonardo’s fame as an artist is based on only a few works since he was taken away by many other interests of his. Unlike his humanist contemporaries, he was not especially fascinated by Classical literature or archaeology. Instead, his passions were mathematics, engineering, and the natural world. He put together volumes of detailed drawings and notes on anatomy, botany, geology, meteorology, architectural design, and mechanics. In his drawings of human figures, he strived not only for the precise details of anatomy, but also for the geometric basis of perfect proportions.

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