

Life and works of leonardo da vinci assignment

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Life and Works of Leonardo Da Vinci BY Nikel 1071985 Nikhil Kumar

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October, 2013 The Life & Works of Leonardo da Vinci Biography: One of the most creative minds of Italian Renaissance not only as a great painter but also as a skilled sculptor, architect and a talented engineer, Leonardo da Vinci was born on 15th April 1452 near the Tuscan town of Vinci. He was an illegitimate child of Ser Pierro da Vinci - an influential local lawyer and a young peasant girl named Caterina, who were in wedlock.

Leonardo spent his early childhood till 1457 in a hamlet of Anchiano, 5 km from Vinci with his mother and her parents. His father San Pierro, after a series of marriages and divorces eventually married to a lady from wealthy family where 5 year old Leonardo was a welcome addition. As a child Leonardo was very intelligent with a great talent for arithmetic and playing lyre as well as singing. His early education was done at home in Vinci where he lived in a big estate with his father, stepmother, several brothers and sisters and most importantly his Uncle Francesco who was a farmer and had a love for nature.

Young Leonardo spent a great deal of time with his uncle working outdoors, drawing sketches and found him influential during his formative years. Leonardo was educated in various fields including arithmetic, geometry, music and latin till the age of 14. However, it was his drawing and painting skills that stood out foremost and to further develop his talents, at the age of 15, he went for apprenticeship to the then, renowned workshop of Andrea del Verrocchio in Florence.

Florence in those early Renaissance days was an independent republic and a commercial centre, and was developing into hub of artistic talent that was seminal in shaping the Italian Renaissance. Andrea del Verrochio's workshop was among the best in Florence and was associated with education of several great Renaissance artists apart from Leonardo like Perugino, Ghirlandaio, and Sandro Boticelli. During the apprenticeship Leonardo learnt not only painting, sculpting and modelling, but also a wide variety of technical trade skills like drafting, metallurgy, plaster casting, chemistry, mechanics and carpentry.

He used his scientific understanding to enhance his paintings. He studied and sketched rocks, caves, fossils, birds and horses. Later during the apprenticeship he started developing his own niche in inventing flying machines, diving suites etc. Among one of the earliest works of Leonardo was his contribution in the painting Baptism of Christ along with Verrochio in 1472 where he painted the face of an angel holding Jesus' robe. His work pleased Verrochio so much that he gave Leonardo bigger projects and Leonardo stayed at the workshop till 1477 creating fine examples of art.

In search of new challenges, and money, Leonardo went to serve the Duke of Milan in 1482. He worked for 17 years in Milan on various projects including painting, culpting, designing for elaborate festivals and also provided the Duke with 1485 to 1490 he produced experiments and studies based on a wide variety of subjects like flying machines, geometry, mechanics, municipal constructions, canals and bridges, war vehicles, combat equipments etc. He also supplied the Duke with war strategies and made

him his strong patron. It was also during this time, he performed studies on structure of human anatomy at his buzzing workshop in Milan.

He would often spend time outside studying nature or experimenting secretly in his workshop dissecting body parts of the dead to reveal the human anatomy, much against the conventional norms of the church.

Leonardo's curious mind compelled him to skip from one thing to other and hence a majority of Leonardo's work is unfinished. During the 17 years at Milan, Leonardo completed only 6 paintings the most notable of them being The Last Supper and Virgin on the Rocks. During the last decade of the 15th century, Leonardo also developed a habit of maintaining his personal notebook, in which he used to draw sketches and write about his observations.

His work covered four main themes: painting, architecture, mechanics and human anatomy and is preserved in codices which are still being studied by many historians. In 1499, after the invasion of Milan by the French and the fall of Ludovico Sforza, Leonardo worked for several employers and travelled to various places in Italy including Venice, Florence, Rome, working on variety of projects. His most notable work, Mona Lisa was begun in 1503 and completed in 1506/07.

During the last three years, Leonardo also served the Medici family in France where his patron King Francis I gifted him with a luxurious Chateau du Clos Luce at Amboise. Leonardo suffered paralysis in right hand during his old age in late sixties, but still he continued teaching. He died in on 2 May, 1519, aged 67 years, in his Chateau at Amboise. As per the legend, King Francis I was

by his side at the time of his death. Contribution to Renaissance Leonardo's scientific investigations and artworks have been seminal in influencing an ignorant early Renaissance Italian society on the path of knowledge, reasoning and science.

Talented with a multitude of technical and artistic skills like draftsman, painter, sculptor, architect, engineer & philosopher, Leonardo is often epitomized as a veritable Renaissance man. Leonardo along with a handful of other artists like Michelangelo, Raphael and Titian pioneered the High Renaissance in Italy. Majority of Leonardo's scientific observations has been deduced from decoding his complex and random recordings he preserved in his notebooks called codices.

Building on inspirations from earlier Italian Renaissance Masters like Masaccio and Donatello, Leonardo used a realism style and worked on developing two important techniques in painting; Chiaroscuro - The interplay of light and shade in a painting without altering the actual colours of the painting; and Sfumato - the technique of showing forms blending into another at the borders by avoiding harsh outlines and using light brush strokes to reveal a smoky, hazy but rather real depiction of light and colour. Both of these techniques are effectively utilized in Mona Lisa.

He was among the earliest artists to use light, colour and form relatively so as to develop homogenised figures that described their scientific and natural behaviour. Even in some of the earlier paintings of Leonardo, like Benois Madonna, 1478, he used chiaroscuro to paint life like figures. He was one of the early Italian adopters of oil order to achieve intensity and depth in

colouring and transparency in effects of light and shade. These techniques and forms distinguish renaissance art from other medieval arts and Gothic arts and became significant features of High Renaissance.

This ability to create three dimensional forms on a two dimensional plane is also a key feature that distinguishes occidental art with oriental style which is more based on lines to give forms. There was also a lot of symbolism used by Leonardo in his paintings also. One of his later paintings, John the Baptist, the mysterious smile and an enigmatic gaze reate a cosmic environment in the painting. Painted during 1513 to 1516, when the High Renaissance was transitioning into mannerism, John the Baptist is gestured as pointing upwards with his right hand symbolizing the importance of salvation through baptism.

Leonardo developed principles based on his anatomical and geometrical studies and applied them to create the Vitruvian Man. He studied the ancient Roman architect Vitruvius's research work and used his geometric understanding to develop his version of a perfectly proportionate male human body. The Vitruvian Man, has allowed us to measure human proportions as an equation of mathematics. The use of symbolism is again evident from the square containing the man's figure - referring to the mundane existence, and circle encompassing the whole image - referring to the divine or spiritual existence.

Some of the other well known paintings of Leonardo include the Annunciation, Virgin of the Rocks, The Virgin and child with St. Anne, The Adoration of the Magi and many more. Much before the dawn of industrial

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revolution in mid 19th century, Leonardo's scientific genius allowed him to develop innumerable projects of building bridges, water canals, military tanks and combat equipments to name a few. He also developed a theoretical design of flying machine, more than 400 years before Wright brothers first invented an airplane.

Due to a spread out mind and too many projects at hand, Leonardo could not complete any sculpture, though he was commissioned by Duke of Milan to sculpt a huge 24 feet bronze horse for which Leonardo developed a clay model but could not cast bronze as the approaching war with France compelled the Duke to utilize bronze for cannon balls. Mona Lisa Considered by many as a masterpiece, Mona Lisa or La Gioconda is 16th century oil on wood panel, half length portrait made by Leonardo da Vinci between 1503 and 1506/07.

The lady in the painting has been revealed as Lisa Gherardini who was the wife of a wealthy Florentine merchant. The relaxed three quarter pose of portrait was quite unusual as compared to rigid profile portraits of that time. The background shows roads and hills in distance. By using the sfumato technique, Leonardo painted Mona Lisa without any harsh borders and used delicate strokes to submerge forms and shapes into one another against the smoky mysterious background; creating an illusion by rendering a natural view.

The subject itself stares at the eyes of the viewer and the calm and composed mannerism of the subject conflicts with the stormy background. Another important technique used is Chiaroscuro whereby, altering the effect of light and shade without affecting the actual colour, Leonardo developed

life like three dimensional image on a plane. The light appears to be approaching from behind the viewer onto the left side of the face of Mona Lisa prominently and casting shadow on the right part of her body.

The painting reveals distance and the subject appears to be sitting closer to the viewer than the background. The dark hue of Mona Lisa's dress contrasts with the lighter hues in the background and wrinkles on her dress are clearly silhouetted by the interplay of light and shade. Detailing of the portrait is done meticulously as the lines on her dress are repeated in a natural fashion and so are the line used to create roads and trees in background to form a realism in painting.

Another interesting observation about Mona Lisa is the use of perspective whereby all lines lead to a single vanishing point behind her head - a technique which many artists of early renaissance tried to develop like Perugino, Masaccio etc. Leonardo was also a master of using symbolism and here, he painted the right arm of the subject rested on left which personifies her as a loyal married woman of virtue, instead of using a wedding ring as a symbol. The mysterious smile is depicted by slight extensions at the end of the lips where as the eyes are stagnant at the viewer are the only communication with the audience.

This creates an enigmatic, mysterious mood in the painting further accentuated by the conflicting landscape which exemplifies an approaching storm. The Last Supper: The Last Supper is a large mural painting done with tempura and oil paint on plaster, ade by Leonardo da Vinci in 1495-98, at the behest of Duke Ludovico Sforza of Milan. The painting is done on the wall of

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the refectory in the Monastery of Sta. Maria delle Grazie in Milan, where it complemented the communal monastic dinners.

The Last Supper has been painted by many artists before and many artists after Leonardo did, and each of those versions revealed various perspectives. The version by Leonardo da Vinci consisted of a scene from the life of Jesus Christ as taken from Bible, whereby he is having the last supper with his 12 disciples and reveals that one of them would betray him. The painting explores various human emotions with expressions of shock, betrayal, surprise, and most importantly guilt on Judas' face. Jesus is seated in the centre with 12 disciples seating on his either sides in a total of four triads.

As a master of symbolism, Leonardo draws a figurative representation of approaching Jesus' sacrifice for the salvation of mankind, the foundation of institution of mass or even a pre-figuration of the gathering of this local monastic community for communal meals. The triads symbolize the holy trinity and four groups suggest the four elements of universe - fire, water, air and earth four directions, four seasons in just behind Jesus' head and the one point linear perspective is accentuated by the tapestries on the sides of the walls that get shorter as they recede.

This exemplifies distance and thus a three dimensional image on a plane. The pyramidal form of Jesus is accentuated by a meticulous geometric set up of the painting that covers the entire wall of the refectory and is strategically set up within the interior architectural design of the building. The dramatic feel is created by a judicious use of light that appears from the three windows,

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at the centre of the wall behind Jesus' head whose mannerism is calm and composed in spite of the upheaval around him on the table.

Judas is shown as sitting in extreme left corner in the first triad, with Peter and John. The three windows provide more aesthetic value to the dramatic set up rather than symbolic in this case. References: Mansen Raven.

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