

Taschen
LEONARDO (I)

Frank Zöllner

KA

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LEONARDO (I)

Uno degli esseri umani più dotati che siano mai vissuti, Leonardo rimane la quintessenza del genio rinascimentale. Autore dei quadri più famosi del mondo, scienziato, artista, filosofo, inventore, costruttore e ingegnere rappresenta il nascere della consapevolezza dell'uomo che caratterizza la sua epoca. Egli era così prolifico e poliedrico che a stento riusciva poi a portare a pieno compimento le sue grandi idee. Leonardo ci sembra così moderno per la sua non-specializzazione, per la sua mente aperta e curiosa, e per le sue migliaia di note, di schizzi e di appunti. In quelle pagine di schizzi egli avrebbe anticipato le grandi scoperte e invenzioni che sarebbero state fatte nei secoli successivi: come le intuizioni sulla circolazione sanguigna o i progetti per macchine volanti, elicotteri e sottomarini.

Leonardo ha anche anticipato numerose tecniche artistiche e sotteso di fine psicologia molti dei suoi dipinti più famosi come L'ultima cena e La Gioconda. Grande cavaliere rivale di Michelangelo, ingegnere militare dei Borgia, morì nel 1519 nel castello che gli aveva regalato Francesco Primo re di Francia. Non male per il figlio illegittimo di un notaio fiorentino.

L'autore:

Frank Zöllner ha dedicato la sua tesi di dottorato ai motivi presenti nella storia dell'arte e dell'architettura di epoca medievale e rinascimentale che hanno avuto origine nell'antichità (1987). Ha scritto inoltre un trattato post-dottorale sul movimento e l'espressione nell'arte di Leonardo da Vinci, pubblicato nel 2010. Ha pubblicato numerose opere dedicate all'arte e alle teorie rinascimentali, oltre che del XX secolo. Dal 1996 è professore di arte medievale e moderna presso l'Università di Lipsia. Per TASCHEN ha scritto le monografie in formato XL su Leonardo da Vinci e Michelangelo.

#arte



There is by no means unanimous agreement on the attribution of this painting of the Annunciation to Leonardo. There is only agreement that the lengthways composition, the Archangel Gabriel and parts of the landscape are the work of Leonardo – and, in fact, a study by Leonardo for the right arm of the angel has survived to this day (illus. p.15). Similarly the mountains fading blue into the morning mists in the background are distinctly reminiscent of work by the young Leonardo in Florence, who was often to return to this theme in later works. Leonardo's touch is particularly evident in the masterly treatment of the elements, water, air and light, which become increasingly atmospherically dense around the steep foothills of the almost alpine ridges and peaks in the distance. Leonardo was later to describe similar phenomena in several passages in his *Treatise on Painting*: "Such horizons in painting are most beautiful to see. Of course to either side there must be some layerings of mountains, as the diminution of colours in great distances demands" (fol. 283v).

Evidence of Leonardo's close attachment to his master is also to be found in the small *Madonna*, which is regarded as his first independent work, the so-called *Madonna with the Carnation* in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich (illus. p. 6). Most likely painted during his time with Verrocchio, in this work – with its small columns in the middle-ground and landscape in the background – Leonardo is drawing on aspects of works by the Old Dutch Masters. The figures of the Madonna and the infant Jesus, on the other hand, clearly pay allegiance to the pictorial forms favoured in Verrocchio's workshop. Such Madonnas, intended for domestic use and private worship, were found widely in 15th century Florence. Besides portraying the loving relationship of Mary and the infant Jesus, Leonardo also includes symbols of customary elements of Christian belief: in an unpractised gesture the Holy Child reaches out with his little hands for a red carnation, the symbol of the Passion of Christ, pointing in this depiction of childlike innocence to the later Crucifixion awaiting the Saviour. Equally important for its symbolism is the crystal vase filled with flowers at the right lower edge of the painting, an unmistakable indication of the purity and virginity of Mary. At the same time, motifs such as the carnation and the crystal vase, which demand great skill on the part of the artist, allowed Leonardo to give an impressive demonstration of his talent, as also in the masterly fall of the fabric across the Madonna's lap, with its intense coloration that gives life to the deeply shaded and otherwise undynamic foreground.

Occasionally Leonardo made short inventories of the works in his possession. From these we can tell that during his first years in Florence he made several small pictures of the Madonna. This is not only borne out by the few surviving works but also by a number of sketches (illus. p. 17). In these sketches there are clear signs of the young painter's urge to test out – within the limits of convention – the possibilities of movement and expression. At the same time, however, there are also experiments in pure flights of fancy which, using the medium of drawing, take liberties of completely free artistic expression not permissible in paintings.

The influence of Flemish style and pictorial forms, which may be seen in Leonardo's *Madonna with the Carnation* and in his later *Adoration of the Magi* (illus. p. 25) is seen at its most striking in the *Portrait of Ginevra de' Benci* (illus. p. 19). This portrait is the first fixed point of reference in the oeuvre of Leonardo the painter: it is the earliest extant work for which we have reliable documentation and information. Much more than his religious paintings so far, it breaks away from the

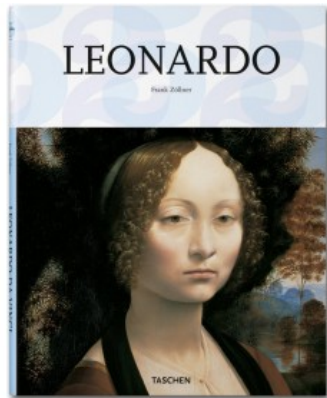


Virgin and Child with a Cat, c. 1470-1475
Pen and ink over pencil sketch,
London, British Museum

PAGE 16:
Madonna Benci, c. 1475-1478
Oil on canvas (transferred from a
48 x 31 cm
St. Petersburg, Hermitage

This painting, named after one of its owners, is distinct from figures 4 and 5 by the subtlety of the light and the degree of movement which is also Leonardo's sketches for the same

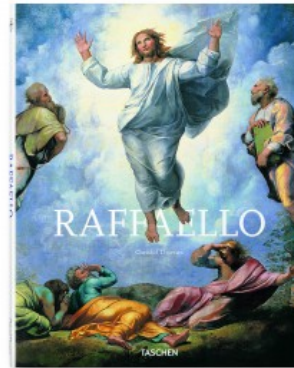
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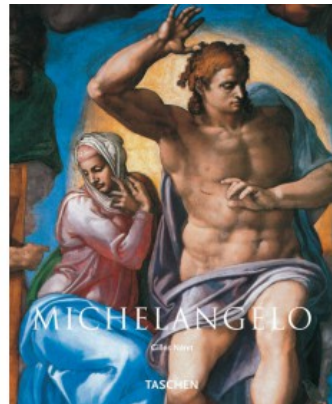
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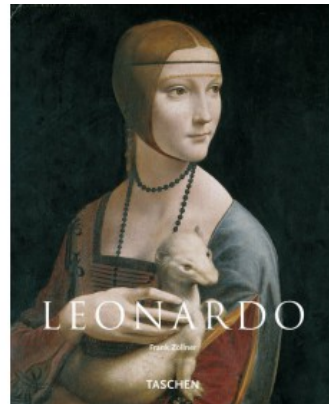
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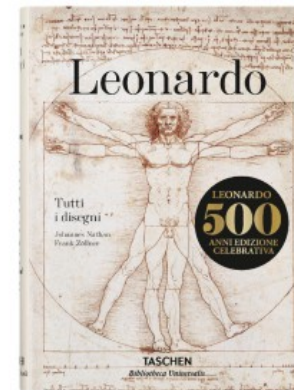
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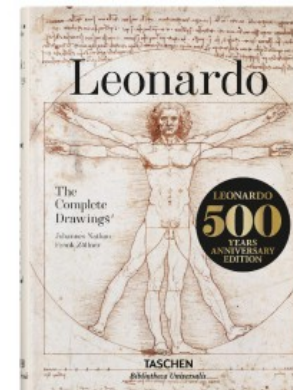
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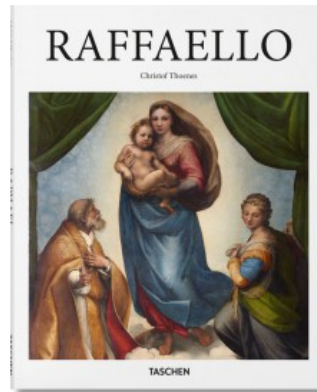
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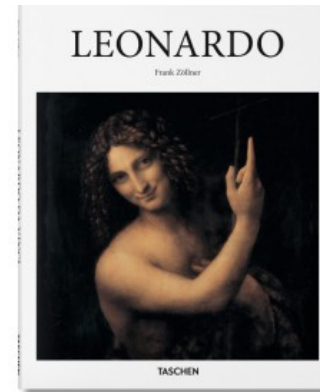
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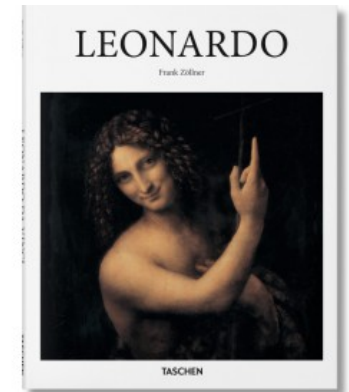
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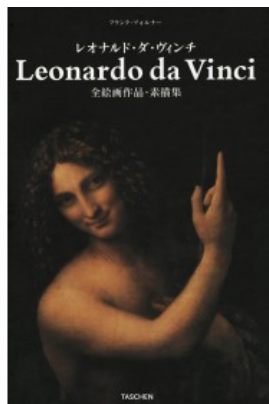
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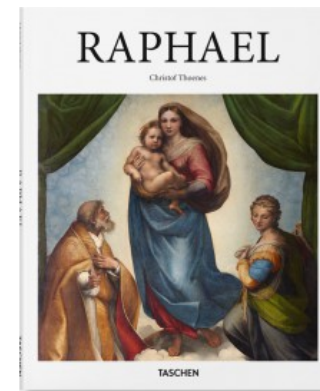
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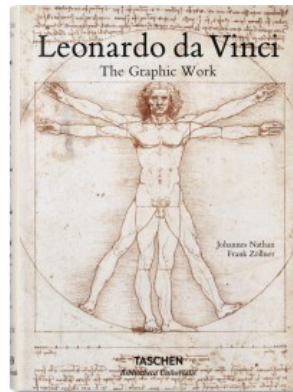
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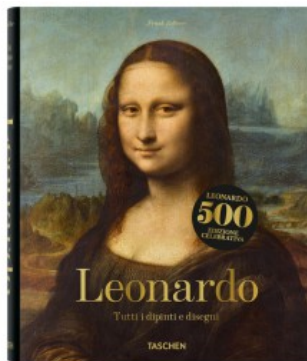
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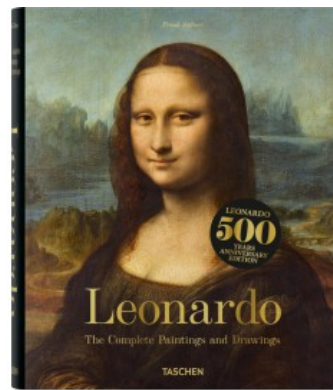
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