

LEONARDO DA VINCI

PAINTER AT
THE COURT
OF MILAN

9 NOVEMBER 2011–
5 FEBRUARY 2012

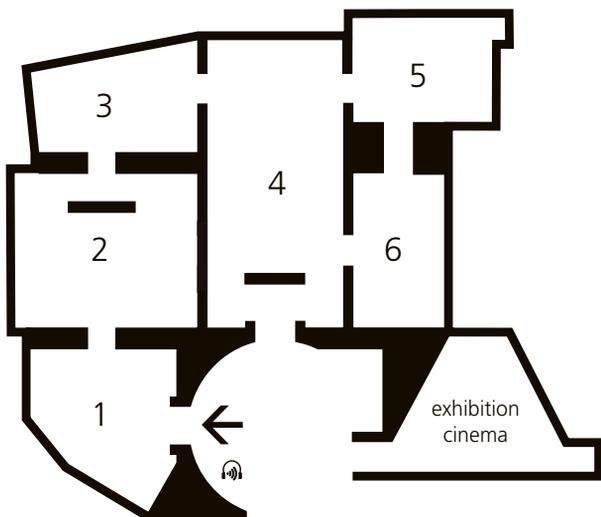
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The exhibition continues in the Sunley Room (level 2)

Exhibition film

A short film showing in exhibition cinemas – both in the Sainsbury Wing and the Sunley Room, where the exhibition continues – tells the story of Leonardo's time in Milan at the court of Ludovico Sforza. The film considers his painting commissions, such as the two versions of the *Virgin of the Rocks* and the mural of the *Last Supper*, explored in Room 7 (Sunley Room). With footage inside the Royal Library in Windsor Castle, which holds one of the greatest collections of Leonardo's studies, it also touches on his wider investigations into art, science and philosophy.

Audio guide

The audio guide traces the remarkable development in Leonardo's art during his time in Milan. With insightful comments on conservation from the National Gallery's Larry Keith, and in-depth visual explorations from Martin Clayton, Senior Curator of Prints and Drawings at the Royal Collection, the guide also features the National Gallery's curator Luke Syson on the complex thinking of Leonardo, this most fascinating of polymaths.

Available in English, French and Italian, priced £4/£3.50 concessions.

Discover more

A fully illustrated exhibition catalogue is available in Gallery shops (£40 hardback, £25 paperback in English; £25 paperback in French).

To find out more about Leonardo, visit www.nationalgallery.org.uk/leonardo.

INTRODUCTION

This exhibition explores Leonardo da Vinci's time in Milan when he became court painter to the city's ruler, Ludovico Sforza. Leonardo's stay, from about 1482 to 1499, was the most productive period of his career and transformed his ideas on the status and purpose of art.

Leonardo (1452–1519) trained in Florence where his gifts as a painter, musician and polymath were soon recognised. However, his perfectionist and easily distracted nature made him ill-suited for freelance work. Moving to Milan he sought the patronage of Ludovico Sforza, whose aspiration to create a perfect city inhabited by exceptional men of talent made Leonardo the ideal court artist. Ludovico gave Leonardo the time and resources to pursue detailed research into nature and art. Leonardo emerged as a painter-philosopher, convinced his art could not just mirror nature but reveal a higher reality of divine harmony and beauty.

Leonardo started very few pictures during his lifetime, and completed even fewer. This exhibition gathers all the paintings Leonardo embarked upon in Milan (with the exception of the mural of the *Last Supper*, which remains in place) and shows them alongside his numerous drawings. Works by his pupils and followers reveal his tremendous impact and are included to explore issues of attribution.

This exhibition has been made possible by the provision of insurance through the Government Indemnity Scheme. The National Gallery would like to thank the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council for providing and arranging this indemnity.

ROOM 1

THE MUSICIAN IN MILAN: A QUIET REVOLUTION

Early accounts of Leonardo's arrival in Milan suggest he may have first appeared at the court of Ludovico Sforza in his capacity as a talented musician, possibly bearing a lyre as a diplomatic gift from Lorenzo de' Medici, the ruler of Florence. In any event, on entering the city in about 1482 at the age of 30, Leonardo found a culture conservative in its artistic tastes.

For portraits, the elite favoured the traditional formula of being depicted in strict profile. Leonardo followed this convention before painting his revolutionary *Portrait of a Young Man ('The Musician')* [7] in about 1486–7. Turning his sitter to engage the viewer, Leonardo used his observational and painterly skills to evoke a living individual possessed of thought and will. In this way portraiture became a means by which Leonardo could demonstrate the powers of naturalistic painting. Works by Leonardo's pupils show this picture's immediate impact.

1 (centre of the room)

Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519)

The ventricles of the brain and the layers of the scalp, about 1490–4

This drawing demonstrates Leonardo's belief in the importance of sight in the workings of the human mind. In cross-section he shows the eye attached to three ventricles, or chambers, in the brain. The first chamber, he believed, gathered data. The middle, the *senso comune* (the combined senses), processed data and was the home of the human soul, imagination and intellect. The third chamber stored memories. For Leonardo, observation, artistic creativity and the divine spark of the soul were inextricably linked. The notes in the artist's characteristic left-handed mirror writing, refer to the layers of the scalp, which he compares to an onion.

1a

Studies of the head, about 1490–4

Here we see diagrams of the head shown on the other side, again depicted as if Leonardo had conducted an anatomical dissection. In fact, these images largely depend on received opinion and Leonardo's own imagination. Leonardo shows how these ideas might be applied to the depiction of a human being by juxtaposing them with an image of the same man characterised as a sage.

Pen and ink and red chalk on paper
X6823/Cat. 1. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

2 (top left)

Domenico de' Cammei (active 1490s)

Portrait gem of Gian Galeazzo Sforza, about 1490

Onyx and gold
X7047. On loan from The British Museum.
Donated by Sir Maurice Rosenheim

3 (top right)

Ducat coin of Ludovico Maria Sforza, about 1494–9

Struck gold
X7033. On loan from The British Museum

4 (bottom)

Ambrogio de Predis
(about 1455–1510)

Portrait of Ludovico Maria Sforza, about 1496–9

Tempera on vellum
X6810/Cat. 2. Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Milan

The illuminated portrait and gold coin both show Ludovico Maria Sforza (1452–1508), known as *il Moro* ('the Moor') for his dark hair and swarthy complexion. From 1481 Ludovico ruled on behalf of the rightful heir to the dukedom of Milan, his young nephew Gian Galeazzo (1469–1494), seen here in a portrait gem. But during the 1480s Ludovico usurped Gian Galeazzo's powers, and at the latter's death in 1494 became Duke of Milan.

5

Leonardo da Vinci

Portrait of a man in profile, about 1484–6

Leonardo depicts this man in strict profile, according to the established portrait convention, but manages to convey something of his individuality through close observation. The finely hatched shadows and carefully reiterated outlines made with a sharpened metal drawing tool (metalpoint) show Leonardo's mastery of a painstaking technique that did not allow mistakes to be erased.

Metalpoint on prepared paper
X6812/Cat. 3. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

6

Leonardo da Vinci

Bust of a youth in profile, about 1485–7

Leonardo often used the profile format when representing ideal and character types. But in this sketch, cut from a larger sheet, the distinctive shape of the youth's profile, in particular the tip of his nose, suggests the drawing was based on a real person. He may be the same individual Leonardo depicted in the *Musician* [7].

Pen and ink on paper
X6982/Cat. 4. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

7

Leonardo da Vinci

The Musician, about 1486–7

This unfinished portrait may depict the singer Atalante Migliorotti (active around 1482–1535), whom Leonardo is said to have taught music. The sitter's subtly animated three-quarter profile pose, the sheet of music he holds and the hint of mobility in his lips suggest that he has just finished singing. Leonardo is demonstrating here painting's power to outlive music's beauty, which fades the instant the notes are sounded.

Oil on walnut
X6811/Cat. 5. Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Pinacoteca, Milan

8

Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio
(about 1467–1516)

Portrait of a Young Man, about 1490–1

Leonardo's pupil Boltraffio here adopts the three-quarter profile pose introduced in the *Musician* [7]. The strong light on this man's somewhat rigid features shows Boltraffio struggling to emulate the subtlety of his master's technique. The Latin inscription, which translates 'Life, if you know how to use it, is long', makes a rather heavy-handed point about the longevity of virtue and painting.

Oil on wood
X6842/Cat. 7. Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan

9

Francesco Galli, called Francesco
Napoletano (died 1501)

Portrait of a youth in profile, about 1488–90

This drawing is one of many by pupils of Leonardo's that emulate his style and technique. The youth's close-fitting hat, upright collar and curly hair bear a close resemblance to the model for Leonardo's *Musician* [7]. The brisk right-handed hatching, strong contour lines and snaking curls suggest this is the work of one of Leonardo's first Milanese pupils, Francesco Napoletano.

Pen and ink and wash on paper
X6962/Cat. 6. Musée du Louvre,
Département des Arts Graphiques, Paris

ROOM 2

BEAUTY AND LOVE: LEONARDO'S PORTRAITS OF WOMEN

The themes of love and beauty were central to portraits of women in Renaissance Italy. In marriage negotiations the likeness of a prospective bride was often sent to her future husband to apprise him of her looks. But it was also conventional to idealise the sitter as it was commonly believed that a woman's outer beauty was a sign of her inner virtue.

When Leonardo entered Ludovico Sforza's service in about 1489, he took the opportunity to paint his master's 16-year-old mistress, Cecilia Gallerani (*The Lady with an Ermine* [18]). As Cecilia was a celebrated beauty Leonardo used her portrait to illustrate his belief that by responding to all that was most beautiful and harmonious in the natural world, painting could inspire love in the viewer. A few years later, Leonardo's intensely idealised portrait known as the *Belle Ferronnière* [19], shows a change in direction. Here, principles of ideal geometry and form are applied to create a beauty higher than nature.

10

Ambrogio de Predis

Portrait of Bianca Maria Sforza, about 1493

This portrait by a contemporary and collaborator of Leonardo shows Ludovico's niece, Bianca Maria Sforza (1472–1510). It was made around the time of her betrothal to the Holy Roman Emperor, Maximilian I, an important match that Ludovico spent a fortune to broker. Ambrogio depicts Bianca Maria in traditional Milanese style – in strict profile and lavishly dressed in jewels and fine fabrics.

Oil on poplar
X6841/Cat. 8. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.
Widener Collection, 1942.9.53

11

Leonardo da Vinci

Portrait of a woman in profile, about 1489–90

For this portrait Leonardo adheres to the Milanese profile format. However, he turns the woman's shoulders to face the viewer and shows her in simple clothes, which are only lightly sketched. Leonardo believed it was the artist's job to seek out natural beauty. Here, his attention is focused on her features and the fall of light on her young skin.

Metalpoint on prepared paper
X6808/Cat. 12. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

12

Leonardo da Vinci

Designs for a Saint Mary Magdalene, about 1486–8

These rapidly sketched designs for a painting show Mary Magdalene with her attribute of a pot of ointment, from which unusually she lifts the lid. The Magdalen was particularly devoted to Christ and was the first saint to whom he appeared after his Resurrection. Here, Leonardo shows the Magdalen alone but in the act of turning as if to Christ or to the viewer.

Pen and ink on paper
X6807/Cat. 9. The Samuel Courtauld Trust,
The Courtauld Gallery, London

13

Leonardo da Vinci

Sketches of the head and shoulders of a woman, about 1489–90

The most detailed sketch, top centre, was probably the first one Leonardo drew on this extraordinary sheet of studies. From there he worked around his model sketching her from every angle. The quick sketch on the far left edge, halfway down, is the closest to the pose of Cecilia Gallerani in the *Lady with an Ermine* [18].

Metalpoint on prepared paper
X6806/Cat. 13. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

14

Leonardo da Vinci

Studies of hands, about 1489–90

Leonardo regularly made separate studies of hands in preparation for paintings. The hands here may relate to his portrait of Cecilia Gallerani [18]. Leonardo seems initially to have drawn them from life, but the impossible pose and deliberately elongated fingers of the lower hand suggest he went on to idealise them. This may account for the large size of Cecilia's right hand in the final work.

Metalpoint over charcoal heightened with white on prepared paper
X6804/Cat. 11. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

15

Leonardo da Vinci

Studies of a dog's paw, about 1485

This study of a dog's paw probably informed Leonardo's depiction of the ermine held by Cecilia Gallerani in her nearby portrait [18]. Leonardo turned to the study of nature for each detail of a picture, sometimes, as in the oddly large and muscular ermine, using other animals to make an ideal composite.

Metalpoint on prepared paper
X7031/Cat. 15. The National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh.
Purchased by Private Treaty Sale with the aid of The Art Fund, 1991

16

Leonardo da Vinci

Study of a bear's head, about 1485

The distinctive shape of this bear's head with its pointed snout, broad cranium and rounded ears seems to have served as a source for the head of the ermine in Cecilia Gallerani's portrait [18]. Leonardo deftly uses lines of varying thickness and density to suggest the sheen of the bear's dense fur – an effect he transferred to the painting.

Metalpoint on prepared paper
X7348/Cat. 14. Private collection, New York

17

Leonardo da Vinci

The ermine as a symbol of purity and moderation, about 1489–94

This drawing, possibly a design for a medal reverse, depicts a hunter lifting a branch to kill an ermine whose path he has blocked with a pile of dirt. It was believed that an ermine (a stoat in its winter coat of white fur) would prefer death to the dishonour of sullyng its coat. In this way the ermine became associated with purity.

Pen and ink over traces of black chalk on paper
X6813/Cat. 16. Lent by the Syndics of the
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

18

Leonardo da Vinci

The Lady with an Ermine, about 1489–90

Cecilia Gallerani (1473–1536), the beloved mistress of Ludovico Sforza, turns her head as if to listen. The ermine she holds may symbolise the purity of her beauty [see 17]. Leonardo believed paintings such as this could both commemorate and inspire love. His triumph in creating a portrait that was true to life yet forever beautiful was celebrated in a poem by his contemporary, Bernardo Bellincioni (see wall label).

Oil on walnut
X6803/Cat. 10. Property of the Princes Czartoryski Foundation.
On deposit at the National Museum, Cracow

19

Leonardo da Vinci

The Belle Ferronnière, about 1493–4

This portrait may depict Beatrice d'Este (1475–1497), the wife of Ludovico Sforza. But Leonardo has so idealised her features that she may also be regarded as a perfect beauty based on ideas of divine geometry. Her static pose behind a plinth-like parapet suggests Leonardo may have intended the work to provoke comparisons with portrait sculpture. Despite the three dimensions of sculpture, Leonardo believed that painting could be more 'real'.

Oil on walnut
X6805/Cat. 17. Musée du Louvre, Département des Peintures, Paris

20

Marco d'Oggiono (documented from 1487; died 1524)

The Archinto Portrait, 1494

In this work by one of Leonardo's pupils, Marco d'Oggiono, the sitter's forward-facing pose, averted gaze and positioning behind a parapet draw upon all three of the portraits Leonardo made in Milan [7, 18, 19]. The scroll in the man's hand not only gives his age, 20, but also the date of 1494, which has helped establish a chronology for Leonardo's career in the city.

Oil on walnut
NG1665/Cat. 19. The National Gallery, London

21

Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio

Portrait of a Young Woman as Artemisia, about 1494

Artemisia was a renowned widow of the ancient king Mausolus whose grief for her husband reputedly led her to drink his ashes mixed with liquid so she could become his living tomb. As the woman shown here by Boltraffio wears mourning colours traditional to Naples she may be an idealised Isabella of Aragon, daughter of the King of Naples, and widow of the recently deceased Gian Galeazzo Sforza.

Oil on wood
X7021/Cat. 18. Mattioli Collection, Milan

ROOM 3

BODY AND SOUL: SAINT JEROME IN PENITENCE

It was during Leonardo's time in Milan that he began studying human anatomy. From the late 1480s onwards his drawings include first-hand observations, the testing of ideas gleaned from other sources and notes exploring systems for calculating ideal physical proportion. These studies reveal his insatiable curiosity about the natural world and his willingness to go to every length to ensure the figures in his work would appear credible – even when idealised.

Leonardo's unfinished *Saint Jerome* [25] is a picture profoundly informed by this research. The saint's physical and mental anguish is communicated through his taut muscles and dynamic pose. Leonardo also intended the work to explore the relationship between the human form, the yearnings of the human soul and the presence of God. It is not known who commissioned the picture or why Leonardo abandoned it. However, the work marks an important stage in Leonardo's developing ideas on the ways in which naturalistic art might reveal the divine.

22

Leonardo da Vinci

Sketches for an Adoration of the Shepherds with angels, about 1478

The figure at the top of this cut-down sheet is a study for a shepherd adoring the Christ Child. It may relate to a commission Leonardo received in Florence before coming to Milan and it shows him searching for ways to give dynamic movement to a kneeling attitude. It was a pose Leonardo returned to throughout his career.

Pen and ink and wash over metalpoint on prepared paper
X7350/Cat. 36. Gallerie dell'Accademia, Gabinetto di Disegni
e Stampe, Venice

23

Leonardo da Vinci

A kneeling angel, about 1480–4

This rapidly sketched kneeling angel is one of Leonardo's so-called *pentimento* (rethinking) studies. In it we see him repeatedly revising the same figure to explore various possibilities. The angel's extended arm is shown in two different positions. Leonardo often returned to sketches like this when developing new projects.

Pen and ink over metalpoint on prepared paper
X6801/Cat. 21. On loan from The British Museum

24

Leonardo da Vinci

The proportions of the arm, about 1487–90

This depiction of arms relates to Leonardo's investigations into ideal human proportions. The length of each part of the arm is calculated according to its proportional relationship to the whole and to other measurements in the body. The notes penned in Leonardo's backwards handwriting set down the necessary calculations.

Pen and ink on paper
X6799/Cat. 26. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

25

Leonardo da Vinci

Saint Jerome, about 1488–90

This unfinished picture shows Saint Jerome, the 4th-century scholar and penitent hermit, kneeling in prayer and about to beat his chest with a rock. Leonardo visually links the idea of suffering, spiritual fervour and divine reward by creating a diagonal from the rock to Jerome's head (the seat, Leonardo believed, of the human soul), his eye and what seems to be a vision of Christ's Crucifixion, roughly sketched at top right. In the foreground is the lion from whose paw, according to legend, Jerome removed a thorn.

Oil on walnut
X6798/Cat. 20. Vatican Museums, Vatican City

26

Leonardo da Vinci

Studies of the nervous system, about 1485–8

Leonardo intended his anatomical studies to form part of a treatise he hoped to write, but they first stemmed from his desire to paint human beings accurately. This sheet shows that initially he relied to some degree on received wisdom rather than direct observation. His study of the anatomy of the arm would prove useful for his *Saint Jerome* [25] – but is positioned like that of the Madonna in the *Virgin of the Rocks* [36, Room 4].

Pen and ink over metalpoint on prepared paper
X6861/Cat. 24. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

27

Leonardo da Vinci

Ecorché study of the neck and shoulders, about 1487

The word *ecorché* (flayed) is used in dissection to describe the state of a subject once the skin is removed. However, Leonardo probably made this study from life, possibly using an old man as his model whose musculature was easily visible. Leonardo was fascinated by this part of the human body and used his detailed knowledge of its workings to great effect in his *Saint Jerome* [25].

Pen and ink over metalpoint on prepared paper
X6860/Cat. 22. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

28

Leonardo da Vinci

Anatomical studies of the neck and skull; profile of an old man, about 1485–8

This drawing of a dissected neck and skull includes a number of anomalies that suggest Leonardo may have been studying a monkey or combination of other animals, rather than a human subject. The little sketch of a face in the bottom right corner shows how easily he could move from anatomical observation to artistic invention.

Pen and ink over metalpoint on prepared paper
X6859/Cat. 23. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

29

Leonardo da Vinci

Design for an Adoration of the Christ Child, about 1486–9

The study at the top of this sheet, around which Leonardo has drawn a frame, shows the Virgin Mary adoring the Christ Child. The Virgin's outstretched arm, unusually bare, almost exactly matches the pose of *Saint Jerome* [25]. In making this little sketch Leonardo was perhaps still searching for the ideal composition in which to use this powerful gesture of devotion.

Metalpoint, much faded, and pen and ink on prepared paper
X6866/Cat. 30. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

30

Leonardo da Vinci

A church viewed in perspective, about 1488–90

This drawing of a church corresponds closely to the sketch of a similar building in Leonardo's unfinished *Saint Jerome* [25]. It is unlikely to relate to a real building project but may have been made to explore the ideas of the ancient Roman architect Vitruvius. Vitruvius related the architecture of temples to the ideal proportions of the human body.

Pen and ink on paper
X6966/Cat. 29. Gallerie dell'Accademia,
Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe, Venice

31

Leonardo da Vinci

Studies of the human skull, 1489

The inscription across the top of this sheet, 'On the 2nd day of April 1489', is one of the few recorded dates in Leonardo's surviving works. It also reveals the moment at which his researches had led him to obtain a human skull. The exceptionally fine pen strokes were made with a quill Leonardo would have cut by hand and show his distinctive left-handed hatching.

Pen and ink on paper
X7025/Cat. 25. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

32

Leonardo da Vinci

Studies of a male nude, about 1489

When using metalpoint the surface of the paper has to be prepared with a special ground layer so that the sharpened metal drawing tool leaves a mark when moved across it. Prepared papers can come in different colours. In these studies of a male nude, Leonardo used the bright blue preparation as a mid-tone to which he added fine white highlights.

Metalpoint heightened with white on prepared paper
X6862/Cat. 28. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

33

Leonardo da Vinci

The proportions of the male head; a standing male nude, about 1490

This study sets out the measurements for the ideal proportions of the human head. Leonardo drew over his initial sketch to make his model appear more warrior-like. The alterations made to the back of the man's head reveal the mathematically calculated ideal winning out over observed reality. The body of the younger full-length male nude is similar to that of *Saint Jerome* [25].

Pen and ink over metalpoint on prepared paper
X7030/Cat. 27. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

ROOM 4

PAINTING THE DIVINE: THE VIRGIN OF THE ROCKS

Displayed here, for the first time, are Leonardo's two versions of the picture known as the *Virgin of the Rocks*. Leonardo began the first work [36] in 1483, soon after arriving in Milan. It was commissioned by the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception, a group who took their name from the doctrine asserting that the Virgin Mary was conceived without the stain of original sin and that God had planned her existence before Creation itself. The mysterious rocky landscape in the picture was perhaps intended to suggest this primeval setting.

Leonardo probably began his second version [46] after a dispute over fees led him to sell the first. This second picture had a tremendous impact on art in the city and may have been installed by the time Leonardo left Milan in late 1499. The confraternity considered the work unfinished, however, and demanded he return to complete it. In 1508, 25 years after the original commission, Leonardo received final payment. The differences between the two works reveal a change in Leonardo's ideas from an art rooted in the observation of nature to one where the artist's powers of invention might reveal a glimpse of the divine imagination.

34

Leonardo da Vinci

Sketches for an Adoration of the Shepherds with angels, about 1478

At the bottom of this sheet a kneeling child has been added to a group of figures, including the Virgin Mary, who are shown adoring a recumbent Christ Child. This additional figure is an infant Saint John. Leonardo made the sketch while still in Florence, where John was the city's patron saint.

Pen and ink over metalpoint on prepared paper
X6968/Cat. 35. Gallerie dell'Accademia,
Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe, Venice

35

Leonardo da Vinci

Cartoon for the head of the infant Saint John the Baptist, about 1482–3

All the major lines in this study have been repeatedly pricked with a pin to make a 'cartoon'. By brushing powdered black chalk through the holes Leonardo could transfer this design to paper or a prepared wood panel. He used it for the head of the infant John in his first version of the *Virgin of the Rocks* [36].

Metalpoint with traces of pen and ink and wash heightened with white on prepared paper
X6826/Cat. 41. Musée du Louvre,
Département des Arts Graphiques, Paris

36

Leonardo da Vinci

The Virgin of the Rocks, 1483–about 1485

Leonardo changed the terms of this picture's commission to include the infant Saint John the Baptist, left, who kneels in adoration of the Christ Child. The saint may represent the faithful viewer receiving the Virgin's protection for honouring her son. The meticulously observed flowers, symbolic of the Virgin's many virtues, and the convincing geology of the setting, the diffuse fall of light and reduced palette of colours were of a revelatory naturalism.

Oil on wood, transferred to canvas
X7447/Cat. 31. Musée du Louvre, Département des Peintures, Paris

37

Leonardo da Vinci

Designs for a Virgin and Child with the Infant Saint John the Baptist, about 1480–3

Leonardo first drew profiles on the bottom half of this sheet, which was folded, before opening it out to sketch the Virgin Mary suckling the Christ Child. Leonardo ensured the legs of both figures avoided the existing drawings below – which in the Virgin's case led him to discover the distinctive pose he gave to the angel in the *Virgin of the Rocks* [36].

Pen and ink on paper
X6954/Cat. 37. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

38

Leonardo da Vinci

Virgin and Child with the infant Saint John the Baptist and an angel, about 1480–3

This delicate sketch gathers the four figures shown in the *Virgin of the Rocks*. The Virgin appears seated on the ground, feeding the Christ Child, who sits in her lap. The infant Saint John kneels on the left, encouraged in his adoration by a figure that may represent an early thought for the angel.

Metalpoint, much faded, over indentations with a stylus on prepared paper
X6963/Cat. 38. The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.
Presented by Chambers Hall, 1855

39

Leonardo da Vinci

Designs for an Adoration of the Christ Child, about 1482–3

As a left-handed artist Leonardo often began sketches at the right edge of a sheet. This series of framed sketches shows him developing various ideas for depictions of the Virgin adoring the Christ Child. The densely worked sketch in the centre appears to be his concluding thought and includes the infant Saint John the Baptist.

Pen and ink over metalpoint on prepared paper
X6802/Cat. 39. Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Rogers Fund, 1917 (17.142.1)

40

Leonardo da Vinci

A rocky ravine, about 1480–3

This drawing of a rocky cliff-face and riverbed might record Leonardo's direct observations made in the Arno valley, near Florence. The distinctive, pillar-like formations are geologically accurate. However, it is equally likely Leonardo recreated a landscape from memory as part of his preparations for the *Virgin of the Rocks*.

Pen and ink on paper
X6827/Cat. 40. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

41

Leonardo da Vinci

Head and shoulders of a child in profile, about 1494–6

This study is connected to Leonardo's second version of the *Virgin of the Rocks* [46] in which the head of the Christ Child was repainted in stricter profile. As babies are difficult to draw from life, Leonardo may have used a sculpture of an infant as his model – a practice he had learnt from his teacher, Verrocchio.

Red chalk on paper
X6829/Cat. 45. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

42

Leonardo da Vinci

Torso and shoulders of a child seen from front and back, about 1494–6

The corrections to the drawing at the bottom of this sheet, and the child's irregular folds of flesh, suggest these sketches of a baby's upper body were made from life. They were drawn using red chalk, a medium recently adopted by Leonardo, which proved ideal for capturing the fall of light on soft skin.

Red chalk on paper
X6867/Cat. 46. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

43

Leonardo da Vinci

Drapery study for an angel, about 1495–8

This is the only drapery study surviving for the *Virgin of the Rocks*, made to solve a particular problem concerning the robes of the angel in the second version of the picture [46], which technical examination has revealed were revised after Leonardo had started painting. The great beauty of this study belies its fundamentally practical use.

Brush and ink heightened with white on prepared paper
X6828/Cat. 47. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

44

Attributed to Francesco Galli,
called Francesco Napoletano

The Madonna Lia, about 1495

This picture, attributed to a pupil or assistant of Leonardo's, takes the second version of the *Virgin of the Rocks* [46] as its starting point. The Virgin's downcast gaze, loosely curling hair, and the folds and colours of her cloak closely match the original. However, Napoletano domesticates Leonardo's rocky landscape. On the left he includes the Castello Sforzesco, Ludovico Sforza's residence and fortress.

Oil on wood, transferred from canvas
X6835/Cat. 48. Raccolte d'Arte Antica, Pinacoteca del Castello Sforzesco, Milan

45

Associate of Leonardo da Vinci
(Francesco Napoletano?)

An Angel in Green with a Vielle, 1490–9

Leonardo's *Virgin of the Rocks* was painted for a large, and mostly sculpted, altarpiece, no longer in existence, which included two angels. Little is known about the overall design of the altarpiece, but it is now thought this panel and its companion [47], were displayed at a considerable height – on a level above Leonardo's painting.

Oil on poplar
NG1661/Cat. 34. The National Gallery, London

46

Leonardo da Vinci

The Virgin of the Rocks, about 1491/2–9 and 1506–8

In this second version of the picture, Leonardo moves away from meticulously observed naturalism to a more generalised depiction of the rocky setting and plants. His palette is even further reduced, paying greater attention to the crepuscular fall of light and the sculptural relief of the figures. The hand of the angel supporting the Christ Child's back is one of the several areas Leonardo left less than completely resolved.

Oil on poplar
NG1093/Cat. 32. The National Gallery, London

47

Ambrogio de Predis

An Angel in Red with a Lute, about 1490–9

Ambrogio de Predis was one of the two Milanese half-brothers who were contracted to paint subordinate parts of the altarpiece for which Leonardo made the *Virgin of the Rocks*. This angel, and the other displayed nearby [45], were probably made several years into the commission's history and show that Leonardo's contribution profoundly affected the style and appearance of the entire work.

Oil on poplar
NG1662/Cat.33. The National Gallery, London

48

Master of the Pala Sforzesca
(active about 1490–1500)

Head of a young woman, about 1494–5

This drawing was made after the second version of the *Virgin of the Rocks* [46]. It reproduces details of Leonardo's Virgin including her hairline and the raking fall of light. But the fleshiness of the woman's face and her bulging eyes mark this drawing as the work of an as yet unidentified follower of Leonardo's, named after an altarpiece known as the *Pala Sforzesca*.

Metalpoint with traces of wash heightened with white on prepared paper
X6974/Cat. 49. On loan from The British Museum

49

Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio

Head of a youth with an ivy wreath, about 1491–4

Boltraffio's drawing is a direct citation, in reverse, of the head of Leonardo's Madonna in the second *Virgin of the Rocks* [46]. In it, however, the Virgin is transformed into an adolescent male crowned with leaves, an attribute of the ancient god Bacchus. This androgynous ideal was much repeated in Leonardo's Milanese workshop, especially in the early 1490s.

Metalpoint on prepared paper
X6952/Cat. 50. Galleria degli Uffizi, Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe,
Florence

50

Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio

Head of a young woman, about 1495–7

Despite the inscription at the bottom of the sheet, this drawing is by Leonardo's pupil Boltraffio, closely related to his *Esterházy Madonna* [51]. In comparison to the still, regular features of Boltraffio's earlier *Portrait of a Young Man* [8, Room 1], the hint of a fleeting expression on this woman's face shows him, like Leonardo, depicting the 'motions of the mind'.

Metalpoint heightened with white on prepared paper
X6839/Cat. 52. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute,
Williamstown, MA

51

Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio

The Esterházy Madonna, about 1495–7

The infant Jesus reaches with both hands towards a maiolica bowl or perhaps to something beyond. The Virgin looks in the same direction. Such ambiguities of gaze and gesture are typical of a painter in Leonardo's circle. Here, Boltraffio can be seen creatively animating elements he had learnt from the second *Virgin of the Rocks* [46].

Oil on poplar
X7011/Cat. 53. Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest

52 

Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio

Body of a child, turning right, about 1492–4

The fold, once horizontal, across this irregularly cut-down sheet indicates the original orientation of this drawing of a plump infant attributed to Leonardo's pupil Boltraffio. The pricked outlines suggest the design was at some point transferred to a panel, although such a painting has not been traced. The design does, however, appear reversed and modified in Boltraffio's painted *Esterházy Madonna* [51].

Metalpoint with traces of pen and ink and wash heightened with white on prepared paper
X7306/Cat. 51. Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts
Graphiques, Paris

53

Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio

**Head of a child in profile,
about 1490**

Metalpoint with traces of pen and ink heightened with white with some traces of black chalk on prepared paper. X6957/Cat. 44.

54

Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio

**Head of a child in profile,
about 1487–90**

Metalpoint heightened with white (partially discoloured) on prepared paper. X6958/Cat. 42.

55

Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio

**Head of a child in lost profile,
about 1487–90**

Metalpoint heightened with white (partially discoloured) on prepared paper. X7305/Cat. 43.

All Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts Graphiques, Paris

These three drawings show Boltraffio responding to the Christ Child in Leonardo's first *Virgin of the Rocks* [36]. But they also show him thinking, as Leonardo did himself, of moving round the subject as a sculptor might. In each study Boltraffio progressively edges to the back of the child's head, recording the fall of light on his disappearing profile.

ROOM 5

**THE MADONNA LITTA:
LEONARDO AND HIS
COMPANIONS**

From the late 1480s there is evidence that Leonardo ran some kind of workshop in Milan. His pupils and assistants were often so successful at emulating his distinctive style that all Leonardo's pictures produced in the city, with the exception of the *Last Supper*, have at one point or another been attributed to his followers. In 1491, while still working with Leonardo, his most gifted students, Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio and Marco d'Oggiono, were referred to as his *compagni dipintori* (companion painters).

The picture of the Virgin and Child known as the *Madonna Litta* [60] (after the surname of its 19th-century owners) achieved extraordinary fame from the moment it was painted. Here it is shown with all surviving works connected with it – some by the master himself, others by pupils. To some extent Leonardo's artistic language became the collective voice for the art of Sforza Milan. In courtly rhetoric, his presence was used to prove Ludovico's achievements in transforming the city into a new Athens, a haven for all great men of talent.

56, 57

After Leonardo da Vinci

Idealised head of a woman; knot pattern, about 1495

These two prints are from a group of engravings, each inscribed with variations on the words 'Academia Leonardi Vinci'. It is not known how far Ludovico Sforza managed to emulate the Greek philosopher Plato, who gathered the intellectuals of his day to his Academy in Athens. But it seems that Leonardo's name and work were used to represent such an enterprise. The quality and complexity of the knot pattern suggest it may even be regarded as the first surviving example of abstract art.

Engraving
X6834/Cat. 55; X6833/Cat. 54. On loan from The British Museum

58

Leonardo da Vinci

Studies of a baby, about 1490

This sheet of animated studies in red chalk, some made from life, some from memory, shows a baby feeding. Always seeking novel ways to depict the Virgin and Child, Leonardo drew babies throughout his career. The baby's kicking leg on the right is almost identical to that in the *Madonna Litta* [60].

Red chalk on paper
X7026/Cat. 58. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

59

Leonardo da Vinci

Head of a woman, about 1488–90

This drawing has been hailed one of Leonardo's loveliest studies. Like Cecilia Gallerani in the *Lady with an Ermine* [18, Room 2], this woman appears to have been a great natural beauty. Details such as the hairs straying from her chignon, the shadows around her eyes and her slightly protruding upper lip suggest she was drawn from life. The drawing was used to paint the head of *The Madonna Litta* [60].

Metalpoint heightened with white on prepared paper
X6830/Cat. 59. Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts Graphiques, Paris

60

Leonardo da Vinci

The Madonna Litta, about 1491–5

This a reworking of the traditional image of the 'Madonna lactans' (the Virgin breast-feeding her Child). The Christ Child looks out at the viewer as he feeds, twisting his body to do so. The head of the Virgin is based on Leonardo's drawing of a real woman's head [59] but her features have been idealised as befits her sacred role. The picture was copied many times from the moment it was made.

Tempera on wood, transferred from canvas
X6953/Cat. 57. The State Hermitage, St Petersburg

61

Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio Study for the head of the Christ Child, about 1490–1

The baby in this study by Boltraffio stares out at the viewer while feeding at his mother's breast, as the Christ Child does in the *Madonna Litta* [60]. Some scholars have suggested this drawing was copied from the painting. Others have proposed that Boltraffio was responsible for the final work and that this is his preparatory study.

Metalpoint heightened with white on prepared paper
X6960/Cat. 61. Frits Lugt Collection, Institut Néerlandais, Paris

62

Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio Drapery study for a Madonna lactans, about 1490–1

This meticulously executed drapery study relates to the *Madonna Litta* [60]. It shows the fall of the Virgin's mantle over her left arm and her bodice unlaced over her right breast. The inclusion of drapery that is hidden by Christ's leg in the picture suggests this is Boltraffio's preparatory study rather than a copy after the finished painting.

Metalpoint heightened with white on prepared paper
X6961/Cat. 62. Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

63

Follower of Leonardo da Vinci Study for the head of a woman, about 1490

This cut-down study copies Leonardo's *Head of a woman* [59]. The rather shaky use of a metalpoint and a not entirely successful attempt to emulate Leonardo's left-handed hatching suggest it could have been made by one of Leonardo's young apprentices learning their craft.

Metalpoint on prepared paper
X6868/Cat. 60. Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main

64

Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio Study for drapery lying across a parapet, about 1487–90

Boltraffio's intense focus here is the fall of drapery over a wide parapet. The arm and shoulder of the woman wearing this fabric are only lightly sketched in. The ribbon-like fold in the centre of the study links it directly to his *Madonna of the Rose* [65].

Metalpoint and wash heightened with white on prepared paper
X6964/Cat. 64. By permission of the Governing Body of Christ Church, Oxford

65

Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio

The Madonna of the Rose, about 1487–90

The red rose that forms the focus of this picture is symbolic of both Christ's future death and the Virgin's compassion for his suffering. As the Christ Child reaches towards the flower the Virgin gently holds him back. This ambitious work may have been Boltraffio's first picture, as Leonardo reportedly only allowed his students to paint once they reached the age of 20.

Oil on walnut
X6840/Cat. 63. Museo Poldi Pezzoli, Milan

66

Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio

Drapery study for the Risen Christ, about 1495–7

This exceptional study was made in preparation for an altarpiece depicting the Risen Christ, whose raised arm and upturned face can be seen top left in outline. Boltraffio won the contract jointly with another of Leonardo's students, Marco d'Oggiono, who eventually painted the figure of Christ himself, using this study to help him.

Black chalk and metalpoint heightened with white on prepared paper
X6973/Cat. 65. On loan from The British Museum

67

Marco d'Oggiono

The Young Christ, about 1490–1

Marco d'Oggiono may have based this work on a drawing by Leonardo, now lost, depicting Christ at about the age of 12 when he debated with the Doctors (or teachers) of the Church in the Temple in Jerusalem. Here, Marco shows Christ's lips parted as if in mid-speech but his rather mask-like handling of the features limits any sense of animating thought.

Oil on beech
X7351/Cat. 66. Fundación Lázaro Galdiano, Madrid

68

Leonardo da Vinci

Virgin and Child with a cat, about 1480

This rapid sketch, in which the Christ Child holds a cat, is one of a vast number of studies Leonardo kept as inspiration for his own painting and as teaching aids. Leonardo encouraged his students first to copy his drawings but then, importantly, to adapt his designs to make new works of their own [69].

Pen and wash on prepared paper
X6797/Cat. 56. Galleria degli Uffizi,
Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe, Florence

Marco d'Oggiono

The Madonna of the Violets, about 1498–1500

Marco used Leonardo's drawing of the *Virgin and Child with a cat* [68] to create an entirely new image. The Christ Child here holds violets (a symbol of humility) rather than a cat, and the artist invents a background with a view resembling Lake Annone near his native town of Oggiono, north of Milan.

Oil on wood, transferred to canvas
X7014/Cat. 67. Collection De Navarro

ROOM 6

THE MIRACLE OF TALENT: LEONARDO AND THE FRENCH

The rule of Ludovico Sforza, Duke of Milan, came to an end in September 1499 when the troops of the King of France, Louis XII, overran the city. Ludovico fled but Leonardo remained in Milan a few months longer, and accepted commissions from several eager patrons, including the French king.

Leonardo probably painted his *Christ as Salvator Mundi* (Saviour of the World) [71] for the king. This was his attempt to create an image of Christ almost as extraordinary as that believed to have been miraculously imprinted on the veil of Saint Veronica. Around this time, there is a record of a 'cartoon' of the *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne and the infant Saint John the Baptist* displayed in a Florentine friary, with crowds flocking to it as if to a religious festival. This drawing may also relate to a royal commission. Increasingly, Leonardo's art was understood as divinely inspired, and Leonardo himself considered imaginative power to represent a gift from God.

70

Leonardo da Vinci

Drapery study for the Salvator Mundi, about 1500

Leonardo used a rather sticky red chalk for the more deeply shaded parts of this drapery study. Although the button at the wrist does not appear in his *Christ as Salvator Mundi* [71], the highlighted folds of the outer sleeve correspond closely.

Red chalk and traces of pen and ink heightened with white chalk on prepared paper
X6875/Cat. 89. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

71

Leonardo da Vinci

Christ as Salvator Mundi, about 1499 onwards

The recent restoration of this picture has revealed many of Leonardo's characteristic working methods. The hands, which are the best preserved, were readjusted during painting. The face, more damaged, was built up with numerous fine layers of paint. Christ holds a rock crystal orb, which represents the universe. In Leonardo's day rock crystal (a clear quartz) was considered a miraculous material and no modern tools could shape it, let alone fashion it into a perfect geometric solid.

Oil on walnut
X6877/Cat. 91. Private collection

72

Leonardo da Vinci and workshop

Drapery studies for the Salvator Mundi, about 1500

This sheet was long ago connected with Leonardo's depiction of Christ as the Saviour of the World, a painting believed to be lost. The picture's recent rediscovery [71] confirms this study to have been Leonardo's preparatory work for Christ's tunic. However, the white chalk hatching on the sleeve drawn below is right-handed, suggesting this may have been made by a pupil.

Red chalk and traces of pen and ink heightened with white chalk on prepared paper. X6876/Cat. 90. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

73

Leonardo da Vinci

The Burlington House Cartoon, about 1499–1500

Leonardo depicts the Virgin seated in the lap of her mother, Saint Anne, with the Christ Child and infant Saint John. He uses charcoal and white chalk to make the figures monumental and sculptural, but some parts are left in outline. The simple perfection of these unfinished elements, most clearly seen in the hand of Saint Anne pointing towards heaven, suggests that the act of drawing could be seen as divinely inspired.

Charcoal (and wash?) heightened with white chalk on paper, mounted on canvas. NG6337/Cat. 86. The National Gallery, London. Purchased with a special grant and contributions from The Art Fund, The Pilgrim Trust, and through a public appeal organised by The Art Fund, 1962

74

Leonardo da Vinci

Sketches for a Virgin and Child with Saint Anne and the infant Saint John the Baptist; machinery designs, about 1499–1500

This sheet of designs is perhaps the most extreme example of Leonardo's *pentimento* (rethinking) technique. The figures are so heavily reworked that it is impossible to follow their exact evolution. Perhaps to clarify his own thoughts, Leonardo went over parts of the drawing in pen and ink. From this emerged the group depicted in his great *Cartoon* [73].

Pen and ink and wash over black chalk heightened with white on paper, indented for transfer.

X6831/Cat. 85. On loan from The British Museum, London

75

Leonardo da Vinci and
unknown 16th-century painter

The Madonna of the Yarnwinder, about 1499 onwards

A picture of this subject was commissioned by Florimond Robertet, Louis XII's secretary. The Christ Child turns in his mother's lap to contemplate the crucifix shape made by her yarnwinder. Leonardo was still working on this picture in Florence in April 1501 but was soon distracted by other projects. An artist unconnected to Leonardo's studio seems to have completed the landscape background some years later.

Oil on walnut. X7496/Cat. 88. The 10th Duke of Buccleuch and The Trustees of the Buccleuch Living Heritage Trust

76

Leonardo da Vinci

Bust of a woman, about 1499–1501

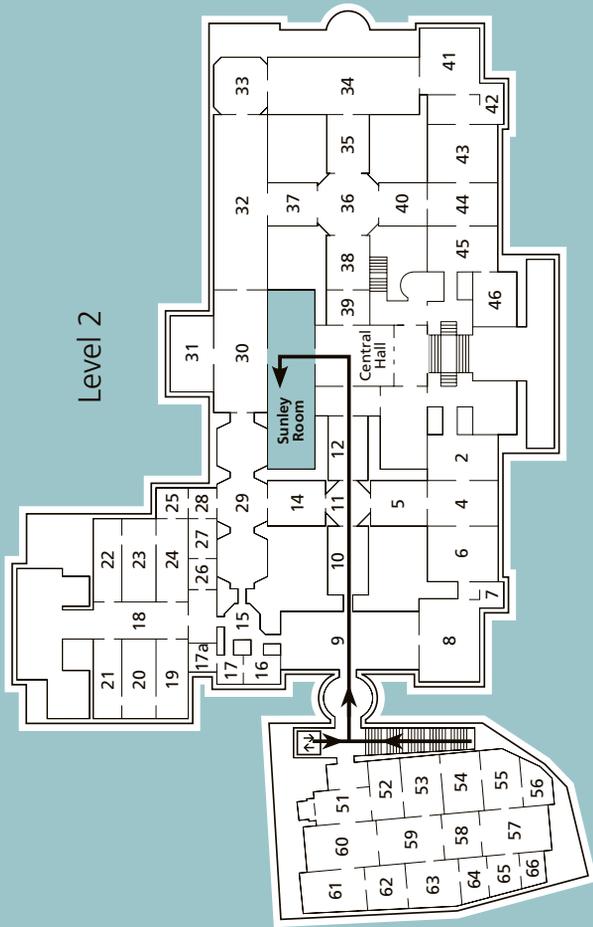
The pose adopted by this woman, in which the lines of her shoulder, neck and cheek meet at a single point, was one that fascinated Leonardo. He used it for his earlier portrait of Cecilia Gallerani, the *Lady with an Ermine* [18, Room 2]. This drawing, made from life using metalpoint for the face and red chalk for the neck and torso, may have been the starting point for his *Madonna of the Yarnwinder* [75].

Red chalk over metalpoint on prepared paper
X6832/Cat. 87. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

Exhibition continues in the Sunley Room

Take the stairs or lift to level 2 and use this map or follow the signs

- Please take your audio guide with you
- Please note that there is no re-admission to either part of the exhibition



ROOM 7 (SUNLEY ROOM)

CHARACTER AND EMOTION: THE LAST SUPPER

The Last Supper (about 1492–7/8) was the most ambitious work Leonardo made for Ludovico Sforza. It was painted directly onto the wall of the refectory of the Dominican convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, where it remains to this day. It depicts the reactions of the 12 Apostles to Christ's announcement that one of them will betray him.

The surviving drawings for the project show Leonardo continually distilling ideas, moving from quick compositional sketches, notes on other artists' versions, caricatures and studies after life through to idealised heads for the Apostles. Throughout this process Leonardo searched for ways to express character and emotion. His ultimate goal was to place the reactions of 12 distinct individuals within an ideally proportioned composition that would communicate the beauty and divine mystery of Christ's imminent sacrifice.

In painting the *Last Supper* Leonardo invented a technique that would allow him to work at his own pace and make revisions. Unfortunately this proved unstable and within 20 years the work was judged a ruin. On display here is the earliest known full-scale copy made before the work deteriorated. It was painted by a sympathetic pupil and is an invaluable record of what has been lost.

Leonardo da Vinci

Description of men dining; emblem designs, about 1493–4

Leonardo often used words in preference to sketches to develop ideas, writing them down in a series of notebooks. Here he describes a group of men reacting in surprise to a figure he calls 'the speaker'. The notes predate the *Last Supper* and since the Apostles are not named, may evoke a real event. They reveal Leonardo focusing on the expressive power of gesture.

Pen and ink and red chalk on paper
X7347/Cat. 71. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
Bequest of John Forster (1812–1876)

Written in the artist's characteristic mirror writing, inscribed from right to left, the text in ink on the displayed pages is translated below.

Left-hand page:

'One who was drinking and has left the glass in its place and turned his head towards the speaker. Another, twisting the fingers of his hands together, turns with stern brow to his companion. Another with his hands spread open shows the palms, and shrugs his shoulders up to his ears, making a mouth of astonishment. Another speaks into his neighbour's ear and he, as he listens to him, turns towards him to lend an ear, while he holds a knife in one hand, and in the other the loaf half cut through by the knife. Another who has turned, holding a knife in his hand, upsets with his hand a glass onto the table'.

Right-hand page:

'Another lays his hands on the table and is looking. Another blows his mouthful. Another leans forward to see the speaker, shading his eyes with his hand. Another draws back behind the one who leans forward, and sees the speaker between the wall and the man who is leaning.'

78

Leonardo da Vinci

Studies of male figures; a hygrometer; a mother and child, about 1480–1

Leonardo's ideas for one subject often sparked thoughts for another. Here, the single figure at top left was drawn for his unfinished painting of the *Adoration of the Kings* (Uffizi, Florence). This figure resembles one at bottom right, now part of a lively group arranged around a table. Drawing this group seems to have prompted thoughts of depicting the *Last Supper*, and he then drew a bearded Christ below.

Pen and ink over metalpoint on prepared paper
X6815/Cat. 68. Musée du Louvre,
Département des Arts Graphiques, Paris

78a

Leonardo da Vinci

Studies of male figures, about 1480–1

This side of the sheet shows Leonardo testing ideas for the entourage of animated figures in his unfinished *Adoration of the Kings* (Uffizi, Florence). Here he begins to explore a theory that would be so important for the *Last Supper* – that the ‘motions of the body’ reveal ‘the attitudes and motions of the mind’.

Pen and ink over metalpoint on prepared paper
X6815/Cat. 68. Musée du Louvre,
Département des Arts Graphiques, Paris

79

Leonardo da Vinci

Study of a man in profile; calculations, about 1491–5

This double-sided sheet shows two versions of Leonardo’s mature type [see 80]. Beneath this austere, strongly featured profile in red chalk he wrote: ‘When you make a figure, think well about what it is and what you want it to do, and see that the work is in keeping with the figure’s aim and character.’ This is a type that has been connected with his depiction of Judas.

Red chalk and pen and ink on paper
X7028/Cat. 78. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

79a

Leonardo da Vinci

Study of a man in profile facing a grotesque figure, about 1491–5

Using a practice he often employed, Leonardo held this sheet of paper up to the light to go over the lines of the profile drawn on the other side. The dignity of the character type he had studied is punctured here by Leonardo’s quick addition of a goatee beard and the grotesque profile facing him.

Pen and ink on paper
X7028/Cat. 78. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

80

Leonardo da Vinci

Head of an old man in profile, about 1490–5

Naturalistic details such as the wisps of hair on the top of this man’s head and the folds of skin beneath his chin suggest Leonardo drew him from life. Leonardo reportedly sought out particularly characterful individuals while preparing a new work and would draw them repeatedly until he had arrived at a distilled character type.

Red chalk on paper
X7032/Cat. 77. On loan from The British Museum

81 

Leonardo da Vinci

Five character studies ('A man tricked by gypsies'), about 1490–3

Leonardo was as fascinated by perfect ugliness as he was by perfect beauty. This study has been identified as that of a man being distracted and robbed by gypsies. Like his contemporaries Leonardo believed that depravity manifested itself in outward deformity. His studies of the grotesque fed into his depiction of Judas.

Pen and ink on paper
X6864/Cat. 74. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

82

Leonardo da Vinci

A bearded old man (Saint Peter?), about 1487–90

Saint Peter was the eldest and most hot-tempered of the Apostles. But if this work is a study for the *Last Supper* it was made long before Leonardo decided on the saint's forward-thrusting pose. Leonardo's assured handling of fine lines made with a sharpened metal drawing tool (metalpoint) and then a pen suggests this was a character type he had been honing for some time.

Pen and ink over metalpoint on blue prepared paper
X6863/Cat. 72. Albertina, Vienna

83

Leonardo da Vinci

Study of a man in profile, about 1495

This head is probably a study for Saint Bartholomew who appears at the far left of the *Last Supper*. In the mural Bartholomew leaps to his feet and grasps the edge of the table, but his face is among the most damaged. This idealising study shows Leonardo imagined him as a bullish warrior – a character type the artist had perfected over many years.

Red chalk on prepared paper
X6820/Cat. 80. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

84

Leonardo da Vinci

Drapery study for the right sleeve of Saint Peter, about 1493–6

This is the only surviving drapery study for the *Last Supper*. It was made for the figure of Saint Peter whose right arm is bent back so that his wrist rests on his hip. Here Leonardo concentrates on the fall of light on the fabric and on how its folds respond to the action and anatomy of the figure.

Black chalk and pen and ink heightened with white on paper
X6818/Cat. 83. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

85

Leonardo da Vinci (with additions?)

Study of a man with his head turned, about 1495

Leonardo reportedly left the heads of Christ and Judas until last due to the difficulty of finding models for such extremes of good and evil. This study for Judas does not appear to be after life. Judas' neck muscles are exaggerated and his features verge on the grotesque. The lines of the profile may have been reinforced by another artist, possibly a pupil.

Red chalk on prepared paper
X6821/Cat.79. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

86

Follower of Leonardo da Vinci

The hand of Judas, about 1500–15

In the *Last Supper* Judas clasps a bag containing his payment for betraying Christ. Here the top of that bag is visible. The use of red chalk on red prepared paper was favoured by Leonardo around 1500, but the clumsy foreshortening of the thumb and heavy outlines suggest this drawing was made by a pupil, possibly after an original study by Leonardo or from a model adopting Judas' pose.

Red chalk heightened with white on prepared paper
X6970/Cat. 82. Gallerie dell'Accademia,
Gabinetto di Disegni e Stampe, Venice

87

Leonardo da Vinci

Study for the hands of Saint John, about 1491–3

This study of clasped hands was made for the youthful Saint John, who sits on Christ's immediate right in the *Last Supper*. Leonardo considered hands to be as expressive of character and emotion as faces. Here John's interlaced fingers convey his gentle and pious nature. The revised lines suggest Leonardo may have used a live model.

Black chalk on paper
X7130/Cat. 81. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

88

Leonardo da Vinci

Measured study of a foot, about 1490–2

The small size of this sheet suggests it was originally a page from one of Leonardo's pocket-sized notebooks. It could be a study for the right foot of Christ but may initially have been made for its own sake, as part of Leonardo's researches into the ideal proportions of the human body made around 1490.

Red chalk on paper
X7027/Cat. 73. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

89

Leonardo da Vinci

Sketch of a youth; fortifications, about 1493

This youth was probably rapidly sketched from life as he was speaking. He corresponds closely to the figure of James the Greater, who appears immediately to the left of Christ, flinging out his arms in angry disbelief. Here Leonardo makes adjustments to the eyes, nose and mouth of his initial sketch to find the right expression.

Red chalk and pen and ink on buff paper
X6817/Cat. 75. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

90

Leonardo da Vinci

Head of a youth, about 1491–3

This study for Saint Philip is among the most beautiful of the idealised heads made as the *Last Supper* was being prepared. Leonardo's delicate use of black chalk includes blended *sfumato* (smoky) areas of modelling that describe the fall of light on Philip's tilted head and help convey his look of pleading enquiry.

Black chalk on paper
X6819/Cat. 76. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

91

Leonardo da Vinci

Compositional sketches for the Last Supper; architectural and geometric studies, about 1490–2

On this sheet Leonardo's early ideas for the composition of the *Last Supper* share space with an annotated mathematical diagram and architectural studies. The sketches show Leonardo originally planned to follow tradition by placing Judas on the near side of the table receiving the piece of dipped bread by which Christ identifies him as his betrayer.

Pen and ink on paper
X6816/Cat. 70. Lent by Her Majesty The Queen

92

Giovanni Pietro Rizzoli, called
Giampietrino (active 1508–1549)

The Last Supper, about 1520

The accuracy of this full-scale copy proved invaluable during the 20-year restoration (1978–98) of the *Last Supper*. It includes details permanently lost in the original, such as Christ's feet and the salt cellar spilt by Judas. Giampietrino is thought to have been an assistant resident with Leonardo during his time in Milan.

Oil on canvas
X6844/Cat. 84. Lent by The Royal Academy of Arts, London

Leonardo da Vinci

Study after a Last Supper, about 1492

The unsure drawing style in parts of this sheet has led to its authenticity being questioned. But the names written above the Apostle's heads are in Leonardo's hand. The fact that Leonardo identifies Filippo (Philip) twice, at the top far right and second in from the bottom, suggests it is not a compositional sketch but a study after another earlier artist's work.

Red chalk and traces of pen and ink on paper
X7349/Cat. 69. Gallerie dell'Accademia,
Gabinetto di Disegni e Stampe, Venice

Information

Exhibition opening hours

Open daily 10am–6pm (last admission 5pm)
Fridays and Saturdays until 10pm (last admission 9pm)
(except Saturday 31 December 10am–6pm)
Sundays until 7pm (last admission 6pm)
Additional late nights – see website for details
No readmission

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Sundays 10am–6pm

The Espresso Bar

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