

## LEONARDO DA VINCI: DRAWING THE FUTURE THE SECTIONS OF THE EXHIBITION

The exhibition opens with an ***Ancient Models*** section that examines the relationship with the legacy of classical art, which was a test bench for all Renaissance artists. In his *Assault Chariot with Scythes*, which is one of the most spectacular visions of military instruments of his time, Leonardo goes back to and works on the subject of war machines. *Hercules with the Nemean Lion* introduces the theme of the hero, as embodied by Hercules, in which the image is linked to a plan to create a statue for the Piazza della Signoria in Florence. Lastly, in his *Male Head in Profile with Laurel Wreath*, Leonardo takes up the theme of the "heroic-style head", another subject from classical art that was dear to Renaissance artists.

The ***Bodies, Structures, Functions*** section opens with the spectacular page of the *Nudes for the Battle of Anghiari and Other Figure Studies*, which is linked to specific works by Leonardo, including the equestrian monuments dedicated to Francesco Sforza and Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, as well as to the *Battle* itself. Next to these are folios illustrating the figure from a range of different angles, with studies of proportions, anatomy, moving bodies, of the relationship between man and horse, and of the horse as an artistic subject but also as an object for anatomical comparisons with the human body. All these themes come together in Leonardo's drawings in a unified approach, and they are compared with examples of similar subjects by Antonio del Pollaiuolo, Botticelli, Michelangelo and Raphael, with works from museums in Florence, Paris, Haarlem and Oxford. In a drawing with *Studies of the Proportions of the Face and Eye*, Leonardo investigates the measurement ratios of the various parts of the face, linking them in a written comment to the underlying bone structure: "where the eye ends in the bone socket which contains it". The small drawing of the eye recalls the importance that Leonardo attributed to sight, which on many occasions he referred to as "the finest sense", for its value as a cognitive instrument (*Codex Atlanticus*) and for its connections with the brain.

The third section, ***Poetic Words and Drawings***, is more intimate in nature, focusing attention on the relationship between drawing and writing, and especially one with a rhythmic flow. In this case it is a sketch coupled with a short poem that alludes to the fate of lovers blinded by passion and the

extraordinary *Codex Trivulzianus*, with the satirical tercet attributed to Bramante: "if Petrarch was so fond of bay, it was because it is of a good taste with sausages and thrush: I cannot put any value on their foolery". Next to this are two famous rhymes by Michelangelo, a sonnet by Raphael and poetic compositions by Donato Bramante.

At the centre of the exhibition is the fourth section, entitled ***Self Portrait***, which is entirely devoted to the *Self Portrait* by Leonardo, one of the most famous icons in the history of Italian art. In this pensive face, framed by long hair and a flowing beard, with the forehead furrowed by wrinkles, the austere crease of the lips and the deep shadow of the eyes, generations of connoisseurs and art historians have seen the face of the artist as an old man, possibly inspired by that of an ancient philosopher or sage. In this outstanding section, the *Self Portrait*, a highly relevant theme today, interacts with contemporary works of art by Luigi Ontani, Salvo and Alberto Savinio.

The exhibition continues with a section entitled ***Faces Real and Ideal***, devoted to the emotions, an area in which Leonardo was the undisputed master. This section focuses on the *Bust of a Young Woman in Three-Quarter View*, which was an initial idea for the angel in *The Virgin of the Rocks*, and on the *Study of a Male Head in Three Positions*. Following the precepts laid out by Leon Battista Alberti, Leonardo explored the diversity of facial features and their ever-changing expressions induced by the pose, the angle of light and the sitter's emotional state. Through observation and recording in the form of drawing, he drew on an infinite catalogue of human types, rendering a truer, more convincing image of the real world. Drawings and paintings by other artists who worked during the same years as Leonardo are also on display, revealing their connections, types, preferences, and attitudes. They include Verrocchio and Raphael, and the Leonardesque artists Ambrogio de Predis and Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio.

The penultimate section of the exhibition is entirely devoted to the ***Codex on the Flight of Birds***, which comes from a small notebook with seven drawings in red chalk, with various subjects: a leg, a twig, two leaves, two flowers, and a three-quarter head. Just a notebook for sketches from life and for small studies. In the spring of 1506, when he was in Florence, Leonardo decided to reuse the little notebook to transcribe his notes on flight, with extremely keen observations and descriptions of the behaviour of various species of birds in the air, through to technical notes for a human-powered flying machine. The bird and the glider, nature's machine and that of man, identify with each other and overlap. The inquisitiveness of the naturalist interweaves with that of the engineer, and the

story of climbing flight by means of flapping wings leads through to analytical drawings that show the supporting ribs of an artificial wing.

The seventh and last section looks at an original theme: **Leonardo and Piedmont**. Revolving around folio 563r of the *Codex Atlanticus* with a note regarding the *Navilio di Invrea facto dal fiume della Doira* – the Ivrea canal built from the river Dora – and annotations on variations in the colour of the sky during an ascent to Monte Rosa (*E questo vedrà come vid'io, chi andrà sopra Monboso, giogo dell'Alpi che dividano la Francia dalla Italia* – "This may be seen, as I saw it, by going up Monte Rosa, a peak of the Alps which divide France from Italy", *Codex Leicester*, c. 4r), the section looks at the course of the River Po, from its source to the Adriatic, with the places in Piedmont mentioned by Leonardo (Saluzzo, Alessandria, etc.) for their particular characteristics. A spectacular reconstruction of Monte Rosa and a historical map with a Leonardesque bird's-eye flight along the Ivrea canal will allow visitors to identify with Leonardo's words. Comparisons will be made with Ptolemy's *Geographia*, Leon Battista Alberti's *De Re Aedificatoria*, and Francesco di Giorgio Martini's treatise on architecture (Royal Library, Turin, *Codex Torinese Saluzziano* 148).