

AUSSTELLUNGSBESPRECHUNG

A double Leonardo. On two exhibitions (and their catalogues) in London and Paris*

Luke Syson/Larry Keith (ed.), *Leonardo da Vinci: Painter at the Court of Milan*, London: National Gallery, 2011, 319 pages, ills., £ 29, ISBN 978-1-85709-491-6 / Vincent Delieuvin (ed.), *La Sainte Anne. L'ultime chef-d'œuvre de Léonard de Vinci*, Paris: Louvre, 2012, 443 pages, ills., € 45, ISBN 978-2-35031-370-2

Ten or twenty years ago, the idea that two major exhibitions with drawings and several original paintings by Leonardo da Vinci could open within just a few months of each other, would have been considered impossible. But this is exactly what the London National Gallery and the Paris Louvre recently managed to do. First came *Leonardo da Vinci. Painter at the Court of Milan*, which opened in November 2011 in London. The National Gallery's decision to host what proved to be the largest and most important exhibition of original paintings by Leonardo for decades, may well have been triggered by the discovery of the underdrawings beneath the London *Virgin of the Rocks* a few years earlier.¹ The cleaning of the altarpiece, completed in 2010, was probably another influential factor. The Paris exhibition *La Sainte Anne. L'ultime chef-d'œuvre de Léonard de Vinci*, which opened in March 2012 in the Louvre, likewise had one of its starting points in a restoration – in this case, that of Leonardo's *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne*. We may therefore assume that both exhibitions were also initiated against the backdrop of the controversies that invariably arise when prominent art works by famous artists are restored and suddenly look quite different.

The London exhibition was one of the best of the past few decades. The illuminating and instructive layout of the exhibition as a whole and the sophisticated display of the individual works reflected the high standards we are used to from the National Gallery. The show offered notable

insights into individual works from the circle of Leonardo's pupils, and these findings are carefully compiled and discussed in the catalogue. We are unlikely to come face to face again with such an impressive number of first-rate and in most cases well-restored paintings by artists such as Ambrogio de Predis, Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio and Marco d'Oggiono. More problematic, on the other hand, are some of the attributions, datings and interpretations proposed in the catalogue and concerning the works by Leonardo himself.

The exhibition *Leonardo da Vinci: Painter at the Court of Milan* focused upon the activities of Leonardo and his workshop in Milan between c. 1483 and 1499. The theme of Leonardo as court painter nonetheless receives only partial treatment in the scholarly catalogue, not least since a number of the major works in the exhibition fell outside the commissions that Leonardo is known to have carried out for the Sforza court. This partial treatment also extends to the possible levels of meaning present within typical princely and political iconography. The section on the equestrian monument to Francesco Sforza, commissioned by Ludovico Sforza as *de facto* ruler of Milan, is a case in point. The catalogue suggests that Leonardo might have based his design on the *Horse Tamers* on the Quirinal in Rome. Not only is this unconvincing in visual terms alone, but it fails to take account of the nature of the commission and the personality of the patron. It would be more apt in this context to cite the antique *Dexileos* motif,² which

* I would like to thank Karen Williams for her translation of this text.

¹ Luke Syson/Rachel Billinge, Leonardo da Vinci's Use of Underdrawing in the »Virgin of the Rocks« in the Na-

tional Gallery and »St Jerome« in the Vatican, in: *The Burlington Magazine* 147, 2005, 450–463.

² Wendy J. Wegener, *Mortuary Chapels of Renaissance Condottieri*, PhD thesis, Princeton 1989.

Leonardo knew from ancient coins³ and which meshed perfectly with Ludovico Sforza's military and political ambitions.

Amongst the particular strengths of the London exhibition were its detailed analyses of works originating from Leonardo's immediate sphere. The portraits by Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio and Marco d'Oggiono, for example, bear clear witness to the advanced level of realism already achieved in Milanese painting. Equally apparent, however, is the distance separating the autograph works by Leonardo and those of his colleagues: while the portraits by these latter are often frozen beneath a wealth of realistic – but static – detail, those by Leonardo convey an entirely new sense of movement. *Cecilia Gallerani* (Cat. no. 10), also known as the *Lady with an Ermine*, is a typical example: her upper body is angled almost imperceptibly towards the left, away from the pictorial plane, while her head is turned in the opposite direction towards the right. A similar tension arises out of the contrast between the unfinished areas along the lower edge of the picture and the masterly realism with which Leonardo has rendered Cecilia's flesh and the ermine's fur in the finest detail. Here we gain a sense of what it was that set Leonardo apart from the artists in his sphere and secured him a place in the history books.

The London exhibition also allowed an illuminating comparison between *Cecilia Gallerani* and the *Portrait of a Musician* from the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana (Cat. no. 5). The *Musician* comes nowhere close to the subtle dynamism of *Cecilia Gallerani*, but on the other hand shares features with portraits by other Milanese artists. Its attribution to Leonardo cannot be upheld by any stretch of the imagination. Hard shading, distortions in the neck region, and the parallel alignment of the musician's head and torso contradict the dynamic understanding of portraiture familiar to us from *Ginevra de' Benci* and *Cecilia Gallerani*. Indeed, the *Musician's* static pose goes directly against Leonardo's own advice on the composition of figures.⁴ Nor does the noticeably off-centre pupil of the *Musician's* left eye appear in any other Leonardo painting, although something

similar can be found in portraits by Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio and Marco d'Oggiono.

The attribution of the Vatican's *St Jerome* (Cat. no. 20), on the other hand, is wholly undisputed. Alongside the *Lady with an Ermine*, it is one of Leonardo's most widely-exhibited paintings. By all appearances, *St Jerome* is relatively easy to borrow and was perhaps included in the London show for this reason, even though it had no real business in an exhibition on this particular theme. In truth, there is no reliable evidence that *St Jerome* was painted by Leonardo at the court of Milan. *St Jerome* is traditionally – and in my view rightly – dated to the end of Leonardo's first Florentine period, in other words to between 1480 and 1482, and not to the years that Leonardo first spent in Milan between 1483 and 1499.

The kneeling figure of *St Jerome* is widely considered to take up a compositional type that was developed and employed primarily in Florence. The church façade visible in the right-hand background likewise has a distinctly Florentine flavour. The new dating of c. 1488–1490 proposed by Luke Syson and others is certainly a possibility, but no more convincing than the much earlier date traditionally assigned to the panel. More problematic, however, is the fact that the dating of Leonardo's anthropometric studies (Cat. nos. 26–27) has been brought forward in the London catalogue to the period between 1487 and 1490, and in some cases even earlier (Cat. nos. 23–24), in order to underpin this later dating of *St Jerome*. In fact, however, Leonardo only began his systematic measurement of the proportions of the human body in 1489, as documented by an entry in his notes for April of that year.⁵ His proportion drawings in all probability only arose after this date and hence are wholly unconnected with *St Jerome*.

The new dating of the Buccleuch version of the *Madonna of the Yarnwinder* (Cat. no. 88) is also difficult to accept. The presence of a Virgin and Child composition of this type in Leonardo's workshop is first documented by a letter from Pietro da Novellara to Isabella d'Este, dated 14 April 1501.⁶ The two finest variants (one owned by the Duke of Buccleuch, the other in a New

York private collection) have consequently traditionally been dated to the period between 1501 and 1507 or even later. In the exhibition catalogue, however, the Buccleuch version is captioned »about 1499 onwards« – a date that would mean it was begun in Milan. There is no convincing evidence to substantiate this claim. The only aspect of the panel with room for discussion is the extent to which, as the catalogue argues, Leonardo was involved in its execution. The extremely high-quality execution of the Virgin's flesh and areas of *sfumato* suggest that the Buccleuch *Madonna of the Yarnwinder* is, in fact, one of those workshop pictures to which the master occasionally put his hand. This practice was typical of many workshops and is firmly documented in Leonardo's case by a letter from Pietro da Novellara to Isabella d'Este of 3 April 1501.⁷

At the true heart of the London exhibition are the two versions of Leonardo's *Virgin of the Rocks*. The first, commissioned in 1483 by a Franciscan lay fraternity in Milan and today housed in the Louvre (Cat. no. 31), was definitely not executed for the court of Milan and nor, most likely, was the second, which was only painted at a later date (Cat. no. 32). Nonetheless, the sensational presentation of the two paintings on opposite sides of the same room, and the discussion fuelled by the recent restoration of the London panel, meant that this slight contradiction between the theme of the exhibition and the actual context of the paintings was quickly forgotten.

Alongside the question of the chronological sequence of Leonardo's *Virgin and Child with St Anne* compositions, the precise relationship between the two versions of the *Virgin of the Rocks* remains one of the most complex issues within Leonardo scholarship. While the Paris version has

traditionally been accepted as wholly the work of Leonardo, the London version has been viewed up till now as the product of a collaboration involving other artists – a conclusion based on the findings of earlier restoration campaigns and surviving documents. Luke Syson now considers that the London *Virgin of the Rocks* is likewise fully autographic. The opportunity to compare the paintings directly in the National Gallery, however, tended to confirm the traditional conclusion that other hands were involved in the execution of the second version of Leonardo's original design. The weaker details in the London painting support this verdict: the locks of hair in the subsidiary figures, for example, and the areas of white heightening, are very schematic in their execution. They remind us less of the corresponding parts of the Paris panel than of works by masters in Leonardo's circle, such as those by Marco d'Oggiono (Cat. nos. 67, 69).

The issue is complicated yet further by the numerous surviving and in part contradictory documentary sources relating to the two paintings. On the basis of this archival material, which urgently needs in-depth analysis, Charles Hope pointed out in his review of the National Gallery exhibition that the London *Virgin of the Rocks* cannot have been painted before 1508!⁸

Ultimately, in other words, the London exhibition has raised a number of complex issues. These include the thesis, argued afresh in the exhibition catalogue, that the *Virgin of the Rocks* thematizes the Immaculate Conception. Neither version of the painting offers any convincing evidence to support this interpretation. Much remains to be discussed, on the other hand, concerning the question of whether the *Virgin of the Rocks* originally served as a screen that could be slid aside on feast days to reveal a wooden statue of the Virgin.⁹ This

3 John Cunnally, Numismatic Sources for Leonardo's Equestrian Monuments, in: *Accademia Leonardi Vinci. Journal of Leonardo Studies* 6, 1993, 67–78.

4 Leonardo da Vinci, *Libro di pittura*, ed. Carlo Pedretti and Carlo Vecce, 2 vols., Florence 1995, §§ 319, 320, 357.

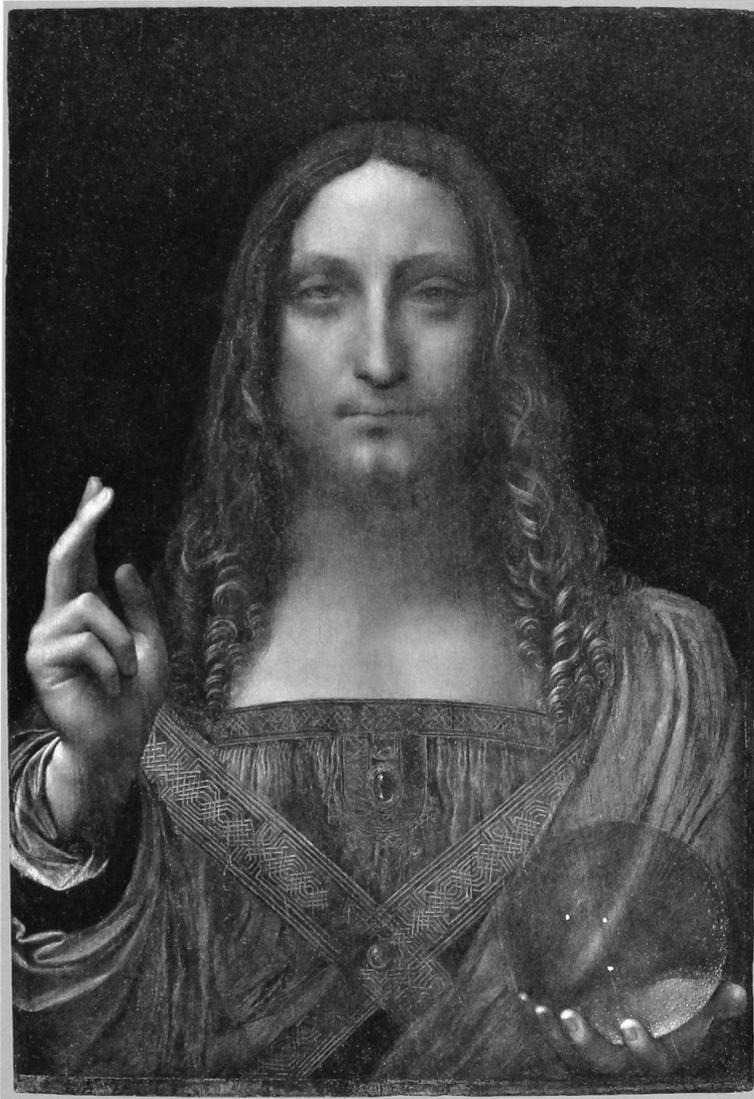
5 Jean Paul Richter (ed.), *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci*, 2 vols., 3rd edn., Oxford 1970 (first published 1883), § 1370.

6 Edoardo Villata (ed.), *Leonardo da Vinci. I documenti e le testimonianze contemporanee*, Milan 1999, § 191.

7 Ibid. § 150.

8 Charles Hope, The Wrong Leonardo?, in: *The New York Review of Books*, 9 February 2012.

9 Paolo Venturoli, L'ancona dell'immacolata concezione di San Francesco Grande a Milano, in: *Giovanni Antonio Amadeo*, ed. Janice Shell and Liana Castelfranchi, Milan 1993, 421–437.



1. Leonardo da Vinci, *Salvator Mundi*, after 1503, oil on walnut, 65.5 × 45.1 cm. Private collection

figure could have been the *Immaculata*, the real object of religious veneration, whereas the scene portrayed in Leonardo's altarpiece was based on the iconography stipulated by his Franciscan patrons. In a similar fashion to a Virgin of Mercy, the Virgin takes the Infant St John – the figure of identification for the Franciscan confraternity – under her own protective mantle. At the same time, the centrally positioned Infant Christ bless-

es this identification figure and thus indirectly the confraternity itself.

The London exhibition also caused a stir, lastly, with its inclusion of the only very recently rediscovered painting of a *Salvator Mundi* (Cat. no. 91, fig. 1), which Luke Syson attributes unreservedly to Leonardo's authentic oeuvre. Known to art historians since the start of the 20th century, the painting long remained out of sight before resur-

facing and undergoing restoration in the past few years. The *Salvator Mundi* is now considered by many experts to be an autograph work by Leonardo da Vinci and may only be reproduced under his name.¹⁰ This attribution cannot be brought wholly into line with the existing state of Leonardo scholarship, however. The same is true of the very bold dating of the painting to about 1499 onwards, which appears to me to be far too early.

The most comprehensive study on Leonardo's *Salvator Mundi* still remains the essay by Ludwig Heydenreich published in 1964.¹¹ Having examined the numerous surviving variants of the *Salvator Mundi* and the differences in their details, Heydenreich concluded that their common source was not an original Leonardo painting but a Leonardo cartoon, on the basis of whose design his pupils produced several *Salvator Mundi* pictures. According to Heydenreich, in other words, Leonardo never actually painted the subject himself. This would place the *Salvator Mundi* – like the variants of the *Virgin and Child with St Anne* and the *Madonna of the Yarnwinder* – amongst those works that were produced in a serial fashion in Leonardo's workshop, and to which Leonardo personally contributed in individual cases.

With regard to the position of the *Salvator Mundi* design within the chronology of Leonardo's oeuvre, Heydenreich referred to the two known preliminary drawings for the subject (RL 12524, 12525, cat. nos. 89, 90), which are traditionally dated on stylistic grounds to the period as from c. 1503. According to Heydenreich, Leonardo must therefore only have begun exploring the motif as from this point in time. Heydenreich also presented another argument in support of his suggested dating, however: on the basis of detailed analyses, he was able to make a plausible case for the proposal that Leonardo had oriented himself in his design towards a *Salvator Mundi* by Melozzo da Forlì in Urbino. Since documentary sources show Leonardo spending time in Urbino only as from 1502¹², Heydenreich considered it

unlikely that Leonardo addressed the *Salvator* subject before this date.

A different hypothesis – one that is also taken up in the National Gallery exhibition catalogue – was put forward by Joanne Snow-Smith in her 1982 monograph on Leonardo's *Salvator Mundi*.¹³ There the author argued that Leonardo himself had also produced a *Salvator Mundi* painting and that this was identical with the version housed in the collection of the Marquis de Ganay in Paris and executed between 1507 and 1513 for the French king Louis XII. While the idea that the painting was commissioned by Louis XII seems entirely plausible, the attribution of the Ganay version to Leonardo has failed to find widespread acceptance.

The *Salvator Mundi* exhibited in London is of a far higher quality than the other new attributions of recent years. Details such as the modelling of the hand raised in blessing and the crystal ball, the execution of the filigree embroidery border around the neckline, and above all the suggestive handling of light and the *sfumato* all testify to a very high standard of technical accomplishment. The fingernails outlined with fine shading, which recall similar features in the *Mona Lisa* (figs. 2, 3) and *St John the Baptist*, also argue in favour of an attribution to Leonardo, as do the shadowy eyes and heavy eyelids. The *Salvator Mundi* also exhibits a number of weaknesses, however. The flesh tones of the blessing hand, for example, appear pallid and waxy as in a number of workshop paintings. Christ's ringlets also seem to me too schematic in their execution, the larger drapery folds too undifferentiated, especially on the right-hand side. They do not begin to bear comparison with the *Mona Lisa*, for example. In view of these weaknesses and the arguments put forward by Heydenreich, on the basis of present Leonardo scholarship we might sooner see the *Salvator Mundi* as a high-quality product of Leonardo's workshop, painted only after 1507 and possibly much later, on whose execution Leonardo was

10 Communication from the owner, 25 April 2012.

11 Ludwig Heinrich Heydenreich, Leonardos »Salvator Mundi«, in: *Raccolta Vinciana* 20, 1964, 83–109.

12 Richter (as note 5), §§ 1034, 1038, 1041.

13 Joanne Snow-Smith, *The Salvator Mundi of Leonardo da Vinci*, Seattle 1982.



2. Leonardo da Vinci (?) and Workshop, *Mona Lisa*, c. 1503–1510 (?), oil on poplar, 77 × 53 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. 779

personally involved. Nor would I exclude the possibility that the painting was in fact executed much later by a pupil or follower of Leonardo after the master's death.

Decisions about attributions are not made in a day. Take Leonardo's portraiture: a hundred years ago, few would have thought it possible that the portraits of *Ginevra de' Benci* and *Cecilia Gallerani*, today entirely undisputed, could have

stemmed from the hand of Leonardo; the idea of what an autograph portrait by Leonardo ought to look like was still too strongly shaped by the *Mona Lisa*. The same may happen with the *Salvator Mundi*: perhaps we will be shaking our heads in a few years' time over the fact that the painting was once taken to be an autograph work by Leonardo, or alternatively over the fact that his authorship could ever have been doubted.



3. Workshop of Leonardo da Vinci, copy of Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*,
c. 1503–1516 (?), oil on walnut, 76.3 × 57 cm. Madrid,
Museo Nacional del Prado, inv. P-504

In truth, the *Salvator Mundi* would have found a much better place in the Musée du Louvre's exhibition on Leonardo's *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* (figs. 4, 5), whose central theme was Leonardo's activity as a generator of designs that were executed not only by him, but also by other artists in several variants. To this end, Vincent Delieuvin and his Louvre colleagues brought together almost all the known workshop variations and copies of Leonardo's *Virgin and Child with St Anne* compositions, organized and carefully annotated on

the basis of Leonardo's preliminary drawings and by successive design stage. These were accompanied, of course, by Leonardo's own treatments of the motif. Lost copies by other artists were represented in the exhibition by reproductions. The unusually thorough catalogue, which references the entire body of Leonardo scholarship, also evaluates a range of written sources. The works on display furthermore underwent detailed technical examination, the results of which were also incorporated into the analyses of the individual exhibits.



4. Leonardo da Vinci, *Virgin and child with Saint Anne*, c. 1503–1519, oil on poplar, 168.4 × 113 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. 776 (319)

Even if we may not perhaps agree in every single case with its assignment of individual variants and copies of Leonardo's *Virgin and Child with St Anne* to certain phases of the design and production process, the Louvre exhibition nonetheless convincingly demonstrated that Leonardo was active, to a previously unrecognized extent, as a designer for a form of serial manufacture of top-quality paintings. In other words, he exploited his extraordinary innovative potential not solely to create one-off masterpieces but also – with the help of his workshop – to produce replicas and

variants of a very high standard, whose wider distribution contributed to the popularization of his pictorial inventions. It is thereby noticeable that Leonardo often supplied only the figural composition, while his pupils then elaborated the landscape backgrounds in very different ways, either to suit their own taste or to meet the expectations of potential customers (fig. 5). The almost complete lack of vegetation in Leonardo's primeval landscapes is thereby supplemented, in many of these workshop versions, by flourishing trees and gentle meadows. However much the uncompro-



5. Workshop of Leonardo da Vinci, copy of Leonardo's *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne*, c. 1514–1516 (?), oil on panel, 104.8 × 75.6 cm. Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi, inv. 1890, no. 737

missing barrenness of many of Leonardo's landscapes may appeal to us today, in the 16th century it was evidently not to everyone's taste.

The Louvre's assembly and analysis of a sensational number of high-quality workshop paintings has probably altered our picture of Leonardo less dramatically, however, than its presentation of Leonardo's *Virgin and Child with St Anne* (Cat. no. 66). The painting had only just returned from a far-reaching restoration, and the results

take some getting used to. In a similar fashion to Michelangelo's frescos in the Sistine Chapel following their cleaning a few years ago, we now find ourselves confronted with an intensity of colour that no longer entirely corresponds with the image of Leonardo that has been established for centuries. With the removal of the darkened and dirty varnish, the *Virgin and Child with St Anne* has also lost some of its *sfumato*, the subtle blurring and shading that lend Leonardo's works

their distinctive atmosphere and are considered a typical characteristic of his late style.

It is a well-known fact that Leonardo worked with numerous pigment-like glazes and varnishes to achieve his *sfumato* effect. As the varnish darkened with age, so the impression of soft transitions was only reinforced. These two effects – the *sfumato* that Leonardo intended and its intensification through exposure to light and dirt – are inextricably bound up with one another: the varnish corresponds to the artist's original intention, but becomes the carrier of a patina that only builds up over time. We look at an unrestored painting quite literally through its patina and consequently gain an impression that has only arisen as a result of the action of light and the accumulation of grime over the centuries. This inseparable link between the effect originally intended by Leonardo and the patina that has formed over time is what the Louvre *Virgin and Child with St Anne*, as a consequence of its restoration, has to a certain extent now lost. If we assume, on the other hand, that the appearance of the restored painting reliably reproduces Leonardo's original intentions, we shall have to re-think the aesthetic effect of Leonardo's *sfumato* and thereby re-open an old debate: as Charles Hope reminds us in his review of the London exhibition, the restoration of a number of paintings – including the *Virgin of the Rocks* – in the National Gallery's collection immediately after the Second World War, fuelled the very same controversy over whether the removal of varnish did not take with it the original finish applied by the artist.¹⁴

The subject of *sfumato* also brings us to another painting that was presented at the Louvre exhibition for the time in a brand new light and which received far greater media coverage, indeed, than the newly cleaned *Virgin and Child with St Anne*: a copy of the *Mona Lisa* that was recently »discovered« in the Prado in Madrid (Cat. no. 77; fig. 3) and which by all appearances was executed in tan-

dem with Leonardo's masterpiece by one of his pupils. Significantly, this copy largely lacks the *sfumato* so typical of Leonardo – and with it, too, a certain aura. The latest findings on the Prado *Mona Lisa* are likewise covered in the comprehensive catalogue of the Louvre exhibition. Early on in their investigations, the conservators noticed that an area of black overpainting in the background of the *Mona Lisa* copy concealed a landscape underneath it. When this overpainting was removed, a luminous pale blue, Leonardesque rocky landscape was revealed. It was also discovered that the dimensions and outlines of the female sitter were identical in both portraits. It is likely, therefore, that the copyist employed a cartoon made by Leonardo as the starting-point for his own painting.¹⁵

On the surface, the significance of the Madrid copy lies in the fact that certain details can be made out more clearly here than in Leonardo's original. This is true of the landscape background, for example, and the folds and decorative trimming of Lisa's dress. But two other considerations make the Prado panel yet more interesting. Firstly, scientific analyses have shown that the copy was executed side by side with the original in Leonardo's workshop. Diagnostic scanning has namely uncovered the presence of small changes, made during the genesis of the composition, that are common to both paintings. The close cooperation this implies between master and pupil is less unusual than it seems. A number of investigations over the past few years, and indeed the Paris exhibition itself, have shown that Leonardo produced or designed paintings of which his pupils made copies and variations.

The very fact, secondly, that a copy of an autograph portrait by Leonardo should have been made in the master's workshop at the same as the original, is in itself surprising. There are several possible explanations for this deviation from the norm. Either the customer wanted a second ver-

¹⁴ Hope (as note 8).

¹⁵ Anna Gonzàles Mozo in: Vincent Delieuvin (ed.), *La Sainte Anne. L'ultime chef-d'œuvre de Léonard de Vinci*, Paris 2012, 234–239.

¹⁶ Kathleen Weil Garris Posner, *Leonardo and Central Italian Art: 1515–1550*, New York 1974.

sion, or – more likely – Leonardo saw the commission as an opportunity to teach one of his pupils the finer points of portraiture. Arguing in favour of the didactic nature of the Madrid copy is the clear discrepancy between its fidelity to detail in the figure, and its greater freedom in other areas. Thus the copyist has reproduced the many folds of Lisa's dress and the filigree ornament around her low neckline with pedantic precision. In other parts of the composition, however, he has allowed himself a few departures from the original. The slender columns flanking the very edges of the pictorial space on the left and right are a case in point. These, too, are more clearly visible in the copy, where they differ from one another in an interesting detail: the base of the column on the right obeys a different perspective construction, insofar as its sides no longer descend vertically to the parapet but arrive at a gentle slant. The whole therefore gives the impression of being an educational experiment in perspective.

There is a sense of experimentation, too, in the copyist's treatment of the landscape background in the right half of the picture. For whereas he has copied the rock formations on the left almost exactly from Leonardo's original, he has taken greater liberties on the right. Thus the rocks in the lower right-hand background are rendered in a more differentiated fashion but thereby appear almost stereotypical. Such comparisons also make it clear that the greatest correspondences between original and copy are found in the left-hand side of the portrait, while the greatest differences are found on the right. It would seem that the copyist proceeded from left to right and thereby distanced himself ever more markedly from his model.

Possibly also experimental in nature is a striking departure from the colour of Lisa's sleeves, which in the Paris painting are executed in a mustard tone that corresponds in visual terms with the ochres of the middle ground. By contrast, the copyist has opted for a reddish fabric that introduces a lively colour contrast in place of the homogenous tonality of the original painting.

The Prado *Mona Lisa* thus clearly illustrates that Leonardo's workshop produced paintings not only on the basis of the master's designs, but also on the basis on his paintings even before they were finished. This would also explain, moreover, the small number of original paintings that have come down to us from Leonardo himself: from the first decade of the 16th century onwards, the master evidently carried out less and less of the painting himself, but left the task largely to others. And in the case of particularly important commissions, he stepped in to perfect the results.

The two exhibitions conveyed two very different pictures of Leonardo. The National Gallery, with its inclusion of the *Salvator Mundi*, showed us a Leonardo whose »dark manner«¹⁶ appears to have set in very much earlier than was previously thought. The Louvre, by contrast, gave us a restored »last masterpiece«, in the shape of the *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne*, that comes across as brighter and much livelier in its palette than the late Leonardo we have been used to up till now. We cannot help but wonder if this double Leonardo presented in the London and Paris exhibitions ever actually existed, or whether in fact we need to reflect a little more closely upon our image of the master.

Frank Zöllner