

# LEONARDO DA VINCI

and the Art of Sculpture:  
Inspiration and Invention

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## MAJOR EXHIBITION AT THE GETTY EXPLORES LEONARDO DA VINCI'S IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF RENAISSANCE SCULPTURE

**Exhibition brings together 17 drawings by Leonardo, and also features sculptural masterpieces including Donatello's *Bearded Prophet*, Verrocchio's *Beheading of the Baptist* and Rustici's colossal bronze statues from the Baptistery of Florence, in the U.S. for the first time following conservation**

### ***Leonardo da Vinci and the Art of Sculpture: Inspiration and Invention***

**AT THE J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM, LOS ANGELES**  
**March 23 – June 20, 2010**



Leonardo da Vinci, *Studies for the Trivulzio Monument*, about 1508–10, pen and brown ink on light tan paper, 11 x 7 13/16 in. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, London, England Royal Collection ©2009 Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

LOS ANGELES—Often called the founding father of the High Renaissance, Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) is widely revered as the artist behind the world's most famous painting, *Mona Lisa* (ca. 1500–07, Musée du Louvre). A gifted painter, architect, designer, sculptor, engineer and scientist, he is universally considered a genius. Although he completed relatively few works during his lifetime—even fewer of which have survived—he left behind numerous writings and drawings which abound with mechanical inventions, scientific studies, and cutting-edge ideas for painting and sculpture.

Organized by the High Museum of Art, in collaboration with the J. Paul Getty Museum, ***Leonardo da Vinci and the Art of Sculpture: Inspiration and Invention*** brings together 17 drawings by Leonardo along with sculptures by seminal Renaissance masters Donatello, Andrea del Verrocchio, and Giovan Francesco Rustici. Included in the exhibition are Rustici's three monumental bronzes from the façade of the Baptistery in Florence and

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Donatello's marble *Bearded Prophet* from the Campanile (Bell Tower) of the Duomo (Cathedral) in Florence. These have all been recently restored and have never before left the city. The exhibition will be on view at the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Getty Center from March 23 –June 20, 2010 following the display of a larger version at the High Museum in Atlanta October 3, 2009, through February 21, 2010.

Leonardo was interested in sculpture from very early in his career, and his first known apprenticeship was with the Florentine sculptor/painter Andrea del Verrocchio. In Verrocchio's workshop, he would have assisted with a number of commissions ranging from sculpture in bronze, stone and terracotta to engineering feats such as the orb atop the lantern of Florence Cathedral. The exhibition will feature Verrocchio's *Beheading of the Baptist* (1477–1483), a solid silver relief for the Silver Altar of the Florentine Baptistery. The relief was recently cleaned and some scholars have since proposed that two of the figures—each of which is little more than 8 inches high—were created by Leonardo da Vinci and not Verrocchio.

In addition, Leonardo was influenced by Donatello—who was 76 years old when Leonardo came to Florence and was considered the most important living sculptor at that time. Donatello's life-sized *Bearded Prophet* (ca. 1418-1420, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo), originally placed in a niche high on the Campanile, was in fact the model for a standing figure in Leonardo's unfinished painting of the *Adoration of the Magi*. The statue has travelled outside Florence for the first—and probably only—time on this occasion.

Core to Leonardo's exceptional abilities was his talent as a draftsman, which he utilized not only to explore compositional designs and engineering problems, but also the human figure, a subject which especially captivated his attention. Julian Brooks, associate curator of drawings at the J. Paul Getty Museum notes, "For Leonardo, a blank sheet of paper provided the opportunity to explore different ideas and configurations, and he set new standards for depicting the proportions and anatomy of the human form, not to mention his handling of space and light." One gallery of the exhibition will be devoted to his relationship with antique and Renaissance sculpture, including a sketch (ca. 1504) in which he draws Michelangelo's famous statue of David, and then playfully reconceives the figure as Neptune, the god of the sea.

An adjacent gallery will feature Leonardo's preparatory drawings for sculptures which were never realized, including an in-depth examination of his plans to create the world's largest and most technically complex bronze equestrian monument, a work which was to

depict the Milanese duke Francesco Sforza mounted on horseback. By November 1493, Leonardo had completed a 24-foot tall clay model of the horse alone. Unfortunately, war between the French and the Milanese interrupted his work: the bronze collected for the horse was made into cannons, and the clay model was destroyed by French soldiers when they entered Milan in 1499. Leonardo's surviving drawings for the proportioning, modeling, and casting of this enormous monument will be shown, in addition to his ambitious compositional studies for other equestrian monuments to Gian Giacomo Trivulzio and King Francis I of France.

The exhibition will continue with an examination of Leonardo's influence on the work of his close associate and friend, Giovan Francesco Rustici. Two innovative terracotta groups from the Louvre and the Bargello museum in Florence reflect Rustici's response to Leonardo's famed *Battle of Anghiari* mural in the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, which has since been painted over.

Most impressive is Rustici's group of three colossal bronze figures of *John the Baptist preaching to a Levite and a Pharisee*, which have been recently restored and are being shown in the United States for the first time on the occasion of this exhibition. Leonardo has long been credited with greatly influencing the work, since much of the group was modeled between March and September 1508 while Leonardo and Rustici were working together. Artist and biographer Giorgio Vasari acknowledged Leonardo's involvement in the project:

"[Leonardo] proved himself in sculpture with the three bronze figures over the north door of San Giovanni which were executed by Giovan Francesco Rustici but finished with Leonardo's advice; they are the most beautiful casts both for their design and for their perfection that have yet been seen in the modern age."

In addition to Vasari's account, the substantial visual evidence—the graceful composition of the figures, the varying expressions which give each figure an individual identity and character, the interaction between the figures and the spectator below—is in keeping with Leonardo's theories and practices in both sculpture and painting.

One of the exhibition highlights will be Leonardo's *Saint Jerome* (ca. 1482, Vatican Museums), an extraordinary unfinished panel painting in which Leonardo conceived the complex figure of the saint in a three-dimensional manner, resulting in a truly sculptural pose. *Saint Jerome* belongs to a group of less than a dozen Leonardo paintings in the world, and this represents a rare opportunity to see it in Los Angeles. In addition, it is the first painting by Leonardo da Vinci to be shown in the city for decades.

To create this focused exhibition, more than 25 works are being generously lent to the Getty, including 13 drawings from the collection of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. In addition, important drawings and sculptures will be on loan from the Musée du Louvre, Paris; the Museo Nazionale del Bargello, and the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Florence; the Musei Vaticani, Rome; the Metropolitan Museum, New York; and the S pm vészeti Muz um, Budapest.

*Leonardo da Vinci and the Art of Sculpture: Inspiration and Invention* is organized by the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, in association with the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. It is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and Humanities. At the High, the exhibition is curated by Gary M. Radke, Dean's Professor of the Humanities at Syracuse University, while the Getty's presentation of the exhibition is curated by Julian Brooks, associate curator, drawings, and Anne-Lise Desmas, associate curator, sculpture and decorative arts at the J. Paul Getty Museum. The exhibition will be accompanied by a full-color catalogue, edited by Gary Radke and published by the High Museum. Restoration of Rustici's *John the Baptist preaching to a Levite and a Pharisee* from the fa ade of the Baptistery in Florence was sponsored by the Friends of Florence, a non-profit international foundation based in the United States.

**Note to editors: Images available upon request**

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