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Lect #01

From: Rishi Raj (rishi.raj@colorado.edu)

In the Footsteps of da Vinci

HUMN 1000-038

MW 3 PM – 4:15 PM

Book (Optional): Walter Isaacson on Leonardo da Vinci, Simon and Schuster, 2017. Have communicated to the CU Bookstore

About him: <https://www.leonardodavinci.net/facts.jsp>

What I wish?

It is my wish that through this course you will find within you your creative force, and find a way of describing it.

As da Vinci has said (I am paraphrasing),

“I have been impressed with the urgency of doing. Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Being willing is not enough; we must do.”

“For once you have tasted flight you will walk the earth with your eyes turned skywards, for there you have been and there you will long to return.”

“In rivers, the water that you touch is the last of what has passed and the first of that which comes; so with present time.”

“Where the spirit does not work with the hand, there is no art.”

Read more at <https://www.brainyquote.com/authors/leonardo-da-vinci-quotes>

The Method

I do not force you to think a certain way. I would rather discuss and discuss again, and have you discuss with each other, about what strikes you about da Vinci’s unusual life.

In many ways he was an ordinary man. He did not seek fame or power. He observed, he thought, and he felt. His medium was pencil and paper. He left behind 6000 drawings, but many more were lost. They are known as Codices, each concerned with a certain subject matter such as nature, military, and so on. He wrote notes alongside his drawings to make them complete.

Codices

- Codex Leicester is mostly about nature and the earth. Here is a website that gives his drawings and explanation alongside them. This one is on “water”.

<https://mostre.museogalileo.it/codiceleicester/en/water/38-water-as-nature-s-carter>

da Vinci was fascinated by movement. His earliest drawings when he was a teenager are of water falls in the forests near him. If you look carefully movement is central to nearly all his work.

Even his paintings the most famous being Mona Lisa and The Last Supper hover with movement. When you see Mona Lisa, just walk from side to side and you will find her eyes following you.

Structure of the Course

There would be three essential elements for the course:

- (i) Drawing of Calligraphy. You would choose one, two or three topics. Finally homing in on one of them, and refining it through the course to achieve perfection (in your own eyes). This is a large part of the course
- (ii) Discussions in class. Mostly informal to discuss da Vinci, each other's work, and whatever else you may like to discuss
- (iii) Critical Writing. Every week I would ask you to read about some aspect of da Vinci's life and his works online, and write me an email (about 100 - 300 words) on your observations. I will respond to each one of you by email as well.

Other Codices

• Codex Atlanticus

- is a twelve-volume, bound set of drawings and writings (in Italian) by Leonardo da Vinci, the largest such set; its name indicates the large paper used to preserve original da Vinci notebook pages, which was that used for atlases. It comprises 1,119 leaves dating from 1478 to 1519, the contents covering a great variety of subjects, from flight to weaponry to musical instruments and from mathematics to botany. This codex was gathered by the sculptor Pompeo Leoni, son of Leone Leoni, in the late 16th century, who dismembered some of Leonardo's notebooks in its formation. It is currently preserved at the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan.

• Codex Arundel.

-is a bound collection of pages of notes dating mostly from between 1480 and 1518. The codex contains a number of treatises on a variety of subjects, including mechanics and geometry. The name of the codex came from the Earl of Arundel, who acquired it in Spain in the 1630s. It forms part of the British Library Arundel Manuscripts.

• The Codex Leicester

is a collection of scientific writings by Leonardo da Vinci. The Codex is named after Thomas Coke, later created Earl of Leicester, who purchased it in 1719. The manuscript currently holds the record for the second highest sale price of any book, as it was sold to Bill Gates at Christie's auction house on 11 November 1994 in New York for US\$30,802,500 (equivalent to \$53,222,898.79 as of 2019).

The Codex provides an insight into the inquiring mind of the definitive Renaissance artist, scientist and thinker as well as an exceptional illustration of the link between art and science and the creativity of the scientific process.

•Codex Madrid

- The two volumes, containing 197 pages, are bound in red leather. Topics discussed include mechanics, statics, geometry and construction of fortifications. There is a list of 116 books Leonardo was using at the time, including some basic Latin grammar books. The manuscripts are of great importance as they contain about 15% of Leonardo's notes referenced today, but are also important

for the quality and relevance of the works they contain, which are among the major engineering treatises of their time.

• **Codex on the Flight of Birds**

- is a relatively short codex from c. 1505 by Leonardo da Vinci. It comprises 18 folios and measures 21 × 15 centimetres. Now held at the Biblioteca Reale in Turin, Italy, the codex begins with an examination of the flight behavior of birds and proposes mechanisms for flight by machines. Leonardo constructed a number of these machines, and attempted to launch them from a hill near Florence. However, his efforts failed. In the codex, Leonardo notes for the first time that the center of gravity of a flying bird does not coincide with its center of pressure.

• **Codex Trivulzianus**

- is a manuscript by Leonardo da Vinci that originally contained 62 sheets, but today only 55 remain. It documents Leonardo's attempts to improve his modest literary education, through long lists of learned words copied from authoritative lexical and grammatical sources. The manuscript also contains studies of military and religious architecture. The Codex Trivulzianus is kept at Sforza Castle in Milan, Italy, but is not normally available to the public. In the main museum a room also contains frescos painted by Leonardo.

• **Codex Urbinas**

A Treatise on Painting is a collection of Leonardo da Vinci's writings entered in his notebooks under the general heading "On Painting". The manuscripts were begun in Milan while Leonardo was under the service of Ludovico Sforza[1] (between 1482 and 1499), gathered together by Francesco Melzi sometime before 1542, and first printed in French and Italian as Trattato della pittura by Raffaello du Fresne in 1651. The main aim of the treatise was to argue that painting was a science. Leonardo's keen observation of expression and character is evidenced in his comparison of laughing and weeping, about which he notes that the only difference between the two emotions in terms of the "motion of the [facial] features" is "the ruffling of the brows, which is added in weeping, but more elevated and extended in laughing." All editions of the treatise are kept at the Elmer Belt Library of Vinciana at UCLA.

• **Codex Forster**

-contains both the earliest notebook we hold (from folio 41, about 1487 – 90, Milan) and the latest (up to folio 40, 1505, Florence). Written in Leonardo's famous mirror writing, the subjects explored within range from hydraulic engineering to a treatise on measuring solids. Five of these fascinating notebooks, bound into three small volumes, have been in our collection since 1876 when they were bequeathed to the Museum by John Forster. Collectively known as Codex Forster, they date from about 1487 to 1505 and reflect Leonardo's highly inquisitive mind. (See below for Forster I, II and III)

<https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/explore-leonardo-da-vinci-codex-forster-i/#?c=&m=&s=&cv=5&xywh=-249%2C-256%2C3337%2C2550>

Time Lines

Renaissance

<https://worldhistoryproject.org/topics/renaissance>

Leonardo da Vinci

<https://worldhistoryproject.org/topics/leonardo-da-vinci>

Leonardo da Vinci: Paintings, Drawings, Quotes and Biography

<https://www.leonardodavinci.net/drawings.jsp>