



La Notizia Italiana



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Lost Leonardo Da Vinci Painting Worth £100 Million

May Have Been Found In A Scottish Farmhouse



By [PHIL VINTER](#)

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For years it sat on a farmhouse wall gathering dust. And when Fiona McLaren redecorated, she didn't even take the time to cover the apparently worthless painting in a protective sheet, so it got flicked in specks of paint. However, in an astounding twist it has emerged that the picture is likely to have been the work of master artist Leonardo da Vinci and worth over £100million.

The striking portrait, which shows woman embracing a young child, was nearly assigned to the rubbish tip on several occasions, but facing financial difficulties Ms McLaren, 59, from Scotland decided to take the painting to an expert for a valuation.

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Auctioneer Harry Robertson, the director of Sotheby's in Scotland, gasped when he saw the art 23ins by 28ins work which had hung on a landing and in a bedroom in London for decades, before being transferred to Scotland when Ms McLaren and her mother moved into a farmhouse.

'I showed it to him [Mr Robertson] and he was staggered, speechless save for a sigh of exclamation,' said Ms McLaren, according to The People

Mr Robertson took the work to London for further testing by specialists on old masters and next year the painting will be closely inspected by experts at the Hamilton Kerr Institute at the University of Cambridge, where it should be dated conclusively. The work of art came into the possession of the McLaren family through Fiona's late father George, a doctor who had received it as a gift from a patient in the 1960s. When George died in 1979, the painting transferred to her mother who gave it to her daughter as a 40th birthday present.

Da Vinci paintings normally fetch in excess of £100million and a string of art experts have now shown excitement in this particular work. Former Antiques Roadshow presenter Sebastian Thewes, an ex-director of Christie's in Scotland said he believed that da Vinci, considered the greatest human mind who has ever lived, had a hand in the painting. Other experts have stated that the painting is at the very least from the da Vinci school. Professor Carlo Pedretti from the University of California said he thought it was by a Leonardo da Vinci pupil of a later generation, possibly the 16th century.

Ms McLaren said her father used to call the painting 'Madonna and Child with John the Baptist, but having spent a decade researching the history of the work, the nurse believes the painting is actually not the Virgin Mary with baby Jesus, but Mary Magdalene and her son. She thinks the true meaning of the artwork may have been disguised for centuries because such a work would have been considered heretic by the Roman Catholic Church. The Pope decreed the Virgin Mary should be illustrated in blue whereas Mary Magdalene had to be shown in red attire, as depicted in this painting.

Leonardo, who excelled at not only painting, but also mathematics, engineering, architecture, sculpture, music and science, was known to hide meanings in his works and the fact the woman in the picture is holding a carnation could be a symbol for marriage.

Florida University-based Michael E Abrams said the picture was 'brimming with sensuality' with the artist taking a tremendous risk of being burned at the stake for heresy after the Pope was re-established in Rome.

French expert Michel Fraisset said he thought the background was the mountain of St Victoire by the city of Aix-en-Provence.



Papal Bull: Old document: On the back of the 500-year-old painting is a document which is believed to be a papal bull - order of the Catholic Church. On it the word 'Magdalene' can be seen

A papal bull – an order from the pope attached to the back of the painting is another significant feature of the painting and has been confirmed as belonging to Pope Paul V who was head of the Catholic Church in the early 17th century. Although much of the wording on the Papal Bull has now disappeared, Fiona says the word for Magdalene is visible.

Once it is sold Ms McLaren says she wants to give a percentage of the money to the charity the Caterina Peace Foundation to help children in care. She hopes the painting will go to a museum so it can be enjoyed by people for many years to come.

Indications of a Da Vinci



1. A similarity between the boy and child in his famous piece:
Madonna of the Rocks
2. A distinctive 'v' shape in the middle of the woman's hairline reminiscent of that shown in the **Last Supper**
3. The fleur-de-lys is often said to be a hidden emblem of the secretive Priory of Sion
4. The area by the woman's shoulder is unfinished, common in da Vinci works
5. A tracing of the figure in the **Last Supper** matches exactly the outline of the woman in this painting
6. The baby's second toe is longer than the big toe - another classic da Vinci feature

Can Mona Lisa Be Identified By The Skull Of Lisa Gherardini?

By Brian Palmer

A team of Italian researchers intends to piece together the skull of Lisa Gherardini supposedly the subject of Leonardo da Vinci's 16th century masterpiece *Mona Lisa*, so they can determine whether the painting's iconic smile belonged to her. Some believe the smile was actually modeled after that of Leonardo's assistant or the artist himself. Can you really tell how someone smiled from their skull?

Not exactly. Skeletal remains provide the broad outlines of a person's mouth. The corners of our lips rest on the outer edge of the canine teeth, so a skull can indicate mouth width. The angles and contact points of the upper and lower teeth impact the way the lips meet, and the wearing on an adult's enamel indicates the thickness of her lips. If those aspects of Gherardini's skull don't match the features on the painting, researchers could make a convincing case that Lisa Gherardini was not Leonardo's muse. (The portrait has many other unique features that could be identifiable in skeletal remains, such as a broad forehead and elongated nose.) But it would be much more difficult to prove the positive case—that Gherardini was the inspiration for Mona Lisa's smile. A person's skull says very little about how he or she smiles. Many of the muscles that control a smile attach to soft tissue rather than bone, and there are indications that one's unique smile is a learned behavior rather than an outgrowth of bone structure.

Forensic facial reconstruction has come a long way in the past few decades. Scientists are now able to recreate the shape of a person's face—the location of the eyes, the slope of the nose, or the curve of the jaw—to within a couple of millimeters. The problem is that people don't tend to identify one another based on those broad facial outlines. Researchers have used medical scanning technology to create a three-dimensional image of a living person's skull, but not even people's own family members are able to reliably recognize them. We are more likely to identify one another through features that forensic anthropologists haven't yet figured out how to dependably reconstruct: skin color, eye color, hair, wrinkles, and characteristic facial expressions.

That's why even Leonardo might have a hard time recognizing a modern reconstruction of Lisa Gherardini's face. In a 2001 study, Australian forensic anthropologists used four reconstruction techniques to create 16 faces from four skulls then challenged untrained observers to pick out a photograph of the decedent from a pool of 10 pictures. It was an abject



failure: Participants identified only one of the 16 reconstructions at a rate that was significantly above random chance. Other studies have shown that personal acquaintances are no better than strangers at identifying reconstructions. The science has improved over the past decade, but forensic reconstruction researchers are still far better at generating hypothetical images of human ancestors than faithful recreations of modern faces.

Reconstructing the face of the real-life Mona Lisa faces a couple of other challenges. Gherardini was more than 60 years old when she died. Facial reconstruction experts have a few techniques to reverse-age someone, such as pulling back the brow ridge, which becomes more prominent in older people. But there's a good chance that Gherardini was missing teeth. (Many in Renaissance Italy believed that toothaches were the result of dental worms, and others prescribed bloodletting or abstinence for oral discomfort.) If Gherardini's gums were bare at her death, it would severely undermine an attempt to reconstruct her mouth.

Finally, although Leonardo da Vinci was known for his anatomically correct artwork, Mona Lisa is still a painting. It's not clear whether Leonardo intended it as a work of photographic realism or an idealized version of his subject. Moreover, Leonardo labored over the painting for years, making it difficult to faithfully recreate every angle of his muse's face.

Thanks to Shawn Phillips of Indiana State University and Caroline Wilkinson of the University of Dundee, author of [Forensic Facial Reconstruction](#).



POINTErs in Person

The POINTErs In Person program, an autonomous branch of **POINT - (Pursuing Our Italian Names Together)** was founded in 1992. Our group, Chapter 15, was organized in September 1996. The 21 nationwide chapters of POINTErs In Person provide genealogical researchers an opportunity to meet socially, and learn and share information pertinent to Italian research. Each chapter is independent and sets forth its own procedures and schedules of events.

We cordially invite Italian genealogical researchers to attend our quarterly meetings. Membership is open to all. In addition to regular meetings our group takes occasional field trips to genealogical research sites in the New Jersey/New York area.

Membership in our parent organization, POINT, is not a prerequisite to joining our group; however, it is highly recommended

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The Lou Costello Chapter

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"Horse and Rider," Discovered Leonardo Da Vinci Sculpture, Unveiled In Los Angeles



*"Horse and Rider," (mold, left, sculpture, right)
Image courtesy of Art Encounter.*

In 1508, three years after completing the "Mona Lisa," Leonardo Da Vinci created a sculpture out of beeswax. He intended to use the small figure of a military man riding a horse as a model for a larger monument to French military governor, Charles d'Amboise. Yet the larger work was never completed, and the beeswax sculpture disappeared from public sight after Leonardo's death. The recently re-emerged work, dubbed "Horse and Rider," was unveiled for the first time on August 27th in Los Angeles.

After Leonardo died in 1519, the sculpture was passed along to Francesco Melzi, a star student, until the 1930's when war broke out and Melzi's descendants, it is believed, brought it to Switzerland. The work disappeared from the public eye until 1985, when a group of traveling businessmen took interest in the mysterious sculpture. It wasn't long before businessman Richard A. Lewis took interest in the piece, as well as the story behind it, and invested in the sculpture. The work's history had been documented some of Da Vinci's biographies, as had his interest in the anatomy of horses. The businessmen took interest in the piece, and contacted the foremost Leonardo scholar, Dr. Carlo Pedretti, to hear his perspective. Dr. Pedretti delivered the letter Lewis was waiting for: "In my opinion, this wax model is by Leonardo himself."

Lewis has owned the sculpture for years, never before giving the public access to the Renaissance masterpiece, which he had restored and cast in bronze. However, "Horse and Rider" was unveiled on August 27 at [Greystone Mansion in Beverly Hills](#). The horse will then embark on a world tour. The work will join forces with ["Da Vinci: The Genius" exhibition at the Venetian Hotel](#) in Las Vegas, possibly travel to the Tower Bridge in London and exhibit at an undisclosed New York location.