Leonardo da Vinci.

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- **Born:** April 15, 1452
- **Birthplace:** Vinci, Republic of Florence (now in Italy)
- **Died:** May 2, 1519
- **Place of death:** Amboise, France

Born near Florence, Italy in 1452, Leonardo da Vinci became known as "the universal genius," "the complete Renaissance man" and one of the greatest painters of the Italian Renaissance. Not only did he excel as a painter, but also as an architect, an engineer, and a sculptor.

Portrait of Leonardo Francesco Melzi [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

Leonardo would become well-known for his profound intellect and his studies in anatomy , botany, astronomy , and geology. Some of his notebooks were found to contain plans for a flying machine and a parachute, long before these devices were actually invented.

As a boy, Leonardo became an apprentice to Andrea del Verrocchio, a famous painter and sculptor in Florence. There, Leonardo worked on sculptures, ceramics, ornaments, and paintings. According to legend, young Leonardo immediately showed such unique artistic talent that Verrocchio soon assigned Leonardo to do all of the painting.

Leonardo stayed with Verrocchio's studio until he was about 25 years old. Afterward, he spent five years producing paintings for various individuals.

At the age of 30 he was invited to Milan to become a court artist for Duke Ludovico Sforza. As court artist, Leonardo was a jack-of-all-trades.

Leonardo not only painted portraits of the duke and ladies of the court, but also designed costumes and organized weddings and festivals.

Mona Lisa Leonardo da Vinci [Public domain or Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

During this time, he also acted as an architect and an engineer and gave advice on military fortifications and weapons.

The artist constantly wrote and sketched in his notebooks. He wrote down everything he learned and observed as well every experiment he conducted. He recorded everything from his findings on geology, geography, anatomy, and physiology to architecture, city planning, military weapons, and aircraft design. Many of Leonardo's plans and designs could be used today.

Leonardo da Vinci did very little painting in his later years. However, he did create many detailed drawings of machines and various inventions that became some of his most favored works.

In 1516, da Vinci settled in France . King Francis I desired to surround himself with many famous people of the time. It was in a large house near the courts of the king that da Vinci spent the rest of his life designing military projects.

Some of Leonardo da Vinci's sketches include:

- An armored fighting vehicle
- A basic design for a parachute
- A gas-propelled mechanism for turning a roasting spit
- Flying machines. One, called an Ornithopter, had wings that flapped. Another flying machine, called an aerial screw, had a flying mechanism shaped like a screw.

Unlike many of his artistic peers, Leonardo was not well educated and could not read classical humanist literature. Instead, he became a keen observer.

His great attention to detail came from studies of objects and situations rather than abstract ideas. This precision can be seen in many of his rough sketches.

da Vinci's Inventions Include:

- aerial screw
- armored fighting vehicle
- hydrometer
- ornithopter
- parachute

More Inventors

- Leonardo da Vinci
- Benjamin Franklin
- George Eastman
- Buckminster Fuller
- Dr. Stephanie Louise Kwoleck
- Madam C. J. Walker

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