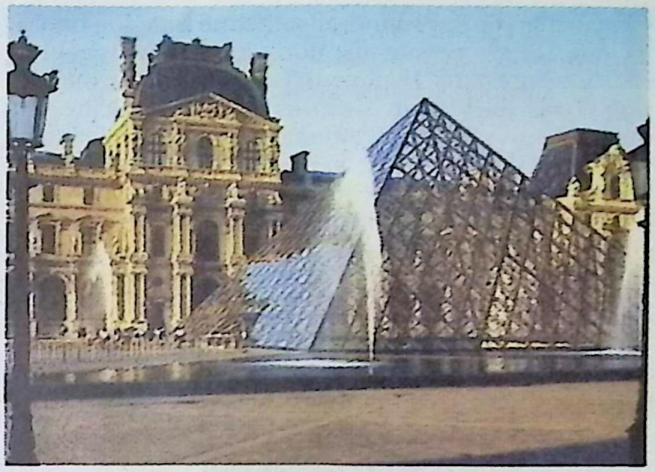


In the essay "On the perfect beauty of a woman'', by the 16th-century Firenzuola, an Italian poet and litterateur, we learn that the slight opening of the lips at the corners of the mouth was considered in that period a sign of elegance. Thus Mona Lisa has that slight smile which enters into the gentle, delicate atmosphere pervading the whole painting. To achieve this effect, Leonardo uses the *sfumato* technique, a gradual dissolving of the forms themselves, continuous interaction between light and shade and an uncertain sense of the time of day. Critic Walter Peter made serious observations in 1867 about Mona Lisa. He expressed his views by describing the figure in the painting as a kind of mythic embodiment of eternal femininity, who is "older than the rocks among which she sits" and who "has been dead many times and learned the secrets of the grave".

Nonetheless, Leonardo certainly knew how he attained this effect, and by what means. That great onlooker of nature knew more about the way we use our eyes than anybody who had ever lived before him. He had plainly seen a problem which the conquest of nature had posed to artists - a problem no less intricate than the one of uniting correct drawing with a harmonious composition. The great works of the Italian Quattrocento masters, the cultural and artistic events of 15th century Italy are collectively referred to as the Quattrocento, who followed the lead given by Masaccio, a great painter, have one thing in common: their figures look somewhat rigid and unsympathetic, almost wooden. The strange thing is that it clearly is not lack of patience or lack of knowledge that is responsible for this effect. No one could be more patient in his imitation of nature than Van Eyck; 15th century Dutch Painter, no one could know more about correct drawing and perspective than Mantegna, an Italian Renaissance artist and a serious student of Roman archaeology, for all the grandeur and solemnity of their illustration of nature, their figures look more like statues than living beings. Giorgio Vasari, biographer of Da Vinci, reported that even beginning in Leonardo's era, artists came from far and wide to the master's studio to study the life-like Mona Lisa: "This work is executed in a manner well calculated to astonish all who behold her." The young Raphael, (April 6, 1483 April 6, 1520) an Italian master painter and architect of the Florentine school in High Renaissance, was so fascinated by Leonardo's composition that he created a series of Florentine portraits, several of which display a striking resemblance to the Mona Lisa. But they have none of the drama of Da Vinci's magnum opus.

This painting of Leonardo da Vinci is distinguished to whole world for its aesthetic components. It was pyramid style which Leonardo craftily applied for painting Mona Lisa. The folded hands of the lady in the painting form the front corner of the pyramid. Her breast, neck and face glow in same proportion that gently models her hands. The light provides the variety of living surfaces an underlying geometry of spheres and circles. Her face now graces museums and barns, wine bottles and billboards around the world. She is straight away recognized on every continent. The list of copyists is endless, and the number of imitations extra special. Arguably the most famous painting in the entire forty-thousand-year history of the visual arts, the Mona Lisa has enthused more versions than any other work of art... some more or less true to life than others.



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