PRESS RELEASE OF THE EXHIBITION

**LEONARDO’S *SELF-PORTRAIT*, HISTORY AND CONTEMPORANEITY OF A MASTERPIECE**

**FACE TO FACE WITH LEONARDO 2024**

**Musei Reali, Biblioteca Reale**

**Piazza Castello 191, Torino**

**28 March – 30 June 2024**

**The format *Face to face with Leonardo*, the encounter with the Maestro’s works preserved in the Biblioteca Reale of Turin, returns this year in a totally new version, dedicated to the famous *Self-Portrait* of Leonardo da Vinci, the icon of the history of art of all time.**

**Benefitting from the Esteemed Patronage of the President of the Republic, the exhibition presents over 60 works, of which 15 are originals by Leonardo, among which 6 sheets of the *Codex Atlanticus* drawn in France, during the period in which he drew his famous *Self-Portrait*, stand out.**

**The exhibition is enriched by numerous loans, granted by prestigious Italian institutions and private collections, and presents original evidence of Leonardo’s activity in the last years of his life. The itinerary is completed by a large selection of paintings, drawings, prints, intaglio matrices and photolithographs which document the fortune of the famous drawing of Turin and the face of the Genius from the sixteenth to the twentieth Century.**

**To embellish this story through images, and for the very first time, the Galleria Sabauda has dedicated a room to 20 works executed by Leonardian painters - pupils, followers and imitators of the Maestro ‒ in which the contemporaneity of Leonardo’s lesson is highlighted**

**A selected exhibition of 15 sculptures by Giuliano Vangi (Barberino del Mugello, Florence, 1931), marked by a peculiar expressive intensity, completes the field of facial representation with a contemporary look.**

From 28 March to 30 June 2024, as part of the *Face to Face with Leonardo* initiative, the Biblioteca Reale of Turin offers an exceptional opportunity to learn about and **explore Leonardo da Vinci’s work up close** and admire some of his masterpieces preserved in the patrimony of the Musei Reali.

The exhibition **Leonardo’s *Self-Portrait*. History and contemporaneity of a masterpiece** is arranged in the two vaults of the Biblioteca Reale, created in 1998 and 2014 with the support of the Consulta per la Valorizzazione dei Beni Artistici e Culturali of Turin. The exhibition, in a totally new version **curated by Paola Salvi, professor at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera**, aims to historically frame the **famous *Self-Portrait* of Leonardo da Vinci** starting from the years of its creation, following the traces that document its knowledge in the second half of the sixteenth Century and the first of the nineteenth Century, before its arrival at the Biblioteca Reale of Turin, and its subsequent consecration and dissemination.

On the basis of the curator's most recent studies, which support the execution of the drawing between 1517 and 1518, in the last years of Leonard’s life in Amboise at the court of King Francis I of France, **the exhibition ideally reconstructs the context and the work of the artist, as if one were in his studio**.

**In the first exhibition room**, and displayed for the first time next to **Leonardo’s Self-Portrait,** is a precious manuscript from the Biblioteca Nazionale of Naples containing the ***Diary* of the Itinerary of Cardinal Luigi of Aragon** written by Antonio de Beatis, who accompanied the Cardinal in his journey through northern Italy, Germany, France and the Netherlands and who with him visited Leonardo in the Castle of Clos Lucé on 10 October 1517; from this chronicle we obtain a precious first-hand testimony of Leonardo’s appearance at that date, of the studies he was conducting, of the paintings most dear to him still in his atelier, of the enormous amount of papers on artistic and scientific subjects that had occupied him all his life, on which the artist, showing signs of age but still extremely active, continued to work. The contextualization with the French period is made possible by the exceptional loan of **six sheets of the *Codex Atlanticus*** from the **Veneranda Pinacoteca e Biblioteca Ambrosiana** in Milan, drawn between 1517 and 1518: This is a group of drawings, **exhibited together for the first time together with the *Self-Portrait***, from which we obtain invaluable proof of his continued ability to draw and write in a firm and precise way, of the projects and research that the artist continued to incessantly pursue during the final stages of his life and of the constant relationship of exchange and intimate sharing with Francesco Melzi, the pupil who would inherit his immense legacy of drawings that the artist-scientist would have liked to have become books on the subjects that had occupied him during his lifetime. Among the folios on display are 770*v* of the *Codex Atlanticus*, in which, together with a number of sketches in Leonardo's hand, there is a study by a pupil which depicts a left hand ‒ believed to be Leonardo's ‒ sketching the waviness of the hair with a technique similar to that of the *Self-Portrait*; folio 920*r* which contains studies for the creation of canal works of the Loire and the memory of the visit to Romorentin, in the company of the King of France; 309*v* in which Leonardo annotates a fundamental reflection on the principles of representing a face: “**That face which in painting sees the face of the maestro who makes it, always sees everyone who looks at it**”. In the case of a self-portrait, the face looking at the maestro who makes it is of the artist himself: Leonardo reminds us that the maestro wanted to leave an image of himself not only to be looked at, but which continues to look at us. Folio 307*v* is also on display, one of the most spectacular in the *Codex Atlanticus*, with studies on the squaring of curvilinear elements and on geometric equivalence, topics that were almost an obsession with Leonardo from the Roman years until the end of his life. And again 673*r*, a double folio with the last date noted by Leonardo: “24 June, the day of St. John, 1518 in Amboise in the palace of Clu”.

To best illustrate the working method of Leonardo, having brought his manuscripts to France, and the drawings that he used and revived for new projects, other important sheets from the collection of the Biblioteca Reale are on display. We find the **Codex on the Flight of Birds**, not only with the studies that give the volume its title, but also with an engineering sketch for the creation of canals on the Arno and, on sheet 10*v*, a small face sketched in red stone, in which Carlo Pedretti in 1975 noticed the similarity with the *Self-Portrait*. Furthermore, while the **Studies of Insects** testifies to his inexhaustible and continuous interest in the natural world, the study of proportions of the face and eye is part of a series of folios dedicated to the proportional theories that would be taken up again in the twentieth century to find the appropriate measures for a three-dimensional translation of the *Self-Portrait*. Studies on horses continued to have importance and relevance, both in relation to the anatomy of what Leonardo himself considered the most noble of animals, and in relation to the projects for (unrealized) equestrian statues for Francesco Sforza and Gian Giacomo Trivulzio: these are the **Studies of a horse’s front legs** on olive green prepared paper, the **Studies of a horse's front legs** on indigo prepared paper and the **Studies of a horse's hind legs** in red stone. In France Leonardo returned to the investigation of equine anatomy with the intention of creating an equestrian monument for Francis I: it is conceivable that he took the Turin sheets back into consideration, together with others preserved in Windsor, as demonstrated by the copy of the red chalk drawing with hind legs, made by Francesco Melzi in 1517-1518, preserved in the Royal Collection Trust at Windsor.

Leonardo's assiduous interests in human anatomy, attested by the chronicle of Antonio De Beatis and by the drawings now in Windsor, is also demonstrated in the exhibition by two sheets from the Biblioteca Reale: the pen and ink drawing with **the Nudes for the Battle of Anghiari** and the sheet with **Hercules and the Nemean lion**, drawn in charcoal, the technique that Leonardo resumed in the last period of his life and with which many of the French drawings were created.

**In the second room,** the exhibition continues with works that attest to **Leonardo's success starting from the second half of the sixteenth Century**: testifying to the **knowledge of the *Self-Portrait*** before its purchase by King Carlo Alberto di Savoia Carignano in 1839, two folios preserved in Gabinetto dei Disegni e Stampe delle Gallerie dell’Accademia of Venice, part of the collection of Giuseppe Bossi, multifaceted neoclassical artist and secretary of the Accademia di Brera ***Study for Heraclitus*, attributed to Giovan Ambrogio Figino (circa 1570), and the copy of the *Self-Portrait* created by Raffaele Albertolli (circa 1808-1809),** as attested by Bossi himself. The section dedicated to the success of the *Self-Portrait* continues with drawings, paintings, prints, books and a marble herm of Leonardo by Pompeo Marchesi (1808), on loan from the **Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera**. This last institution played a fundamental role in making this section of the exhibition possible, not only for the loan of materials and documents, but also for the studies conducted on the occasion of the publication of the volume *Leonardo da Vinci and the Accademia di Brera,* 2020, edited by Paola Salvi, with Anna Mariani and Valter Rosa.

Surrounding these works is the rather mysterious ***affaire* of Leonardo's *Self-Portrait* in the early nineteenth Century**, evidently known to Milanese and Braidense *conoscienti*, as demonstrated by the Venetian drawing from which Giuseppe Benaglia derived the print on the frontispiece to the volume *Del Cenacolo di Leonardo da Vinci, Libri quattro* by Giuseppe Bossi, which is also on display in the exhibition in the very rare edition on blue paper (only two copies were ever printed), on loan from the Biblioteca Trivulziana.

Of notable interest is the **drawing of Leonardo’s face by Giuseppe Bossi himself** for his *Life of Leonardo da Vinci* (1812), the model for the print by Pietro Anderloni, with which the iconography of the Renaissance maestro was consolidated. Never previously exhibited, this is preserved in the Bettoni album of the Gabinetto dei Disegni del Castello Sforzesco in Milan.

The exhibition is completed with the analysis of the dissemination of Leonardo's *Self-Portrait* in the era of technical reproducibility, through the figures of **Carlo Felice Biscarra**, secretary of the Accademia Albertina of Turin who, in 1870, etched the *Self-Portrait* which was subsequently published in the magazine *L'Arte in Italia*, and of the photographer **Angelo della Croce**, who travelled to Turin to photograph the *Self-Portrait* and reproduce it in photolithography for the famous *Saggio delle opere di Leonardo da Vinci*, published on the occasion of the Leonardesque Celebrations of 1872 in Milan, the year in which the monument dedicated to the artist was also erected in Piazza della Scala. The exhibition also comprises the historical reproductions by **Pietro Carlevaris** (Turin 1888) and the **facsimile edition by the Fratelli Alinari** (Florence 1898).

The itinerary in the **second exhibition room** also includes a painting by **Giovanni Antonio Bazzi, known as Sodoma,** a very intense *Ecce homo* from a private collection which can be admired again, some eight years after the last public exhibition. In it, the turbaned face behind Christ, which perhaps depicts an ancient wise man, recalls the features of Leonardo.

The exhibition occasion is enriched, for the first time, with a pictorial section curated by Annamaria Bava within the Galleria Sabauda: ***Beholding Leonardo. A journey through the Collections of Galleria Sabauda*** intends to evoke the different ways of relating to Leonardo's innovations through **20 works**, created by companions of formative years, direct pupils and intelligent assimilators of Leonardo’s lessons and style, from **Lorenzo di Credi** to **Andrea Solario,** from **Bergognone** to **Gaudenzio Ferrari**.

Furthermore, in the context of the depiction of the face, from the first floor of the Galleria Sabauda to the Giardino Ducale, a selected exhibition of sculptures by **Giuliano Vangi** (Barberino di Mugello, Florence, 1931) is proposed, **fifteen works marked by a peculiar expressive intensity**, always within the solemnity of their bearing. Effected between 1964 and 2022 in a range of widely different materials ‒ marble, wood, bronze, stone, glass ‒ with which the sculptor loves to experiment, they let us retrace the path of an internationally known and celebrated artist, who has taken up the testimony of the great Italian sculpture over the centuries. The exhibition, ***Giuliano Vangi****.* ***Volti contemporanei*** confirms how expressive freedom can be based on the love of tradition and the ability to capture the pulse of a mystery, which stops movement and suspends the flow of time, ideally embracing the peremptoriness of the face of Leonardo.

**The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue edited by Paola Salvi, published by Silvana Editoriale**.

**Leonardo's *Self-Portrait*. History and contemporaneity of a masterpiece is an exceptional experience** for the quality of the works on display and the loans granted, also enhanced by the presence of multimedial installations and the **video that tells the journey of Leonardo's *Self-Portrait* and the Codex on the Flight of Birds** in a microchip on board the Rover *Curiosity*, launched from Cape Canaveral on 26 November 2011: thanks to an idea by Silvia Rosa-Brusin of the RAI TG production ***Leonardo***, and taken up by NASA, Leonardo landed on Mars on 5 August 2012 and has been exploring the “red planet” for 12 years.

**The collection of graphics of the** **Biblioteca Reale**

The rich collection of graphics in the Biblioteca Reale contains over 2,500 drawings, including an important nucleus of 1,585 sheets by old Italian and European masters, sold in 1839 to King **Carlo Alberto** by **Giovanni Volpato** from Chieri, a particularly interesting character who, after emigrating from Italy, built a brilliant career abroad as an art dealer, working between France and England, before returning to Piedmont in 1837, bringing with him a very rich collection. Precisely in those years, King Carlo Alberto was engaged in the creation of his own collection, conceived and desired as a collection of wonders, in the wake of a family tradition: an instrument of personal prestige and celebration of the Savoy dynasty, for the creation of which he had commissioned the Bolognese architect **Pelagio Palagi** and a large group of intellectuals led by **Domenico Promis**. Thanks to the intermediation of Promis, negotiations began with Volpato for the conclusion of the agreement to sell the collection of drawings to the King: the contract was signed in September 1839 and, in January 1840, 1585 drawings arrived in the library.

At the heart of this fortunate purchase, in which there are also sheets by Michelangelo, Rembrandt, Carracci, Guercino, Canova and many others, is the nucleus of **thirteen autograph drawings by Leonardo da Vinci** which document his activity and interests of the Renaissance Genius from his youth to full maturity. Some refer to famous masterpieces of the maestro, such as the **nudes for the Battle of Anghiar**i, **the horses for the Sforza and Trivulzio monuments, the study for the angel of the Virgin of the Rocks, known as the Face of a Maiden;** others, such as the **Proportions of the face and the eye**, testify to his research on anatomy and the “motions of the soul”, of which Leonardo was the undisputed master. Up to the *unicum*, the ***Self-Portrait***, one of the most famous icons in the history of art. Finally, the **Codex on the Flight of Birds**, donated by Teodoro Sabachnikoff to King Umberto I in 1893: a notebook written between 1505 and 1506 which organically collects Leonardo's reflections for the **creation of a flying machine**, as well as thoughts on the subject of mechanics, hydraulics, architecture, figure drawing, intersecting crucial issues of his studies.

**LEONARDO'S SELF-PORTRAIT. HISTORY AND CONTEMPORANEITY OF A MASTERPIECE**

**Face to face with Leonardo 2024**

Musei Reali, Biblioteca Reale - Piazza Castello 191, Turin

**28 March – 30 June 2024**

**From Tuesday to Sunday, 9am-7pm (last entry 6pm).**

**Prices:**

**Normal single ticket: € 15**

**Group (maximum 25 people): € 13 ea.**

**18-25 years: €7 ea.**

**As legally entitled: free**

**Possibility of integrated tickets (Musei Reali + the exhibition *Guercino. The profession of the painter.)***

**Reservation is highly recommended:**

E-mail: info.torino@coopculture.it

Telephone: +39 011 19560449

**Ticket purchases through:** <https://www.coopculture.it/>

***Beholding Leonardo. A journey through the Collections of Galleria Sabauda***

Galleria Sabauda, first floor

28 March – 28 July 2024

***Giuliano Vangi. Contemporary faces***

Galleria Sabauda, first floor and Giardino Ducale

28 March – 30 June 2024

Entrance to the exhibitions in the Galleria Sabauda is included in the Musei Reali ticket

Open from Tuesday to Sunday 9am-7pm (last entry 6pm).

**Additional openings of the exhibition *Leonardo’s Self-Portrait. History and contemporaneity of a masterpiece***

April 1, April 25, April 29, May 1, June 2, June 24, 2024

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