

Media contacts: Robin Wander 415.750.2604 rwander@famsf.org
Jill Lynch 415.750.3553 jlynch@famsf.org

Leonardo da Vinci:
Drawings from the Biblioteca Reale in Turin
At the Legion of Honor in Gallery 1

Exhibition Dates: November 15, 2008-January 4, 2009

Images:

<http://picasaweb.google.com/FAMSF1/LeonardoDaVinciDrawings?authkey=55Luggb5U9I>



San Francisco, August 2008--Leonardo da Vinci's drawings form the heart of the Renaissance master's artistic legacy and continue to fascinate and challenge viewers today. A select group of eleven drawings, as well as one of his most celebrated notebooks, the *Codex on the Flight of Birds*, is on view at the Legion of Honor from November 15, 2008, to January 4, 2009. Previously exhibited at the Birmingham Museum of Art, *Leonardo da Vinci: Drawings from*

the Biblioteca Reale in Turin, marks the first time that this remarkable group of drawings has been loaned to a U.S. exhibition by the Biblioteca Reale (Royal Library) in Turin, Italy. This small-scale traveling exhibition presents the first opportunity to view these drawings together, outside of Italy.

Recognized as one of the greatest draftsmen of all time, Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) explored his extensive range of interests through his drawings. *Drawings from the Biblioteca Reale in Turin* features eleven drawings, including three that are double-sided, and one bound notebook. Dating from about 1480 to 1510, the works represent the most prolific period of Leonardo's career. The subjects of the drawings range from fantastical explorations to acute observations, anatomical studies, and utilitarian working drawings. Additionally, one of the Turin sheets includes a fragment of a poem.

Curator James Ganz states, "Leonardo da Vinci represents an unusual phenomenon in the history of art. Since his death in 1519, he has become immortalized by his creations, transformed from a flesh-and-blood working artist to an almost mythical figure. This exhibition gives us a rare opportunity to view a selection of Leonardo's drawings as well as one of his original notebooks. These fragile sheets of paper hold Leonardo's most direct and intimate artistic acts. They give us a unique opportunity to get inside the head of this legendary figure and understand him as a living, breathing, and thinking man."

One of the most well known drawings in the exhibition is Leonardo's preparatory sketch of the angel for the first version of his painting *Madonna of the Rocks* (ca. 1483). After viewing this drawing's powerful and expressive silverpoint lines, art critic and connoisseur Bernard Berenson described it as "the most beautiful drawing in the world." Another highlight is a sheet of *Figural Sketches* (ca. 1506/08). This study is associated with several of Leonardo's projects, most notably the *Battle of Anghiari*, his unfinished mural painting for the assembly room of the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence (1505). *Figural Sketches* illustrates Leonardo's method of "thinking on paper," in which he would consider several subjects on a single page. The exhibition also features drawings of insects, a minute sketch of a cloud of butterflies, and three sheets filled with equine studies, two in metalpoint and one in red chalk. Leonardo most likely completed the equine studies in preparation for his planned monument of patron Francesco Sforza, which would have been the largest equestrian statue ever made.

Leonardo's *Codice sul volo degli uccelli* (*Codex on the Flight of Birds*) of 1505/6 is also on view. Contained in a bound notebook of eighteen recto and verso sheets, the *Codex on the Flight of Birds* is filled with Leonardo's observations on the movement of birds and his ideas for reproducing these natural movements with a machine.

The exhibition is organized by the Birmingham Museum of Art, where it was on view from September 28 to November 9, 2008. The coordinating curator for the Legion of Honor's presentation of the exhibition is James Ganz, the curator of the Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts at the Fine Arts Museums of San

Francisco. The exhibition catalogue, published by the Birmingham Museum of Art, includes individual entries on the eleven drawings, full-scale color illustrations of each sheet, and several essays.

The Biblioteca Reale

The Biblioteca Reale in Turin was established during the reign of Carlo Alberto of Savoy (r. 1831-1849). One of Europe's oldest dynasties, the House of Savoy had long collected the rare manuscripts, illuminated books, and exceptional bookbindings that are part of the Biblioteca Reale's current collection of 200,000 volumes. Carlo Alberto acquired a group of more than 2,000 drawings, including important examples of works by Michelangelo, Raphael, Poussin, Rembrandt, and Tiepolo. The Biblioteca Reale's drawings by Leonardo are considered the jewels of the prestigious collection. In 1893, the collection of Leonardo drawings was further enhanced when a Russian collector donated the *Codex on the Flight of Birds* to King Umberto I of Savoy.

Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts

The Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts, founded in 1948 by Moore and Hazel Achenbach, is widely recognized as among the largest and best museum collections of its kind in the United States. With nearly 100,000 works representing over 500 years of works on paper from around the world, the collection is utilized as a teaching vehicle as well as for exhibitions and publications. The strength of the Achenbach collection lies in its diversity and the pursuit of a broad range of graphic art that reflects the aesthetics and politics as well as the social and cultural mores of the era in which it was created.

Exhibition Credit Information

Leonardo da Vinci: Drawings from the Biblioteca Reale in Turin is organized by the Birmingham Museum of Art and is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and Humanities. This exhibition was made possible by the Foundation for Italian Art and Culture. The San Francisco presentation is made possible by patrons Rosemary and Ed Baker, the Istituto Italiano di Cultura, the Brown Foundation and a bequest from Leonard E. Kingsley.



Image: Leonardo da Vinci, *Angel for the Madonna of the Rocks*, ca. 1483-1485.
Metalpoint heightened with white on prepared paper. Collection of the Biblioteca Reale, Turin, and used with permission of the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, inv. no. 15572. Photograph by Fabrizio Fenucci / Y. Press srl

Legion of Honor visitor information

The Legion of Honor displays a collection of over 4,000 years of ancient and European art and houses the Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts in a Beaux-Arts style building overlooking Lincoln Park and the Golden Gate Bridge.

Address: Lincoln Park
34th Avenue and Clement Street
San Francisco, CA 94121
415.750.3600

Hours: Tuesday–Sunday, 9:30 am–5:15 pm
Closed on Monday
Café open 9:30 am–5 pm
Museum Store open 9:30 am–5 pm

Admission: \$20 adults
\$17 seniors
\$16 youths 13–17 and students with a college I.D.
Members and children 12 and under are free.
The first Tuesday of every month is free.
(admission \$10 to view the permanent collections only)

Information: www.legionofhonor.org, www.famsf.org