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Da Vinci drawing sells for millions

On July 11, 2001, at an auction at Christie's art auctioneers, a small drawing by **Leonardo da Vinci** sold for \$5 million. The drawing titled: "*horse and rider*," is a very small drawing (from what I could see on my television screen). I estimated its size to be about 9 X 10 inches, with a degree of finish no more than a sketch. The medium was silverpoint. As I ponder the future of my work, I wonder if drawing will ever achieve such value and notoriety for those who are today's Canadian drawing masters? (*Gerrit Verstraete*)

A \$12 million Michelangelo drawing is found in a New York maid's room

On July 9, 2002, CNN reported on their evening news that a **Michelangelo** drawing, estimated to be worth \$12 million, was unearthed among sketches of Renaissance lighting fixtures in what used to be a New York maid's room. The unsigned drawing was a design for a seven-branched candelabrum done in black chalk, brush and brown wash on cream-colored paper in the mid-1500s, according to officials at the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum in New York City. The candelabrum's arms were only inferred, but the sketch clearly showed where they should have gone. The drawing was plucked from a box of sketches of lighting fixture de-

signs by unknown artists in the museum's Drawings and Prints Department, on the fourth floor of the building in what used to be a maid's room. The museum, part of the Washington-based Smithsonian Institution, purchased the drawing within a group of five goldsmith drawings in 1942, for \$60. Museum scholars guessed the work might have been done by 16th century artist Perino del Vaga, who often followed Michelangelo's designs for decorative objects. Somehow it got into the wrong box and was described only as being Italian, from around 1530-1540. It was first identified as a Michelangelo in April 2002, by Sir Timothy Clifford, director of the Na-

tional Galleries of Scotland, during a sabbatical visit to the Cooper-Hewitt. While the experts agreed on the artist, there was no agreement on how the finished candelabrum would have been used. It was never made, Clifford said. Clifford called the object a menorah, after the candelabrum used by Jews, but said that did not necessarily mean it was destined for use in a Florentine synagogue, since such candlesticks were used in both Jewish and Christian houses of worship during the 16th century. He said it might have been destined to be part of a project for tombs of the Medici rulers.

"You recognize a Michelangelo as you recognize a friend," Clifford said by

telephone from Florence, Italy. "If you're familiar with a friend, and you're walking down the street, you wave to them. You do rather the same sort of thing when you're seeing a Michelangelo."

While Clifford was convinced that the work came from Michelangelo's hand, others were skeptical. To au-

thenticate the find, the drawing was taken to London in mid-June of 2002, for examination by Michelangelo scholars. A Smithsonian statement said experts who have agreed with Clifford's assessment include George Goldner of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, William Griswold of the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los An-

geles, Michael Hirst of the Courtauld Institute of Art in London and Paul Joannides of the University of Cambridge in Cambridge, England. But Lawrence said what clinched it for her was to juxtapose the Cooper-Hewitt's drawing with a Michelangelo drawing of a salt cellar in the British Museum.

"Questions and Answers" on drawingsociety.com

Just to remind you, we are up and running with our own *dotcom* site and we are encouraged by many visits to the site. Get in touch with our webmaster Doug Jordan (email address: dougjordan@telus.net) and let him know you're out there in drawing land. One new feature of the site is "Questions & Answers" where you can "ask a master," anything you want to know about drawing and all of us at the *Drawing Society of Canada* will do our best to get you a satisfactory answer. Already some dozen questions and answers are posted on the site. Check it out.

Some exciting websites for lovers of drawing

Here are some websites you may want to check out as well. Each offers a rich variety of information, product news, and much more:

www.duva.com - check out D'uva LithocoatCoal heat-fixable synthetic charcoal

www.artistsmagazine.com - for "Drawing Board" magazine

www.pencils.co.uk - for Derwent's sketching collection of pencils

www.savoir-faire.com - for Cretacolour Monolith woodless pencils

www.canadianart.ca - Canadian Art Magazine

www.myamericanartist.com - American Artist Magazine

www.winsornewton.com - the Winsor Newton Company

www.dakotapastels.com - Dakota Art Pastels (excellent selection of drawing pencils)

www.opusframing.com - Opus Framing & Art Supplies

www.currys.com - Curry's Artists Materials

If you know of any educational and informative websites for those who love drawing, please let us know at www.drawingsociety.com

Celebrating ordinary people

In a Post Modern world where the abstractions of life have led to a media frenzy surrounding the arts and artists, it would appear the only successful artist is one who remains either detached from the world around him or her, or thoroughly convinced he or she must destroy the conventions and traditions that have built society. Yet, one day when their bones have grown weary and many years have left their aging mark, they will wonder if it was all worth it, only to find the very things they destroyed remain forever present in the lives of ordinary people. Things really do not change and what we attribute to change is only a mirage, a misunderstanding of science and technology, and a misunderstanding of the human spirit. (from "Essays," by Gerrit Verstraete)

Drawing Society activities update

Monday Night Studio Life Drawing continues to be a welcome place for fellowship and serious drawing. We've started the new Fall season with some great new models and a new time, 6:30 - 9:30 pm. Artists of all ages and with various drawing skill levels gather every Monday evening in the historic **Occidental Hotel** building in the "old quarter" of downtown Nanaimo, BC.

A history of drawing presented in a series of scholarly articles based on *out-of-print* books about the art of drawing, specifically from "The Art of Drawing," by Richard Kenin, 1974.

Romanesque Draughtsmanship

In medieval drawing we find the draughtsman carried away by the decorative potentialities of his penmanship. There is often such a complete coherence in the staccato zigzag of the pen that an extraordinary sense of energy, turbulence, and movement is created within the realm of divine composition. Figures which are brittle, insubstantial, and apparently frail, achieve a degree of agitation and attenuation which generates fantastic dynamism. This is particularly true of the English drawings of the eleventh century where Byzantine influences are noticeably strong. It is also apparent in many other schools of early medieval draughtsmanship which reduce all descriptive elements into the complex and convoluted embroidery of magical cosmology.

The history of medieval drawing can be roughly divided into two periods - the Romanesque and the Gothic. After the Carolingian, Ottonian, and Salian empires exhausted themselves, and Europe generally, an artistic revival took place in Europe but most particularly in France. There the great feudal lords of Normandy, Aquitaine, Burgundy, Gascony, Anjou, and Brittany, together with the young Capetian monarchy, attempted to restore order, peace, and security to the people of their territories. Papal supremacy also lengthened and with it arts and letters in the great abbeys and pilgrimage centres. When peace was at last restored it was in these places that art executed in the *more romano* - the Romanesque style - flourished throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

A characteristic style of draughtsmanship emerged at this time, particularly in manuscript illustration. One finds firm, smooth lines indicating

clearly and precisely the boundaries of colour and the dynamism of movement. Romanesque draughtsmanship of the twelfth century adopted a particular drapery convention called the damp-fold style. The drawing is executed with a double series of sensuous lines covering limbs in such a way as to suggest their solidity. This gradual hardening of both colour and line at length produced a highly conventionalized type of art which in turn has made attribution of a given work to a particular artist extremely difficult for the modern historian of art.

The iconographic drawing of Romanesque draughtsmen provided society with moral and doctrinal lessons together with illustrations of historical and religious precepts. These drawings appear as the products of deep meditation rather than spontaneous expressions of joy and hope. This is comprehensive when one considers the early monkish draughtsman who viewed his work as an essential tool in the creation of literary and artistic documents.

Romanesque illustrated manuscripts were also an experimental laboratory for those who worked in allied media. Parchment and reed pen were more ductile than gold, ivory, or stone, and in illuminated manuscripts images were born and new forms created that later found logical expression in the buildings and sculpture of the period. Form was reduced to pattern and pattern could express movement in a never-ending panorama of variation.

The growth of universities all over Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries increased the demand for texts. Since book illustration was a prime source of employment for the

draughtsman, it was natural that the art of drawing was commercialized and professionalized by workshops and guilds such as those located in Paris' *Rue de la Parcheminerie* (Parchment Street). These guilds were unconnected with the monastic scriptoria which had previously held a monopoly over such activities. As workshops established their partial independence of the Church, so too did the draughtsman's art attain a new independence.

Private patronage played a significant role in the development of secular drawing. Perhaps most notable among the late medieval patrons in France were four princely brothers: King Charles V, the Dukes of Berry and Burgundy, and Louis d'Anjou, at whose courts dozens of draughtsmen flourished, opening new paths of creative energy and sophistication. Patronage was further augmented by members of the newly rich merchant classes who were sufficiently enlightened to appreciate the gifts of the artists, and who commissioned works demanding a type of social reality that differed markedly from that required by the Church or the court.

Romanesque art reached its pinnacle in twelfth century France, having already shone brightly in England one hundred years earlier. It was to continue as a dominant style in Germany well into the thirteenth century, and was still to be seen in isolated pockets of Italy and Spain at a much later date. But the conclusion is unavoidable, regardless of venue, that Romanesque art was in many ways simply an incomplete expression of the style that became known as Gothic. (to be continued....)

Previously published in *Bottega*:

1. **Introduction** - Volume two, number 1, February 2000
2. **The Ancient World** - Volume two, number 2, June 2000
3. **The Ancient World (con't)** - Volume two, number 3, November 2000
4. **Athenian Drawing and the decline of drawing** - Volume three, number 1, April 2001
5. **The Drawings of Pre-Colombian Peru** - Volume three, number 2, September 2001
6. **Romanesque and Gothic Draughtsmanship** - Volume four, number 1, May 2002
7. **Romanesque Draughtsmanship** - Number 9, October 2002

In our next issue: **Gothic Draughtsmanship**

Memorable Quotes

Barnett Newman, a renowned modernist and American abstract painter, was once asked: "Why do you paint?" His answer was published in a magazine in 1947. He said: "An artist paints so that he will have something to look at; at times he must write so that he will also have something to read." – *The Critics*, by Lord Barney, *The New Yorker Magazine*, April 15 2002.

G.P.Weisberg, a respected and well-known art historian, was asked by Gerrit Verstraete, founder of the *Drawing Society of Canada*, if he would agree with his claim that indeed "we need a revival of the academy" in Canada and the United States? Weisberg's reply was a resounding "yes," with the additional comment, "but we first must get rid of digital imaging and rock music."

Regional Chapters

The society is looking for interested artists to form regional chapters for the specific purpose of helping us discover Canada's drawing masters, both past and present, as well as help us "spread the word" about the society's web page and internet gallery of Canadian drawing masters. The society has an existing chapter in Western Canada, facilitated by Peter Leclerc. In addition we are looking for those who would like to facilitate a regional chapter in the Prairie region, Ontario, Quebec, and the Atlantic Region. Write or email us if you are interested.

How to become a member of the Drawing Society of Canada

We do need the support of members to help us fulfill the mandate of the society, with its principal aim, to preserve and promote the fine art of drawing. Especially during the early, formative years of the *Drawing Society of Canada* (est. 1998), it will require patience and endurance to find and define our niche in the forum of voices for the arts in Canada. Support and encouragement is deeply appreciated. Membership is a one-time fee of \$50.

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Bottega will continue to encourage an environment that nurtures creative growth and artistic excellence in the proven methods of centuries ago.

Bottega is a forum where artists gather to discuss the issues of life and their relationship to the arts.

Honourary members:

David Owen Campbell
Ken Danby
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John Gould
Tom La Pierre
Peter Leclerc

Peter Mah
John Newman
Myfanwy Pavelic

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Stephen Warren