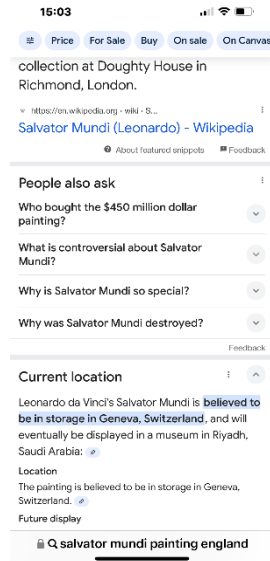
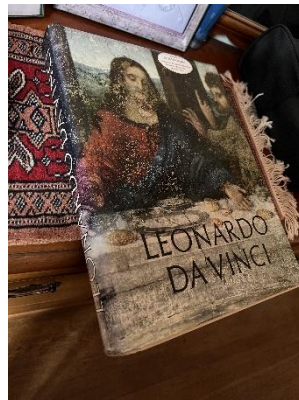


The **Salvator Mundi** painting, presumably by Leonardo da Vinci, currently in a vault in Switzerland.

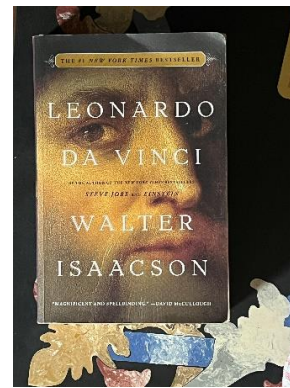


The painting was found recently enough not to have been included in my Abrams book on Leonardo da Vinci.

After



seeing the portrait in Walter Isaacson's book I decided to research a few things for myself.



There have been publications on whether this is an original or a fake; I have not read these, hoping to establish an unbiased opinion for myself before listening to the experts. For what it's worth, here are my findings, an artist's perspective, untainted by the auction price of \$450,000,000.

In my opinion the painting should be in the public domain as a world heritage item, not in private hands.

After just crudely staging the setup several things become very clear:



Another self-portrait is at hand



The positioning of the arms, hands, and fingers is difficult to attain, let alone maintain, for a model for any length of time. Furthermore, the benediction pose of the right hand is clearly conceptual and would not be achievable for most hands.

Also, the orb in the left hand is a contrivance that is hardly realistic in optical terms. (The three white dots are clearly not enclosures, they are at best three light sources reflecting on the crystal surface.)

I conclude that both hand and orb were added at a different date than the head, face and hair.

The plays of light, perspective blur and the resulting gender ambiguities do reveal many of Leonardo's concerns about creating 3D illusion in 2D space. The seemingly over-emphasized curls in the hair seem to

be an afterthought, perhaps a subsequent addition, likely by someone else, because these curls look to be draping at an unnatural angle.

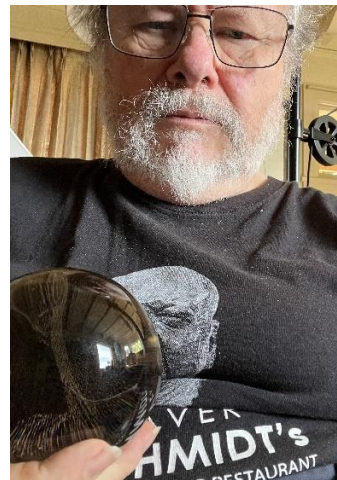


The left shoulder also looks too large and too light in the composition.

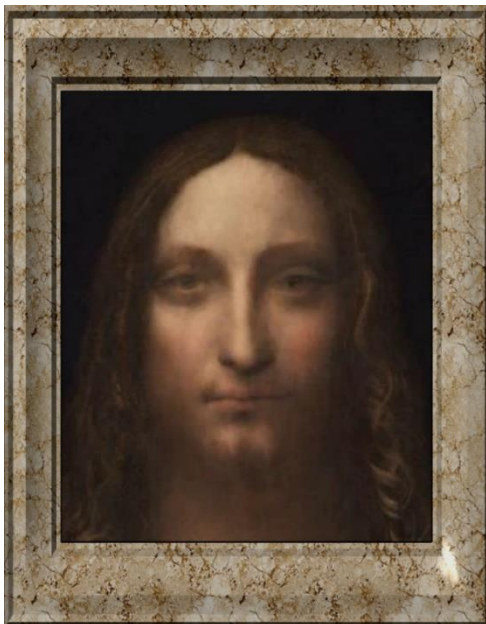
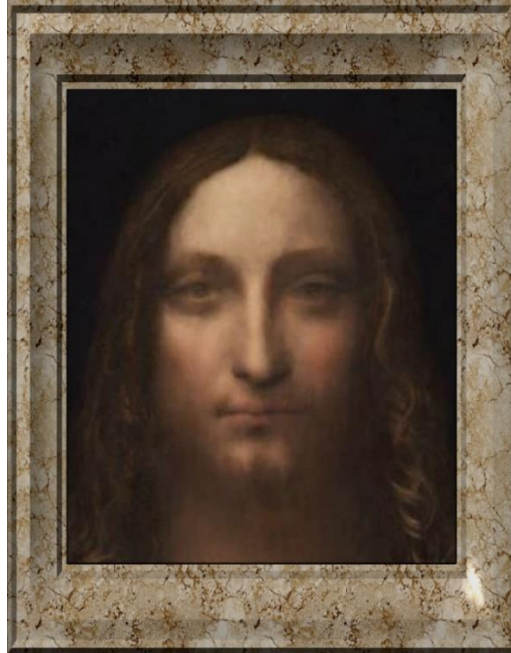
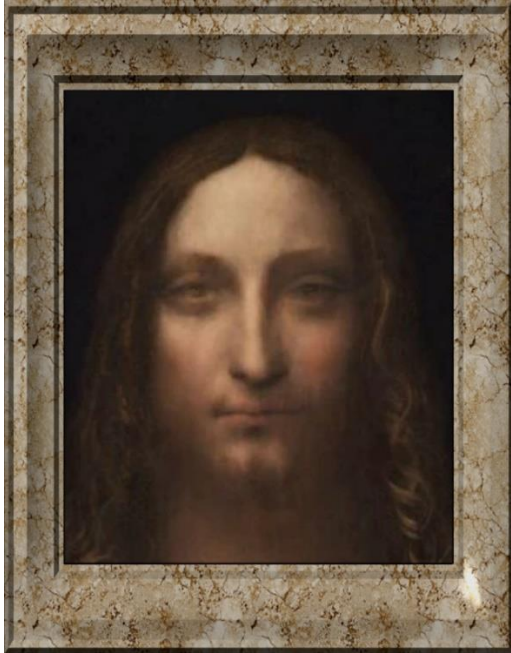
My attempts at reenacting parts of the scene seem to underscore these opinions.



Yes, I know my fingers are in the wrong position, and the light source comes from a different angle and at different intensity, but the pictures do show the principal thought. I doubt that better staging would lead to other conclusions. (Sorry, no curls at hand.)



Experiments with the light in Salvador Mundi's eyes speak of experimentation on the painter's part and seem to demonstrate some of Leonardo's concerns about 3D illusion in 2D space. This is perhaps an attempt at **adding a 5th dimension, that of perception**, into the fray. No doubt a stroke of **Genius**, as Leonardo leapfrogs beyond time (the fourth dimension) into a fifth realm. Not until M. C. Escher's work have I seen such attempts, mind you that M. C. Escher only realized a 3D illusion in 2D space.



Which one is the real painting and which one shows the androgenous illusion and further ambiguity? Perhaps an unresolved experiment?

Subtleties; where a millimeter this way or that way makes all the difference. The lightness or lack thereof makes any square millimeter in the painting change the overall perceptions. Mix them in a contradictory manner and it makes for different perceptions. Any portraitist will tell you that one small line can make all the difference on likeness. If you can game such effects, inner emotions can be triggered in the onlooker, conjuring yet more illusions of revealing inner emotions in the audience.

Gaming raytracing and with it the illusion of reality was clearly not enough. Leonardo put the burden of interpretation of inexplicable, conflicting reflections on the observer; thereby forcing a panoply of confusing interpretations on his viewer, deliberately overloading his audience, and thereby creating a hypnotic, confounding image that is not easily sorted. He conjured up a visual, synthetic, pseudo realm that could be read as emotional content.



Brilliant!

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