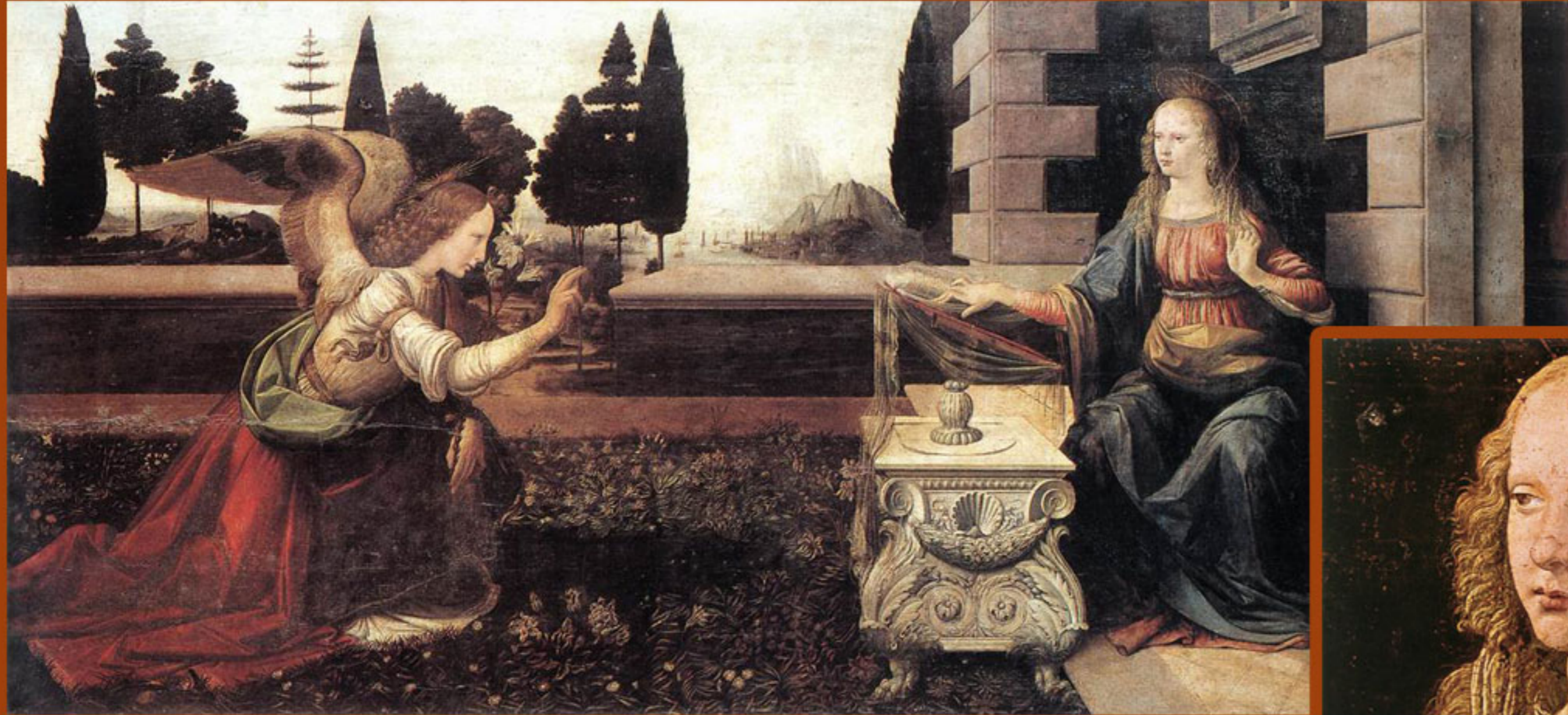


ANNUNCIATION



1472-75 oil on wood,
Florence

Leonardo painted his version of the Annunciation when he was 23 years old. One of his earliest works, Leonardo created a new style of painting that was based on how things really look. The flowers were drawn from nature, and the angel's wings were painted after he looked at a real bird.

Da Vinci had a great reverence for birds. Whenever he saw one caged, he set it free. His notebooks were covered with drawings of fluttering wings.



Lady with an Ermine

This work is generally accepted as Leonardo's, but some dispute the claim. The woman is probably Cecilia Gallerani, companion to the leader of Milan. The ermine (a kind of weasel) is placed in her hands. Cecilia, known for her sense of humor, would have found her picture funny. The Greek name for ermine is "gale" which sounds like her last name.



The girl and the ermine visually "rhyme." Both have bright eyes and high foreheads, and her hand and the ermine's paw mimic each other.



The Last Supper

On the day before Christ died, he told his disciples, "One of you shall betray me." Leonardo painted that very moment. The Lord's words strike everyone at the table like a thunderbolt. Passionate feeling bursts forth, and Judas recoils, wondering how Jesus knows his secret.

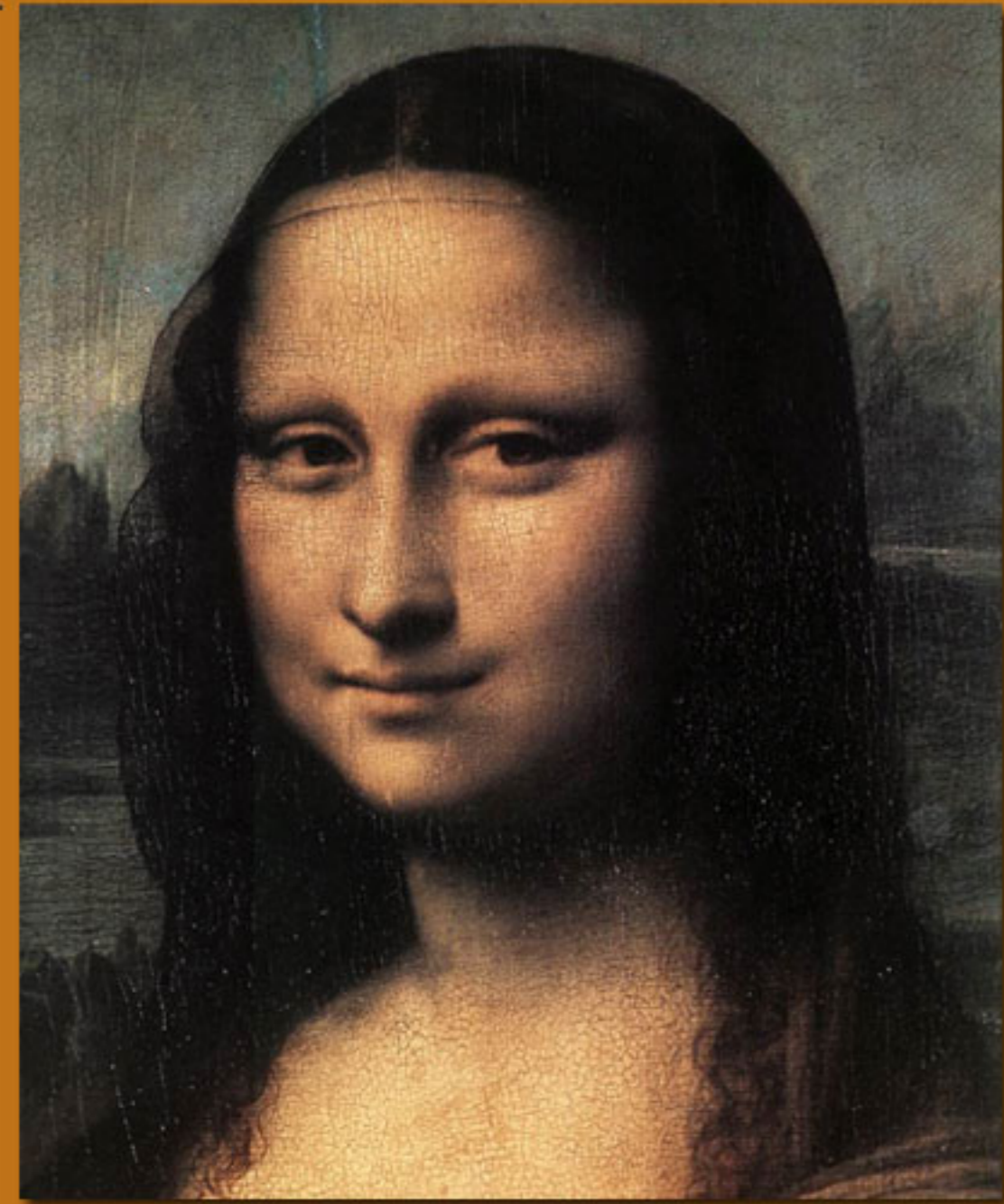


A *Failed* Experiment



Da Vinci did not like to work fast. As you already know, frescoes have to be painted quickly. To get around this, he invented an oil-based paint for plaster so that he could work very slowly and carefully. At first, the colors were very vivid, but as time went on the colors faded and the paint peeled. This masterpiece quickly fell into ruin, and needs constant restoration. His experiment failed. Leonardo had a photographic memory. Every figure in this painting has the face of a person Leonardo saw.

Mona Lisa

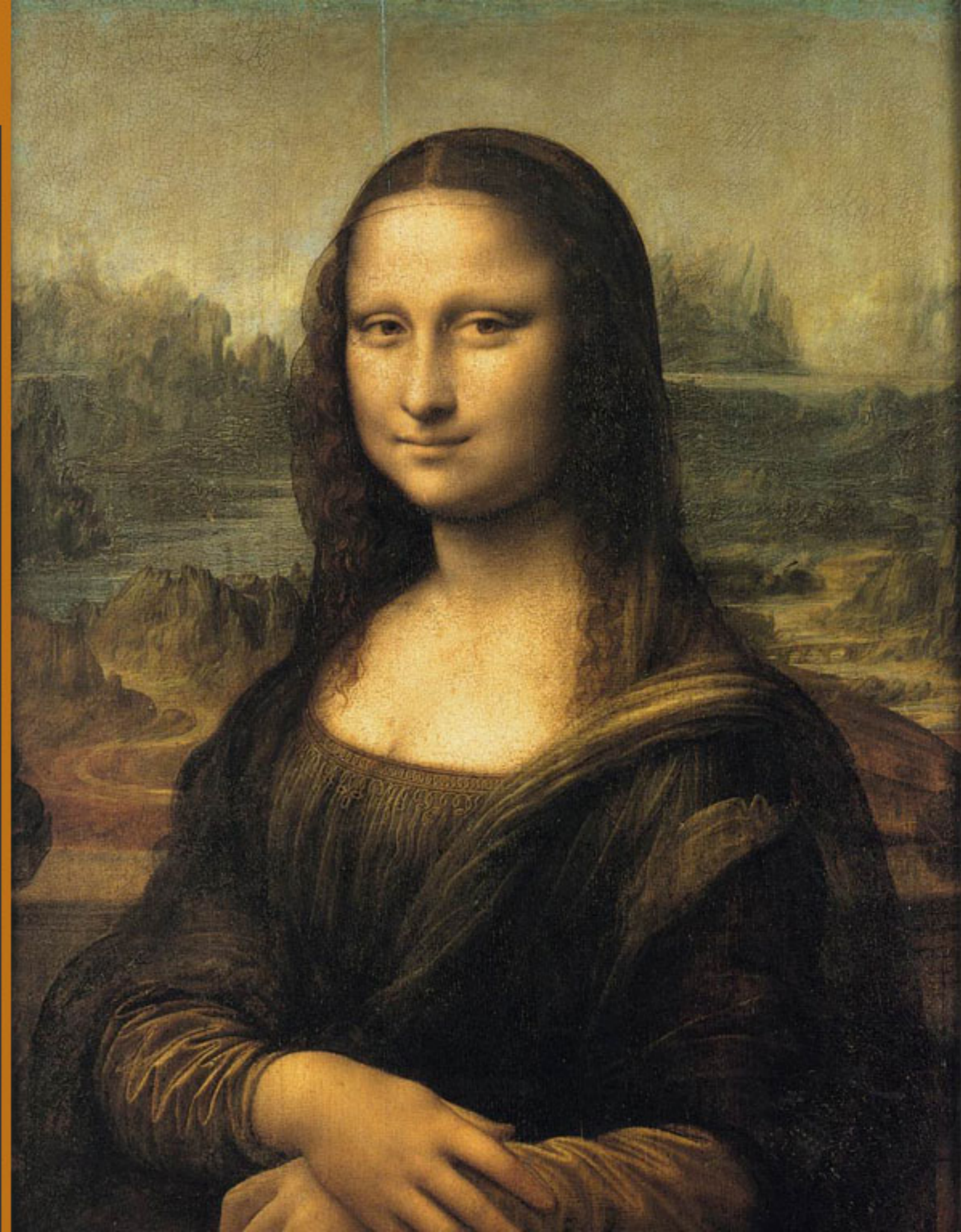


This painting has not aged very well. The colors used to be radiant, and now they have dulled and turned yellow-gray.

This is one of the most famous paintings in the world. The woman painted, however, is not. She sat for this portrait with Leonardo for five years.

Leonardo painted the Mona Lisa with such fine strokes, that they are only visible under a microscope.

When Leonardo was in his seventies, he stole the Mona Lisa from the patron who paid for it. He was going to France, and wanted to take his masterpiece with him!



Virgin & Child with St. Anne

Mary sits on the lap of her mother, St. Anne, and reaches out for the baby Jesus.

The entire group is contained in an equilateral triangle. At the time, the mere cartoon caused a frenzy of excitement in Florence.



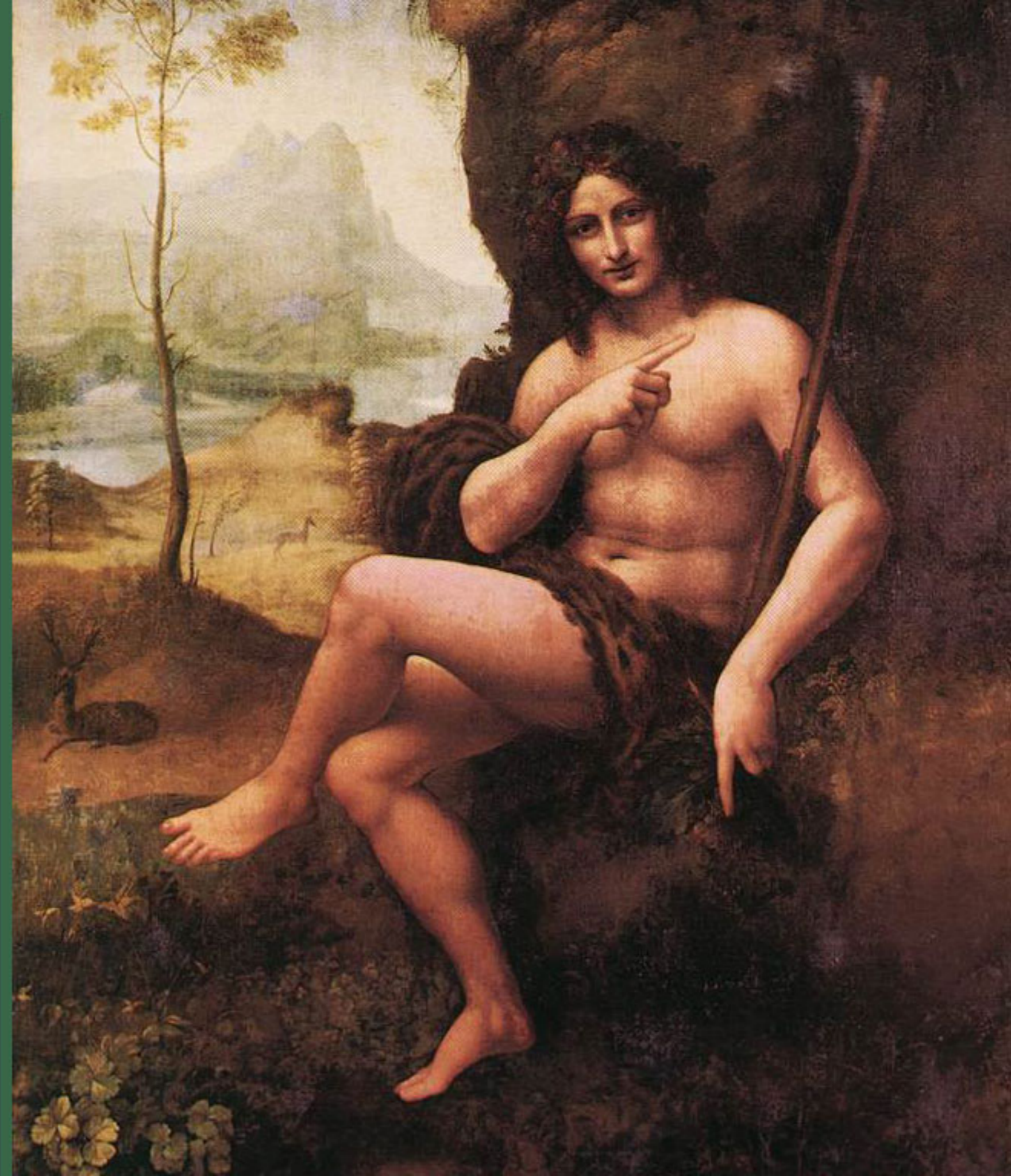
St. John the Baptist in the Wilderness

This depiction of St. John the Baptist is often compared to the Roman god of wine, Bacchus.

The fur and the staff are attributes of John the Baptist, but the laurel wreath and fruit are characteristic of Bacchus.

At any rate, there is a text that equates John with Bacchus called, "Ovide moralise" by Pierre Bersuire, and it dates from the 14th century.

Leonardo's sketches were found before he did this painting, and he did not include the laurel wreath nor the fruit; it is impossible to tell if the painting was tampered with because it has deteriorated too much for professionals to tell.



The Vitruvian Man

Leonardo da Vinci was the very first artist who systematically examined the proportions of the body in people and animals.

The Vitruvian man is a drawing of the proportions of man in the confines of the geometry of Vitruvius.

