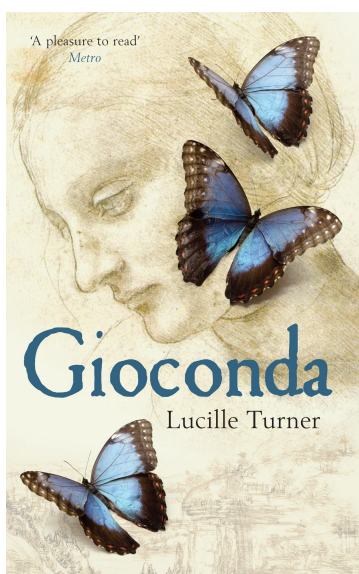


# *The Leonardo Tour*



Hi, I'm Lucille, Author of *GIOCONDA*. Take a tour of the city of Florence with me and you will discover that Leonardo is everywhere, even on the rooftops!



Find out more about Leonardo da Vinci at

[www.lucilleturner.com](http://www.lucilleturner.com)

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With articles on the Renaissance, the Ottoman Empire, European history and more!



# *The Piazza della Signoria and the Uffizi Gallery*

## HISTORY

The Piazza della Signoria was centre stage to turbulent past events, such as the bonfires of the vanities, when Florentines threw their worldly goods into the flames. There too, one of Florence's most charismatic personalities met his end: Girolamo Savonarola. Look out for the commemorative plaque. The square leads on to the Uffizzi gallery and the adjoining Loggia dei Lanzi.

## THE LEONARDO FACTOR

The Uffizi gallery houses two works by Leonardo: the *Annunciation*, one of his earliest paintings and the *Adoration of the Magi*, which a much older Leonardo left unfinished on his departure for Milan. The *Annunciation* shows the young Leonardo's love of natural realism, while the *Adoration of the Magi*, an ambitious and controversial work, blends Paganism and Scripture in an explosion of hugely complex detail.

## *The Duomo and Bell Tower*

### HISTORY

The Duomo of Florence was the work of Arnolfo di Cambio, who also designed the Palazzo Vecchio, but the famous cupola of the basilica was the brainchild of Filippo Brunelleschi in 1420. Brunelleschi won a competition for best structural design and conceived of a great self-supporting octagon, which crowns the top of the basilica.

The brother of Lorenzo de' Medici was murdered in the cathedral at the time of the infamous Pazzi conspiracy. Every last conspirator – including an archbishop – was hunted down and killed.

The Bell Tower, designed by an ageing Giotto in 1334, holds seven bells rung singly at particular times, including lunchtime.

## THE LEONARDO FACTOR

As a sixteen year old, one of Leonardo's first important tasks under the guidance of Andrea del Verrocchio was likely to have been the soldering of the great bronze ball, which was then hoisted to the top of Brunelleschi's cupola into the lantern of the Duomo.

For a general insight into the range of Leonardo's work, visit the Leonardo Museum in Via dei Servi nearby.

## *The Palazzo Vecchio*

### HISTORY

Built around 1300, the Palazzo Vecchio, or people's palace as it was also known, has been the seat of Florentine government from the time of the Medici family to present day. It is now

both town hall and museum, containing the *Salone dei Cinquecento*, where the five hundred strong council of Savonarola's republic once held sway.

### THE LEONARDO FACTOR

Leonardo was commissioned in 1503 to paint a battle scene on one of the walls of the *Salone*. His rival, Michelangelo, was given the opposite wall to work on, but both works were unfinished and neither has survived. It is thought that Leonardo's *Battle of Anghiari* still lies bricked up beneath the wall, and efforts have been made to find this 'lost Leonardo'.

## *The Palazzo Medici Riccardi*

### HISTORY

Ferdinando II de' Medici sold the Palazzo Medici Riccardi, the famous residence of his family, to Gabbriello Riccardi in 1659, in recognition for his loyalty and service. The exterior of the Palazzo is surrounded by a stone bench, which suggests the origin of the word 'bank' since it was there that Florentines waited to be received by the Medici family or their staff in one of the loggias, to discuss monetary affairs.

### THE LEONARDO FACTOR

Leonardo would have been a regular visitor to the Palazzo Medici, seat of the great Florentine bankers, in the late 1470s when he received commissions through the patronage of Lorenzo de' Medici. Lorenzo, reputed as a man of elegance and taste, was dedicated to promoting art in all its forms, and Leonardo received his first portrait commission of Ginevra de' Benci at this time.

## *The Piazza Santa Croce*

### HISTORY

With its cloisters by Brunelleschi, frescos by Giotto and superb gothic architecture, the Basilica of Santa Croce contains the tombs of brilliant Florentines such as Michelangelo and Machiavelli. The construction of the church, begun at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, was not completed until 1442, with both the Medici family and their rivals the Pazzi commissioning



chapels. The large piazza in front of the basilica was the setting for jousting and festivals during the Medici era.

### THE LEONARDO FACTOR

The Piazza Santa Croce was Leonardo's district, being close to where he worked with Verrocchio as a young apprentice. It was here that he would have witnessed the dazzling pageant of the Medici, when Lorenzo, parading in sumptuous attire of silk and gold, became a symbol of power and refinement during the great joust of February 1469.

## *The Bargello National Museum*

### HISTORY

The Bargello palace, once a public prison, contains one of the largest collections of Renaissance sculpture in Italy. The palace was constructed in 1255 and became a museum in 1865. It was the place of administration of justice up to 1857, and was subsequently restored by Francesco Mazzei.

### THE LEONARDO FACTOR

Admire the sculpture *David* by Andrea del Verrocchio in the museum. The model for the sculpture is said to have been Leonardo in person. He would have been around 18 years old at the time, and indeed the physical appearance of Verrocchio's *David* bears a striking resemblance to the descriptions we have of Leonardo.

## *The Hospital of Santa Maria Nuova*

### HISTORY

This hospital, the oldest still active in Florence, dates from 1288. It used to house a beautiful botanical garden and Botticelli's painting of the Virgin, Child and John the Baptist. In 1688 it opened an asylum section for lunatics, known as the Pazzaria, or madhouse.

## THE LEONARDO FACTOR

Leonardo carried out dissections at the hospital in his search for a complete understanding of anatomy. He also kept his accounts there because of his connection to the Guild of Doctors and Apothecaries to which, as a painter, he was affiliated.

### *The House of Leonardo in Vinci, Near Florence*

The house of Leonardo, reputed to be his birthplace, is 3 km from Vinci in the hamlet of Anchiano. Now a museum, the house was registered under the name of Leonardo's father, Ser Piero da Vinci, who worked as a notary in Vinci. In the house there are sketches by Leonardo of the surrounding countryside. The view towards the village has changed little and is easily recognisable in the drawings. It is probable that Leonardo spent several years here as a boy before his departure to Florence. Samples of his reverse writing displayed on the wall provide a vivid connection.

