

THE INDEPENDENT WOODSTOCK LITERARY FESTIVAL

16th - 20th September 2009

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LATEST NEWS

SOLD OUT EVENTS

21 Martin Kemp; 63 Lunch with Daisy Goodwin; 70 Publish and Be Damned

Janet Street-Porter

Janet is unable to attend Event No 28, but her place has been taken by Alex James from Blur

Oxford Times Prize Draw

Click [here](#) to see details of a prize draw in conjunction with The Oxford Times

New Event

Penelope Lively is speaking in the Indian Room at Blenheim Palace on Friday 18 September at 2pm. This event was organised after the brochure went to press.

WED 16th | **THU 17th** | FRI 18th | SAT 19th | SUN 20th | SPECIAL EVENTS

21 Martin Kemp

The Discovery of an Unknown Work by Leonardo da Vinci

Sold Out Venue The Oxfordshire Museum Time 10:30am Price £8.00



SOLD OUT. Martin is also talking at Event No.44 on Friday 18th September

A major, previously unknown work by Leonardo (to be shown to the public for the first time in mid September in Vienna) is the rarest of rare things. Nothing like the portrait of a Milanese "princess" has emerged for over 100 years. Scrupulous analysis of the historical and scientific evidence, including forensic analysis of fingerprints, shows that we are dealing with the real thing. The portrait of a young Milanese woman is executed with indescribable delicacy in coloured chalks on vellum. Is she Bianca, the illegitimate daughter of the Duke of Milan, married to the captain of the Milanese forces when she was little more than 13? Martin Kemp, one of the world's leading authorities on Leonardo, talks about this remarkable discovery.

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22 Zac Goldsmith

Building a Sustainable Society

Thursday 17 September

21 Martin Kemp

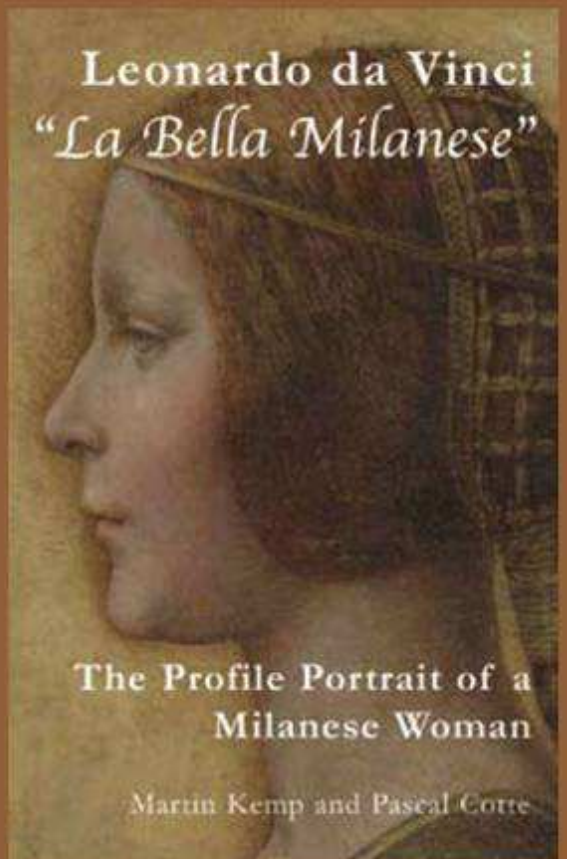
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GALLERY

Face of a dead princess: Martin Kemp introduces a rediscovered major work by Leonardo da Vinci

After 40 years in the Leonardo business, I thought I'd seen it all. "The Mona Lisa" as Leonardo in drag, and more recently as a Honduran princess painted by Titian, to say nothing of fantastical codes. The Leonardo loonies never relent. Aspiring new "Leonardo works" appear on at least a monthly basis. At best they are adjacent to his style; at their worst they are grotesquely far-fetched.

Then, much against expectations, a very real one comes along, the first major work of art by him to appear, from nowhere, for over 100 years. Its debut was not auspicious. It was knocked down at Christie's New York on 12 January 1998 as German 19th-century. It is in a complicated technique of ink and chalks on vellum (parchment), a medium Leonardo is not known to have used. It has no earlier history. When I was first sent a digital image, I was deeply suspicious.

It portrays a beautiful young lady on the cusp of maturity. Her fashionable costume is that of a Milanese court lady in the 1490s. She wears a green dress, adorned with Leonardo-esque knots, under which is a red bodice. The shoulder of the dress is "slashed" to reveal a triangle of red. Green, red and white are the colours of the Sforza family, rulers of Milan.

The profile of her face is subtle to an inexpressible degree. The line is incised with unerring precision, yet retains a living, breathing life. Those aspects of the faces of beautiful women most praised by Renaissance poets - rosebud lips and eyes like stars - are drawn with infinite tenderness. The iris of her eye retains the translucent radiance of a living person. Her eyelashes are so fine as



La Bella Principessa: is this Bianca, the daughter of the Duke of Milan?

to elude a casual glance. The tip of her upper lip barely touches the pink curve of her lower lip with extraordinary delicacy. Her ear plays a subtle game of hide-and-seek below the gentle waves of her hair.

But - is it too good to be true?

Science helps. Carbon dating confirms the right date-bracket for the vellum. Innovative technical analysis, undertaken by Pascal Cotte of Lumière Technology of Paris, shows that it was drawn with extraordinary graphic subtlety by a left-hander, as we know Leonardo to have been. Parallel shading orientated from top left to bottom right is visible both on the surface and in the lower layers. This and many other technical details add up.

It turns out that Leonardo was much concerned with how to draw with coloured chalks on vellum, and quizzed the French King's painter, Jean Perréal, who visited Milan with Charles VIII in 1494, about a technique in which the French specialised.

Everything is falling into place. But we need a plausible sitter. One stands out, Bianca, the illegitimate (but legitimised) daughter of Duke Ludovico Sforza in Milan. In 1496, aged no more than 14, she was married to the commander of Ludovico's armies, Galeazzo Sanseverino, an important patron of Leonardo. Four months later, Bianca was dead, afflicted by stomach disease.

The Milanese princesses were the dedicatees of books of poetry inscribed on vellum. The Leonardo portrait, which has clearly been excised from a bound codex, is likely to have come from one such volume. For Bianca's marriage or her death? I am more inclined to think the latter.



Convinced: Prof Martin Kemp of Oxford University has judges

The portrait of La Bella Principessa, as I am calling her, deserves to be seen widely in public. But the public galleries approached so far have said no. Their concerns have been that they will be seen as vastly increasing the value of the portrait and as aiding a process of sale. As I said to them, it's not the object's fault that it's not yet in a public collection. We are faced with what is in effect a dereliction of duty.

In the event we are still working towards getting what is a wonderful work into the public arena, to be seen by as many people as possible. Subjecting the portrait to full scrutiny is essential if it is to prove so good as to be true.

The writer is Emeritus Professor in the History of Art at Oxford University. For more information see www.lumiere-technology.com/discoveries.html

Martin Kemp talks about The Unknown Leonardo at The Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock on 17 Sept (01865 305 305)

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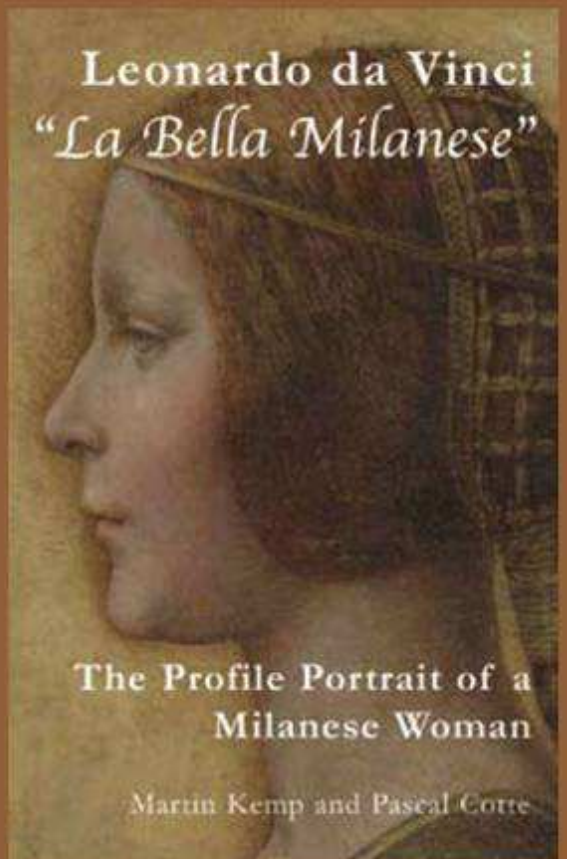
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