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Leonardo's Red Chalk Drawing of a Man

Submitted for your analysis and wonder is this famous Torino red chalk drawing by Leonardo da Vinci

However, it is Not a self portrait.
Rather, it is a portrait of an elderly man.

Leonardo's Torino Red Chalk Portrait had for decades been incorrectly assumed to be a c.1512 self-portrait of the 60-year old Leonardo.

More recent scholarship by the Leonardo scholar, Professore Pietro C. Marani, dates the work to circa 1490, when Leonardo da Vinci was about 38 years of age, far too young to look like this, even for that time period in human history.

Note the line hatchings that go from the top left to lower right, suggestive of a left-handed artist, which Leonardo has been said to have been.

The drawing is not a self- portrait of Leonardo, but rather, a portrait of a man by Leonardo, and a revelatory one at that.

It has been suggested by scholars that the sitter represents Leonardo's father Piero da Vinci, or that it represents Leonardo's uncle Francesco, based on the fact they both had a long life and lived into their eighties.

So, why is this c.1490 portrait, and not a c.1512 and a self-portrait?

This dating of circa 1490 stems from the superb work of Professore Pietro Marani and Dottore Marco Versiero:

“Traditionally thought to be a self-portrait as an old man (around 1510 or later), in recent years the drawing has been backdated to the final decade of the Quattrocento, on technical and stylistic grounds: the still refined use of sanguine, with results that look almost engraved, as well as the shading in parallel lines leaning diagonally to the left, are characteristics typical of the use in the artist's early years of this new graphic medium (adopted in the same way as a stylus or pen), while in later years Leonardo favored its atmospheric qualities, supported by curved strokes rather than straight ones, in the creating of form.”

Leonardo da Vinci

Study of a bearded man, perhaps for an apostle in the 'Last Supper' (formerly thought to be a self-portrait)

c. 1490-5 (?).

Sanguine on unprepared paper

33.3 × 21.3 cm

inv. 15571.
Biblioteca Reale
Torino

