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Inside a Genius Mind

Due to Google's power as a modern institution for learning they are able to comment on the dichotomy of art and science and where the two subjects intersect. Through the online exhibit, *Inside a Genius Mind*, which dives into the life and work of Leonardo da Vinci, who is an exemplar in combining the realms of art and science. This exhibit can be found on Google Arts & Culture which is a collaboration between Google and various museums to create an online gallery of artworks and artifacts from around the world. Google's exhibit demonstrates their ability to organize knowledge and resources in order to discuss the modern misconceptions that dissuade the combination of art and science through the history of Leonardo da Vinci.

Inside a Genius Mind is a collaboration from 28 different museums' collections where resources are condensed into easily accessible and understandable information of Leonardo da

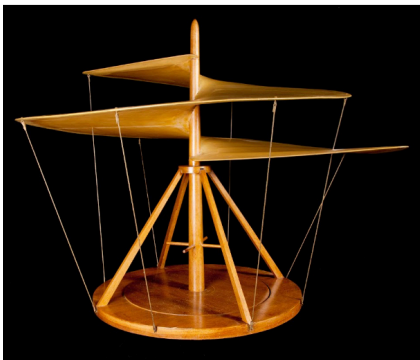


Fig. 1. 3-D Model. Aeronautica Militare, *AIR SCREW*

Vinci. The online exhibit is organized into one central page with links to various themes—his personal life, codices, polymath studies, etc—with their own page of images, information that the user can traverse through at their own pace. There is a heavy focus on visuals—images, videos, smooth transitions, simple usability—and interactive activities—moveable 3-D models, AI games, crossword puzzles (Example seen in Figure 1 and 2). The amount of

aforementioned Google Art & Culture, specifically with their *Inside a Genius Mind* exhibit. An exhibit of this magnitude is something that could only exist through the online world due to the amount of resources and information coming from the 28 museums it collaborated with. It would be impossible to exist in an actual museum with physical copies rather than digital. Their focus on spreading accessible information has made them a valuable resource for institutional learning in the modern age.

Google Arts & Culture undertakes Google's overall mission of dispersing information by providing accessible ways to view and learn about various cultures and accompanying art from around the world. With this, they are able to make viewers reflect on the role and purpose of art, which is seen in their *Inside a Genius Mind* exhibit where they examine the ways art and science intersect through the history and work of Leonardo da Vinci. Science in the modern sense is often considered to be the complete antithesis to art; art is too subjective, too abstract, while science is impartial and facts-based. However, as seen throughout the exhibit, this distinction was not always so clear and the barriers between art and science were muddled. The overlapping

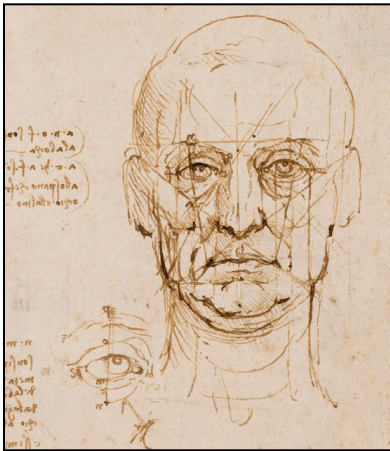


Fig. 3. Leonardo da Vinci,
*Studi di proporzioni del volto e
dell'occhio*, 1489-1490

of the realms of art and science is seen in the way information about Leonardo is presented; as seen in the polymath section with the various themes of mathematics and biology being placed next to themes of artist and architect. Further connections are made within each theme. For example, in the biology theme, it describes his study of the human face and proportion, and it used to explain his ability to depict the human form in his paintings (Study seen in Figure 3). In the physics theme, it describes his fascination

with optics and shadows which is used to explain his creation of *chiaroscuro*, a painting style which heavily emphasizes the contrast between light and dark. The interlaping of science and art in the context of the past, specifically in the era of the Renaissance makes sense. During this time, art was focused on observing the natural world and representing it through visual media, this closely resembled the type of science occurring during this time, “aristotelian science” or science based on observation. Both art and science during this time were following the same pattern of basing their study from observable phenomena in the natural world, so it makes sense how art and science were not viewed as complete opposites as is common in the modern day.

Google Art & Culture due to their resources as an institution for learning was able to successfully create an accessible and educational exhibit, which targets a modern audience and makes them rethink their own biases and misconceptions about the realms of art and science. It made me think about the history of art and the history of science and drawing similar parallels in their progression. Both fields had periods where they were heavily based in observation; science being about aristotelian observation and art being about creating representational media, but a gradual shift happens. Science becomes more about what human observation can not see—atoms, disease—and art becomes less about depicting reality and more abstract—surrealism, cubism.

Inside a Genius Mind is a prime example of Google’s power as an institution and their ability to comment on incorrect modern ideas on the inability of art and science to intersect.

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