



# Leonardo and the Mona Lisa Story (The History Of A Painting Told In Pictures)

*Donald Sassoon*

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From the Preface of this 348 page book: "That smile... we've all seen it thousands of times. It graces the face of La Gioconda, or the Mona Lisa, as she is affectionately known - the world's most famous painting, created by Leonardo da Vinci around 1503. From its first viewing, this work of art caused a stir among all who saw it. Was it the peerless technique, the innovative composition? Perhaps the air of mystery about the scene, or the subject's bold but elusive regard? It might well have been that smile. Giorgio Vasari, a sixteenth-century art historian, wrote: 'All will acknowledge that the execution of this painting is enough to make the strongest artist tremble with fear.....In this painting of Leonardo there was a smile so enchanting, it was more than divine than human.' More than the sum of her parts, the Mona Lisa, helped along by twists of fate and strange coincidence, has become an icon. And the interest in her shows no sign of waning. She is the most viewed masterpiece in the Louvre, attracting over 6 million visitors a year. No work of art has had a more lasting impact on the world around us - art, literature, advertising, the media, and the digital world have all been inspired by the Mona Lisa. Like any historical figure, she has had a life of drama, adventure, even mystery. She has been talked about, written about, parodies, copied, stolen, celebrated, filmed, and toured like a rock star. We do not know for certain who she is, when exactly she was painted, or why she gazes out at us with that inscrutable half-smile. She is entirely familiar, yet eternally mysterious. Here, then, is her story: a biography of a painting, told through pictures."

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