

Interpretation of “Madonna of the Yarnwinder” by Leonardo da Vinci

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Abstract

The object of this research is Leonardo da Vinci’s “The Madonna of the Yarnwinder”. The date of creation of the painting is unknown. By rotation and moving of the detail we get a figure depicting a snake trying to escape Jesus. Mary’s gaze is directed towards the snake and therefore expresses concern. In our opinion, Leonardo presented a scene where Mary is disturbed by a snake, which is a symbol of sin and evil and because of which Christ was crucified.

Keywords: Leonardo da Vinci, Yarnwinder, child

1. Introduction

The date of creation of the painting is unknown. The picture shows the Virgin Mary in the background of the landscape with Jesus watching the yarnwinder which has the form of a cross. Mary tries to protect Jesus from impending danger, but she cannot change her fate and avoid crucifixion.

2. Materials and Methods

The object of this research is “The Madonna of the Yarnwinder” (Fig. 1).



Figure 1. “The Madonna of the Yarnwinder” by Leonardo da Vinci

The painting shows Mary expressing concern. His gaze is directed to the right and down, though there is nothing in that direction in the painting (Fig. 2A- red line). Our attention was drawn to the index finger of Mary’s left hand, pointing down and to the left (Fig. 2A- blue line). There is an impression that Leonardo is pointing us to something. In this

direction a dark colored detail is observed, bordered by a faint contour (Fig. 2A- yellow contour). Through the program Paint X we rotated the detail at a 90 degree angle to the left and moved it to a location that coincided with the direction of Mary's gaze (Fig. 2A- green line).

3. Results

By rotating and moving the detail, we get a figure depicting a snake trying to escape Jesus. Mary's gaze is directed towards the snake and therefore expresses concern (Fig. 2B). The snake is seen in part. His head and front of his body are visible. The rest is covered with Mary's left hand.

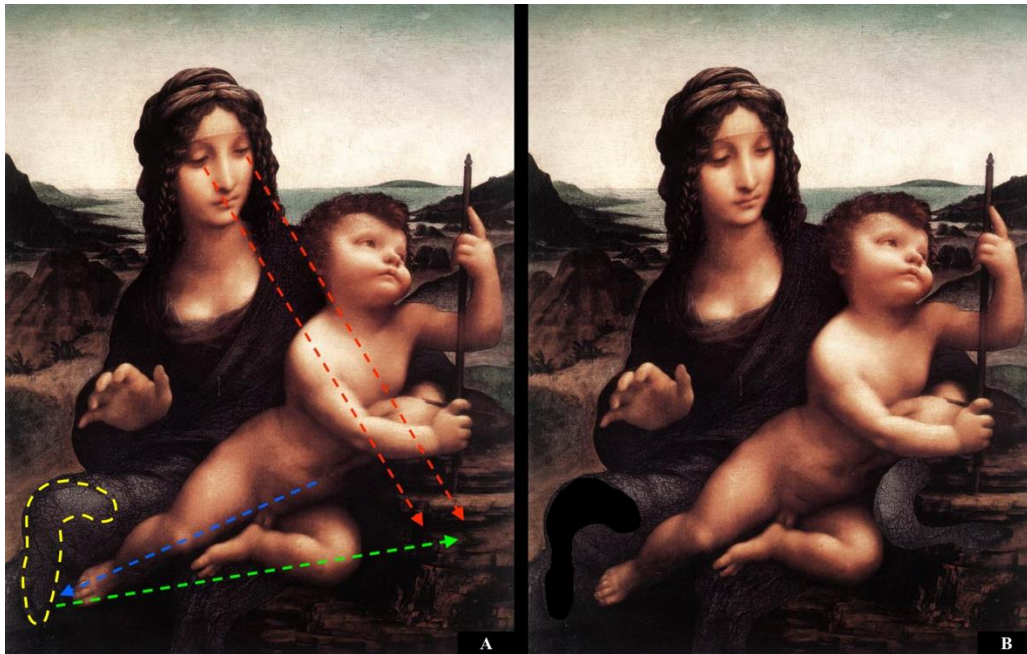


Figure 2A. Red line - the direction of Mary's gaze; blue line - the direction indicated by the index finger of Mar's left hand; yellow contour – removable detail; green line – the direction of movement of the detail

Figure 2B. The image obtained by moving the detail

4. Discussion

We think in some of Leonardo's works, the content of the painting changes as the detail moves. We have established that the copy of the lost fresco, which was created six centuries ago, includes double content. Moving some details of the drawing in which The Battle of Anghiari is depicted, changes the image and we get a lateral view of the brain figure (Keshelava 2020). We also found that by moving one detail of „Bacchus” we get the map of North America (Keshelava 2020).

The snake symbol is one of the oldest and often used in ancient cultures. It is associated with wisdom, death, multiplication and fertility. In African mythology, the god created a set of twins. The twins were half human and half snake. The ancient book of Maya tribes states that the first people to settle in the Yucatan were the Chanés or the people of the serpent. Though the serpent god is depicted as a dragon in Chinese mythology. In Egypt the snake signifies the immortality and God. In Greek and Romans mythology, the snake symbolizes a guardian spirit and was inscribed on any altars (Geller 2016).

In the Cristian religion, the serpent is the most hated creature. The snake is associated with evil both the beginning and the end of the Bible. In Genesis 3, the snake entices Eve into eating from the forbidden fruit of the Garden of Eden. In Revelation 12, Michael throws a serpent from heaven. In this episode the snake is associated with Satan. In view of the above, the serpent is a symbol of evil and sin in Christendom (Charlesworth 2010).

5. Conclusion

By moving and rotation one detail of the painting, we get a figure depicting a snake trying to escape Jesus. In our opinion, Leonardo presented a scene where Mary is disturbed by a snake, which is a symbol of sin and evil and because of which Christ was crucified.

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