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Heart-pounding discovery of rare Leonardo da Vinci drawing

The double-sided work, valued at €15m, depicts Saint Sebastian on its front and optical studies by the Old Master on the reverse

by [VICTORIA STAPLEY-BROWN](#) | 12 December 2016

On Monday 12 December, the Paris-based auction house Tajan announced a stirring discovery of a double-sided drawing by Leonardo da Vinci, the first such find in over 15 years. The work depicts Saint Sebastian bound to a tree on the recto, and optical studies in light and shadow and text by the Old Master on the verso. The artist referred to eight drawings of the saint in his tome of drawings, texts and scientific studies, the Codex Atlanticus (1478-1519) and this sheet is believed to be among them—and is the one of only three that have been located to date.

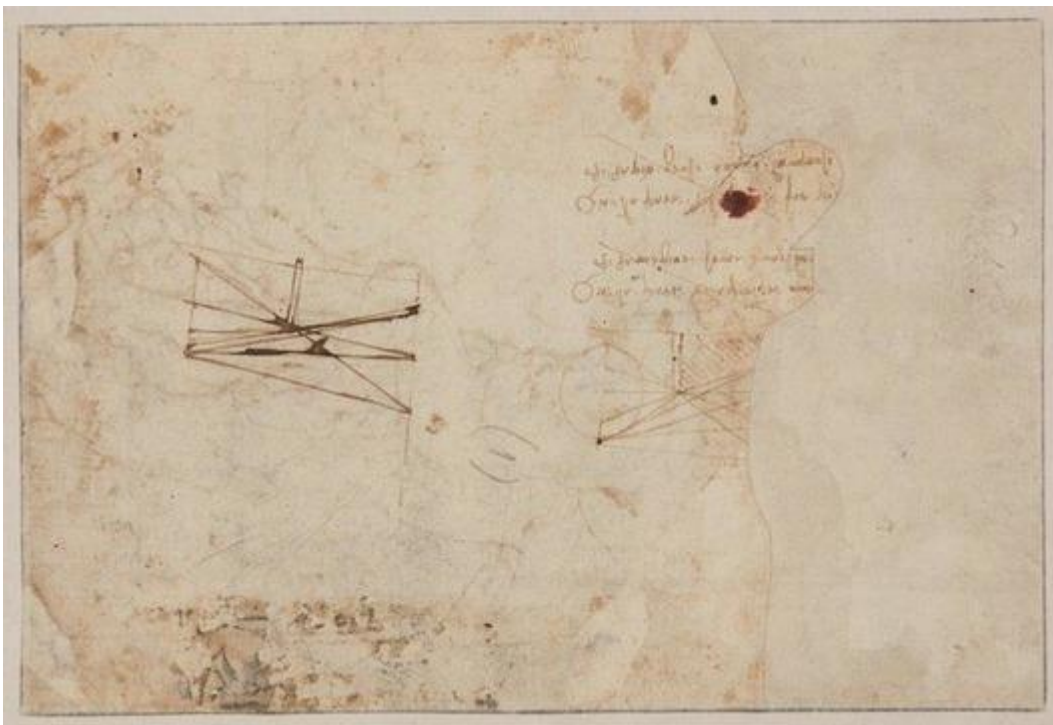
According to the New York Times, the work—valued at €15m—was brought to Tajan last March by a retired doctor in a group of 14 unframed drawings collected by his father. The work stood out to Thaddée Prate, Tajan's director of Old Master paintings, who consulted the Old Master drawings expert Patrick de Bayser, and then Carmen C. Bambach, a curator of Spanish and Italian drawings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and a specialist on the artist's drawings.

Bambach—who organised and wrote the catalogue for the Metropolitan Museum of Art's 2003 exhibition, Leonardo da Vinci, Master Draftman—gave the work a date of around 1482-85. She will soon publish an article on the discovery and related works soon, the Metropolitan Museum of Art said in a statement on Tajan's site. Bambach told the New York Times that the attribution to Leonardo da Vinci is "quite incontestable", referring to the finding as "an open-and-shut case". "My heart will always pound when I think about that drawing," she said to the Times.

The auction house has not released any information about a sale of the work, but it could be subjected to a temporary export ban if it is declared a "national treasure" by the government, which would give France 30 months to buy the work at market value.



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