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Experts believe Leonardo da Vinci drew 'Nude Mona Lisa'



The Mona Lisa CREDIT: JEAN-PIERRE MULLER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

- [Oliver Gee](#), PARIS

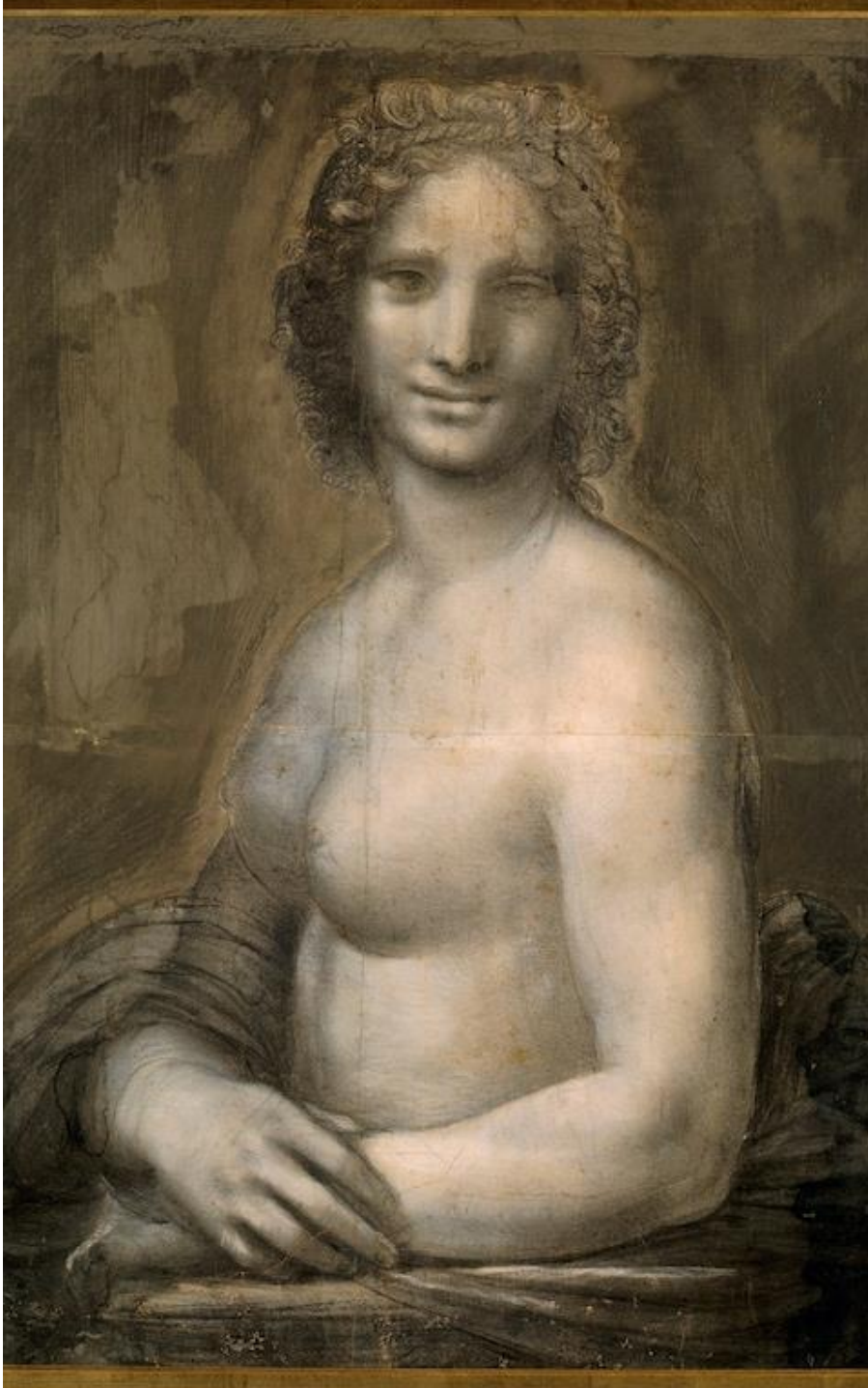
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Experts suggest that Italian artist Leonardo Da Vinci may have been the man behind a drawing of "topless Mona Lisa".

Scientists in Paris have been looking into a charcoal drawing of a woman, which was until now believed to have been drawn by Leonardo's students.

The drawing, titled Joconde Nue, shows a topless woman who bears a striking resemblance to the Mona Lisa that hangs at the Louvre museum in central Paris.

Experts at the same museum have concluded, after weeks of tests, that the charcoal drawing was “at least in part” actually done by Leonardo himself.



It is believed to have been a study for the Mona Lisa CREDIT: CHRISTOPHEL FINE ART/UIG VIA GETTY IMAGES

"The drawing has a quality in the way the face and hands are rendered that is truly remarkable. It is not a pale copy," curator Mathieu Deldicque told AFP.

"We are looking at something which was worked on in parallel with the Mona Lisa at the end of Leonardo's life," he added.

"It is almost certainly a preparatory work for an oil painting," he added.

The drawing has been kept in the Conde Museum in Chantilly to the north of Paris, where it has been ever since it was bought by the Duc d'Aumale in 1862 for 7,000 francs, considered to be a substantial sum at the time.

But it's only now that scientists have spoken out about the chance that Leonardo's hand was behind both pieces of art. They pointed out that both the body of the women in the two pieces and her hands are remarkably similar.

They've also noted that the two pieces are very close in size, with the charcoal drawing featuring pierced holes suggesting it may have been used as a backdrop to trace a second image.

Bruno Mottin, a conservation expert at the Louvre museum, told *Le Parisien* newspaper that if nothing else, the *Joconde Nue* was an original from Leonardo's studio, and not one of the 20 or so copies of nude *Mona Lisas* around the world.

He added, however, that there were suggestions that others had worked on the piece too.

"The hatching on the top of the drawing near the head was done by a right-handed person. Leonardo drew with his left hand," he told the French paper.

"It is a job that is going to take some time," he added.

"It is a very difficult drawing to work on because it is particularly fragile."

The month-long investigations into the drawing have seen scientists scanning the image in attempts to first determine if it was drawn before or after the *Mona Lisa* was painted, which was in 1503.

Museum curators hope to have a definitive answer as to who drew the woman before the 500-year anniversary of Leonardo's death, which will be in 2019.