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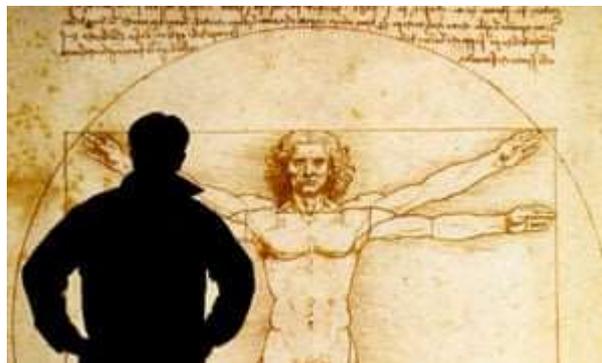
The Guardian

Italians try to crack Leonardo da Vinci DNA code with lock of hair

Hair tagged as polymath's in US collection to be tested against remains in French grave

Angela Giuffrida in Rome

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‘This extraordinary relic will allow us to proceed in the quest to carry out research on Da Vinci’s DNA,’ said Alessandro Vezzosi, director of the Ideale museum where the lock of hair will be displayed. Photograph: Alamy

Two Italian experts are set to perform a DNA test on a lock of hair that they say might have belonged to Leonardo da Vinci.

The hair strand was found in a private collection in the US and will go on display for the first time at the Ideale Leonardo da Vinci museum in Vinci (the Tuscan town where the artist was born), from 2 May, the 500th anniversary of the artist’s death.

“We found, across the Atlantic, a lock of hair historically tagged ‘Les Cheveux de Leonardo da Vinci’ and this extraordinary relic will allow us to proceed in the quest to carry out research on Da Vinci’s DNA,” said Alessandro Vezzosi, the director of the museum and Agnese Sabato, president of the Leonardo da Vinci Heritage Foundation in a statement.

The lock will also be presented at a press conference at Leonardiana library in Vinci on Thursday as year-long celebrations get underway in [Italy](#), France and elsewhere to commemorate the artist.

“This historical relic – a lock of hair – has long remained hidden in an American collection,” said Vezzosi. “It will now be exposed for the first time, along with documents attesting its ancient French provenance.”

In 2016 Vezzosi and Sabato, who are the curators of the Leonardo Lives exhibition at the Ideale museum, announced that they had identified an interrupted line running from da Vinci’s half-brother, Domenico, to 35 male descendants who were mostly living in the Tuscany region.

“This relic is what we needed to make our historical research even more solid from a scientific point of view,” said Sabato. “We are planning to carry out DNA analysis on the relic and compare it to Leonardo’s living descendants as well as to bones found in Da Vinci burials that we have identified over the past years.”

Sabato added that the investigation into Da Vinci’s DNA might also resolve controversy regarding “his presumed remains in the tomb in Amboise, France”.

The artist’s original burial place was in the chapel of Saint-Florentin at the Chateau d’Amboise in the Loire valley in France, but this was destroyed during the French Revolution. Bones were removed from there and interred in the chateau’s smaller chapel, Saint-Hubert, but there is only presumption that they are Da Vinci’s remains.

Da Vinci commemorations got underway in Amboise, in the Loire valley, on Monday. Da Vinci was born the illegitimate son of a notary, never married and had no direct descendants. He left Italy aged 64 to join the service of King Francis I of France.