

# The first ten years of the Leonardo3 Museum

2023 marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the museum dedicated to Leonardo da Vinci in Piazza della Scala.

From temporary exhibition to de facto museum, the Leonardo3 Museum celebrates with novelties and collaborations, enriching the Milanese and national cultural palimpsest

*Milan, May 9, 2023* – It was March 1, 2013 when the exhibition “Leonardo3 - The World of Leonardo” opened in Milan in Piazza della Scala, at the entrance to the Galleria. The exhibition was conceived as a temporary exhibition, but it has been extended year after year, so much so that it is now considered a *de facto* museum.

Ten years later, the Leonardo3 Museum, which hosts more than 230,000 Italian and foreign visitors every year, continues to evolve and amaze with its collection of Leonardo’s machines, consisting of more than 200 interactive 3D models and working physical reconstructions, many of which have never been seen before.

Leonardo da Vinci represents a national heritage that is part of world culture. And the success of the Leonardo3 Museum lies in the fact that all the contents on display are the result of the work of its own **Research Center**, which has been studying the work of Leonardo da Vinci for 20 years. In this way, interpretations and reconstructions of unpublished machines are created, as well as experiences related to artistic works, which allow the museum to constantly renew itself. All this is done by favoring interactivity and the use of innovative tools.

*“The results of these ten years of activity confirm the value of the Leonardo3 Museum, which has established itself and has certainly contributed to enhancing the city’s cultural offer”,* says **Elena Buscemi, President of the Milan City Council**, who adds: *“Reaching such an important milestone, looking ahead by opening up to collaborations with institutions such as the Politecnico and the Conservatory, innovating its offer and thinking about new projects together with established artists is certainly the right way to go. On the other hand, it can only be for those who have been inspired by the genius of Leonardo da Vinci”.*



Elena Buscemi

The new projects and partnerships presented on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary are significant and will contribute to the cultural and tourist offer of Milan.



Massimiliano Lisa

*“After 10 years, 1.5 million visitors, thousands of school visits and 230,000 tickets expected in 2023, we feel the responsibility of being a de facto museum, one of the most visited in our city. That is why we are working to offer organic and complementary content to that of the Museo di Scienze e Tecnologia (Science and Technology Museum), the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana (Ambrosian Art Gallery), the Last Supper and the Sforza Castle”,* says **Massimiliano Lisa**, director of the Leonardo3 Museum, who adds: *“The goal is for the Leonardo3 Museum, located just a few steps from the statue of Leonardo, to become **part of the city’s cultural heritage**. After many years of working with the formula of a museum/study center that has done everything internally, we have started a series of collaborations that we are announcing today: from that with scholar **Martin Kemp** to those with the Politecnico, the Conservatory, the director **Marco Casini** and the director of photography **Davide Manca**”.*

**Martin Kemp**, Professor Emeritus of Art History at Trinity College, University of Oxford, and **considered the foremost Leonardo scholar**, says: *“The extraordinary success of Leonardo3 over ten years proves that Leonardo da Vinci is still a living presence today, more than 500 years after his death. No other historical figure inspires such a fascination for our modern imagination. A fascination that is particularly evident in his mechanical inventions. Reconstructing his machines requires careful research and imagination, as his manuscripts do not present fully detailed drawings. I look forward to my new role of interacting with Leonardo3 in the historical interpretation of Leonardo’s drawings. We will also have new ideas. We have ten exciting years ahead of us”.*



Luigi Abete

**Luigi Abete**, President of AICC (Association of Cultural and Creative Enterprises), with which Leonardo3 is associated, says: *“The Leonardo3 Museum is an example of an entirely private initiative that, with its own resources and by combining culture, research and innovation, has offered the City of Milan a museum that catches the interest of tourists, experts and lovers of science culture turned into art. Entrepreneurial risk-taking in the cultural sector, if accompanied by a context of flexible rules and a non-obstructive public administration, is a multiplier of well-being for the entire country. The AICC protects and represents these private cultural and creative enterprises. The Association promotes all the actions necessary to create the most favorable conditions for private enterprises to contribute to the economic growth of the cultural sector. We ask institutions for “equal dignity” in public-private collaborations, so that virtuous examples like that of Leonardo3 will be more and more numerous”.*

The Leonardo3 Museum’s collection of 13 working musical instruments, the latest of which is the **Great Continuous Organ**, is unique in the world. In order to bring the instruments to life, a fascinating project with the **“Giuseppe Verdi” Conservatory in Milan** is announced today. Writes **Gabriele Manca**, the director’s delegate for research at the Conservatory: *“What destiny could be more fitting for the instruments imagined and designed by Leonardo da Vinci than to see them involved in a path of experimentation, research and exploration? The sound imagined by Leonardo, and probably never heard before these reconstructions, will be part of a series of new musical productions composed especially for the occasion by students of composition and new technologies at the Milan Conservatory”.*

The Director of the Conservatory, **Massimiliano Baggio**, adds: *“From the very beginning, I have seen the Leonardo3 Museum proposal as a great opportunity for the Milan Conservatory, for our students, in particular for those who study new musical technologies and early music: firstly, to get to know Leonardo’s genius, and secondly, to be protagonists of an event that reinterprets his genius in the contemporary context. For the Conservatory, this is a new step in the development of a network of relationships we have been working on for some time, in order to put our institution back at the heart of Milan’s cultural scene. I can only thank them for seeking us out and making us an active part of the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Leonardo3 Museum: a multifaceted celebration, as multifaceted as Leonardo’s genius”.*



Massimiliano Baggio



The digital restoration of the Last Supper and the reconstruction of the refectory



The Mechanical lion in the central hall of the museum

The changes also involve the museum's halls, for which a **new lighting design** has been designed, signed by the director of photography **Davide Manca**. The goal is now to take visitors on a journey into Leonardo's mind, using light as a narrative voice. Manca approached the space as if he were shooting a movie, re-creating a screenplay of light and shadow, with a reference to the warm tones of the Renaissance, as opposed to the cool tones of the illustrations, drawings and texts.

The **hall devoted to the Last Supper** has been completely renewed to provide an immersive experience that is no longer purely digital, as there was already a VR reconstruction, but also physical. Visitors can now discover the details and colors lost in the original, thanks to the new digital restoration of the painting carried out by the Leonardo3 Research Center, but also enter into the physical reconstruction of the vaults, floor and woodwork (taken from Leonardo's drawings) as they would have appeared in the 1500s. The wall and vault decorations are still in progress, in full view of the public.

Among Leonardo's machines, the most famous project we have evidence of is the **Mechanical Lion**. An automaton that was built to walk in the presence of King Francis I of France. *"He asked Lionardo to do something bizarre, and he made a lion that walked several steps, then opened its chest and showed all full of lilies"* (from the *Lives of Giorgio Vasari*). In 2007, Leonardo3 had already made a reconstruction of this automaton, but it was only conceptual and not functional.

Under the supervision of **Edoardo Zanon**, scientific director of the Leonardo3 Museum, they started from scratch on a completely new design: *"Apart from the drawings of some mechanical joints contained in the Madrid I Codex, we have no other explicit drawings that can be related to this project. Our effort was to reconstruct this incredible working machine, using the technical solutions drawn by Leonardo and respecting Vasari's testimony. In the final part of the project, we contacted the Department of Mechanics at the Politecnico di Milano, which, with the help of software for simulations, was able to give us advice on how to optimize the mechanical elements to arrive at the working machine. All of this was tested empirically by Leonardo"*.



Edoardo Zanon

**A unique display to top the celebrations:** Leonardo da Vinci's Mechanical Lion will take its first steps in front of the eyes of the journalists and invited guests. A tribute to the city of Milan, where Leonardo spent most of his life.

The Leonardo3 Research Center believes in the fundamental role of culture in the process of growth, and therefore promotes activities that bring new generations closer to artistic and cultural heritage. Museums must stimulate the curiosity of each young guest for art, culture and science, also through playful and recreational moments that can engage the whole family. For this reason, we have decided to collaborate with the author and director **Marco Cassini**, who has written and directed a new commercial for the Leonardo3 Museum. A video with a high emotional impact that shows the discovery of the museum through the dreamy eyes of a child.

## Leonardo3 Museum

The **Leonardo3** Research Center has been studying and disseminating the work of Leonardo da Vinci since 2004. In 2013 it launched the exhibition **Leonardo3 - The World of Leonardo**, located in Piazza della Scala in Milan, at the entrance of the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II. The exhibition has become a de facto museum and is **a unique opportunity to discover and learn more about Leonardo's many talents**. Visitors can interact with **over 200 interactive 3D machines and working physical reconstructions**, almost all of which have **never been made before**. The **patronage of the City of Milan** and the **Award of Excellence from the President of the Italian Republic** testify to the **originality and authority** of the **contents** on display.

The analysis of the original manuscripts has led the Leonardo3 team to create **brand new machines**, including the **harpsichord viola**, the **mechanical lion**, the **submarine**, the **rapid-fire crossbow**, the dragon and many others. The exhibition allows visitors to **consult Leonardo's writings in digital format** and to **engage with his inventions** in entirely new and fascinating ways through **interactive and virtual reality stations**. Each year, the content of the exhibition is renewed to keep it interesting for returning visitors.

Among Leonardo's artistic works, the **hall dedicated to the Last Supper** is particularly appreciated by visitors. The **digital restoration** of the mural allows us to discover **details** of the original that are **now lost forever**, and the **reproduction on a wall support** brings the restoration even closer to what the original would have looked like in 1498.

Created and managed by the Leonardo3 Research Center, the exhibition takes place in the historic halls of the Galleria, built in 1865 for King Vittorio Emanuele II. After a painstaking restoration, the rooms reopened their doors to host Leonardo da Vinci.

**The Leonardo3 Research Center has created shows for cultural institutions around the world**. Shows have been presented at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum (Simi Valley, USA); the Expo Congress Center (Antalya, Turkey); the Ontario Science Center (Toronto, Canada); the Franklin Institute (Philadelphia, USA); the Museum of Science and Industry (Chicago, USA); the Museum of Islamic Art (Doha, Qatar); and many others.

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## Info

**Leonardo3 Museum, Piazza della Scala** / entrance to Galleria / Milan  
9:30 am-8 pm on weekdays / 9:30 am-9:00 pm weekends and holidays  
[www.leonardo3.net](http://www.leonardo3.net)

**Patronage of the Municipality of Milan**  
**Award of Excellence from the President of the Italian Republic**

**Tickets:** € 14 (full); € 10 (reduced); € 9 (kids & teens [7-18 y.o.]);  
€ 7 (evening ticket – *from 7:00 pm*); € 6 (school groups); € 1 (children [0-6 years old]).  
*Family Ticket:* adults € 11 (max 2),  
kids & teens (7–14 y.o.) € 7

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