

THROUGH THE EYES OF
LEONARDO
DA VINCI

SELECTED DRAWINGS BY THE
GREAT RENAISSANCE MASTER



WITH ACCOMPANYING TEXT BY BARRINGTON BARBER

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DA VINCI



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WITH ACCOMPANYING TEXT BY BARRINGTON BARBER
AND INTRODUCTIONS BY WILLIAM WRAY



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INTRODUCTION

*W*hat must it be like to look through the eyes of Leonardo, to see things that are beyond our normal way of viewing the world, to connect so fully, so deeply, that nothing escapes the gaze? To start not from a pre-formulated set of assumptions, but to lay nature out before exacting eyes in order to discover what is really there? These were powers that Leonardo possessed, and with his mind engaged and powered by a limitless curiosity, he turned his life into an all-embracing study of anatomy, astronomy, botany, geology, geometry and physics.

Leonardo started life as an artist and craftsman but he was by nature a scientist as much as a painter. Today the definition of science is established, but in Leonardo's day experimental science was virtually unknown and the observation of nature was scorned as an unscholarly activity. Scholarship adhered to the approved classical texts such as those of Aristotle, and empirical observation and experimental methods were yet to develop.

Leonardo's drawing skills created an exact method of recording his observations. Nobody before had observed in the way that he observed, nor recorded findings in such meticulous detail or such beauty:

Now do you not see that the eye embraces the beauty of the whole world?... It counsels and corrects all the arts of mankind... it is the prince of mathematics, and the sciences founded on it are absolutely certain. It has measured the distances and sizes of the stars, it has discovered the elements and their location ...it has given birth to architecture and to perspective and to the divine art of painting.

Leonardo created a new way of looking at nature and a new way of understanding ourselves in relationship to nature. In the process he created a way of thinking that did much to lay the foundations for the modern world, and at the same time he created some of the finest and most profound works of art known to man. He was one of the greatest painters and most versatile geniuses in history, and a key figure in the Renaissance; that great shift in western culture which still illuminates the world today.

Leonardo's notebooks show what the human mind can do and what the human spirit might rise to, given that one possesses patience and