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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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treatiseonpainting.org/intro.html.

For those of us who have spent much of our scholarly lives in cramped archives without air conditioning, the digital archive Leonardo da Vinci and His *Treatise on Painting* is a breath of fresh air. In this digital space, Francesca Fiorani and her team have gathered and meticulously organized a vast compendium of resource materials concerning Leonardo's art theory and its dissemination.

It is well-established that Leonardo always intended to write a treatise on painting but died before completing the project. His student and heir, Francesco Melzi, culled from his master's notebooks all the material that he estimated would have been included in this treatise and compiled the original version of the text known today as the *Treatise on Painting* (*Trattato della pittura*). Melzi completed his manuscript around 1540 (MS Urb. Lat. 1270, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana). There are three further iterations of Leonardo's so-called *Treatise on Painting* that have survived: an abridged version of Melzi's original compilation in manuscript form (c. 1570); a second manuscript of an edited version promoted by Cassiano dal Pozzo in Rome (c. 1634–43); and the first printed version which appeared in Paris c. 1640–51.

As the introduction to the digital project makes clear, what we know today as the *Treatise on Painting* is, in fact, a fragmented and disorganized fabrication. It is a pastiche of what Melzi deemed important and, in its fragmentation, it ultimately belies the nuance and sophistication of Leonardo's art theory as expressed in his original notes. And yet, unlike Leonardo's notebooks, which did not circulate widely until the early nineteenth century, the *Treatise on Painting* was widely known and influential in Renaissance and Baroque Europe. Indeed, artists, scholars, and scientists—including Galileo Galilei, Annibale Carracci, and Nicolas Poussin—assumed it to be an authoritative source. For this reason, both Leonardo's original notes and the *Treatise on Painting* are critical historical documents.

The primary aim of the digital archive Leonardo da Vinci and His *Treatise on Painting* is to gather as many iterations of the *Treatise on Painting* as possible into a single digital space. Visitors to the digital archive will find high-resolution

scans of Melzi's original manuscript, over forty manuscript copies of portions of the *Treatise on Painting* (dating from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century), and three early printed editions of the *Treatise on Painting* (Italian of 1651, French of 1651, and English of 1721). A quick glance at the list of contributing repositories reminds the visitor of how far flung many of these manuscripts and printed texts are and underscores the project's significant contribution to public access to rare original materials (manuscripts, images, and documents).

The site is organized into six sections: "Introduction" (Home); "Libro di Pittura"; "Manuscripts"; "Printed Editions"; "View/Compare"; and "Bibliography." Three of the pages are devoted to the texts and images associated with the *Treatise on Painting*: "Libro di Pittura" contains a high-resolution scan of Melzi's unpublished manuscript compilation of Leonardo's original notes; the "Manuscripts" section contains scans of forty-five manuscript copies of portions of the text of the *Treatise on Painting*; and "Printed Editions" provides an extensive list of the many printed versions of the *Treatise on Painting* and offers a transcription of three influential versions. But these pages are not just repositories of valuable digitized manuscripts and printed editions. For all the manuscript entries, a thorough description of the physical manuscript, a provenance history of the object, and a valuable bibliography are provided. This information adds rich detail to the archival material.

In addition to the texts and images enumerated above, the digital archive also presents an "Introduction" page, which provides an introduction to the archive and makes clear the stakes of the project. Leonardo da Vinci and His *Treatise on Painting* capitalizes on the new representational and interpretative methodologies available via an online archive to provide scholars the ability to efficiently compare multiple texts across different places and at different times using perhaps the most helpful tool on the site: the "Comparative View" research tool. This tool allows the visitor to directly compare different versions of the manuscripts and/or printed editions. It is accessible through the "View/Compare" section, but is more easily utilized on the individual manuscripts and printed editions. For example, one can navigate to a specific page of interest in MS Urb. Lat. 1270 and use the "Compare" feature to compare this digitized page with any other page in the archive. The printed pages are shown side by side in the same window for ease of comparison; this direct comparison allows for detection of variation across the dozens of manuscripts and printed

editions included in the archive, as well as the ability to compare illustrations. Ultimately, the Comparative View tool opens many exciting new avenues for scholarship, particularly in word and image studies.

Learning how to navigate the digital archive initially takes a bit of practice and patience. A good place to start is on the “About the Project” section. Here one can find entries devoted to the project’s methodology, materials, features, research tools, terminology, and a user’s guide to the orientation bar. Visitors to Leonardo da Vinci and His *Treatise on Painting* should take careful note of the terminology employed on the site. The digital archive uses “Text Unit,” “Chapter Sequence,” and “Figure Sequence” numbers to organize the intellectual content and structural order of the manuscripts and printed editions. A Text Unit number is assigned to each chapter of each manuscript or printed edition according to its intellectual content, while a Chapter Sequence number records the order in which a chapter is found in each volume. These numbers are primarily useful for sophisticated visitors to the site who wish to use the Compare feature to evaluate chapters with similar intellectual content. While the use of these categories may elude the casual visitor on a first visit, they are undoubtedly very helpful for Leonardo scholars.

The digital archive Leonardo da Vinci and His *Treatise on Painting* is set to undergo an exciting revamp this year (2022). Fiorani and her team are undertaking yet another Herculean task to completely update the interface of the archive and expand its features, including providing important connections with Leonardo’s original manuscripts and with other related digital projects. One expects that the refresh will take into careful account the most recent book published on Leonardo’s *Treatise on Painting*, the two-volume anthology, *The Fabrication of Leonardo da Vinci’s “Trattato della pittura.”*¹ Through a series of essays, as well as an annotated and translated edition of the 1651 *Trattato della pittura*, this publication provides an accounting of the transformation of Leonardo’s art theory from original notes to the first printed edition of the *Treatise on Painting*. It traces not only Leonardo’s own original ideas, but also how these ideas have been received by generations of readers up to today. One can easily see how together this recent publication and the Leonardo da Vinci and His *Treatise on Painting* project will bring Leonardo’s writings, Melzi’s manuscript compilation, and the reception of both into sharper focus than ever

1. Farago, Bell, and Vecce, *Fabrication*.

before and consequently make Leonardo's remarkable art theory accessible to a broad range of scholars and enthusiasts alike.

Leonardo da Vinci and His *Treatise on Painting* is much more than a repository of the various iterations of an important historical text; it is a massive scholarly project aimed at examining the simultaneously woefully inaccurate and yet also highly influential *Treatise on Painting*. As Fiorani writes on the archive's "Introduction" page, "The art-historical significance of the *Treatise on Painting* cannot be overstated." Fiorani and her team have indeed contributed greatly to our understanding of this important and dynamic text by providing access to visual and verbal materials that are difficult to find, insightful analysis, and valuable comparative functions.

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