ForeWord Reviews

HISTORY

Leonardo's Legacy: How Da Vinci Reimagined the World
Stefan Klein
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"Today we are guided by our knowledge; Leonardo was open to seeing issues with the eyes of a child even in his old age," author Stefan Klein writes in his analysis of Leonardo Da Vinci's perspective. "We divide up our knowledge according to disciplines and demand logic from them; he regarded the world as a single entity and sought similarities between the most dissimilar phenomena. We try to solve problems as systematically as possible; he did so by employing creative combinations. We want answers; he posed questions."

It seems a miracle that any one person could mark with his or her genius fields as diverse as painting, music, science, optics, philosophy, engineering, automation, the principles of flight, human anatomy and physiology, architecture, and prophetic futurism—and even more a miracle when this person was the illegitimate son of a day laborer and had little formal education. Yet Leonardo was possessed of a vast and unquenchable curiosity about the world around him; his way of seeing how things worked (and how they could be made to work even better) and his skill at finding answers to the complex problems of his day make him a model that twenty-first-century problem-solvers would do well to emulate.

Klein reminds readers that Leonardo was not universally talented; although he tackled mathematics for years, he never got the hang of long division. Based on his drawings, it appears that he left a good many of his inventions untested—researchers building from his designs today have certainly found flaws. And he did not stand alone, but helped himself liberally to the established knowledge of his day and the work of his peers. Although a large portion of his work has been dispersed around the world, and a good part has been lost, what remains shows the functioning of a phenomenal mind, and Leonardo continues to fascinate, half a millennium after his death.

Stefan Klein is considered one of the most influential science writers in Europe. Former editor at Der Spiegel, he is the 1998 winner of the Georg von Holtzbrinck Preis (prize) for science journalism. He is the author of The *Science of Happiness* and *The Secret Pulse of Time*. *Leonardo's Legacy*

was originally published in German.

Driven by curiosity, Da Vinci was able to advance to more horizons than anyone before or since. Leonardo, as Klein writes, “has showed us what man is capable of when liberated from the constraints and apparent certainties of the world. This is his true legacy.”

Kristine Morris