

LEONARDO DA VINCI
The Head of Christ in Venice
And the Figure of Thaddeus in the Last Supper

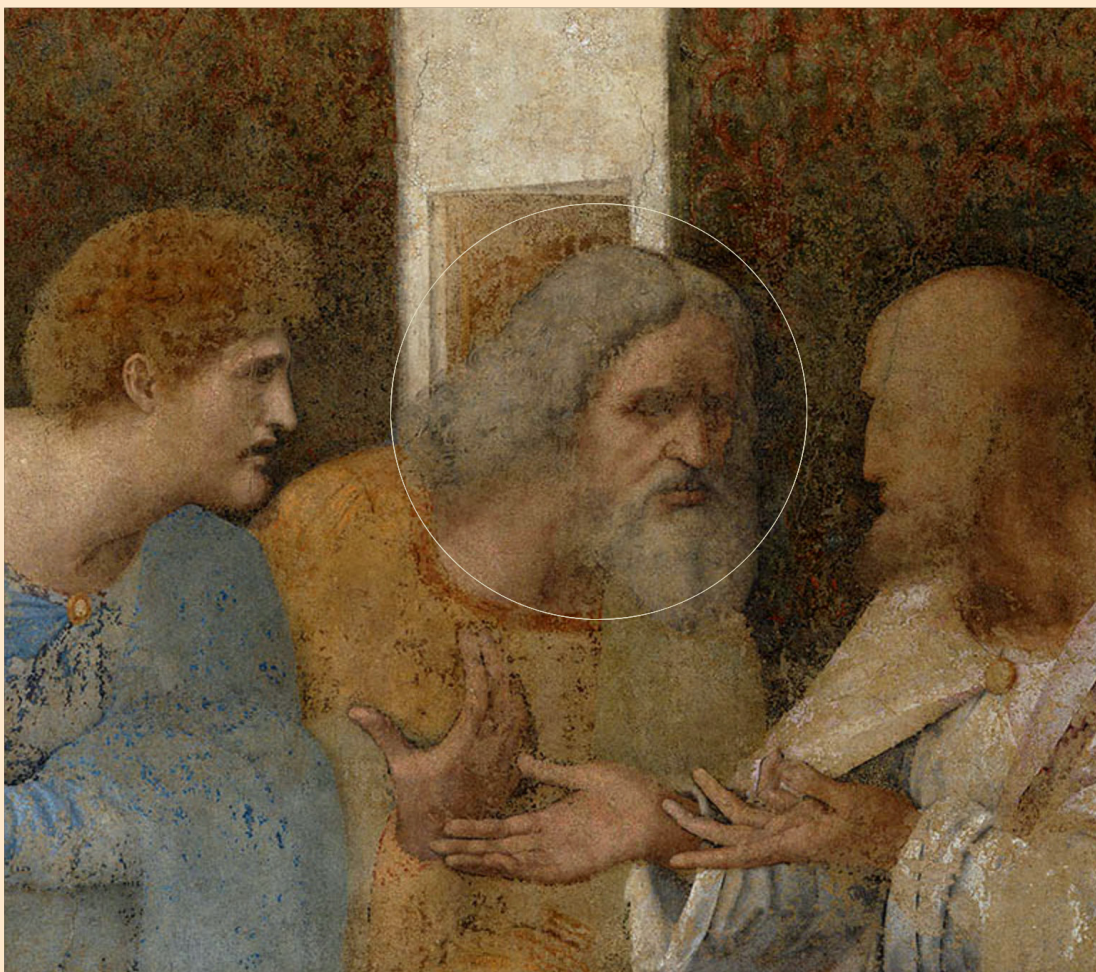


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Presentation of the Study – Access, Navigation and Appendices

Online Access to the Full Study

Website: **leonard-christ.com**

The website *leonard-christ.com* presents the full study dedicated to the *Drawing of the Head of Christ*, housed in the Galleries of the academy of in Venice and attributed to Leonardo da Vinci.

The research is structured around two complementary axes:

- an analysis of the drawing and its influence on Leonardo's disciples.
- a study of the connections between this drawing and the figure of the apostle Thaddeus in *The Last Supper*.

The site is available in three languages (French, English, Italian), and offers in-depth texts, comparative visual analyses, and short explanatory videos.

How to Use This Digital Version

- In the table of contents, click on any chapter title to jump directly to the corresponding section.
- To return to the table of contents, use the button at the bottom of each page.

Note to the reader

To help readers navigate and better understand the study, several visual appendices are provided at the end of the document.

They reproduce key works cited in the text (drawings, paintings, early copies) and serve as visual references for the comparative analysis.

Each appendix is referenced throughout the chapters with a direct mention (e.g., see Appendix 4) to allow for a smooth and enriched reading experience.

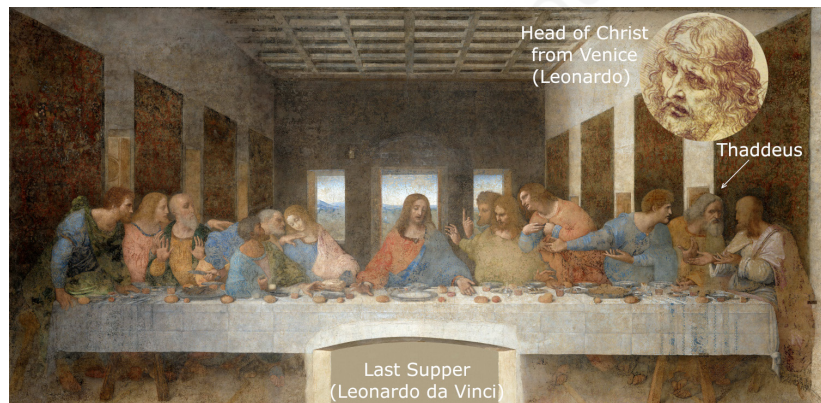
Available Appendices:

- Appendix 1: Head of Christ Drawing (Leonardo da Vinci, Venice)
- Appendix 2: Portrait of Thaddeus in The Last Supper (Giampietrino / Boltraffio)
- Appendix 3: Excerpt from Gazette Drouot – April 2019
- Appendix 4: Christ Carrying the Cross paintings attributed to Giampietrino

1. Foreword

This study is entirely devoted to exploring the connection between the *Drawing of the Head of Christ* held at the Galleries of the academy in Venice (No. 231) and Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper*, more specifically the figure of the apostle Thaddeus. It builds upon earlier research¹ regarding the drawing, particularly concerning its influence on Leonardo's Venetian and Lombard disciples.

**The Last Supper
and the Drawing of Venice**



The starting point of this study is straightforward: among the many hypotheses proposed about the *Venice Drawing*, some suggest a possible link with the *Last Supper*, although this connection has never been thoroughly analysed. This study focuses on the specific link between the *Head of Christ Drawing* and the figure of Thaddeus in the *Last Supper*. Given the current condition of the original painting, our analysis is based on early copies.

Any development unrelated to this topic has been deliberately excluded: only documentary elements directly linked to the *Last Supper* have been considered. The study is organised around two complementary approaches: on the one hand, a reasoned synthesis of available data, drawn from both early literature and recent publications; on the other, a comparative analysis based on concrete examples aimed at highlighting morphological, stylistic, or expressive similarities between the two figures.

With regard to the literature, we provide here a representative selection of about ten major titles, without claiming to be exhaustive:

- Bossi, G. (1810) - *Del Cenacolo di Leonardo da Vinci*
- Clark, K. (1967, 2005) - *Leonardo da Vinci*
- Pedretti, C. (1983) - *Studi per il Cenacolo*
- Marani, P.C. (1992) - *Leonardo & Venice*
- Bambach, C. (2003) - *Leonardo da Vincis Master Draftsman*
- Zöllner, F. (2003) - *Leonardo da Vinci*
- Marani, P.C. (2009) - *Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper*
- Ross King, (2012) - *Leonardo and the Last Supper*
- Isbouts, J.P. (2019) - *A Multidisciplinary Study of the Tongerlo Last Supper and Its Attribution to Leonardo da Vinci's Second Milanese Studio*

This base allows us to address a subject that is often mentioned but rarely developed in depth: the perspective of historians on a possible link between the *Venice Drawing* and Leonardo's *Last Supper*, which will be the focus of the next chapter.

1 : See leonardo-christ.com

2. Historians, the Drawing of the Head of Christ in Venice and the Last Supper

The Venice Drawing and the Last Supper: exploring a possible link

The well-known drawing of the *Head of Christ* housed in the Galleries of the academia in Venice is often referenced in the context of Leonardo da Vinci's preparatory studies for the *Last Supper*. Although no formal connection has ever been established, this association was already suggested in the early 19th century. In 1810, Giuseppe Bossi, who then owned the drawing, published an engraving of it in his book *Del Cenacolo di Leonardo da Vinci*, linking it to the apostle James the Greater. He recognized the same type of head as seen in the Milanese fresco.

More recently, Carlo Pedretti (1983) noted that the attitude of Christ in the drawing recalls that of the apostle Thomas in the *Last Supper*, although without providing further elaboration: "*the attitude in the Drawing recalls that of the apostle Thomas.*"

Pietro C. Marani² compared the *Venice Drawing* to a sheet from the Albertina in Vienna, probably representing Saint Peter, underlining their stylistic and expressive kinship. He saw in it a proximity to the studies carried out for the Santa Maria delle Grazie fresco. According to him, the *Venice Drawing* could be a preparatory study for a more complex composition, contemporary with the design phase of the *Last Supper*. Its estimated date, circa 1490–1495, coincides with the time when Leonardo was developing the mural's composition.

Carmen Bambach (2003)³ also noted that the drawing's dramatic quality and expressive intensity resonate with Leonardo's concerns in the fresco, especially in the way the apostles are grouped in threes: "*Indeed, the dramatic quality of the drawing and its sense of tension seem to reflect similar concerns in the painting*". She emphasized that, apart from the *Last Supper*, Leonardo painted no other Passion scenes, which gives this drawing a unique value. She also observed that Christ, violently pulled by the hair (only the executioner's hand is visible), stares intensely at the viewer despite a three-quarter pose, within a tense composition that evokes the fresco's dynamic groupings.

However, both Marani and Bambach pointed out an important technical difference: the *Venice Drawing* was executed in silverpoint on prepared paper, whereas the known studies for the *Last Supper* were done in black or red chalk. This makes it unlikely that the drawing served directly as a preparatory sketch. It could reflect a parallel exploration of expressions and emotions related to the Passion, developed independently by Leonardo.

Lastly, one final point further links the two works. While the *Last Supper* portrays the moment Jesus shares his final meal with the disciples, the *Drawing* instead captures a scene evocative of Good Friday. These two key moments, consecutive in the Gospel narrative, may have inspired parallel studies by Leonardo, perhaps as part of a broader reflection on human emotion and the representation of sacred drama.

2 : Marani, P.C. (1992) '*Leonardo & Venice*', p. 346.

3 : Bambach, C. (2003), *Leonardo Master Draftsman*, p. 423s (Texte rédigé par Pietro C. Marani).

3. Presentation of the Drawing of the Head of Christ in Venice

Key Information – The Venice Drawing

Title: Head of Christ and Hand Grasping the Hair

Artist: Leonardo da Vinci

Location: Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice

Technique: Silverpoint on prepared paper

Dimensions: 116 × 91 mm

Date: circa 1490–1495, during the conception of the Last Supper

Subject: Christ, crowned with thorns, his head pulled by the hair

Stylistic Features:

- Iconic example of the *ritratto di spalla*
- Expressive gaze turned toward the viewer
- Dramatic tension

Provenance: Collection of Giuseppe Bossi (ca. 1822)



Figure 01 : Head of Christ in Venice (Leonardo da Vinci)

Executed in silverpoint on prepared paper, the drawing portrays Christ in a three-quarter view, his head pulled to the left by a hand entering the scene. This dramatic gesture clearly evokes the Carrying of the Cross, following the Flagellation, as indicated by the visible crown of thorns.

Its dating remains debated, but most scholars agree on a range between 1490 (or possibly 1488) and 1495, precisely the period during which Leonardo was designing the *Last Supper*. This chronological proximity suggests a shared research context focused on Passion themes, though it does not allow us to conclude that the drawing served as a direct preparatory work for a painting.

The drawing can be interpreted either as a preparatory study for a broader project or as a fully developed independent work.

The ‘*ritratto di spalla*’⁴, a technique developed by Leonardo at the end of the 15th century, is perfectly illustrated here: the rotation of the head over a three-quarter-turned torso creates a dynamic tension. This type of composition marks a move away from the static portrait and embodies what Leonardo called the “motions of the mind”⁵.

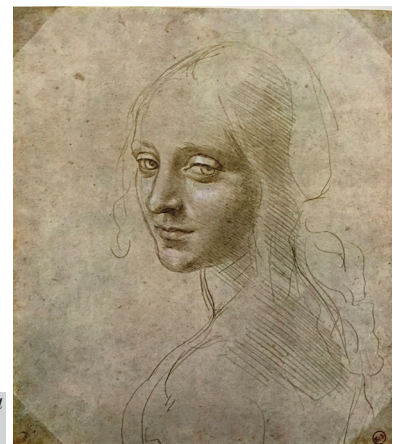


Figure 02 : Leonardo - Testa di Fanciulla (Turin)

For an in-depth analysis of the drawing’s influence on Leonardo’s disciples, see the full study: *Leonardo da Vinci and Christ Carrying the Cross* (leonardo-christ.com).

4 : ‘Ritratto di spalla’ : Italian term for a portrait showing the sitter looking back over the shoulder.

5 : Hennessy, J.P. (1979), *The Portrait in the Renaissance*, p. 101: “The motions of the mind - The change that overtakes the profile portrait in the last decade of the fifteenth century reflects a change of a more general kind, the invention of the autonomous portrait. It was created by Leonardo, and it sprang from the belief that the portrait should portray what is described in Leonardo’s Notebooks as ‘the motions of the mind’”.

4. Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper

The Last Supper, Santa Maria delle Grazie (Milan)

Date: circa 1495–1498

Dimensions: 460 cm × 880 cm

Technique: mural painting – tempera on gesso

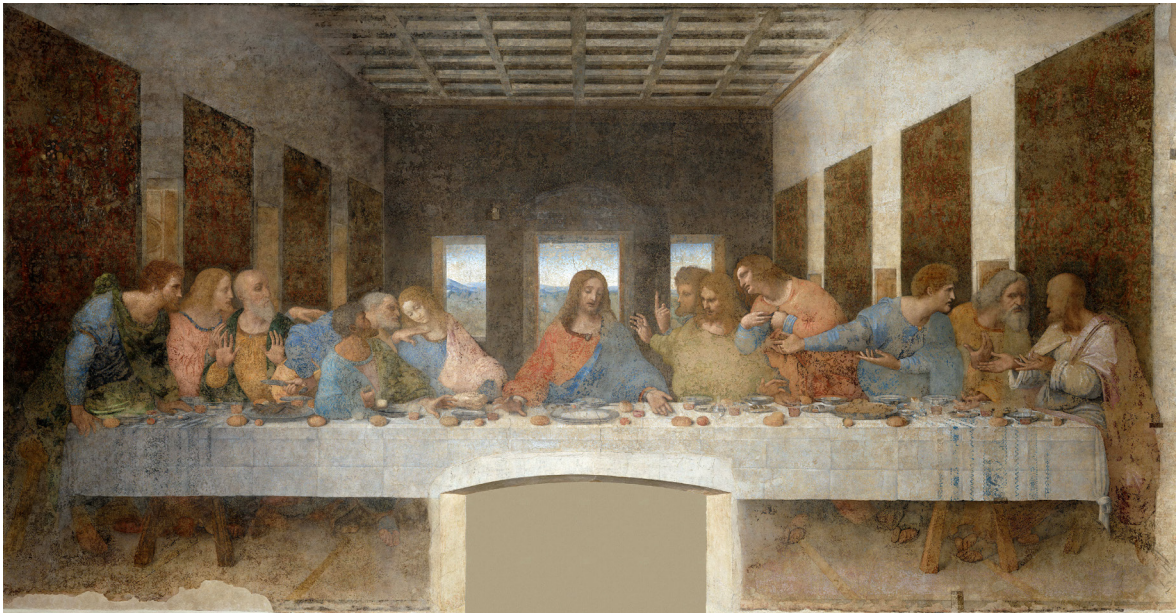


Figure 03 : The Last Supper (Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan)

Painted between 1495 and 1498 for the refectory of the Dominican convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper* is one of the most renowned and thoroughly analyzed works of the Renaissance. It depicts the dramatic moment when Christ declares to his disciples, “*Truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.*”. Leonardo breaks with iconographic tradition by offering a unified scene animated by the collective reaction of the apostles to these words. The figures are arranged in four dynamic groups, framing the calm and symmetrical central figure of Christ, in a composition of unparalleled clarity and expressiveness.

But this masterful work is also among the most fragile. Due to Leonardo's experimental technique painting on a dry surface rather than using true fresco method, the work began to deteriorate shortly after its completion. As early as 1517, Antonio de Beatis⁶ reported signs of damage, and by 1642, Francesco Scanelli⁷ noted that only traces of the figures remained. Over five centuries, the *Last Supper* has undergone multiple restorations, some quite invasive. According to specialists, notably Kenneth Clark, what we see today is largely the result of careful restoration work based on surviving elements and early copies. The restoration completed in 1999 made it possible to preserve the remaining original elements that are still visible. During this intervention, several early copies, especially those from the early 16th century, proved invaluable⁸ in guiding the restorers' choices and compensating for the most deteriorated sections.

Under such conditions, it is not possible to make a direct comparison between the current fresco

6 : Clark, K. (1967), *Leonardo de Vinci*, p.190s (Livre de Poche)

7 : Scanelli, F. (1657), *Microcosmo della Pittura*

8 : “These include the versions by Giampietrino held at the Royal Academy of Arts (London) and at the Abbey of Tongerlo (Belgium) – See in this regard the 2005 study by Laure Fagnart (University of Liège, Belgium): ‘*The copy of Leonardo da Vinci's ‘Last Supper’ preserved at the Abbey of Tongerlo*’.”

and the *Drawing of the Head of Christ* held in the Accademia of Venice. The stylistic comparison proposed in this study is therefore based on early copies of the *Last Supper*, produced shortly after the mural's completion, when it was still visible in its original state. These faithful copies will be analysed in the next section.

Leonardo's preparatory documentation, though fragmentary, confirms the richness of the design phase. Notes found in the Codex Forster⁹ reveal that he carefully envisioned both emotional and physical reactions of the apostles to the announcement of betrayal. Some general compositional sketches have been identified, such as a drawing held in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle (inv. RCIN 912542). Individual head studies have also survived, including a sheet from the Galleries of the academia in Venice (inv. 254) and several drawings in the Royal Collection depicting Judas, James the Greater, Bartholomew, and Philip. These rare documents testify to a long process of preparation, in which Leonardo alternated between expressive studies and overall composition planning.



Figure 04 : Studies for the Last Supper, Leonardo da Vinci, Accademia Gallery, Venice - inv. 254)

Finally, a remark by Eugène Müntz¹⁰ deserves mention: in the fresco, only Saint John and Christ are shown frontally, while eight apostles are depicted in profile and three in **three-quarter view**. This detail is crucial to our study. Since the *Venice Drawing depicts a three-quarter head*, only a few figures in the fresco can be compared to it. The figure of Thaddeus, placed at the far right of the composition, is one of the rare ones to meet this criterion, thus justifying the comparative examination proposed further on.

9 : Codex Forster II, Folios 62v et 63r.

10 : Müntz, Eugène (1899), *Léonard de Vinci, L'artiste, le penseur, le Savant*, p.180s.

5. The most faithful early copies of the Last Supper

Key early copies of the Last Supper

Among the many known copies of the Last Supper, only three stand out due to their early date, fidelity to the original, and historical importance:

• The Last Supper by Marco d'Oggiono – Château d'Écouen (France)

- **Exhibited at:** Musée national de la Renaissance (on deposit from the Louvre)
- **Date:** between 1506 and 1509
- **Dimensions:** 206 cm × 575 cm
- **Technique:** oil on canvas



Figure 05 : The Last Supper - Marco d'Oggiono - Château d'Écouen (France)

Commissioned in 1506 by Gabriel Gouffier, Dean of the Chapter of Sens Cathedral, this is one of the earliest known copies. It is now held at the Château d'Écouen (France). This version is smaller than the original (about one-third narrower in width). Although smaller in size than Giampietrino's version, it is notable for its fidelity to the original composition and richness of detail, especially on the table.

• The Last Supper by Giampietrino/Boltraffio – Royal Academy of Arts, London

- **Date:** circa 1515–1520
- **Dimensions:** 302 cm × 785 cm
- **Technique:** oil on canvas



Figure 06 : The Last Supper - Giampietrino - Royal Academy of Arts (London)

This full-scale copy is the most detailed and complete known version of the *Last Supper*. It served as a major reference during the restoration of the original fresco between 1978 and 1998. It preserves elements that are now missing from Leonardo's work, such as Christ's feet, transparent glass decanters on the table, and the floral motifs on the wall tapestries.

• **The Last Supper from the Abbey of Tongerlo (Belgium) – A Work from Leonardo's Workshop?**

- **Date:** circa 1507–1509 / 1520
- **Dimensions:** 418 cm × 794 cm
- **Technique:** oil on canvas

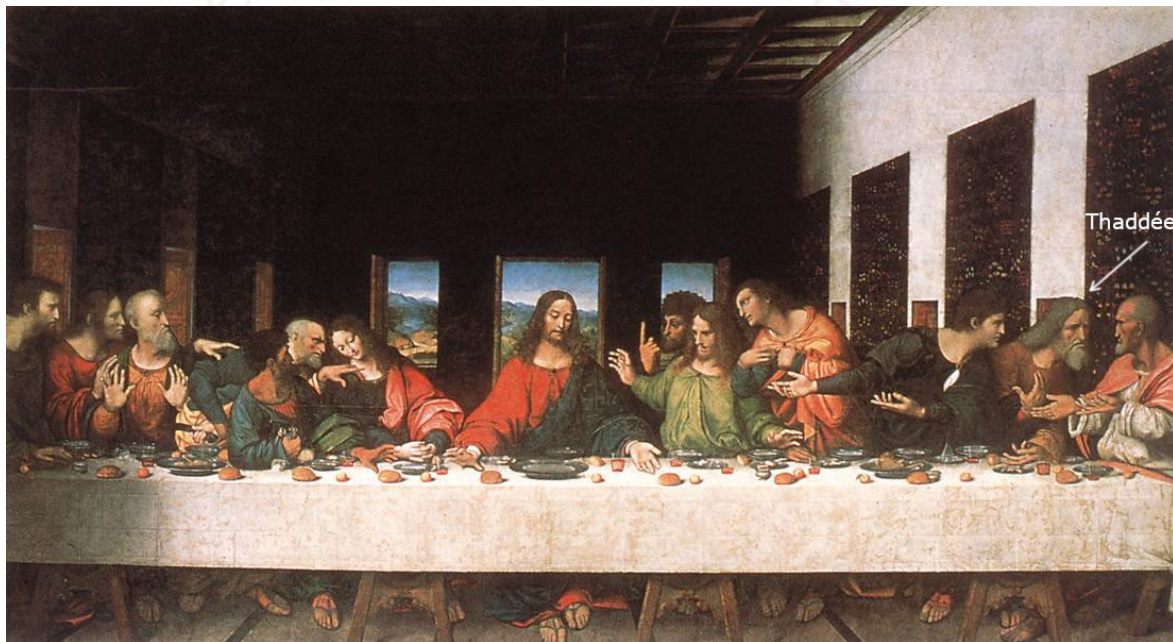


Figure 07 : The Last Supper - Leonardo da Vinci's workshop - Abbey of Tongerlo (Belgium)

This version is preserved at the Abbey of Tongerlo¹¹. Recent studies¹² suggest that it may have been created in Leonardo's workshop, with the participation of his pupils (Giampietrino, Solario, Oggiono), and could even contain interventions by the master himself. These elements suggest that the Tongerlo copy is faithful to the original and nearly identical in dimensions¹³.

These copies will serve as the basis for the comparative analysis of the figure of Thaddeus, due to the extensive deterioration of the original fresco over time.

11 : A 2005 study by Laure Fagnart of the University of Liège (Belgium) concluded that, *in the current state of knowledge, the attribution of the copy held at the Abbey of Tongerlo remains unresolved. However, it may be considered that the Premonstratensian canvas was painted around 1520, by one of the Leonardeschi...*

Fagnart Laure. The copy of Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper* preserved at Tongerlo Abbey. In: Bulletin de la Classe des Beaux-Arts, tome 16, n°7-12, 2005. pp. 193-210;
doi : <https://doi.org/10.3406/barb.2005.20913>;
https://www.persee.fr/doc/barb_0378-0716_2005_num_16_7_20913;

12 : Conservation Science in Cultural Heritage (2020), *A Multidisciplinary Study of the Tongerlo Last Supper and its Attribution to Leonardo Da Vinci's Second Milanese Studio*, J. P. Isbouts et Christopher H. Brown.

13 : "Originally, the *Last Supper* preserved at the Abbey of Tongerlo had dimensions equivalent to those of the original *Cenacolo*, measuring approximately 8.80 meters in length."

6. The Depiction of Thaddeus in the Last Supper

The apostle Thaddeus, also known as Jude, Judas Thaddeus, or Lebbaeus, is a New Testament figure whose identity varies across Christian traditions. His name is mentioned in the Synoptic¹⁴ Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, and only once in the Gospel of John where he is clearly distinguished from Judas Iscariot.

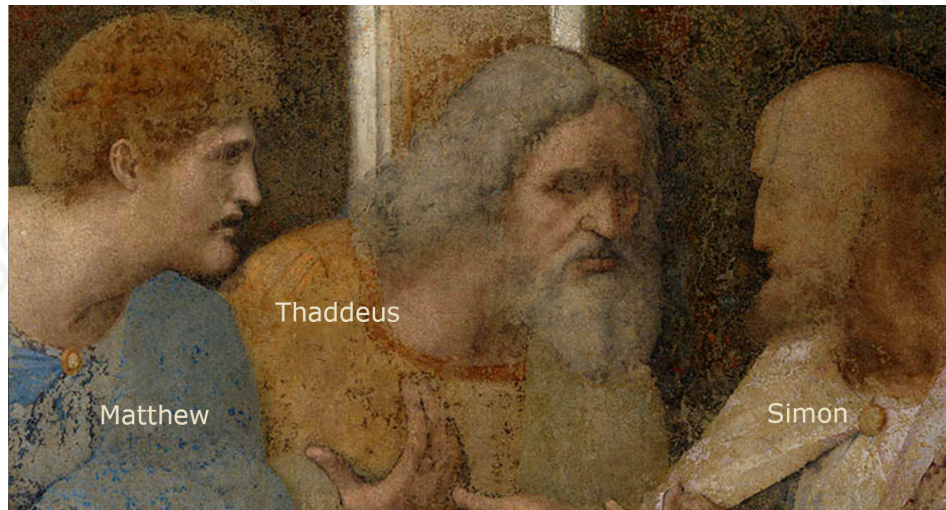


Figure 08 : *The Last Supper* (Leonardo) - Left side of Christ, group of three apostles

In the *Last Supper*, he is positioned at Christ's far left (to the viewer's right), forming a group with Matthew and Simon. Although none of the three adopts theatrical or exaggerated gestures, their interaction produces a clear sense of tension when the betrayal is announced. Matthew, seen in profile, turns sharply toward Simon, while Thaddeus, in a three-quarter view, also turns toward him.

Thaddeus's expression is visibly emotional: furrowed brows, pronounced forehead wrinkles, and a fixed, concentrated gaze suggest a struggle to understand. His right hand is raised vertically, with the thumb extended, probably a sign of confusion. In contrast, his left hand rests flat on the table, palm up, turned toward Simon.

In short, Thaddeus's portrayal in the *Last Supper* exemplifies Leonardo's ability to capture the complexity of human emotions, highlighting the unique personality of each apostle at a moment of dramatic tension.

After a detailed observation of the figure of Thaddeus in *The Last Supper*, it becomes necessary to determine which version should be used as a reliable basis for a rigorous comparative study with the *Head of Christ Drawing from Venice*.

Given the severely deteriorated state of the original fresco, we must turn to early copies. The first step is therefore to identify which of these copies can serve as a trustworthy reference.

This is the purpose of the following chapter, which explains the method used to identify the most reliable portrait of Thaddeus from among the main known versions of *The Last Supper*.

14 : The Synoptic Gospels are the Gospel according to Matthew, the Gospel according to Mark, and the Gospel according to Luke.

7. Which Thaddeus portrait to use for comparison?



7.1. A two-step approach

Before undertaking a direct comparison between the figure of Thaddeus and the *Drawing of the Head of Christ*, it is necessary to determine which copy of *The Last Supper*, the most reliable one, should be selected as the reference base. Indeed, the significantly damaged condition of the original fresco makes it impossible to conduct a reliable analysis based on that alone.

The methodology adopted therefore follows a two-phase protocol:

- Phase 1: Identify, among the principal early copies of *The Last Supper*, the version that will be used for the comparison (see section 7.2 and following sections).
- Phase 2: Use the portrait of Thaddeus from the selected version for a detailed comparison with the *Venice Drawing*, using digital superimpositions (see Chapter 8).

7.2. A Common reference point and a rigorous protocol

In this first phase, each version of Thaddeus's portrait was outlined digitally (using GIMP¹⁵ software), following the essential contours of the face and its constituent elements (hair, brows, nose, lips, beard).

To ensure comparability:

- A scaling segment (segment A) was defined: connecting the base of the lower lip to the top of the skull.
- A common anchor point (point B) was fixed at the intersection between the right edge of the nasal wing and the nasolabial fold.
- The figure below illustrates the four representations used in this phase; the two white parallel lines show that the portraits were all resized to match the same scale.



Figure 10 : Portrait of Thaddeus resized to the same scale

¹⁵ : Image editing software.

7.3. Scaled superposition at point B: The Last Supper and copy tracings

These three figures show a comparison between the portrait of Thaddeus in Leonardo's original (background image) and the tracings from the copies by Marco d'Oggiono (Écouen, **in yellow**), Giampietrino (Royal Ac. of Arts, London, **in red**), and the Abbey of Tongerlo (Belgium, **in green**). All overlays were scaled equally and aligned at point B.



Figure 11 : Overlay: background – The Last Supper / M. d'Oggiono's outlines in yellow

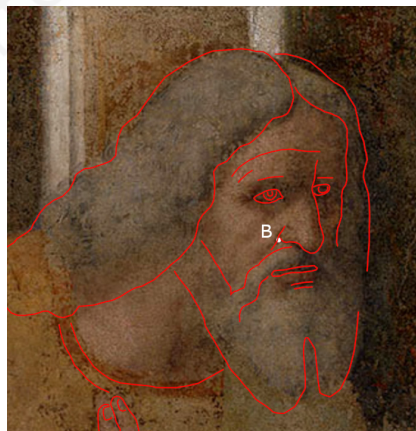


Figure 12 : Overlay: background – The Last Supper / Giampietrino's outlines in red

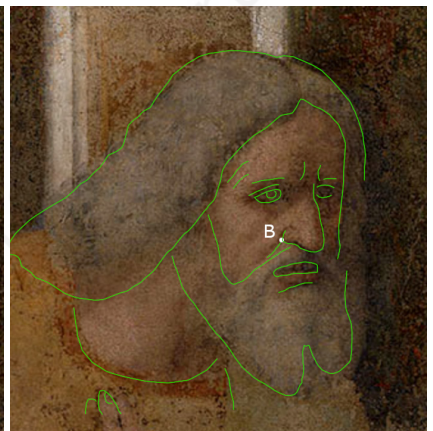


Figure 13 : Overlay: background – The Last Supper / Abbey of Tongerlo's outlines in green

To refine the comparison, the following figures also include in blue the contours taken from the original *Last Supper*.



Figure 14 : Overlay: Last Supper in blue / M. d'Oggiono in yellow



Figure 15 : Overlay: Last Supper in blue / Giampietrino in red



Figure 16 : Overlay: Last Supper in blue / Tongerlo in green

7.4. General visual observations

Case of the Écouen version

The overlay of the tracing from Marco d'Oggiono's copy (Château d'Écouen, **in yellow**) on the original portrait (**in blue**) of Thaddeus reveals a notable correspondence in facial features: the eyes, nose¹⁶, and mouth are positioned identically to those in Leonardo's fresco, attesting to fidelity to the initial composition.

Figure 17 : Overlay of outlines – Original Last Supper / Écouen copy



¹⁶ : However, a notable variation can be observed in the inclination of the nose: the angle of the nasal bridge relative to the vertical is approximately 20° in the Écouen copy, compared to 11° in the original.

However, there is a noticeable widening of the overall outline of the head:

- The hair appears fuller on the sides.
- The neck appears broader.
- The skull slightly flatter or more elongated horizontally.

These differences likely result from scaling down the original model¹⁷: the Ecouen version is approximately two-thirds the width of the fresco.

Giampietrino and Tongerlo: Two Sister Copies

When the tracing of the London version by Giampietrino is superimposed on the original portrait of Thaddeus, a striking similarity in facial structure becomes apparent. The eyes, nose, and mouth are positioned almost identically, and the proportions of both the skull and the beard are very close to those of the original. Giampietrino's version is therefore faithful and reliable enough to serve as a basis for comparison with the *Venice Drawing*.

Superimposition of the London and Tongerlo versions

The superimposition of the tracings from Giampietrino (in red) and the Tongerlo copy (in green) also shows that they are nearly identical, with only a few minor differences, particularly in the hair and hands. This strong resemblance supports the hypothesis put forward by Laure Fagnart (2005)¹⁸, according to which the Tongerlo version may have been produced using tracings or templates taken directly from Giampietrino's copy.

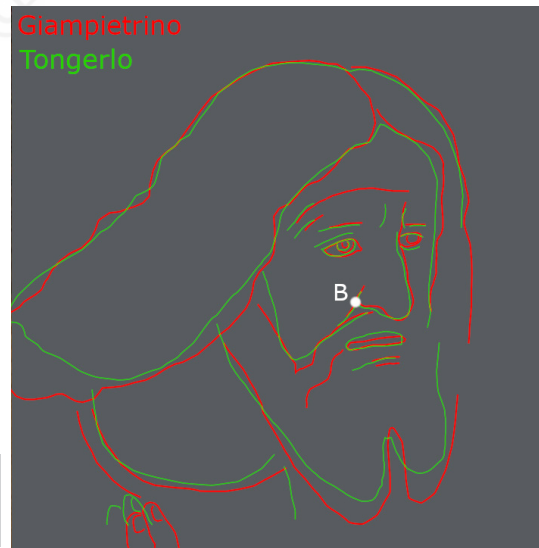


Figure 18 : Overlay of outlines
– Giampietrino and Tongerlo
Abbey versions

In summary, to compare the face of Thaddeus with the *Drawing of the Head of Christ in Venice*, **Giampietrino's copy will be used as the primary reference**. It offers four major advantages:

- It was used during the restoration of the *Last Supper* at the end of the 20th century.
- It provides a high-quality image, unlike the version from the Abbey of Tongerlo¹⁹.
- It displays a strong resemblance to the original portrait.
- And it is widely recognized by specialists in the study of the *Last Supper's* history.

That said, the versions from the Château d'Écouen and from Tongerlo are not excluded: they may be consulted at certain points, particularly for their specific aspects of the portrait or the overall composition.

17 : These differences are likely due to the reduction of the original model, which may have affected the accuracy of the transfer relative to the original.

18 : The copy of Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper* preserved at the Abbey of Tongerlo (2005), conclusion: "However, it can be considered that the Premonstratensian canvas was produced around 1520 by one of the Leonardeschi, **either based on the copy by Giampietrino held at the Royal Academy of Arts in London, or by reusing the cartoons or pouncing patterns that Leonardo's pupil had employed around 1515 to execute the London version.**"

19 : Unfortunately, we were unable to obtain a usable image for a detailed comparison.

8. Comparative study: Thaddeus's Head and the Drawing of the Head of Christ in Venice

Following the previous analysis, Giampietrino's copy of the *Last Supper* was selected as the primary reference for comparing the head of Thaddeus with that of Christ in Leonardo da Vinci's *Venice Drawing*. The analysis, based on the superimposition of main lines and morphological reference points, focuses exclusively on the head in order to test the hypothesis that both figures derive from a common model.



Figure 19 : Thaddeus (The Last Supper - Giampietrino)

Figure 20 : Venice Drawing (Leonardo)



LEONARD DE VINCI

8.1. Method and Scope of the Comparison

The comparison is restricted to the head (area above the neck), using an overlay of the main lines from the *Venice Drawing* and Thaddeus's portrait in mirror orientation (reversed). This method aims to evaluate the hypothesis of a direct or indirect formal connection between the two figures.

8.2. Morphological analysis

The outlines of the fundamental structures from the *Drawing of the Head of Christ*²⁰ were superimposed onto the face of Thaddeus in Giampietrino's copy, previously reversed to match the orientation of the *Venice Drawing*. In addition, a precise mapping of **eighteen homologous morphological points** was carried out on both figures, in order to systematically validate the observed correspondences.

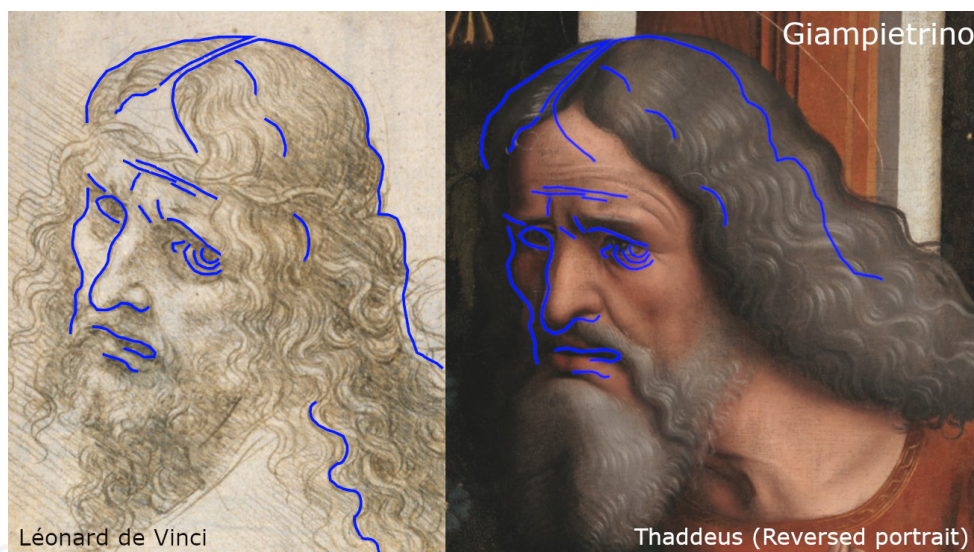


Figure 21 : Venice Drawing overlay on Thaddeus (Giampietrino)

²⁰ : A reproduction of the *Head of Christ Drawing* from Venice is included in Appendix 1.

8.3 Summary of the 18 corresponding morphological points

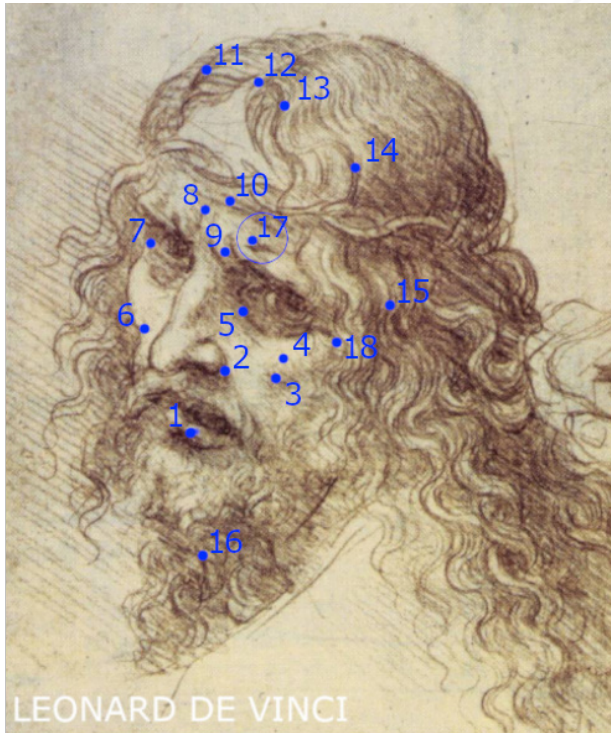


Figure 22 : Drawing - Key morphological points

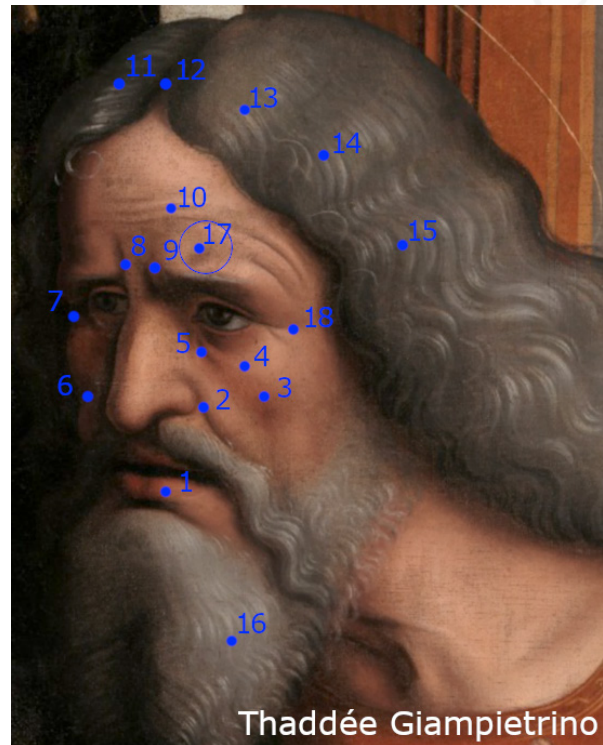


Figure 23 : Thaddeus - Key morphological points

The table below forms the framework for the morphological analysis that follows, focusing on the anatomical areas of the face: skull shape, facial features, and hair.

N°	Morphological points	Comparative observation
1	Lower lip, slightly open mouth	Same volume and lip tension, identical central shadow.
2	Left edge of nasal wing / nasolabial fold	Clear correspondence in structure and surface definition.
3	Shadow under the cheekbone	Identical cast shadow, with similar light orientation.
4	Prominent cheekbone	Same prominence.
5	Wrinkle under the left eye	Similar curve, indicating stress or concentration.
6	Hollow cheek (right profile)	Slightly less depth in Giampietrino, but same position.
7	Outer corner of the right eye	Deep hollow at the outer orbital rim, accurately rendered.
8	Left glabellar wrinkle	Furrowed curve visible in both cases.
9	Right glabellar wrinkle	Symmetrical pair of the previous, identically reproduced.
10	Forehead tension lines	Three continuous horizontal wrinkles.
11	Hair fold (left temple)	Similar spiral dynamic.
12	Central hair part	Same central separation.
13	Upper left hair fold	Equivalent hair volume.
14	Central right hair fold	Orientation and mass preserved.
15	Outer right lock	Hair falling symmetrically.
16	Beard growth line	Forked beard with identical implantation.
17	Forehead hollow (above left eyelid)	Rare expressive feature, faithfully reproduced.
18	Wrinkle at corner of left eye	Present in both cases, identically.

8.4 Morphological Observations Summary

The previous table forms the foundation for the morphological analysis that follows, focusing on three anatomical areas of the face: skull shape, facial features, and hair.

a. General shape of the skull

The heads of Christ in the drawing and Thaddeus in the painting display a very similar overall shape: a wide, domed forehead, and a gentle line that gradually recedes toward the back of the skull. The hairline is also identical, with a clearly defined central part.

The hair volume follows identical undulations, on the top of the head (point 13), and especially on the sides, notably the left (point 14). These curves are not merely decorative: they reflect the same approach to constructing the head in three-dimensional space, suggesting a shared model. This type of detail, rarely invented twice, clearly indicates transmission.

b. Facial features

On closer inspection, the similarities become striking. The nose has the same slightly aquiline shape. The nasolabial fold (2) and the cheekbone (4) on the left side of the face are well defined. The slightly open mouth shows the same tension in the lower lip (point 1), and both faces feature a dark area between the lips.

In both portraits, the eyes are depicted with remarkable precision. Beneath the left eye, a small wrinkle (point 5) and a slight hollow at the outer orbital edge (point 7) are perfectly matched. Between the eyebrows, the two vertical frown lines (points 8 and 9) indicate a furrowed brow, a rare expression, but one faithfully reproduced here.

The most distinctive feature is the hollow above the left eyebrow (point 17), in the upper part of the forehead. This pronounced relief, visible in the *Venice Drawing*, is faithfully reproduced in Giampietrino's portrait of Thaddeus, **as well as in the copies by d'Oggiono and Tongerlo**. Its shape and localized shadow make it a remarkable expressive detail, difficult to explain except through the use of a shared model.

Two vertical frown lines (points 8 and 9) between the eyebrows reinforce the expression of tension. Their position, symmetry, and depth convey the same expression of troubled concentration, a poignant expression traditionally associated with Christ's Passion.

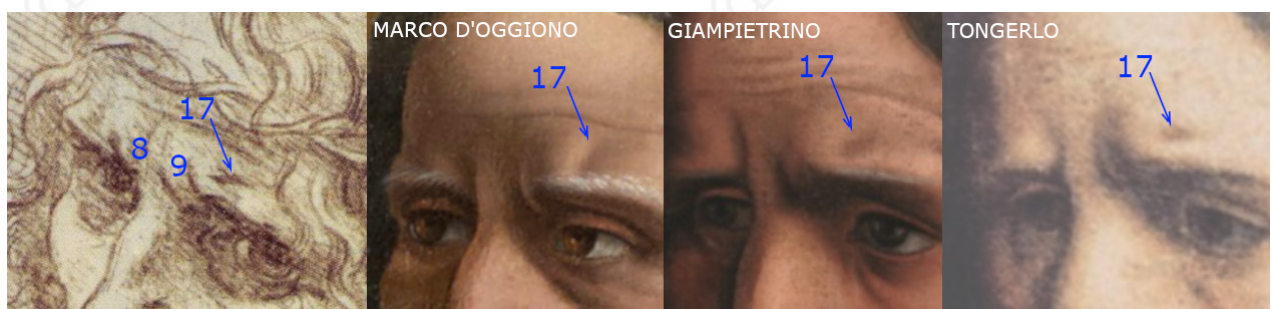


Figure 24 : Depression of the left eyelid (point 17) and vertical lines between the brows (points 8 and 9)

c. Hair and beard

Hair plays an important role in the resemblance. Both figures feature long, soft, wavy locks, organized around a central part (point 12). Some strands fall toward the temples and form very distinctive spirals (point 11). Three major hair folds (points 13 to 15) can be traced almost identically in both figures.

The same observation applies to the two-pointed beard (16), whose outline follows the drawing exactly.

8.5. Thaddeus, a subtle mirror of Christ

Thaddeus's face in *The Last Supper* stands out for its unusually intense expression among the apostles. Tense features, downcast gaze, slightly open mouth, these signs of inner suffering recall those in the *Head of Christ Drawing*, which Leonardo may have reused. According to Frank Zöllner²¹, Leonardo did not always invent entirely new faces during execution, often relying on existing models.

Conclusion

The comparison between the *Head of Christ Drawing* and the face of Thaddeus in *The Last Supper*, particularly in Giampietrino's version, **reveals morphological and expressive similarities too precise to be coincidental**. All evidence suggests that Leonardo reused, for Thaddeus, the head originally conceived for Christ in the *Venice Drawing*.

This connection invites a reassessment of Thaddeus's role: by reflecting Christ's sorrow, he silently echoes and amplifies the central drama unfolding around Christ, an indication of how much importance Leonardo placed on expression, even in secondary figures.

21 : Zöllner, F. (2003, 2011) '*Leonardo da Vinci, The complete Paintings*', p.134, Taschen : '*For the Last Supper, Leonardo therefore did not use entirely new figure types, at least at the design stage.*'

9. From one face to another: Adam and Thaddeus

After establishing the close connection between the *Head of Christ in Venice* and the figure of Thaddeus in the *Last Supper*, it is interesting to observe how this same facial type may have circulated within Leonardo's workshop and among his followers. Certain contemporary works bear particularly striking witness to this continuity.

The painting *Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden*, attributed to Giampietrino, vividly illustrates this phenomenon. In this regard, it is worth noting the existence of a cartoon by Leonardo—now lost—depicting Adam and Eve in a meadow “strewn with an infinite number of flowers,” as mentioned by both Vasari and the Anonimo Gaddiano, and cited by Kenneth Clark in his 1939 work *Leonardo da Vinci*²². This cartoon of *Adam and Eve* could thus have served as a visual reference for other artists in his circle, such as Giampietrino.

The analysis of Adam's head reveals a structure very similar to that of Giampietrino's *Christ Carrying the Cross*²³. These works themselves are derived^{24,25} from the *Drawing of the Head of Christ in Venice*. The superimposition of contours shows a precise correspondence in facial structure, hair, and several anatomical details.



Figure 27 : Giampietrino's *Christ Carrying the Cross* Budapest (Head of Christ)



Figure 25 : Leonard, *Head of Christ Drawing* (Gallerie Accademia di Venezia)



Figure 26 : *Adam and Eve* (Giampietrino)

22 : Kenneth Clark (1939), *Leonardo da Vinci*, Cambridge University Press, p. 253 (Livres de Poche): “*Vasari and the Anonimo Gaddiano both mention a cartoon representing Adam and Eve in a meadow strewn with an infinite number of flowers.*”

23 : See **Appendix 4** for images of *Christ Carrying the Cross*, all based on a single model, including those held at the National Gallery in London, the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest, and the Galleria Sabauda in Turin.

24 : The National Gallery of London : ‘*A silver-point study of ‘Christ Carrying his Cross’ by Leonardo now in Venice is clearly the compositional source of the National Gallery Giampietrino.*’ (Keith, L. Roy, A. ‘*Giampietrino, Boltraffio, and the Influence of Leonardo.*’ Nat. Gallery Technical Bulletin Vol. 17, pp 4–19.)

25 : Pietro C. Marani: excerpt from Pietro Marani’s 1998 entry (Catalogo Generale dei Beni Culturali, 08.24 – Italy) concerning the version held at the Galleria Sabauda in Turin: “*The work is still today considered an autograph by Giampietrino {...} following the model created by Leonardo, now visible in the drawing preserved at the Gallerie dell’Accademia in Venice, which probably led to a highly successful (now lost) painting by the master...*”.

A detailed comparison shows that in creating Adam's head, Giampietrino likely mirrored the original model, slightly adjusting orientation and certain anatomical elements. This process reflects a common Renaissance practice: adapting and reusing existing models for new compositions.

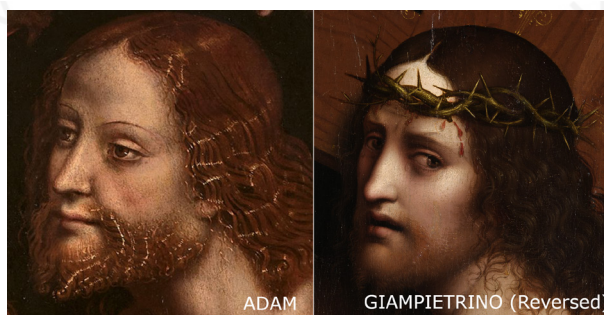


Figure 28 : Adam and Giampietrino's Christ (reversed), Budapest version

The red lines from the reversed Budapest version, when superimposed onto the figure of Thaddeus, reveal an almost perfect morphological match.

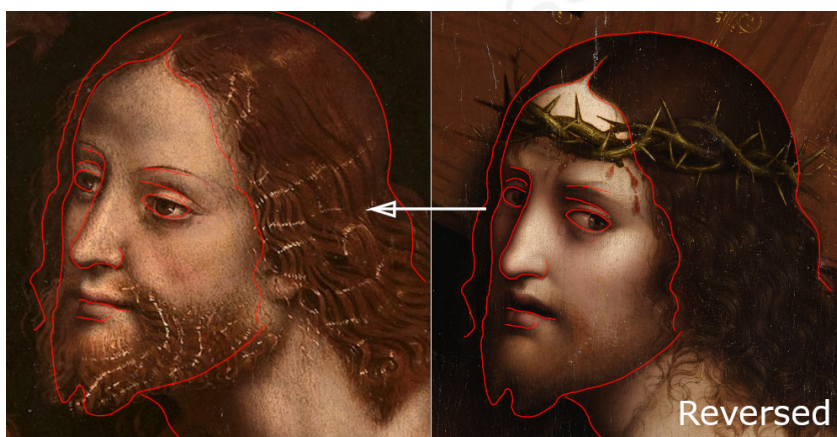


Figure 29 : Superimposition of Giampietrino's outlines over Adam

An article published in Gazette Drouot in April 2019 further substantiates the visual lineage established in this study. It notes that the male model used for Adam in this painting can be found in the *Last Supper*, supporting the hypothesis of a broader diffusion of the facial type created by Leonardo through his disciples and followers.

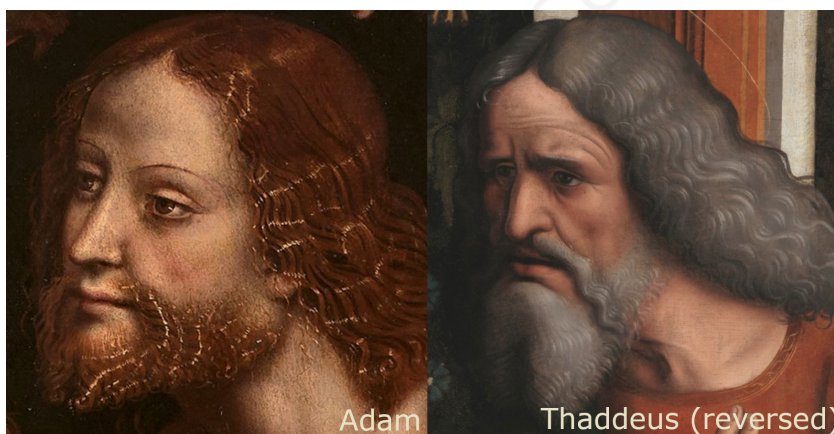


Figure 30 : Comparison: Adam and reversed Thaddeus

The *Drawing of the Head of Christ in Venice* likely inspired the face of Thaddeus in *The Last Supper*. Beyond this, it played an important role in Leonardo's workshop, serving as a model for several figures, notably in the work of Giampietrino²⁶. The similarities between Adam, the *Christs Carrying the Cross*, and Thaddeus reveal a stylistic continuity inspired by Leonardo, while also incorporating variations specific to his followers.

26 : See S. Kourtchevsky, *Leonardo de Vinci and Christ Carrying the Cross*, chap. 7, available at: leonard-christ.com

10. Expert testimony on the formal link between Thaddeus and Adam (Giampietrino)

To reinforce the stylistic comparisons established so far, it is essential to consider external and independent assessments. Several recent expert assessments provide strong support for the connection proposed in this study.

At the time of the presentation of the *Adam and Eve* painting attributed to Giampietrino, La Gazette Drouot (France)²⁷ published a particularly significant comment²⁸ in April 2019. It stated that “*this panel representing Adam and Eve, attributed to the artist, draws inspiration for the faces from Leonardo’s works, especially for the man, whose model is found in the Last Supper, as analysed by the Turquin²⁹ firm.*” This observation, supported by one of the leading firms in Old Master painting expertise, confirms a direct lineage between Adam’s face and figures created by Leonardo in his Milanese masterpiece.

A few years later, in 2022, the auction house **Artcurial**³⁰ also emphasized the enduring influence of Leonardo’s models on this composition. It highlighted the poetic quality of the expressions, the sophistication of the gestures, and Giampietrino’s ability to appropriate and subtly transform the models inherited from Leonardo’s studio.

This active circulation of models was also noted by Martin Kemp, in his 2003³¹ biography of Leonardo:

“No artist has ever inspired more copies [...]. The work on variations of Leonardo’s preferred themes seems to have become a kind of industry in Milan after his departure in 1513 [...]. The variants that appear to reflect Leonardo’s own inventions include the themes of Christ Carrying the Cross [...].”

These independent expert opinions provide valuable context to the comparative analysis. They confirm not only the circulation of models but, above all, the idea that Adam’s face reprises the features of Thaddeus in the *Last Supper*, based on the *Drawing of Venice*.

The convergence of these findings sets the stage for the conclusions of this study.

27 : La Gazette Drouot (formerly La Gazette de l’Hôtel Drouot) is a French weekly magazine founded in 1891, dedicated to public auctions and the art market.

28 : See Appendix 3 for the excerpt from La Gazette Drouot, April 2019.

29 : **Cabinet Turquin**: a Paris-based auction house specialized in the appraisal and valuation of Old Master paintings. - <https://www.turquin.fr/fr>

30 : **Artcurial**: a Paris-based auction house specializing in art sales. - <https://www.artcurial.com>

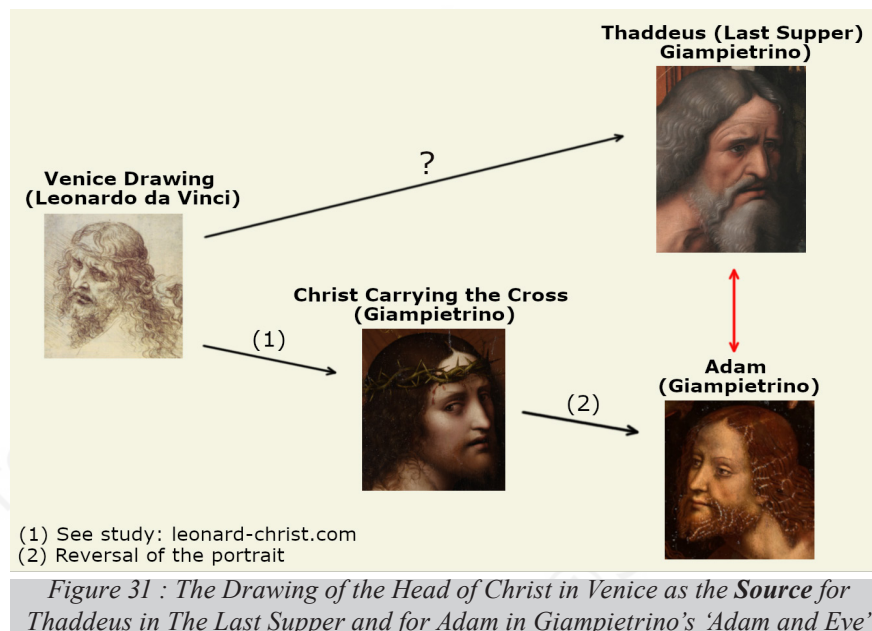
31 : Oxfordartonline - <https://www.oxfordartonline.com>

11. Conclusion

The study of the *Head of Christ* drawing held at the Accademia in Venice leads to a central hypothesis: this drawing likely served as the original model for the depiction of the apostle Thaddeus in Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper*. From this painted figure, its influence appears to have spread into several other works produced by artists close to Leonardo. Among these, the early copies of the *Last Supper*, notably the one by Giampietrino³², as well as several paintings of *Christ Carrying the Cross* attributed to the same artist, all show faces inspired by the Venetian drawing. This stylistic lineage extends even to the head of Adam in the composition *Adam and Eve*, where we find the same essential features, sometimes reversed or adapted to fit the context of the subject.

The connection between the faces of Thaddeus and Adam was noted in La Gazette Drouot through an analysis by the Turquin firm. The drawing now appears as a possible starting point for several figures produced within Leonardo's circle.

This connection, linking the *Venice drawing*, the portrait of Thaddeus in the *Last Supper*, and the figure of Adam in *Adam and Eve*, is also illustrated in the diagram below.



Note: The works mentioned here are reproduced in Appendix 1 (*Venice Drawing*), Appendix 2 (Thaddeus), and Appendix 4 (*Christs Carrying the Cross*).

While it remains unclear whether the drawing was intended for a **specific project** or as an **independent study**, it clearly played a central role in Leonardo's visual thinking on the theme of the Passion. Through its powerful expression, this expressive face left a profound and lasting imprint on Leonardo's circle and still helps us today to better understand Leonardo da Vinci's artistic legacy.

32 : See leonard-christ.com

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Drawing of the Head of Christ, Venice

Artist: Leonardo da Vinci

Title: Head of Christ and Hand Grasping the Hair

Location: Galleries of the Academy, Venice (No. 231)

Technique: Silverpoint on prepared paper

Image in the public domain – Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice (via Wikipedia)



Figure 32 : Head of Christ, Venice (Leonardo da Vinci)

Appendix 2: Thaddeus (The Last Supper by Giampietrino/ Boltraffio)

Painting: Last Supper, attributed to Giampietrino or Boltraffio

Collection: Royal Academy of Arts, London

Public domain image – Wikipedia



Figure 33 : Thaddeus (The Last Supper, Giampietrino or Boltraffio)

Appendix 3: Gazette Drouot – Paris, April 2019 (excerpt)

La Gazette Drouot (Paris) is a French weekly publication established in 1891, focusing on public auctions and the art market.

Léonard

Gazette Drouot

Publié le 17 avril 2019, par **Caroline Legrand**

Vente le 22 avril 2019 - 14:15 (CEST) - 14, boulevard Eindhoven - 14400 Bayeux

Le *Salvator mundi*, huile sur panneau conservée au Detroit Institute of Arts, est une reprise du tableau de Léonard de Vinci qui a défrayé la chronique des ventes publiques l'an dernier, due à un élève et proche du maître de la Renaissance. Son nom ? Giovanni Pietro Rizzoli, dit Giampietrino (actif entre 1500 et 1549). Peu...



Attribué à Giovanni Pietro Rizzoli, dit Giampietrino (actif entre 1500 et 1549), *Adam et Ève*, huile sur panneau, 74,5 x 58 cm.

Estimation : 20 000/30 000 €

Le *Salvator mundi*, huile sur panneau conservée au Detroit Institute of Arts, est une reprise du tableau de Léonard de Vinci qui a défrayé la chronique des ventes publiques l'an dernier, due à un élève et proche du maître de la Renaissance. Son nom ? Giovanni Pietro Rizzoli, dit Giampietrino (actif entre 1500 et 1549). Peu de repères biographiques sont connus de l'artiste dans le *Codex Atlanticus*, Léonard mentionne à la fin de son premier séjour milanais un certain «Gian Petro» parmi les *garzoni* et élèves de son atelier. Cependant, de nombreuses peintures de sa main sont conservées au Louvre, au Metropolitan Museum de New York et dans d'autres collections publiques. Il a très probablement fait partie des principaux assistants du maître lors du second séjour à Milan, à partir de 1504. Ce panneau représentant Adam et Ève attribué à l'artiste est inspiré pour les visages d'œuvres de Léonard, en particulier pour l'homme, dont le modèle se retrouve dans La Cène, ainsi que l'a analysé le cabinet Turquin. Les corps sont quant à eux issus d'un cuivre de Dürer du même sujet réalisé en 1504 peut-être à son retour d'un voyage à Venise et repris trois ans plus tard sur deux panneaux visibles au Prado, à Madrid. Giampietrino, identifié depuis peu comme s'appelant Giovanni Pietro Rizzoli, aurait effectué un voyage en France avant son mentor. Ses peintures diffusent les prototypes léonardesques dans toute l'Europe, en particulier auprès de Joos van Cleve. Auteur de scènes religieuses, il ne négligea pas non plus les sujets mythologiques ou inspirés de l'Ancien Testament lui permettant de broder des nus de juste proportion, un intérêt qu'il partageait avec Vinci et Dürer.

Appendix 4: Giampietrino's Christ Carrying the Cross paintings

With contributions³³ from his workshop, Giampietrino produced multiple versions of *Christ Carrying the Cross* created using a single underlying model³⁴.

Although additional versions may exist, six have been clearly identified:

- *Christ Carrying the Cross* - National Gallery, London (1510-1530), oil on wood, 47 x 59.7 cm
- *Christ Carrying the Cross* - Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest (1519-1520), oil on wood, - 48 x 62 cm
- *Christ Carrying the Cross* - Royal Museum of Turin, Gal. Sabauda (1500-1524), oil, - 50 x 64 cm
- *Christ Carrying the Cross* - Nat. Mus., Castel Sant'Angelo, Rome (1500-1549), oil, 35 x 44 cm
- *Christ Carrying the Cross* - Kunsthistorisches Mus., Vienna (1510-1530?), oil on wood, 58 x 77 cm
- *Christ Carrying the Cross* - Museo Diocesano, Milan (1510-1530?), oil on wood, 59 x 74 cm

The following examples show the versions held in London, Budapest, and Turin.



Figure 34 : Christ Carrying the Cross London

Figure 35 : Christ Carrying the Cross Budapest



Figure 36 : Christ Carrying the Cross Turin

33 : National Gallery London (1996), Technical Bul. N°17, 'Giampietrino, Boltraffio, and the Influence of Leonardo'.

34 : The term single model refers here to a shared preparatory source, such as an original drawing, cartoon, or faithful copy of an earlier work, whose use is evidenced by the coincidence of principal lines (positions of figures, contours, gestures) across all known versions.

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Author	Work
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Clark, K (2005)	<i>Leonard da Vinci</i> (Paris : Livre de Poche)
Marani Pietro C. (2009)	<i>Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper</i>
Marani Pietro C. (1992)	Contribution to <i>Leonardo & Venice'</i> (p344 à 347) (Bompiani)
Pedretti Carlo (1983)	<i>Leonardo - Studi per il Cenacolo...</i> (Mondadori Electa)
Zöllner, F. (2003)	<i>Leonardo da Vinci</i>
Ross King (2012)	<i>Leonardo and the Last Supper</i> (Bloomsbury, London)
Isbouts JP. - Brown C. H. (2019)	<i>A Multidisciplinary Study of the Tongerlo Last Supper and its attribution to Leonardo da Vinci's Second Milanese studio</i>

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<i>Last Supper, Leonardo da Vinci, Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan</i>	Public domain – via Wikipedia
<i>Testa di Fanciulla (drawing), Leonardo da Vinci, Biblioteca Reale, Turin</i>	Public domain – via Wikipedia
<i>Studies for the Last Supper, Leonardo da Vinci, Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice (inv. 254)</i>	Public domain - via wikipedia
<i>Last Supper, Marco d'Oggiono, Musée national de la Renaissance, Château d'Écouen (France)</i>	© 2019 GrandPalais Rmn (Louvre Museum) / Mathieu Rabeau
<i>Last Supper, Giampietrino, Royal Academy of Arts, London</i>	Public domain – via Wikipedia
<i>Last Supper, Abbey of Tongerlo (Belgium)</i>	Public domain – via Wikipedia
<i>Adam and Eve, Giampietrino (Private Collection)</i>	@Artcurial (France)
<i>Christ Carrying the Cross, Giampietrino, Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest</i>	@Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest
<i>Christ Carrying the Cross, Giampietrino, National Gallery, London</i>	@National Gallery London
<i>Christ Carrying the Cross, Giampietrino, Galleria Sabauda, Turin</i>	@Galleria Sabauda, Turin