The Saviour of the World – or the story of the "Salvator Mundi"

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1.

On March 5, 2008, Martin Kemp, Professor of Art History at the University of Oxford, then nearing retirement, received an email. The courteous and gentlemanly Kemp is one of the world's leading experts on Leonardo da Vinci. Well used to being bombarded with endless communications concerning the artist, his habit would have been to reply with cool politeness, gently implying that no further messages would follow. But this email was different: it came from Nicholas Penny, Director of the National Gallery in London and was sufficiently cryptic to be important: "Martin, I have something here you absolutely have to see ..." Professor Kemp noted the date, and cancelled his appointments for that day. On May 19, he duly took his place in the National Gallery's Conservation Studio. Placed on a plain wooden easel, with the *Virgin of the Rocks* beside it, was a picture depicting Jesus in Renaissance dress, his right hand raised in blessing, the left holding a crystal orb – Jesus Saviour of the World and Lord of the Cosmos, according to sixteenth-century iconography. "When I saw the 'Salvator Mundi' I experienced an almost physical reaction, I felt a presence, just as I felt in front of the Mona Lisa", Kemp recalled on February 4 this year, in a seminar held at St Catherine's College, Oxford, as part of a series on the Italian Renaissance. He could hardly contain his emotions. To regain his composure, Kemp got out his magnifying glass and started to examine the crystal in Christ's left hand. Also in the room were a number of other invitees, among whom he recognized such well-known scholars as Maria Teresa Fiorio and Pietro Marani, flown over from Milan. He also made his first acquaintance with Robert Simon, a soft-spoken, polite New York art dealer who was introduced as the current custodian of the work (it would later transpire that he was also one of its owners). Kemp studied the picture and decided it was a genuine Leonardo. His opinion was readily accepted by at least one other expert present at the meeting and eventually by the National Gallery, and a cultural and commercial miracle got underway. A work that had been

attributed in the nineteenth century to "school of Giovanni Boltraffio" – a Milanese early Renaissance painter (1467–1516) who was a pupil of Leonardo's – upgraded to "a work by Boltraffio" when sold at auction in London for £45 in 1956, and later bought by Robert Simon for $1,175 in 2005, was admitted to the da Vinci canon and would become a few years later the world's most expensive painting. In November 2018, a Saudi prince paid $450 million to secure the picture, announcing that it would be hung in the new Louvre-Abu Dhabi. But not everybody is convinced by the attribution, and the "Salvator Mundi" has been a focus of a scholarly dispute between art historians – which continues to this day – since its rediscovery in 2005. And more than that, the whole business of this "Leonardo" has shed some light on the less-known corners of the art market, from the overlapping of commercial and major museum interests to the working of offshore jurisdictions and the Geneva Free Port. And in the meantime, the "Salvator Mundi" itself has disappeared from view. But let's take one thing at a time.

2.

When Professor Kemp first saw the painting in the spring of 2008, the National Gallery had already decided to include the work in an important exhibition – *Leonardo da Vinci: Painter at the court of Milan* – which opened in London on November 9, 2011, and continued until February 5,2012. In the catalogue, published by Yale University Press, the show's curator Luke Syson defends the attribution to Leonardo. We might note at this point that the "Salvator Mundi" was not, in all probability, painted in the Lombard capital: Kemp in fact humorously suggested in his seminar that the exhibition boasted "eight of the six pictures Leonardo is known to have painted in Milan". The show was a huge success nonetheless, with tickets being sold on pirate sites for ridiculous sums (up to £300 according to *The New York Times*). Even so, the debate over the real authorship of the "Salvator Mundi" showed no

sign of slackening. A review in the *New York Review of Books* by Charles Hope, former Director of the Warburg Institute, was full of praise for the "intelligent" exhibition but closed with a dismissive final paragraph: "even making allowances for its extremely poor state of preservation, it is a curiously unimpressive composition and it is hard to believe that Leonardo himself was responsible for anything so dull". Frank Zöllner, in a review essay of 2013 in the prestigious *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte,* concluded that it was painted post-1507 by a pupil working from an original Leonardo cartoon. Carlo Pedretti, perhaps the most eminent scholar of his generation in the field, is another dissenter. The critics emphasize that Leonardo's stylistic hallmark is his ability to capture bodies in movement, while this Christ is a very static figure. Nevertheless, none of the attribution's initial supporters has changed their mind: for them it remains a genuine Leonardo.

3.

Other questions arise in addition to that of pure attribution. The National Gallery has a strict principle of not displaying works that are for sale. And it is true that the painting was not actually on the market in 2011 – indeed, Robert Simon had let it be understood that "the owners want to do the right thing and were keen that the work should end up in a public collection", reports Kemp. However, after the exhibition, Robert Simon offered the picture for sale privately. By May 2013, Simon had concluded negotiations and passed it on to a blond, elegant forty-something who might have stepped out of a James Bond novel, Yves Bouvier. A Swiss businessman, and adviser to a rich Russian collector, he was heir to a hundred-year-old company specializing in the transport and storage of luxury assets. Bouvier was king of the Geneva Freeport, where goods in transit can be lawfully parked without attracting any kind of tax. Under Swiss law the goods stored there can remain in this limbo indefinitely and be bought and (re)sold in the meantime.

When I visited Geneva in April this year, I discovered that the Freeport is only a couple of stops on the bus from the city centre. At the entrance there's a post office with dozens of mail boxes for hire and an actual art gallery. Inside there is a restoration laboratory and a room for displaying artworks to potential buyers. *The Economist* estimates the total value of the works stored here to be some $100 billion. According to Artprice, the free-ports of Geneva make up more than 50 per cent of global revenue generated by public and private art sales. There are over a million art objects and three million bottles of fine wines. Bouvier managed the equivalent of safe deposit boxes for goods of incalculable value – a value that depends on certificates of authenticity. Any object might change owner, or owners, dozens of times out of the public eye: above all, the prices realized legally remain entirely secret. Whoever is in charge of the depot will receive the documentation pertaining to every transaction and thereby come into possession of confidential information regarding owners, prices and chains of purchases and sales. As he told Sam Knight in an interview published in the *New Yorker* in 2016, Bouvier at some point realized that this information could quite legitimately be put to work and decided to do what none of his colleagues had thought of doing: become an art dealer himself, without having any sort of relevant training or a gallery. When the Russian billionaire Dmitry Rybolovlev arrived with his entourage at the Geneva Freeport in 2002 to take possession of a Chagall he had just bought, he met Bouvier. Rybolovlev and his wife had moved to Switzerland in 1995 from Russia, where he owned a major potash producer. He was to become famous in certain circles for buying in 2008 Donald Trump's Palm Beach villa for $95 million (Trump had bought it in 2004 for $41.3 million, thus managing, at the height of an American real estate crisis, to turn a profit of more than $50 million). Yet in the mid-nineties the Rybolovlevs lacked introductions into the international *beau monde*, collecting circles in particular. Bouvier obtained a proper certificate of authenticity which the

Chagall painting lacked, and offered his services as adviser and go-between. Rybolovlev entrusted him with the task of finding high-end artworks to add to his collection and over the next few years Bouvier bought valuable pieces on his behalf. In 2013, Bouvier obtained the "Salvator Mundi" and Rybolovlev paid $127.5 million for it. Like Martin Kemp, Rybolovlev too felt a physical reaction in the presence of the Leonardo, a "vibration", as he told the *New Yorker*. But the feeling soon gave way to another emotion – rage. Rybolovlev found out that Bouvier had bought the "Salvator Mundi" for $80 million from Robert Simon just a few days before selling it to him for $127.5 million, pocketing the better part of $50 million. The Russian initiated a lawsuit against his adviser, who found himself – for four days – behind bars. Bouvier, for his part, claimed to have been doing no more than exercise his profession as art dealer (Robert Simon also lodged a complaint). Legal proceedings are still ongoing under different jurisdictions round the world and the matter is highly complex. No doubt, in due course, the courts will decide. In the meantime, Bouvier has sold (in 2017) his packing and shipping company.

And so we come to the most recent of the "Salvator Mundi"'s changes of ownership: by November 2017, Rybolovlev wanted to get rid of the picture and entrusted it to Christie's New York. The auction house decided to make the most of the panel's celebrity status as the only Leonardo in private hands by sending it on a world tour, taking in Hong Kong, London and San Francisco before returning to New York. More than 27,000 people viewed the work, which was subsequently included in a contemporary art sale rather than an "Old Master" sale, a most unusual decision. With a reserve of $100 million, the "Salvator Mundi" amazed everybody – including Martin Kemp ("I didn't think it would go for much over the estimate") – by being knocked down for $450 million. Initially Christie's would not divulge the buyer's identity, but it soon emerged that the winning bid had come from a little-known Saudi prince

with no track record as a collector, Badr bin Abdullah. American intelligence sources leaked that the real buyer was Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, commonly known as MBS, the power behind – sometimes in front of – his father's throne, although the Government of Saudi Arabia never confirmed the allegation. Badr is known to be very close to MBS and when the *New York Times* was on the point of publicly identifying the former as the buyer, in December 2017, the Louvre-Abu Dhabi announced that the work would form part of its newly inaugurated collection, while at the same time Badr was appointed the Saudi kingdom's Minister of Culture.

The buying and selling of works of art – a global turnover estimated at $63.8 billion in 2015 – is frequently an opaque process. Martin Kemp – lapsing from his habitual understatement – has himself described the art market as "an unregulated jungle". Transactions are almost invariably conducted through trusts based in offshore tax havens. Bouvier's contracts for the pictures he bought for Rybolovlev were drawn up by a leading and respected Swiss law firm, but he operated through a company registered in Hong Kong, and the buyer acted through a trust registered in the name of his daughter. Furthermore, the auction houses are not legally obliged to establish the identity of a work's true owner – often indeed they do not know themselves. In the documentation a vendor is described generically as, say, "a European collector".

This case aside, the art market has other, more general problems to face. "The art market [is] exposed to money laundering and tax evasion risks", states a European Parliament study published in October 2018. The US government has recently accused several Malaysian businessmen of laundering $200 million by buying art at auction. Works of art are easy to transport and preserve, and they do not have an objective value, so any price tag is plausible.

They can also be a good way to hide wealth from tax officials as one can pretend that they are not an investment, but rather a passion.

4.

Of course, art scholars, museums and restorers are indispensable players in this market and we should be asking serious questions about art history's role in it. What is a collector (or a museum) buying when they acquire a Leonardo? As the art critic Peter Schjeldahl has put it, they are buying an attribution. The asset being exchanged – in this case for a dizzying $450 million – is the idea of owning a Leonardo. The collector may think he (or she) feels a frisson in front of the work, but the excitement just as likely comes from the knowledge that they are up close and personal with a work of genius. Which is why it is paramount to be confident that the painter is who he is supposed to be, without too many reservations. But our modern idea of authorship and "genius" is not really the same as that which prevailed in the Renaissance.

Serious scholars are at pains to place an artist within his or her historical context. For instance, Carlo Vecce, the author of a monumental biography, has shown how Leonardo was an autodidact who learned Latin when he was forty, struggled with algebra, and was indebted to many of his contemporaries, such as the military engineer Roberto Valturio (1405–1475), for his inventions. Leonardo's anatomical drawings were exceptional for their clarity and accuracy, but many of the inventions credited to him by today's hagiographers were well known at his time. Leonardo's notebooks contain copies of other people's work and were never intended for publication. Rather than for specific inventions, Leonardo should be remembered as a leading artist-engineer who championed the modern experimental method (Vecce also shows how the 1939 Milan exhibition sponsored by Benito Mussolini, *Leonardo*

da Vinci e delle Invenzioni Italiane, was a key moment in the creation of the "Leonardo the Genius" myth).

Leonardo, like many painters of his time, began his career in another painter's workshop, in his case that of Andrea del Verrocchio. In his master's "Baptism of Christ" (1472–75), some of the figures are now attributed to Leonardo, and over the years he would collaborate with other painters like the de Predis brothers and Boltraffio on a number of paintings, without being responsible for every detail. Nicholas Penny himself, in that initial email to Martin Kemp, had been ready to recognize a contribution by assistants to the "Salvator Mundi": "some of us consider there may be parts which are by the workshop". Besides, it is known that the artist actually completed very few projects in his lifetime. A show at the Louvre in 2012, centring on Leonardo's "Virgin and Child with St Anne", shortly before the London one, suggested that the painter's main occupation was producing preliminary sketches for high-class workshop production, as pointed out by Frank Zöllner. For example, scholars had concluded – on the basis of a close analysis of the preparatory drawings for the "Madonna Litta" (now in the Hermitage in Saint Petersburg) – that the head of the Virgin matches Leonardo's drawing while that of the child is closer to one by Boltraffio. This finding was evidently not accepted by all – in the catalogue of the London exhibition the picture is *wholly* attributed to Leonardo. If the attribution had been to the workshop, the Hermitage would not have lent it, suggests Kemp in his book *Living with Leonardo*. The same was the case with the National Gallery's own "Virgin of the Rocks": a number of respected experts agreed – at least prior to the recent restoration – that the contribution of Leonardo himself is much greater in the earlier version kept in the Louvre. Yet, in the London exhibition catalogue, their displayed version is ascribed "entirely" to his hand.

It would probably be correct to see the workshops of Renaissance artists as akin to modern graphic design agencies. Undoubtedly, there was an element of individual talent, of authorship, even in the Renaissance: in Leonardo's case, art historians agree that his particular gift was for rendering figures in movement, a dynamism either in the body itself or in an apparently shifting gaze (unlike in the case of the "Salvator Mundi"), suggesting emotional transitions. But there was also a good deal of teamwork, and commercial priorities to consider. Leonardo ran a studio that had between three and ten people at any one time, who produced scores of copies of the master's work. In that period, painters responded to commissions and it makes sense to suppose that Leonardo would take more personal interest in some products than others. It is part of an art historian's job to ask what factors might determine the greater or lesser involvement of the *maestro*. One would imagine that there are many possible variables, including chance or the artist's age (an established painter could delegate more), but the status of the patron must surely have played a significant part: you would expect Leonardo to exert himself more for the King of France or the Duke of Milan than for a commoner. So a clue to help determine degrees of involvement can be the identity of the consignee. According to those who brought the "Salvator Mundi" to the market, the picture was intended for the King of France, even if there is no documentation to back this up. "Unlike every other picture Leonardo is widely recognized to have executed, there is no documentary evidence that his hand ever painted the *Salvator*", writes Ben Lewis in the must-read work of investigative journalism on the "Salvator Mundi", *The Last Leonardo*. We are expected to believe that Leonardo painted the greatest subject in Christian art and nobody ever mentioned it, including the author himself, who from time to time used to make an inventory of the paintings in his studio. Arguably, the more important the commission, the more letters and other documentation it would generate: ideally one might find a contract. Stylistic considerations are surely important, yet the art history world seems to be obsessed

with establishing authorship beyond dispute, on the ground of an expert's *eye*, as if the only answer were a simple "yes" or "no". A significant section of an academic discipline relies so heavily on ineffable intuitions, the "zing", as Kemp has called it. As I was making this point to an art historian on the margins of a newly opened exhibition on Leonardo in Italy, he quickly dismissed my notion that documents matter greatly: "documents appear and disappear, the expert's eye is irreplaceable", he told me. According to this view, art history appears to be less of an historical subject than political or social studies. On the other hand, any judgment in human and social sciences is probabilistic in nature, grounded on limited evidence. Inference problems are severe when the available sample is small and they are even worse when we know little about the population under study. In these situations, social scientists have opted for a style of probabilistic inference steeped in the work of Thomas Bayes and championed, among others, by J.M. Keynes in his *Treaty on Probability*. Probability estimates are tentative and updated as more evidence becomes available. In keeping with Leonardo's own attitude to the experimental method, we can ever only lend *some* support to a given hypothesis drawing upon limited evidence, which include stylistic as well as other considerations. But what exactly are "stylistic considerations"?

Attributing a work to a particular painter entails comparing it with the generally accepted canon for that artist. When we are trying to establish whether a picture is by Leonardo, we examine it in the light of other works known to be painted by him. But this approach runs into certain logical problems: a painter may well change styles during his career. He won't go on painting the same picture, any more than a writer will go on writing the same book. Paradoxically, therefore, a copy may be more readily accepted on the basis of an aesthetic judgement, other things being equal, than a ground-breaking original work by the artist. Indeed, the restorer of the "Salvator Mundi" used for guidance in her work a copy of the

picture attributed to a painter who himself worked with a follower of Leonardo. We have entered a dizzying hermeneutical circle: the original is made to look like a copy of a copy of a copy in order to convince a sceptical audience that it is original. This mechanism is akin to mafia members who copy fictional and incorrect versions of themselves depicted by popular films in order to convince their victims that they are the real mafiosi. The *Godfather* movies have been most popular among real mafiosi, while being also highly inaccurate in their depiction of the Italian-American mob. Louie Milito, a member of New York's Gambino crime Family, killed in 1988, "watched the [*Godfather*] movie six thousand times", according to his wife's autobiography. After seeing the film, her husband and his crew were "acting like *Godfather* actors kissing and hugging . . . and coming out with lines from the movie. A couple of them started learning Italian". The real specimen, to be convincing, had to copy a fake imagine.

Once a picture has been accepted into the canon, the canon itself changes, expands slightly, so when the next dealer claims to have discovered a "new" Leonardo, we will measure it against a canon containing, let us suppose, the "Salvator Mundi". In theory, it could come about that a canon expands to the point that paintings once considered typical become the exceptions. The market, needless to say, has a strong incentive to increase the number of paintings attributable to the great masters, to go on discovering Leonardos, in effect – within reason: best not to saturate the *piazza*.

Finally, even supposing we can establish with a high degree of probability that a particular Renaissance artist is the author of a work, how sure can we be that the picture we see in front of us today corresponds to the one that left the artist's easel? I discovered that restorers use a very peculiar, understated vocabulary to refer to their interventions: they speak of "losses"

that are “bridged”, of damaged areas that are “consolidated”, while the whole picture is “integrated”. Kemp refers to “diplomatic filling in of lost areas”. In Leonardo’s case, there has been a long-drawn-out dispute over the dark varnish he used to finish his paintings, evident, for example, in the Louvre version of the “Virgin of the Rocks”. It is that which softens the picture’s contours and imbues it with an air of mystery, as Charles Hope has noted. In 1945, however, the chief restorer at the National Gallery decided to remove the varnish from a whole series of works, including the London “Virgin of the Rocks”. Doubtless the restorer’s decision had its defenders, but the fact remains that what we see today is the outcome of a questionable decision by an individual responding to the taste of his time.

When Simon bought it, the “Salvator Mundi” had been considerably damaged. The face and the background were the most ruined parts, the panel had a large cut down the middle and had been broken into five pieces. The choices made by the highly respected American restorer Dianne Modestini are significant. The background of the image of Christ was wholly lost and the restorer decided, on the basis of her research and with the approval of the owners, to (re)paint it ivory black. Modestini reports in a technical paper that “I repainted the large missing areas” and “retouched the new paint to make it look antique”. Furthermore, cleaning had revealed two thumbs on the right hand raised in blessing – a *pentimento*: at some point the painter had been dissatisfied with the first thumb and painted another. Which was Leonardo’s final choice? We can’t know. Martin Kemp, in his Oxford lecture, said that in his view it would have been better to have left both thumbs to show the public how the artist worked, but the restorer – no doubt with the owners’ agreement – covered one up. Modestini – who operates within an established tradition and has openly discussed her decisions – wrote that she set herself the task of rendering the painting “convincing”. She was hired by the owners and readily admitted that she “worked closely on the restoration for six years” with

Robert Simon. Perhaps it would have been harder to sell a two-thumbed "Salvator Mundi" for $450 million. Such choices are understandable but not unarguable. The work we see is an interpretation. For any artwork, the worry is that commercial considerations may pressure major decisions that favour firm attributions and uncomplicated artworks.

5.

What has become of the "Salvator Mundi"? The Louvre-Abu Dhabi was supposed to unveil the picture in the autumn of 2018, but on September 3 the Culture Ministry announced a postponement via a tweet. As of this date, we do not know when – or if – the "Salvator Mundi" will ever see the light of day. The most recent speculations suggest that Crown Prince Salam has decided to keep the painting for himself, at least for now, and it is hanging in his $500m yacht *Serene*. Sadly, he has every right to be capricious with his own property. Let us hope it is being looked after with the respect it deserves.

Much water has passed under the bridges of Oxford since that 2008 email. Martin Kemp is now emeritus professor there and remains a firm advocate of the painting's authenticity. Indefatigable, he is writing a book on the subject, together with its sometime owner Robert Simon. "Leonardo never ceases to amaze", he said, as his lecture wound to its close.

References

1.

Direct quotations from Martin Kemp are taken for the most part from Kemp's seminar lecture at St. Catherine's College, Oxford, held on the 4th of February 2019, which I attended.

Others are taken from Kemp, *Living with Leonardo* (Thames and Hudson, 2019), pp. 161-183.

The May 19, 2008 meeting is described in Kemp, *Living with Leonardo* (who attended); in Dianne Dwyer Modestini, *Masterpieces: based on a manuscript by Mario Modestini* (Cadmo editore, 2018), p. 418, who was at the time restoring the painting; and in *The Last Leonardo. The Secret Lives of the World's Most Expensive Painting*, by Ben Lewis (William Collins, 2019). Lewis reports that David Alan Brown, present at the meeting, also supported Kemp's attribution (p. 174). Lewis has established the sale prices for the painting (see, e.g., pp. 27, 227, and 303). It should be noted that Alex Parish was another part-owner of the "Salvator Mundi".

2.

The London exhibition catalogue is *Leonardo da Vinci: Painter at the court of Milan* by Luke Syson, Larry Keith, *et alii*, London, National Gallery, 2011. The "Salvator Mundi" is discussed on pp. 282-3, 298-303, catalogue no. 91.

The scalping of tickets for this exhibition is mentioned in Carol Vogel, "Long Lines and Scalpers: Rock Star? No, Leonardo", *The New York Times*, 4 December 2011. See also Kemp, *Living with Leonardo*, p. 182.

The reviews I refer to are: Charles Hope, "The Wrong Leonardo," *The New York Review of Books*, 9 February 2012; Frank Zöllner, "A double Leonardo. On two exhibitions (and their catalogues) in London and Paris.-[Rezension]," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 76 (2013), pp. 417-427.

Carlo Pedretti rejected the Leonardo's attribution in an article in *Osservatore Romano*, 2 July 2011, yet he never saw the painting. Alessandro Vezzosi, in *Leonardo da Vinci: The Complete Paintings in Detail* (Prestel, 2019), also took a stance against the attribution. Carmen Bambach, the Metropolitan Museum's curator of drawings, who was at the May 2008 meeting, was sceptical from the start. See Kemp, *Living with Leonardo*, p. 163 and Dalya Alberge, "Leonardo da Vinci expert declines to back Salvator Mundi as his painting", *The Guardian*, 2 June 2019. Cfr. Modestini, *Masterpieces*, p. 418.

Leonardo himself advised against painting static figures. See *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, entry 595.

3.

Modestini, *Masterpieces*, p. 420 suggests that the curator of the London exhibition knew the painting was on the market.

Much of the information on Bouvier and the workings of the Geneva Freeport is taken from Sam Knight, "The Bouvier Affair", *The New Yorker,* 8-15 February, 2016, pp. 62-71. I also draw upon Pascal Henry's excellent documentary, *The Black Box of the Art Business*, 2016.

The estimate from *The Economist* comes from "Über-warehouses for the ultra-rich", 23 November 2013 and "Brush with the law", *The Economist*, 5 March 2015. See also Will Gompertz, "Geneva Free Port: The greatest art collection no-one can see", *BBC News*, 1 December 2016.

The Artprice estimate is cited in: https://www.privateartinvestor.com/news/free-ports-or-the-elusive-treasure-chests-of-art/ and in Lewis, *The Last Leonardo*, p. 247.

On Rybolovlev's purchase of Trumps' mansion, see Doreen Carvajal, "The Billionaire who bought Trump's mansion faces scrutiny in Monaco", *New York Times*, 7 September 2018. See also Gaby Del Valle, "How a long-lost Leonardo da Vinci painting got dragged into a Trump-Russia conspiracy theory", *Vox*, 22 January 2019.

On the tour of the painting and the risks it faced, see Modestini, *Masterpieces*, p. 422-423.

Shane Harris, Kelly Crow and Summer Said, "Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Identified as Buyer of Record-Breaking da Vinci", *The Wall Street Journal*, Dec. 7, 2017 at: https://www.wsj.com/articles/saudi-arabias-crown-prince-identified-as-buyer-of-record-breaking-da-vinci-1512674099

David D. Kirkpatrick, "Mystery Buyer of $450 Million 'Salvator Mundi' Was a Saudi Prince", *The New York Times,* 6 December 2017.

Martin Kemp's comment on the art market is in *Living with Leonardo*, p. 181.

On the trust used by Rybolovlev to buy art, see Lewis, *The Last Leonardo*, p. 267. See also pp. 233-4 and 247 on art as an asset. The contemporary art market has total global revenues much higher than the Old masters market, notes Lewis, p. 287.

European Parliament, *Money laundering and tax evasion risks in free ports*, October 2018, p. 5. at:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/155721/EPRS_STUD_627114_Money%20laundering-FINAL.pdf

See also Graham Bowley & William K. Rashbaum, "Has the art market become an unwitting partner in crime?" *New York Times News Service*, 27 February 2017. Eric Reguly, "The link between art and money laundering", *The Globe and Mail*, 3 September 2015, discusses the case of the Malayan businessmen.

4.

Peter Schjeldahl, "Masters and Pieces: Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Munch", *New Yorker,* 27 November, pp. 78-81.

Carlo Vecce, *Leonardo* (new edition: Salerno editrice 2006). Vecce's book on Leonardo's library is superb (Vecce, *La biblioteca perduta. I libri di Leonardo*, Salerno editrice, 2017). Other scholars to place the artist's work squarely in the context of its time are Pietro Marani and Mario Taddei. Leonardo also made mistakes. For instance, he failed to test the technique he used for his largest works, *The Last Supper* and *The Battle of Anghiari*. As a consequence, they decayed and, in the case of the latter, were lost. See Frank Zöllner, *La Battaglia di Anghiari di Leonardo da Vinci fra mitologia e politica. XXXVII lettura Vinciana*, Vinci, Biblioteca Leonardiana, 18 April 1997 (Giunti Barbèra, 1998). Lewis, *The Last Leonardo*, pp. 185-186, points out that his concrete engineering achievements did not amount to much.

Penny's email to Kemp is in Kemp, *Living with Leonardo*, p. 161. The restorer Modestini does not rule out that different hands might have painted the "Salvator Mundi". See Dianne

Dwyer Modestini, "The *Salvator Mundi* by Leonardo da Vinci rediscovered: history, technique and condition," in Michel Menu (ed.), *Leonardo da Vinci's technical practice: paintings, drawings and influence* (Hermann, 2014), pp. 139-151 (p. 148).

The catalogue of the 2012 Louvre show is: Vincent Delieuvin (ed.), *La* Sainte Anne. *L'ultime chef-d'ceuvre de Leonard de Vinci,* Paris, Louvre, 2012.

See Kemp, *Living with Leonardo*, p. 177, on the Hermitage conditions for lending the *Madonna Litta*.

On Leonardo completing very few projects in his lifetime, see, for example, André Chastel, *Le Madonne di Leonardo: XVIII lettura Vinciana* (Vinci, Biblioteca Leonardiana, 15 April 1978. Giunti Barbèra, 1979), p. 72; Frank Zöllner, *Leonardo da Vinci* (Taschen, 2000), pp. 7, 23, 24, 37, 45, 74, 81 and, obviously, Giorgio Vasari's chapter on Leonardo in *Lives of Artists* (1550, 1568).

On Leonardo's studio, see Lewis, *The Last Leonardo*, pp. 97, 100.

The claim that the painting had been "(Possibly) Commissioned by King Louis XII of France (1462-1515) and his wife, Anne of Brittany (1477-1514)" is in Christie's entry for the sale: https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/Lot/leonardo-da-vinci-1452-1519-salvator-mundi-6110563-details.aspx

The quotation from Lewis on the absence of documentation is from *The Last Leonardo*, p. 35. See also p. 44 and p. 324. This point is also made in Pierluigi Panza, *L'ultimo Leonardo. Storia, intrighi e misteri del quadro più costoso del mondo* (Torino, UTET, 2018).

Kemp mentions the 'zing' in *Living with Leonardo*, p. 131.

On Modestini's decision to base her restoration on a copy of a copy, see Dianne Dwyer Modestini, "The Salvator Mundi by Leonardo da Vinci rediscovered: history, technique and condition," in Michel Menu (ed.), *Leonardo da Vinci's technical practice: paintings, drawings and influence* (Paris, 2014), pp. 139-151 (especially pp. 149-150). Her decisions are criticized by Lewis, *The Last Leonardo*, p. 194.

I discuss how the mafia imitates art in Federico Varese, "The mafia at the Movies", *Times Literary Supplement* online, 27 October 2017 (https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/public/mafia-movies-varese/) and *Mafia Life* (Profile, 2017), pp. 137-157. See also Diego Gambetta, *Codes of the Underworld* (Princeton University Press, 2009), pp. 251–74.

On the language used by restorers, see Lewis, *the Last Leonardo*, p. 124 and Kemp, *Living with Leonardo*, p. 165.

The mid-century restorer who decided to remove the varnish was Helmut Ruhemann. E.H. Gombrich, for one, opposed the decision. See H. Ruhemann, "Leonardo's use of sfumato", *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 1(4) (1961), pp. 231-237; Ernst H. Gombrich, "Dark varnishes: variations on a Theme from Pliny", *The Burlington Magazine* 104, no. 707

(1962), pp. 51-55. For the importance of *sfumato* in the Louvre *St. John the Baptist* (1513-1516), see Zöllner, *Leonardo*, p. 86.

On the bad state—and the restoration--of the "Salvator Mundi", see Modestini, "The *Salvator Mundi* by Leonardo da Vinci rediscovered". See also Kemp, *Living with Leonardo*, p. 165, and Lewis, *The Last Leonardo*, pp. 11, 130, 194-197. Zöllner has cast doubts on the restoration (in Lewis, p. 197).

On her decision to repaint the missing areas in the upper part of the painting, remove the *pentimento*, and her contacts with Simon, see Modestini, "The *Salvator Mundi* by Leonardo da Vinci rediscovered", p. 145 and 150. See also p. 146 on her decision to render "convincing" the rob crystal orb. Modestini also received approval from the curator of the 2011 London exhibition regarding her decision to remove the thumb (p. 145). Modestini states that Simon was her restoration "advisor" (*Masterpieces*, p. 416). There was no committee overseeing her work. See also Modestini, *Masterpieces* (pp. 419-420) on the repainting of the background.

5.

The latest on the picture's whereabouts is: Kenny Schachter, "Where In the World Is '*Salvator Mundi*'? Kenny Schachter Reveals the Location of the Lost $450 Million Leonardo", *Artnet*, 10 June, 2019, at: https://news.artnet.com/opinion/kenny-schachter-on-the-missing-salvator-mundi-1565674.

Martin Kemp, Robert B. Simon and Margaret Dalivalle, *Leonardo's "Salvator Mundi" and the Collecting of Leonardo in the Stuart Courts* (Oxford University Press), due to be published in October 2019.

6.

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