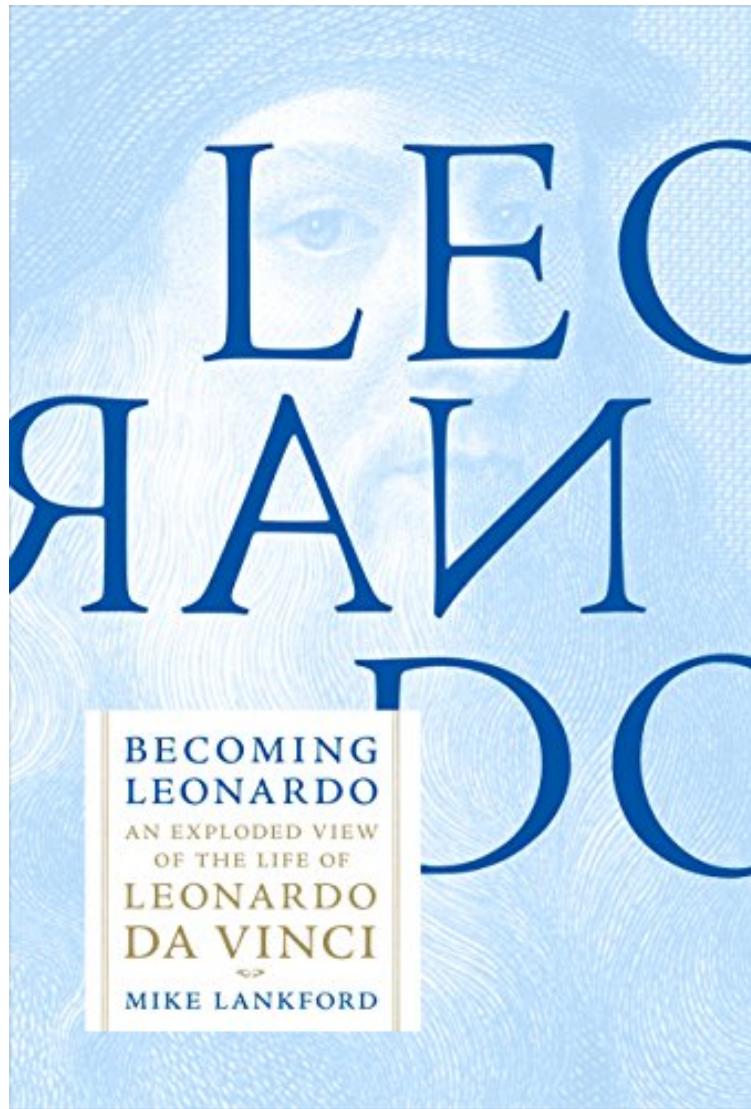


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Becoming Leonardo: An Exploded View of the Life of Leonardo da Vinci

Mike Lankford
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Mike Lankford : Becoming Leonardo: An Exploded View of the Life of Leonardo da Vinci before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *Becoming Leonardo: An Exploded View of the Life of Leonardo da Vinci*:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Irreverent, Informal, InsightfulBy John D. CofieldLeonardo da Vinci's aura is so overwhelming that it makes sense to believe that his life has been thoroughly documented, that his every step, word, and thought are known, and that his artistic output must be enormous. Actually, as Mike Lankford makes clear in his fascinating new biography, far less is known about Leonardo than most of his fellow Renaissance

artists, and much of what is known is debatable and liable to misinterpretation. In bringing Leonardo to life Lankford also recreates the Renaissance as it really was: a violent, dirty place rank with bad smells and disease, where conquering armies stood ready to upend society by overthrowing one tyrant and replacing him with another. Far from being the universally recognized and admired genius we know today, Leonardo spent much of his life in the shadows, wisely lying low when epidemics and warfare grew too close for comfort, departing one city for another when danger loomed, and seeking income and safety from a variety of patrons whose volatile careers threatened to destroy him more than once. Leonardo bubbled over with ideas and plans, often quickly sketched out or described in his famous mirror writing in a series of notebooks, but unfortunately rarely got around to seeing his ideas come to fruition. He was a notorious perfectionist, keeping some paintings with him for years while abruptly abandoning others, experimenting with new paints and mixtures that often decayed or molded, and always highly distractable, unable to focus on any of the twenty or thirty tasks he seemed to have on hand at any one time. Lankford uses a modern vernacular which is informal and often irreverent, superb for conveying the full flavor of Leonardo's life and times. He does a superb job of surmising the many missing chapters in Leonardo's life, including how long he must have spent in jail on a sodomy charge, or how he must have reacted to the many wars that raged across Renaissance Italy, or indeed what it was like to actually be Leonardo: bewhiskered, sometimes brightly dressed but more often shabby, his sexuality a matter for speculation then and now, in turns arrogant, haughty, or humble until finally, at the (then advanced) age of 64, he finally wore himself out. There are more scholarly and more thoroughly documented biographies of Leonardo available, but none will bring him to life so well as *Becoming Leonardo*. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. *Bringing Leonardo To Life* By Jay Byrd Unless you are an art history major, Leonardo da Vinci may not be someone whose life sounds exciting. Wrong! Author Mike Lankford explores the world the artist lived in realistic detail and with a passion for the genius of the man, his work, and the fascinating people who entered his life and sponsored his work. This non-fiction reads like a novel and one you can't put down. If more biographies were written in such an articulate and engaging style more young people would enjoy history. I highly recommend this book for a fresh look at an old master as well as an engaging, thought provoking read. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. *The Weird Weed of Creativity* By Starved for It As a reader previously unfamiliar with Leonardo's life, I found this a breezy, almost gossipy introduction to both the artist and Renaissance Italy. Mr. Lankford takes his subject seriously but not himself, and it's a refreshing approach. This is a colorful, informative book about a fascinating man. Because this was life lived mostly in obscurity five hundred years ago there are a lot of blanks to fill in, and Lankford, in doing this very imaginatively also takes the reader through a rumination on the creative process.

Why did Leonardo Da Vinci leave so many of his major works uncompleted? Why did this resolute pacifist build war machines for the notorious Borgias? Why did he carry the Mona Lisa with him everywhere he went for decades, yet never quite finish it? Why did he write backwards, and was he really at war with Michelangelo? And was he gay? In a book unlike anything ever written about the Renaissance genius, Mike Lankford explodes every cliché; about Da Vinci and then reconstructs him based on a rich trove of available evidence; bringing to life for the modern reader the man who has been studied by scholars for centuries, yet has remained as mysterious as ever. Seeking to envision Da Vinci without the obscuring residue of historical varnish, the sights, sounds, smells, and feel of Renaissance Italy; usually missing in other biographies; are all here, transporting readers back to a world of war and plague and court intrigue, of viciously competitive famous artists, of murderous tyrants with exquisite tastes in art ... Lankford brilliantly captures Da Vinci's life as the compelling and dangerous adventure it seems to have actually been; fleeing from one sanctuary to the next, somehow surviving in war zones beside his friend Machiavelli, struggling to make art his way or no way at all ... and often paying dearly for those decisions. It is a thrilling and absorbing journey into the life of a ferociously dedicated loner, whose artwork in one way or another represents his noble rebellion, providing inspiration that is timeless. From the Hardcover edition.

“Mike Lankford offers a compelling tour of Leonardo’s life and work, using the known facts as jumping-off points for tantalizing (but still level-headed) speculations and reconstructions. In challenging old clichés and assumptions, and assessing the ambiguous evidence from fresh new angles, he paints one of the most intimate and clear-sighted portraits we’re likely to have of such an elusive artist.” Ross King, author of *Brunelleschi’s Dome*
“With scholarly research and a novelist’s ability to zoom in and paint a truly intimate portrait of one of the greatest creators in human history, *Becoming Leonardo* does what historians long to do, and novelists often struggle to achieve. A book that has the pace, elegance, and authorial omnipresence of a novel, but which will enlighten, rather than annoy, the astute historian.” Noah Charney, best-selling author of *The Art of Forgery*
“A strange, passionate, impressionistic biographical meditation...Lankford has produced a reading experience far more similar to Sebastian de Grazia’s surreal life of Machiavelli, Machiavelli in Hell; and every bit as rewarding.” Open Letters Monthly
“Provocative...Lankford...argues that da Vinci’s human frailty made him the genius we know today.” Quartz
Lankford, while steeped in historical resources,

dates, and places, doesn't get bogged down in dry recitations of facts; he's always trying to get at da Vinci the man..What comes through...are da Vinci's humanity, foibles, and imperfections alongside his gifts. Many books have been written on the life of Leonardo da Vinci...But no one has probed his soul and speculated so profoundly about his actions quite the way Mike Lankford does...Strips away the polish and shows the man with all his peculiarities. Shelf Awareness;A creative biography of the great Renaissance artist and inventor, taking the bare factual outline we have of da Vinci's life and filling it in with 15th-century Italy's society, culture and history; the people and personalities who surrounded da Vinci; and the constancies of human nature. Oregonian;All those things you think you know about Leonardo Da Vinci? You may want to put them aside after you've read;Becoming Leonardo...Peeks into the life and quirks of the master as it takes you back several centuries to Renaissance Italy. Idaho Press-Tribune;Like a jazz musician taking a theme and improvising upon it, [Lankford] evokes aspects of da Vinci's personal and professional life and imagines (and reimagines) them. He doesn't dispute facts; he just asks 'What if?' and his slightly irreverent, totally accessible style only increases our appreciation of this great artist and complex human being. Booklist/American Library Association;Fun and enlightening...;Lankford's unconventional approach provides for a deeper appreciation of a genius. Publishers Weekly;About the Author;Mike Lankford is a graduate of the Iowa Writers Workshop and the author of *Life in Double Time: Confessions of an American Drummer*, a memoir about his years as a white drummer in a black RB band. The book was an editor's pick, and was selected by eight major newspapers, including the Chicago Tribune and the Austin Chronicle, as the best music book of the year.