



Analyzing Copies of Leonardo da Vinci's "Battle of Anghiari"

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Introduction

In 1505 Leonardo da Vinci abandoned a partially completed mural depicting the battle of Anghiari, as well as a cartoon depicting the same subject. Both the mural and the cartoon were eventually lost, but not before some artists had the chance to copy these works. Later on, many copies were made of these early copies. It was the aim of my research to examine these copies, identify important iconography, and research the literature already written on the subject. In doing so, I hoped to reach a better understanding of the copies as well as of Leonardo's original work.

Materials and Method

- The only material used in this project was high resolution images (usually around 600 pixels/inch) of the various copies of *the Battle of Anghiari*.



Figure 1

- I examined these images on the HiperSpace Wall at Calit 2 in order to:
 - Enlarge details to a previously unattainable level of clarity, illuminating differences in iconography and characteristics of each artists' distinct style
 - Study two copies side by side, enabling a direct comparison of specific pieces of iconography



- Reading previously written literature on the subject of *the Battle of Anghiari* in order to establish which pieces of iconography were considered by scholars to be crucial in understanding the copies and their relationship to the original works by Leonardo.

Results

Through noting which features art historians considered important and through examining the images on the HiperSpace Wall, each copy of *the Battle of Anghiari* was divided into twelve different sections based on iconography, including a section for:

- Each individual figure, for example this Milanese cavalryman



Figure 2



Figure 3

- The standard



And other details which vary between the copies such as:

- The presence or absence of a dagger in the hand of the upper figure in the pair struggling on the ground



Each of the main copies of *the Battle of Anghiari* now has an iconographic index containing the twelve general sections, as well as an image of any significant additional iconographic or artistic change.

Results

From the bibliography compiled on the subject of *the Battle of Anghiari* and its copies, an index was made of every iconographic detail mentioned in each article so that the index of images compiled for each copy can easily be cross-referenced with the literature mentioning it.

Conclusions

From my own examinations of the copies of *the Battle of Anghiari*, and the familiarity which this has afforded me with the differences in iconography and the style of the various artists, it seems to me that there could be a traceable progression between many of the versions. Therefore, before making assumptions about when any particular copy was created, said copy should be examined in context with other versions using the iconographic index, so that one might be able to see if any patterns could be established from the changes which occurred between the copies. Also, while of course a few artists must have seen the original cartoon or mural by Leonardo, many of the features previously thought by scholars to have implications as to the composition and degree of finish in Leonardo's work might instead be the results of each artists' imagination and individual style, which can be seen when examining and comparing the many copies of *the Battle of Anghiari*.

Next Steps

- I would like to research specific elements of iconography, such as the turban of the Milanese cavalryman, to see what they might symbolize and if they reveal anything about Leonardo's original intentions for the work
- Follow the work Maurizio Seracini, who is in Florence searching for Leonardo's original mural in the Palazzo Vecchio, and the work of Tatianna Sizonenko who is writing her dissertation on *the Battle of Anghiari*.

References:

- Edelink, Gerard. *Copy of the Battle of Anghiari*, 1660. British Museum, London.
- Unknown artist. *Copy of the Battle of Anghiari*, Seventeenth Century (?). Uffizi, Florence.
- Edelink, Gerard (?). *Copy of the Battle of Anghiari*, Eighteenth Century, Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge.