

In November of 1994 the art world was astounded when Christie's auction house sold Leonardo Da Vinci's *Codex Hammer* to an anonymous American buyer for almost \$31 million. Two days later the buyer revealed himself to be Mr William Gates, the founder and president of Microsoft Corporation, who outbid the Italian government for possession of the *Codex*. What made the sale even more astonishing was the fact that Mr Gates was not known to be a collector of manuscripts; this was his first acquisition, and the *Codex* itself was hardly unique. While just 12 of Leonardo's paintings still survive, about 5,000 pages of his manuscripts are known; but the *Codex Hammer*, a mere 72 pages of notes and sketches, was the last of Leonardo's manuscripts in private hands. Bill Gates knew that this would be his only opportunity to own something that belonged to Leonardo Da Vinci, the great genius of the Italian Renaissance. Bill Gates would not be outbid; he had to have the manuscript and was willing to drive the bidding even higher to gain possession of it. At first this might seem incongruous or even naive on Mr Gates's part—another case of a rich man spending his money foolishly on antiquities he neither understands nor needs. But there is more to it than that. Bill Gates had to own something of Leonardo's. He wanted to touch the parchment, to feel its irregularities, to gaze lovingly at the words and drawings, to sense the faded ink inscribed by Leonardo almost 500 years ago, because in doing so he might gain some insight into the genius that was Leonardo.

Consider the place the two men occupy in their respective societies. Leonardo was widely acclaimed in his own time as a universal genius. His fertile mind spanned a number of disciplines; he was an architect, a musician, a natural philosopher, a scientist, an engineer, and an inventor, but above all, he was an artist. Dr Armand Hammer, the previous owner of the *Codex*, said, "Leonardo approached science with an artist's eye and art with a scientist's mind." Bill Gates is a gifted computer programmer who, by a mixture of serendipity and business acumen, built Microsoft Corporation into the world's premier high-tech company. Our society so values Mr Gates's product that it has made him, at age 39, the wealthiest man in America. Imagine that you could view each man's greatest creation. To view Leonardo's, you would have to travel to a small chapel in Italy where you would see his magnificent fresco, "The Last Supper." Bill Gates's greatest creation is the computer program DOS and its successor, Windows. If you saw them in analog form they would appear as an almost endless series of zeroes and ones. Clever programming, but is it art? Leonardo Da Vinci lived 500 years ago. Five hundred years from now Microsoft

Corporation will be long forgotten, and Bill Gates will be remembered as the person who once owned Leonardo's *Codex*.

We live in a society that values science above all else, yet we instinctively know that the greatest scientists are also artists. If you attend a lecture given by a gifted colleague and he shows a beautifully executed surgical procedure or a particularly successful prosthetic result, what adjectives do you use to describe it? Beautiful, exquisite, stunning, magnificent—you could be in a museum describing a great work of art. Insurance companies and managed care programs would deny our art and reduce our work to a series of numbers and codes. They would have us become latter-day pseudoscientists who, instead of counting the angels on the head of a pin, count the numbers of microbes in periodontal pockets. It is this Philistinism we must resist and, like Leonardo, let art infuse our lives and guide our work.

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