



Presents

# THE LOST LEONARDO

**A film by Andreas Koefoed**  
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# THE LOST LEONARDO

The whole story of the most talked about painting of the century.

## SYNOPSIS

THE LOST LEONARDO is the inside story behind the Salvator Mundi, the most expensive painting ever sold at \$450 million. From the moment the painting is bought for \$1175 at a shady New Orleans auction house, and the restorer discovers masterful Renaissance brushstrokes under the heavy varnish of its cheap restoration, the Salvator Mundi's fate is determined by an insatiable quest for fame, money and power. As its price soars, so do questions about its authenticity: is this painting really by Leonardo da Vinci?

Unravelling the hidden agendas of the richest men and most powerful art institutions in the world, THE LOST LEONARDO reveals how vested interests in the Salvator Mundi are of such tremendous power that truth becomes secondary.

## THE BEGINNING

In 2008, the world's most distinguished Leonardo Da Vinci experts gathered around an easel at the National Gallery in London to examine a mysterious painting – an unassuming Salvator Mundi (Latin for Savior of the World). Despite not seeking experts' formal opinions, the National Gallery presents the Salvator Mundi as an autograph<sup>1</sup> Leonardo da Vinci painting in their 2011 blockbuster exhibition, setting in motion one of the most beguiling and perplexing art stories of our time.

Filmed over a three-year period, THE LOST LEONARDO meticulously unveils the whole story behind the Salvator Mundi and unfolds as a real-life thriller

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<sup>1</sup> An autograph painting is one which is thought to have been painted entirely by the specified artist, rather than being, for instance, partly, or wholly, by studio assistants. (The National Gallery, London)

featuring major characters from the world of art, finance, and politics including the restorer Dianne Modestini – who speaks in the film about her role in the evolution of the painting for the first time.

Director Andreas Koefoed positions this stranger-than-fiction story squarely at the intersection of capitalism and myth-making, posing the question: is this multi-million dollar painting actually by Leonardo, or do certain powerful players simply want it to be?

## **DIRECTOR'S NOTES**

**By Andreas Koefoed**

“This is a film about the incredible journey of a painting, the Salvator Mundi, the Saviour of the World, possibly by Leonardo da Vinci. It is a true story, yet a fairytale worthy of H.C. Andersen: A damaged painting, neglected for centuries, is fortuitously rediscovered and soon after praised as a long-lost masterpiece of divine beauty. At its peak in the spotlight, it is decried as a fake, but what is revealed most of all is that the world around it is fake, driven by cynical powers and money.

The story lays bare the mechanisms of the human psyche, our longing for the divine, and our post-factual capitalist societies in which money and power override the truth. The painting becomes a prism through which we can understand ourselves and the world we live in. To this day there is no conclusive proof that the painting is – or is not – a da Vinci and as long as there is a doubt, people, institutions, and states can use it for the purpose that serves them the most.

Making this film has been a huge team effort. The producers, writers, editor, and DOP have worked side-by-side and devoted so much of themselves to the project. For that I am deeply grateful. It has been a fantastic voyage into secret worlds that are otherwise entirely inaccessible. Worlds in which anything can

be bought and sold, where prestige, power, and money play out beneath the beautiful surface of the art world.

The main character is the painting. Brooding over it is its restorer, Dianne Modestini, who began working on it just after losing her husband, Mario, a world-famous restorer himself. For Modestini the restoration becomes a symbiotic process of mourning in which the painting and Mario at times become one. After she lets go of the painting, it is locked away in a freeport somewhere, leaving Dianne feeling alone, and criticized for her work. Did her restoration go as far as to transform a damaged painting into a Leonardo? She is forced to defend herself and her integrity, and seek closure on the painting and her grief.

What fascinates -- and disillusions -- me is that art is being used for economic speculation and as a token in political games. Art is a beautiful manifestation of human feelings and expressions throughout history. In my view, art belongs to humanity. Instead of being publicly accessible, it is hidden away in freeports and used for cynical and speculative purposes.

None of the prominent institutions involved in the story – The National Gallery, Christie's, the Louvre, or states of France and Saudi Arabia – wanted to talk, perhaps unsurprisingly. The supposedly independent scientific and scholarly approach to the painting is under enormous political pressure. In the end, not only the painting is lost, but also the truth itself. The painting, a product of the very Renaissance that valued freedom of science and art, ultimately becomes a victim of vested interests and power games. As Jerry Saltz says in the film, the story is “a telling fable of our time.”

I hope the film will engage, surprise and intrigue the viewers who themselves become detectives in the story, leaving them with a question: What do I believe to be the truth?”

# CHARACTERS

## **DIANNE MODESTINI – Restorer (USA)**

One of the top art conservation professionals in the world, Modestini restored the Salvator Mundi over several years in the period between 2005 and 2017 and became convinced the work was from the hand of Leonardo da Vinci. Dianne Modestini comes under intense scrutiny but continues to fight for the attribution.

## **ROBERT SIMON – Art Dealer (USA)**

Together with Alexander Parish, Simon purchased the Salvator Mundi in 2005 for \$1175 and was the key person in brokering its Leonardo da Vinci attribution.

## **ALEXANDER PARISH – Sleeper Hunter (USA)**

Parish is a sleeper hunter who spotted the Salvator Mundi in a New Orleans auction in 2005. He purchased the painting together with Robert Simon for \$1175.

## **WARREN ADELSON – Art Dealer (USA)**

Adelson becomes the third partner in the Salvator Mundi consortium following the National Gallery's Leonardo da Vinci attribution and was in charge of selling the painting.

## **YVES BOUVIER – Freeport Owner and Businessman (Switzerland)**

Bouvier purchased the Salvator Mundi from Warren Adelson for \$83 million and resold it to Russian billionaire Dmitry Rybolovlev for \$127.5 million, making a \$44.5 million profit in less than two days.

## **LUKE SYSON – Curator (2003-2012), National Gallery in London (UK)**

Syson invited the Leonardo da Vinci experts to look at the Salvator Mundi at the National Gallery. Syson makes the controversial decision to display the Salvator Mundi as a newly discovered Leonardo in his 2011 blockbuster exhibition.

**MARTIN KEMP – Leonardo da Vinci Expert, Oxford (UK)**

Kemp was one of the five experts invited by Luke Syson to examine the Salvator Mundi. A leading authority on the life and work of Leonardo Da Vinci, Kemp is a champion of the attribution.

**MARIA TERESA FIORIO – Leonardo da Vinci Expert, Milan (Italy)**

One of the five experts invited by Luke Syson to examine the Salvator Mundi, Fiorio is on the fence about the attribution and believes the poor condition of the painting forbids conclusive attribution.

**FRANK ZÖLLNER – Leonardo da Vinci Expert, Leipzig (Germany)**

A leading Leonardo scholar, Zöllner believes the painting is most likely by Leonardo's workshop but with the involvement of the master. He is critical of Dianne Modestini's extensive restoration.

**JACQUES FRANCK – Artist and Restorer (France)**

A specialist in Leonardo da Vinci painting technique, Franck believes the Salvator Mundi is by Leonardo's workshop. Franck writes a letter to the French president Emmanuel Macron warning against the Louvre exhibiting the painting with full Leonardo attribution.

**EVAN BEARD – Global Art Services Executive, Bank of America, New York (USA)**

One of the top bankers involved in the art market, Beard is a true Salvator Mundi insider.

**GEORGINA ADAM – Writer and Journalist (UK)**

Art market specialist, Adam writes for The Art Newspaper and the Financial Times, and is the author of *Dark Side of the Boom: The Excesses of the Art Market in the 21st Century*.

**BRADLEY HOPE – Investigative Journalist (USA)**

A former Wall Street Journal journalist based in London, Hope is the author of *Blood and Oil: Mohammed Bin Salman's Ruthless Quest for Global Power*.

**ALEXANDRA BREGMAN – Writer (USA)**

Author of “The Bouvier Affair” and art world insider.

**KENNY SCHACHTER – Art Critic and Writer (USA)**

Art world renegade and writer, Schachter is cynical about the Salvator Mundi and the art market at large.

**JERRY SALTZ – Art Critic and Writer (USA)**

Pulitzer award winning art critic, Saltz is one of the most vocal critics of the Salvator Mundi.

**STÉPHANE LACROIX – Associate Professor, Sciences Po (France)**

One of the leading Middle East experts in France.

**ALISON COLE – Editor, The Art Newspaper (UK)**

Cole wrote extensively about the Salvator Mundi, and was the first to reveal the existence of the secret Louvre book.

**ANTOINE HARARI – Investigative Journalist (Switzerland)**

Investigative Journalist who authored the explosive Heidi News expose on the Bouvier affair.

**DAVID KIRKPATRICK – The New York Times Journalist (USA)**

Revealed MBS was the buyer of the Salvator Mundi following the Christie’s auction.

**ROBERT KING WITTMAN – Founder of the FBI Art Crime Team (USA)**

Wittman was one of the FBI's top investigators in cases involving art theft and art fraud.

**DOUG PATTESON – ex CIA (USA)**

Former CIA operative and intelligence world insider.

**BRUCE LAMARCHE – Yves Bouvier’s business partner (Switzerland)**

A close associate of Yves Bouvier, Lamarche is a freeport insider.

**DIDIER RYKNER – Editor, La Tribune de l'Art (France)**

Investigating what happened behind the scenes of the Salvator Mundi no-show at the Louvre in Paris, Rykner finds and publishes the secret Louvre book in France.

**BERND LINDEMANN – Director (2004- 2016), Gemäldegalerie in Berlin (Germany)**

Lindemann was offered the Salvator Mundi for the Gemäldegalerie in 2012 but did not wish to acquire it due to its poor condition and attribution questions.

## **THE SALVATOR MUNDI TIMELINE**

### **c. 1500**

Salvator Mundi is commissioned, possibly for Louis XII of France after his conquests of Genoa and Milan. There is no evidence from Leonardo da Vinci’s lifetime that he painted it himself.

### **1900**

The first certain sighting of the Salvator Mundi, when it is purchased by a wealthy textile manufacturer, Sir Francis Cook. Sir Francis Cook bought the painting – as a work by Leonardo’s follower Bernardino Luini – for £120 in 1900 from Sir Charles Robinson, who was then Surveyor of Queen Victoria’s Pictures. Art historians are still not sure of the Salvator Mundi’s whereabouts between c. 1500 and 1900. There is a photo of the painting from 1911 with an old and amateurish restoration which makes it difficult to recognize it as the same painting.

### **1958**

After having hung in the Cook family house, The Doughty House in Richmond, until 1958, the painting is sold at Sotheby’s in London to an American businessman, Warren Kuntz, for £45.



## **2005**

Warren Kuntz and his wife Minnie lived in New Orleans. After their deaths the painting was inherited by their nephew Basil Clovis Hendry Sr. and he kept it in his house in Baton Rouge until his death in 2005. It was then put for sale at New Orleans Auction where it is discovered by the sharp and speculative eye of Alex Parish, a New York art historian and dealer. Parish partners with Robert B. Simon to buy the Salvator Mundi for just \$1175.

## **2006**

Restorer Dianne Modestini begins working on the Salvator Mundi.

## **2008**

The National Gallery in London asks five Leonardo experts to look at the Salvator Mundi over an afternoon. During the informal conversation, the scholars are open to the painting being by Leonardo, but they are not asked to examine the painting thoroughly or express formal opinions.

## **2011**

The National Gallery in London presents the Salvator Mundi as an autograph Leonardo in their blockbuster exhibition Leonardo da Vinci: Painter at the Court of Milan.

## **2012**

The Dallas Museum of Art attempts to acquire the painting, but cannot raise sufficient funds.

## **2013**

Russian oligarch Dmitry Rybolovlev buys the Salvator Mundi on May 3<sup>rd</sup> for \$127.5 million. Rybolovlev later learns that his art adviser Yves Bouvier had acquired the painting the day before from a consortium led by Robert Simon in a private sale brokered by Sotheby's. Bouvier paid the consortium \$83 million before flipping the painting to Rybolovlev at a markup of \$44.5 million.

## **2015**

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, Bouvier is indicted in Monaco on charges of fraud and complicity in money laundering. According to Rybolovlev, Bouvier had defrauded him of more than \$1 billion, often reselling paintings to him in a matter of days at markups as high as 70%. The dispute over Rybolovlev's collection of 38 paintings spawned civil and criminal litigation in at least five jurisdictions around the world – Singapore, Switzerland, France, Monaco, and the United States. The legal battle is still going on today.

## **2017**

Ahead of its auction, Christie's create an extensive marketing campaign for the Salvator Mundi, sending the painting on a tour to Hong Kong, London, San Francisco, and New York, where it sells on November 15<sup>th</sup> for a world record auction price of \$450,300,000. After the auction, The New York Times reveals that the Salvator Mundi's buyer was the crown prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammad bin Salman.

## **2018**

The painting's first public appearance is scheduled at the Louvre Abu Dhabi in September but the show is cancelled at the last minute. The unveiling is postponed indefinitely with no explanation given. The painting is sent instead to the Centre for Research and Restoration of the Museums of France (C2RMF) for a scientific examination.

## **2019**

In October, the Louvre in Paris opens their blockbuster Leonardo da Vinci exhibition to mark the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Renaissance master's death. The Salvator Mundi fails to show up despite the Louvre requesting a loan.

## **2020**

The Art Newspaper reports on a secret 46-page booklet, "Léonard de Vinci: Le Salvator Mundi," prepared by the Louvre and printed in December 2019. The publication of the book was cancelled when the Salvator Mundi loan was

refused but some copies of the book were purchased at the Louvre bookshop. A Louvre spokesperson confirms that “the book was prepared in case the Louvre got the chance to present the painting. As this has not been the case, it is not going to be published.” The booklet provides detailed conclusions of the Louvre’s scientific examinations, and concludes: “The results of the historical and scientific study ... allow us to confirm the attribution of the work to Leonardo da Vinci.” The entire content of the secret book is published by the French art newspaper, *La tribune de l'art*, in April 2021.

# **FILMMAKERS**

Directed by  
**ANDREAS KOEFOED**

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**CHRISTOPH JÖRG & ANDREAS DALSGAARD**

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Editor  
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Special Thanks  
**BEN LEWIS**

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ELIZABETH RADSHAW, JACK OLIVER**

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ALBA COLLIS, HOT DOCS PARTNERS, DIAMOND DOCS**

# BIOGRAPHIES

## **DIRECTOR Andreas Koefoed**

Andreas Koefoed is a film director, born in 1979 in Copenhagen. He graduated in documentary direction from The National Film School of Denmark in 2009 and holds a BA in Sociology from Copenhagen University. Koefoed has directed documentary films since 2001 with a focus on character driven human interest stories, among them *Ballroom Dancer*, *The Arms Drop* and *At Home in the World*. His films have been selected for film festivals across the world, winning numerous awards including IDFA, CPH:DOX, Full Frame, AFI Docs, Sheffield Doc Fest and Tribeca.

## **PRODUCER Christoph Jörg**

Christoph Jörg is the founder and managing director of Pumpernickel Films in Paris. He has produced a wide range of award-winning documentary features and series, working with a line-up of talented and acclaimed international filmmakers.

His recent films include Sundance Grand Jury Prize winner *One Child Nation*, released by Amazon Studios, and *Winnie*, Best Cinematography Award in Sundance. Jörg has also produced *Trump and the FBI*, *The Lovers and the Despot*, *In Amazon We Trust*, *The Silicon Valley Project*, *Battle for Rio*, *Ingrid Betancourt: Six Years In The Jungle*, *Be Like Others*, *Love Crimes of Kabul* among many other films.

He previously worked as a Commissioning Editor at ARTE FRANCE (1994-2009) and ZDF/Das Kleine Fernsehspiel (1990-1993).

## **PRODUCER Andreas Dalsgaard**

Andreas Dalsgaard is a film producer, writer & director. He has directed a number of award winning documentaries working with some of the most acclaimed producers and creatives in the business. Dalsgaard is the founding partner and CEO of Elk Film, a Copenhagen based documentary production company.

Andreas Dalsgaard has directed and produced documentaries for almost two decades, among them *The War Show*, *The Great Game*, *The Human Scale*, *Life Is Sacred*, *Bogota Change*, and *Afghan Muscles*. The films have been shown at festivals all over the world, and have won numerous awards at major festivals including Venice Film Festival, American Film Institute Grand Prix, Göteborg Film Festival, Danish Critics Association and Al Jazeera Fest. Dalsgaard graduated as a fiction director from the National Danish Film School of Denmark in 2009, and also holds a BA in Anthropology from Aarhus University and Paris VII.

## **ABOUT ELK FILM AND PUMPERNICKEL FILMS**

Elk Film is a boutique production company based in Copenhagen. Dedicated to developing and producing ambitious films for global audiences, Elk Film blends the best of Scandinavian talent with leading European and international partners and financing. Specializing in high profile stories backed by elaborate research and finely crafted narratives, Elk's team continues to expand creative boundaries in filmmaking.

The company was founded in 2013 by CEO Andreas Dalsgaard and Editor Nicolás Nørgaard Staffolani and today encompasses a dedicated team of producers, production management, equipment rental services and post-production facilities.

Pumpernickel Films is an independent production company based in Paris and New York. Through well founded business relationships, we produce high quality and innovative films for Cinema and Television.

We constantly explore possibilities for co-productions. We build distribution strategies and creatively develop films with an eye on maximizing the position of each project in the domestic and international markets.

## **FUNDING**

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