



Buongiorno! Io sono Mona Lisa. Que? Non mi comprendi? Non mi capisci?

OK, I'll speak in English. I'm very good at English, I even have the Proficiency! I used to speak with my friend, Queen Elisabeth the 1<sup>st</sup>!

Without a doubt, I am a celebrity, the most famous painting in the world! So many people have written about me, have sung about me! I'm a Guinness World Record Holder as well! \$660 million dollars were paid for my insurance valuation!

Now, what is it that makes me so special? It's about my smile, isn't it? I drive everybody crazy with that mysterious, enigmatic smile...

My pose is another unique characteristic. It's half bust, very different from the portraits made before me, which were very static, lifeless and formal! My master, Leonardo, turned my head towards you, so that it seems that, wherever you go, I'm following you with my eyes!

I'm a portrait of a real person - her name was Lisa Gherardini - she was the wife of a wealthy cloth merchant from Florence.

In English they call me Mona Lisa. Mona is a contraction of the word Madonna, meaning 'my lady'. So, actually, Mona Lisa means Mrs Lisa.

In Italian they call me 'La Gioconda', which means 'happy lady'.

The man who painted me was **Leonardo da Vinci**, a real genius! Apart from a painter and a sculptor he was an architect, an inventor, a scientist, an engineer, a musician. He was a gifted person, a polymath, a 'homo universalis'.

The technique I was painted with is known as '**sfumato**' from the Italian word 'fumo', meaning smoke. Sfumato was used to soften the outlines of my portrait. It also make me emerge out of the darkness - really impressive, aren't I?

Do you know somebody stole me in 1911? Not 1, not 2, but 60 detectives were hired to look for me! The thief, **Vincenzo Peruggia** entered the building as a guest and hid in the broom closet and walked out with me under his coat after the museum had closed. He wanted to take me to Italy! Mama mia! I returned to my home, Louvre, in 1914.

I influenced a lot of other painters! I'm a source of inspiration for so many artists! I exist in millions of multiples around the world! They even make caricatures out of me!

But I don't get angry, because I'm a lady, I'm Mona Lisa!



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