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Summary Article: **Madonna of the Rocks**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Title of two paintings, both of which have been attributed to Leonardo da Vinci, one in the Louvre, Paris, the other in the National Gallery, London. Arguments about who exactly painted them – Leonardo or assistants under his direction – are still unresolved, though it is generally believed that the National Gallery version is by Leonardo himself.

On 25 April 1483 Leonardo, in partnership with Ambrogio da Predis (c.1455–after 1508) and the latter's half-brother Evangelista (died after 1490), contracted to paint a work for the confraternity of the Immaculate Conception in Milan, for the chapel adjoining their Church of S Francesco. The centrepiece was to be painted by 'the Florentine' (Leonardo), the side panels by da Predis. Between 1490 and 1494 the artists claimed more pay. Argument dragged on for years and the picture was reclaimed.

In 1506 the confraternity agreed to pay an extra sum but the work finally delivered seems to have been a different version from that originally painted. The first version is generally considered to be the painting now in the Louvre. A question on which there have been different opinions is whether the National Gallery picture, which was definitely that finally accepted and hung in the confraternity's chapel, was by Leonardo or his assistant. Comparison with the wings of the altarpiece by da Predis, also in the National Gallery, shows so different a level of skill as to lead to the conclusion that the London *Madonna* is indeed a mature work by Leonardo himself.

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