



Da Vinci's Ghost: Genius, Obsession, and How Leonardo Created the World in His Own Image

By Toby Lester

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In *Da Vinci's Ghost*, critically acclaimed historian Toby Lester tells the story of the world's most iconic image, the Vitruvian Man, and sheds surprising new light on the artistry and scholarship of Leonardo da Vinci, one of history's most fascinating figures.

Deftly weaving together art, architecture, history, theology, and much else, *Da Vinci's Ghost* is a first-rate intellectual enchantment.”—Charles Mann, author of *1493*

Da Vinci didn't summon Vitruvian Man out of thin air. He was inspired by the idea originally formulated by the Roman architect Vitruvius, who suggested that the human body could be made to fit inside a circle, long associated with the divine, and a square, related to the earthly and secular. To place a man inside those shapes was to imply that the human body could indeed be a blueprint for the workings of the universe. Da Vinci elevated Vitruvius' idea to exhilarating heights when he set out to do something unprecedented, if the human body truly reflected the cosmos, he reasoned, then studying its anatomy more thoroughly than had ever been attempted before—peering deep into body and soul—might grant him an almost godlike perspective on the makeup of the world.

Written with the same narrative flair and intellectual sweep as Lester's award-winning first book, the “almost unbearably thrilling” (Simon Winchester) *Fourth Part of the World*, and beautifully illustrated with Da Vinci's drawings, *Da Vinci's Ghost* follows Da Vinci on his journey to understanding the secrets of the Vitruvian man. It captures a pivotal time in Western history when the Middle Ages were giving way to the Renaissance, when art, science, and philosophy were rapidly converging, and when it seemed possible that a single human being might embody—and even understand—the nature of the universe.

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Editorial Review

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Almost everyone is familiar with the Vitruvian Man, an image created by Renaissance painter and inventor Leonardo da Vinci depicting a disrobed four-armed, four-legged man framed in a circle and square staring stolidly out at the viewer. The drawing, created by Da Vinci in 1487, has appeared on everything from coffee mugs to spacecraft and is often used by alternative-medicine purveyors as a symbol of homeopathic wellness. Few people may know, however, what motivated the artist to draft the illustration or what a rich history lies behind its creation. Lester, whose previous acclaimed book, *The Fourth Part of the World* (2009), told the riveting true story of the map that gave America its name, here provides an equally compelling survey of the social and artistic influences leading to Vitruvian Man's creation. Along the way, Lester dissects the popular Renaissance notion that man's God-given, perfect proportions justified using him as a template for architecture and paints a rare, vivid portrait of a younger, enthusiastic Leonardo, who promoted this idea. Highly recommended. --Carl Hays

Review

"Da Vinci's Ghost is a . . . complex mosaic, combining centuries and layers of relevant religion, architecture, art, early science and personalities, plus a rich variety of historic illustrations, to trace the influences that may have led Da Vinci to that moment when he penned the famous drawing."

—*USA Today*

"This is an enthralling book about a famous drawing and its equally famous creator, who becomes disarmingly, even heartbreakingly human in the author's sympathetic hands."

—*The American Scholar*

"Drawing on history, art, astronomy, geometry, geography and religion, Lester skillfully unpacks Vitruvian Man to reveal a vast landscape of human thought and achievement."

—*Dallas Morning News*

About the Author

Toby Lester is the author of *The Fourth Part of the World* and a contributing editor for the *Atlantic*.

Actor Stephen Hoye is a graduate of London's Guildhall and a veteran of London's West End. An award-winning audiobook narrator, he has won thirteen AudioFile Earphones Awards and two prestigious APA Audie Awards.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Ann Gonzalez:

This *Da Vinci's Ghost: Genius, Obsession, and How Leonardo Created the World in His Own Image* book is absolutely not ordinary book, you have after that it the world is in your hands. The benefit you will get by reading this book is information inside this publication incredible fresh, you will get information which is

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Michael Short:

A lot of people always spent their free time to vacation as well as go to the outside with them friends and family or their friend. Are you aware? Many a lot of people spent they will free time just watching TV, or playing video games all day long. If you need to try to find a new activity this is look different you can read any book. It is really fun in your case. If you enjoy the book that you read you can spent all day every day to reading a book. The book Da Vinci's Ghost: Genius, Obsession, and How Leonardo Created the World in His Own Image it is extremely good to read. There are a lot of folks that recommended this book. They were enjoying reading this book. If you did not have enough space bringing this book you can buy the actual e-book. You can m0ore easily to read this book out of your smart phone. The price is not to fund but this book offers high quality.

Leona Hicks:

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Karina McDermott:

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