

Young Leonardo

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“Young Leonardo”

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (imagined, 1819)

Oil on canvas, 88,5 x 140 cm (framed)

Following his 1818 commission for The Death of Leonardo da Vinci, Ingres is imagined to have embarked on a more personal and visionary study: Young Leonardo, portraying the Renaissance master at the height of his youth and inventive imagination. Arms outstretched toward the heavens, Leonardo is shown poised between aspiration and possibility, surrounded by delicate wings of bamboo and linen — a symbolic nod to his lifelong fascination with flight and mechanical invention.

Rendered in meticulous oil on canvas, the painting combines the technical precision and idealized forms for which Ingres was renowned with a lyrical energy that hints at imagination unbound. Each fold of fabric, each subtle shadow, reflects the Neoclassical discipline, yet the composition radiates a poetic dynamism that elevates the figure to a near-mythical stature.

The background features a softly glowing Tuscany sky at dawn, suggesting the birth of new ideas and the endless horizon of human potential. Leonardo is depicted not merely as a painter, but as a visionary inventor and dreamer, embodying the universal genius that Ingres revered.

Though entirely hypothetical, Young Leonardo reads as a natural extension of Ingres' admiration for the Renaissance master, blending historical homage with creative speculation. In this imagined work, the viewer glimpses the youthful spirit that would later give rise to some of the most extraordinary achievements in art and science.





More about Ingres

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867) was a French Neoclassical master celebrated for his precise draftsmanship, refined lines, and devotion to classical ideals. A student of Jacques-Louis David, he blended rigorous academic technique with a personal, almost obsessive pursuit of perfection in form. His portraits, such as *La Grande Odalisque* and *Portrait of Madame Moitessier*, reveal both meticulous detail and a subtle sensuality, while his history paintings reflect his deep admiration for antiquity and the Renaissance.

Though often in conflict with Romantic trends of his time, Ingres remained steadfast in his belief that drawing was the soul of art. His disciplined approach and commitment to harmony influenced generations of artists, securing his place as one of the defining figures of 19th-century French painting. Revered and sometimes criticized for his uncompromising vision, he left a legacy that bridges the grandeur of the past with the evolving sensibilities of modern art.



Self portrait at the age of 24

"Drawing is the integrity of art."

- Ingres