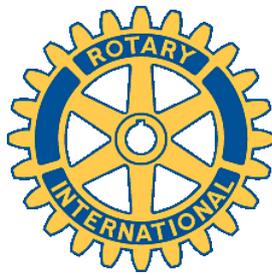




Leonardo da Vinci
(1452-1519)



Rotary Club Firenze

"Leonardo da Vinci International Award"

It the year 1973 the Florence Rotary Club, approaching the 50th anniversary of its foundation, decided to found a prize to be awarded to young scholars who intended, also with the aid of the prize, to continue their studies and work in their particular field even though they had already acquired special merit.

To confirm the precise intention of making the prize open to every artistic, scientific and literary discipline, it was decided to name it after Leonardo da Vinci, who symbolizes the most elevated expressions of the human spirit and whose genius has left profound marks in many fields of knowledge and culture.

Inspired by the universally renowned figure of Leonardo, it was decided to render the prize appropriate to one of the main Rotarian vocations, that of internationality seeking and obtaining the ready, enthusiastic adherence of other European Rotary Clubs. The first was the Tours Rotary Club which is in the region where Leonardo ended his days, followed by the Rotary Clubs of Athens and Vienna. Thus the prize, which was inspired by the greatest cultural intentions, is formed of links initially shaped in light of the knowledge and culture of Athens, then the civilizations of the Florentine and French Renaissances and finally the culture of Central Europe with Vienna as its capital.

At the end of 1974 this "INTERNATIONAL LEONARDO DA VINCI AWARD" was founded. A special commission of the President of Florence Rotary Club, promoter of the prize, and composed of the Presidents of Athens, Tours and Vienna Rotary Clubs had provided, among other things, precise statutory

characteristics: the amount to be awarded to the winner at the time was to be two million lire or its equivalent in foreign currency. Today the amount is approximately ten thousand euros. The awarding of the prize takes place annually in the cities of the participating Rotary Clubs: Florence, Tours, Athens, Vienna. The nomination of the prize winner is made by an eminent personality of unquestioned international repute, selected, like the discipline, by a panel of judges formed by the Rotary Club organizing the ceremony. In this way is an absolute guarantee of the merits of the prizewinner and, at the same time, the distinguished figure of the prize giver.

*The first award ceremony took place in **Florence** on the 13th of April **1975**: the prize-winner was the American painter Ben Long, nominated by the Maestro Pietro Annigoni. In the "Salone dei Duecento" in Palazzo Vecchio the prize was solemnly awarded by the past international President Giampaolo Lang.*

*In **1976**, in **Tours**, the Count of Paris conferred the prize on the young Renaissance art historian Jean Guillaume, pupil of Andre Chastel, with a ceremony in the castle of Amboise, residence of Francis the First, patron of Leonardo.*

*In **1977**, the mayor of **Athens** awarded the prize to two young sculptors, Stravos Valasakis and Constantin Palaiologos, nominated by Professor George Rallis, Minister of Education.*

*In **1978**, Dr. Otto Prohaska, inventor of a multiple integrated probe for cortico-cerebral research, received the prize in **Vienna** from the President of the Republic Rudolf Kirchschlager. The ceremony was held in Palais Schwarzenberg, where the Minister for Scientific Research, Mrs Herta Firnberg, was also present.*

The first cycle has come to an end and the perfect success of the four encounters, the consequent widespread enthusiasm, not to mention the fraternal friendship which, by now, united the four Rotary Clubs, meant that other frontiers were crossed. The cultural importance of the prize, the possibility of achieving a common, useful, effective and significant initiative, the symbolic value of a

pleasant and esagerly-awaited annual meeting among Rotarians from various European countries, induced other European Rotary Clubs to request their adherence to the Leonardo da Vinci Prize.

Thus, other Rotary Clubs joined the four founding members in the following order: Madrid in 1979, Brussels in 1983, London and Wurzburg in 1984 and Amsterdam in 1987 until, unanimously but with great regret, it was decided not to accept other members, to limit the already demanding organizational load.

*The second cycle began with the prize's return to **Florence**: the music critic Leonardo Pinzauti proposed the fifteen-year-old violinist Alberto Bologni, pupil of Maestro Sandro Materassi, a well-known name among violinists worldwide. The ceremony took place, once more, in the "Salone dei Duecento" in Palazzo Vecchio, on the 21st of April **1979**.*

*The choice made in **1980** by **Tours** Rotary Club was of particular scientific importance: in the Chateau d'Artigny the prize was awarded to the young virologist Claude Nodian for setting-up a diagnostic test and vaccine against infectious hepatitis.*

*In **1981**, **Madrid** Rotary Club awarded the prize to the geologist and hydrologist Ferdinando Lopez Vera, author, among other things, of an interesting "Atlas of the hydric resources of Latin America".*

*On the 22nd of May **1982** in **Athens**, in the Chamber of the Senate, the ex-President of the Republic, Constantin Tsatos, conferred the prize on the twelve-year-old pianist Dimitri Sgourus whose reputation had already crossed the borders of Greece as he had, among other activities, performed in New York with the National Symphony Orchestra.*

*In **1983**, in **Vienna**, the President of the Republic awarded the prize in the ceremony hall of Palais Schwarzenberg, to Dr. Ingeborg Hochmair Desover for important studies and discoveries in the development and testing of cochlear protheses.*

*On the 28th of April 1984 in Palazzo Vecchio, the Mayor of **Florence** awarded the prize to the nuclear physicist Giovanni Bonvicini, nominated by Professor Antonino Zichichi who had him at the European Centre for Nuclear Research in Geneva, first as a student and then as a prized member of a team engaged in experiments in "wide-spectrum neutrino beams"*

*The ex-Prime Minister of France, Michel Debré, on the 25th of May 1985, in the Jean Ockeghem Centre in **Tours**, conferred the prize on the architect Patrick Blettery, author of a revolutionary project for an underwater city: a fantastic project, in Leonardo da Vinci's style.*

*In **Brussels** on the 24th of May 1986, in the auditorium of the Palais des Académies, the Nobel Prize winner Professor Ylia Prigogine, awarded two physicists: Doctor Baidyanath Misra, of Indian nationality, a graduate of the University of Delhi who since nine years run a Department of the International Institutes of Physics and Chemistry, founded by Ernest Solvay as well as a Belgian, Doctor Yves Elskens, teacher at the Catholic University of Louvain. The research of the two prizewinners, completed and specialized also at various universities in the United States, has contributed to the study of "irreversible processes in statistical mechanics"*

*On the 31st of May 1987, **London** celebrated the 13th Leonardo Prize in an atmosphere and a setting which enhanced the traditions of the Rotarians on the other side of the Channel. The high point of the award ceremony was when Sir Yehudi Menuhin, a symbolic individual who aroused enthusiasm during his whole career as a violinist, presented the young Scottish percussionist, Evelyn Glennie. The Lord Mayor, Sir David Rowe, conferred the prize on the young musician who, a few days later, was to perform with Sir George Solti and Murray Perahia in Bartok's sonata for two pianos and percussion.*

*Particularly interesting was the awarding of the prize in **Wurzburg**, where on the 4th of June 1988 Professor T.H. Schiebler introduced Doctor Dietrich Lorke from Hamburg, an anatomopathologist, who devoted his research to growth disturbances and development of the brain. In the stupendous "Kaisersaal" of the*

Wurzbürger Residenz frescoed by Tiepolo, the prize was awarded by Professor W. Wild, Minister of Culture and Science of Bavaria.

*In 1989 the prize returned to **Madrid**: Professor Severo Ochoa, Nobel prize-winner for medicine, designated the biochemist Dr. Julian Agut Sanchez, author of important research on the connection between neurotransmitters and phospholipids of the membrane, a determining factor in senile pathologies. The solemn and suggestive award-ceremony took place in the Aula Magna of the Real Monastero dell'Escorial, with an impressiveness worthy of the great name which inspires it.*

***Amsterdam** held the prize ceremony, for the first time, in 1990: in the historic Nieuwe Kerk, Professor Ronald de Leeuw, Director of the "Rijksmuseum Vincent Van Gogh" presented the young sculptor Joost van der Toorn, who received the prize from the Mayor of Amsterdam, E. van Thijn.*

*In the suggestive surroundings of the theatre of Attic Herod, at the foot of the Acropolis, in **Athens** on the 8th of June 1991, the vice Prime Minister and Minister of Culture, S. Kanelopoulos, awarded the prize to the violinist Leonidas Kavakos. Having perfected his studies in the United States thanks to an Onassis Scholarship, Kavakos was a prized student of illustrious maestros such as Dimitrij Shostakovic, Esa-Pekka Salomen, Rahmand Leppard and Mitislav Rostopovich.*

*In 1992 the prize returned to **Vienna**: the subject chosen was ecology and more precisely "construct ecologically in harmony with nature".*

The prizewinner was the architect Helmut Deubner who, pursuing ecological, biological and social aims, projected and constructed in Vienna the "Gaertnerhof" housing complex which, unique in the world, is a pioneering work in the field of ecological building. Dr. Scholten, Federal Minister of Culture, awarded the prize in the famous "Prunksaal der Oesterreichischen Nationalbibliothek".

Once more in **Tours** on the 29th of May **1993**: the President of the Senate, Mr. René Monory, conferred the prize on the engineer Frederic Patat. Employed very young, before graduating, by the National Center for Space Studies, he carried out research on space physiology and the acoustics of high frequencies and participated in the setting-up of instruments for the study of cardiovascular modifications in orbital flights, instruments installed for the first time in 1982 in the "Saliout7" spaceship. He put aside the prize money for the perfecting a project for a "piezoelectric immunodetector".

In the year **1994** the Prize was hosted again in **Florence**, in the "Salone de' Cinquecento" in Palazzo Vecchio, and the Vice Chancellor of Florence's University, Professor Paolo Blasi, conferred the prize to the young architect Fabrizio Rossi Prodi who was nominated by Professor Pierluigi Spadolini.

The next year, in **1995** in **Brussels** Charles Piqué Ministre Président du Gouvernement de la Region de Bruxelles Capital awarded the Prize to the pianist Johan Schmidt.

On May the 20th **1996**, in **London**, following the presentation made by Jeremy Isaac Superintendent of Covent Garden, H.E. Prince Philip of Edinburgh awarded at Buckingham Palace, Joan Quinn, a young draftsman who was author of a satirical cartoon on the long history of Great Britain.

In **Wurzburg**, inside the "Hofstuben der Festung" of Marienberg Fortress, which towers over the hills of Franconia, S. K. H. Franz Herzog, descendant of the ancient Family of Wittelsbach, Duchies of Bavaria, in the year **1997** conferred the prize to a musical quartet conducted by Klaus Ospald. The Staatminister, Dr. Thomas Goppel, attended the Ceremony.

In **Madrid** in **1998**, inside the splendid Retiro Park-Jardines de Cecilio Rodriguez, the Lord Mayor Don Maria José Alvarez del Manzano, awarded the prize to Eig Omada, creator of highly appreciated drawings.

In **1999** in **Amsterdam**, inside the Oude Kerk, the most ancient Church of the town, the Lord Mayor awarded the prize to the young sculptor Hermans who was nominated by the Director of the Rijksmuseum.

The **2000** year prize was held in **Athens** inside the evocative ancient Parliament where the President of Greece conferred the Prize on the well known painter Nikolaos Frantzolas.

The mathematician Renate Motschnig was the winner of the **2001** prize which was awarded to her at the "Festsaal der Universitat" by Professor Skalicky, Vice Chancellor of **Vienna**, Faculty of Engineering.

In **2002** in Tours, Mr Hervé Novelli, a Member of the European Parliament, presented the prize to the engineer F. Brochet, who made interesting studies in the brand new field of wine making engineering.

In **2003**, for the fifth time, the Prize returned to **Florence** and the fascinating adventures of man in air and in space was chosen to celebrate the centennial of the first human flight to which Leonardo dedicated many of his observations. **"The big bird will make its first flight over the hillock of the great Cècero, filling up the Universe of astonishment, filling up with its fame all the writings and of eternal glory the nest in which it was born"** (Fiesole 1505 - Manuscript on birds' flight - Turin Royal Library). This was Leonardo's prophecy which was brought into reality after five Centuries thanks to the marvel of the aircrafts flown by men at high speeds toward well known and unknown horizons.

In honour of so many space explorers, Professor Mario Calamia, General Director of Italian Space Agency, introduced the astronaut Roberto Vittori who participated in a space flight. The prize was conferred by the Vice Chancellor of Florence University.

In **2004**, the prize celebrated its thirtieth birthday. The ceremony was held in **Brussels**, where Baron Philippe Roberts-Jones, Secretary Permanent of the Real Academy of Belgium awarded a young lady for her excellent and distinguished work in the conservation and restoration of paintings.

Another woman won the prize in **London** in **2005**. Sir Nicholas Goodison, in the suggestive and gorgeous surrounding of the Goldsmiths Company, awarded Sidsel Dorph-Jensen for silver creations. She was introduced by Martin Dru Drury, President of the Goldsmiths Company.

*In 2006, the prize was held again in the charming atmosphere of **Wurzburg**, inside the magnificent "Hall of the Emperor" in the Castle Residenz, Roman Herzog, past-President of Federal Germany, awarded the young Italian biologist, Rebecca Basile, for her interesting research on the social behavior of the bees.*

*In Wurzburg, during the meeting of the Club Presidents and General Secretary, it was decided to accept as a new member of "Leonardo da Vinci Prize" the friends of the **Dublin** Rotary Club, the oldest Club of Europe. The Irish friends will host the Prize in **2011**.*

*In 2007, in the warm atmosphere of **Madrid**, in the Casa de Correos, don Santiago Grisolia, Nobel Laureate for his biochemical studies, introduced don Emilio Benito Garcia for his effort on the future of hospital nursing. The Health Minister of Madrid conferred the prize.*

*Last year, in **2008**, in **Amsterdam**, the tulip town, the 34th edition of Leonardo da Vinci Prize was organized. During a magnificent ceremony in the Muziekgebouw aan't IJ, the new and impressive Concert Hall, in north of Amsterdam, close to the North sea, Professor Ronald Plastreh, Minister of Education, Culture and Science, awarded the young architect Ties Rijcken for his project on "floating houses".*

*This year **2009**, in **Athens**, the prize celebrates its 35th birthday, years during which the legitimacy and validity of the cultural and commitment of the Rotary in favour of the young people has been demonstrated, as well as the understanding of dialogue and friendship among Europeans, in perfect faithfulness with another significant prophecy of Leonardo in the Atlantic manuscript dated of 1500:*

" Men will speak to each other from very distant countries and they will answer each other".