

**Address by the Ambassador Gianluigi Benedetti  
on the occasion of the opening of the exhibition “Leonardo’s Questions”  
The Bloomfield Science Museum, Jerusalem – July 5, 2019**

Dear Director Maya Halevy,  
Dear Shai Doron, President of the Jerusalem Foundation,  
Dear Shlomo Yanai, President of the Board of Directors,  
Distinguished guests,

It's a great pleasure to be here and represent Italy in this wonderful occasion. I am thankful to the Director of the Bloomfield Science Museum, Maya Haley, for making the Embassy of Italy and the Italian Cultural Institute in Tel Aviv an active part in this important exhibition celebrating the genius of Leonardo da Vinci.

This year marks 500 years from the death of an extraordinary man: back in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, Leonardo had already traced the path that every researcher - regardless his working field - is supposed to walk today.

The continuous and wide research, the meticulous method, the craving for knowledge which knows no taboo and defies every preconception: these are just few of his teachings that today, after 500 years, we are still treasuring.

Although Leonardo’s heritage has a universal value, we Italians feel very proud of his roots. To be here today, praising his wit, is twice important, as this year diplomatic relationships between Italy and Israel turn 70. Seventy years full of cooperation, dialogue and mutual enrichment, a strong bond confirmed by the present event.

Our effort to share the best of Italian culture always receives excellent feedback here in Israel: we have had the opportunity to observe a high level of interest, for example, towards the ongoing series of lectures about Leonardo’s life and works, organized by our Cultural Institutes.

In this framework, an accomplishment we’re particularly proud of is the collaboration with the Musei Reali of Turin, one of the most prestigious Museums in our Country, whose director, dr. Enrica Pagella, has been invited by the Institute

in September to give a lecture in this Museum, thanks to the hospitality of Director Halevy.

The lecture will revolve around the famous *Codex on the Flight of Birds*, one of the most valuable examples of Leonardo's way of studying the world around him. A stunning work you have now the opportunity to admire here in digital reproduction, thanks to this precious cooperation.

The name of the exhibition we are about to open today, *Leonardo's Questions*, leads us to reflect on what were the fundamentals of Leonardo's thought: the constant search not just for answers, but most of all for new questions.

Never settling for plain results, but always overreaching them. To call into question every solution: that's the very essence of research, whether scientific, literary or artistic.

In Leonardo's work the separation between science and art, as we're used to perceive it, is torn down: engineering and painting are different expressions of the same experience of the world. And in this perceiving the Man as a whole, in this absence of separation between different fields of knowledge, lies the modernity of his work and of his teaching, after 500 years.

This multiplicity of interests reflects Leonardo's great freedom of thought, which the exhibition we're opening today succeeded to depict in all its aspects. There is yet a common thread connecting apparently distant fields.

Nowadays we are constantly informed that most of the innovative discoveries come from an approach to science and knowledge that makes no distinction between technology and human sciences. And this change is also visible in the asset of the most important Universities in the planet: separation among different fields of human knowledge starts to be seen as a limitation.

For Leonardo, these separations didn't make any sense even 500 years ago. From his point of view machines made of gearwheels and tie-rods are just a reflection of the most perfect machine ever seen: the one made of blood, flesh, and bones.

The man himself becomes a macrocosm, a model from which one can deduce rules to apply in technology. Thus the need to dissect, dismantle, disassemble machines and bodies to deeply understand their functioning. This across-the-board conception of science, typical of the Renaissance period, made possible for Leonardo's genius to fully express all of his potential and to gift to humanity a heritage of immeasurable value.

I hope these thoughts will inspire you during your visit to the exhibition.

Thank you again to Bloomfield Science Museum in Jerusalem for deciding to celebrate with us one of the greatest minds of human history. I wish the exhibition all the best of success.

Thank you all very much