

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

Scott Lund, investigative writer, multimedia artist and Laguna Hills resident, believes the Louvre in France has misspelled Mona Lisa. "There will come a time when they'll have to change all those brass plaques," he laughs good-naturedly, his eyes crinkling at the corners behind his tinted glasses.

DA VINCI DECODED

Currently at work on a book about Leonardo Da Vinci's masterpiece, tentatively titled *The Mona Lisa Code*, Lund says the double "n" spelling commonly seen in French or Italian is incorrect. Not only because Da Vinci himself was calling the work *Mona Lisa* long before his biographer Vasari did, but also because of Lund's theory, which may unlock the mystery of one of the most recognizable works of art in the world.

Art historians, symbolists and academics have long debated the meaning of *Mona Lisa*, coming up with theories both convincing and contrived. But Lund, who is also an accomplished pianist, maintains he has Da Vinci decoded. "There's no problem with my logic," he says confidently, "nor will there be."

While most have wondered about the identity of Mona Lisa, Lund contends she was not a person at all, but rather Da Vinci's interpretation of a celestial soul. "Up until the time of Da Vinci, artists most often painted mythological and legendary figures.

Biblical figures, saints, angels, and even God himself," he says. "Conspicuously absent from this list is the depiction of a soul, which had to be an obvious challenge for Da Vinci."

As Lund discovered in his research, Da Vinci wrote explicitly about the idea of mother and unborn child sharing one soul, a premise he may have incorporated into the painting. But Lund's explanation for the subtle duality of the *Mona Lisa* goes even deeper. He believes that the *Mona Lisa* is an anagram for *anima sol*, which directly translates to soul/sun god. Da Vinci used the sun god, more specifically the Roman god Janus, who is often depicted with two faces, as the theme for the painting. "What ties the soul and the sun together for Leonardo is that he believed the sun to be the source for the vital force of the soul," says Lund.

It might be easy to write Lund off as a fanatic, but he seems entirely sane. He is articulate, engaging and doesn't devote all of his time to spell checking the titles of other priceless works of art. He has spent nearly every summer for the past 20 years riding his white Yamaha 700 motorcycle through Europe, photographing churches, of which he says he has visited more than any known professor or art historian.

Lund cites several details to support his idea that the *Mona Lisa* is a depiction of the soul of mother and unborn child splitting, inspired by the sun god Janus: the lack of eyelashes and eyebrows, for example, or Da Vinci's use of *sfumato*, a painting technique that creates a glow effect, to achieve an otherworldly esthetic. But larger details Lund is saving for a media tour of Italy scheduled for next September to coincide with his book. Lund says the *Mona Lisa* Discovery Tour will prove his theory by visiting a few key locations where Da Vinci is believed to have worked on the *Mona Lisa*.

Lund also plans to film the tour as part of a documentary he is making on his hypothesis. "I know I'm not going to be popular with anybody," he says of his controversial findings. "I hope people get an enlightened view of what Leonard Da Vinci was doing. I'm open to critical debate. I engage that exchange if it gets people thinking." But he adds: "I would really like to be at the Louvre when they finally have to change all their plaques and signs and admit that the spelling should be 'Mona' and not 'Monna.'"

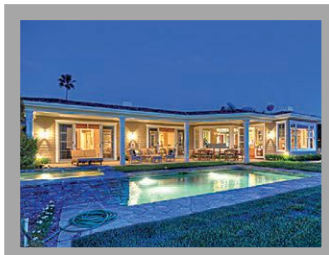
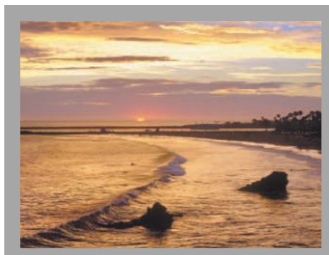
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■ **READ AND TOUR** :: Visit Scott Lund's website for the latest news on his book and the *Mona Lisa* Discovery Tour.
:: scottlund.com

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