

## MONA LISA TIMES THIRTY ©

By Connie J. Schlosberg

Both Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* and Andy Warhol's *30 are Better than One* are both fine examples of the two-dimensional processes in art. However, each work of art was accomplished in very different ways.

Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* is an oil painting on wood and a portrait of a sixteenth century Florentine banker, Zanobi del Giocondo's wife. His use of light and shadow created a blurred vision with the sfumato technique, presents an illusion of mystery upon the model. Oil painting is a versatile medium. Three dimensional effects can be realized with oil based paints, giving a sense of realism to portrait paintings. It can be blended right on the painting surface to façade continuous tones and hues, as viewed in the *Mona Lisa*. Oil painting - during da Vinci's time - consisted of egg tempera with linseed oil as the binder, which dries slowly allowing the artist to rework his piece in time. The process involves thin layers of color that give a luminous effect to the painting.

Da Vinci's choice for painting the *Mona Lisa* with oils creates a very real picture in three-dimensions. The textures that he can utilize with oil give a sense of mystery to the now famous model. He couldn't have accomplished this same aura with any other medium. The way da Vinci was able to blend away the outlines in her facial expressions asks what is her smile about. Oil paint allowed him this luxury. The thin layers of paint illuminated *Mona Lisa's* face against the misty mountainous backdrop.

When I observe the *Mona Lisa*, I, like many others, wonder what her smile is telling us. What secret does she keep? Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* sits almost alive in the painting. Her hands are posed comfortably and naturally, looking unbelievably real. The hues of the oil paint, murky in tone, add to the mystery. In my mind, Leonardo da Vinci captured *Mona Lisa's* soul in his masterpiece.

In a modern take of the original *Mona Lisa*, Andy Warhol's *30 Are Better than One* is a silkscreen ink and synthetic polymer paint on canvas. Silkscreen printing is another form of two-dimensional art. Warhol took a masterpiece and created an image of it – thirty times. With silkscreen printing, using a stencil and a porous fabric, a sharp edged single color image is created. The process uses a screen (originally with silk but synthetic fibers can be used) stretched over a frame. Areas of the screen are blocked off with a stencil, which will be the negative image of what is to be printed. The screen is placed on top of a dry fabric. Ink is placed on the screen and a tool called a squeegee is used to evenly spread the ink over the fabric. The ink will pass through the open spaces in the screen onto the fabric and the screen is lifted away.

Warhol's *30 Are Better than One* is a humorous take on an original masterpiece. Silkscreen painting can create images multiple times almost mocking the concept of original art. Why create one when you can have many? With silk-screening, the production of art can be endless and available to the masses. No longer can works of art be

seen as singular.

I think Warhol's silkscreen of the *Mona Lisa* commercializes art in the modern day. The *Mona Lisa* is the most famous painting in the world. Her image has been seen now for centuries with the art world giving the *Mona Lisa* an untouchable impression. Warhol's version brings the *Mona Lisa* down to earth and accessible to everyone.