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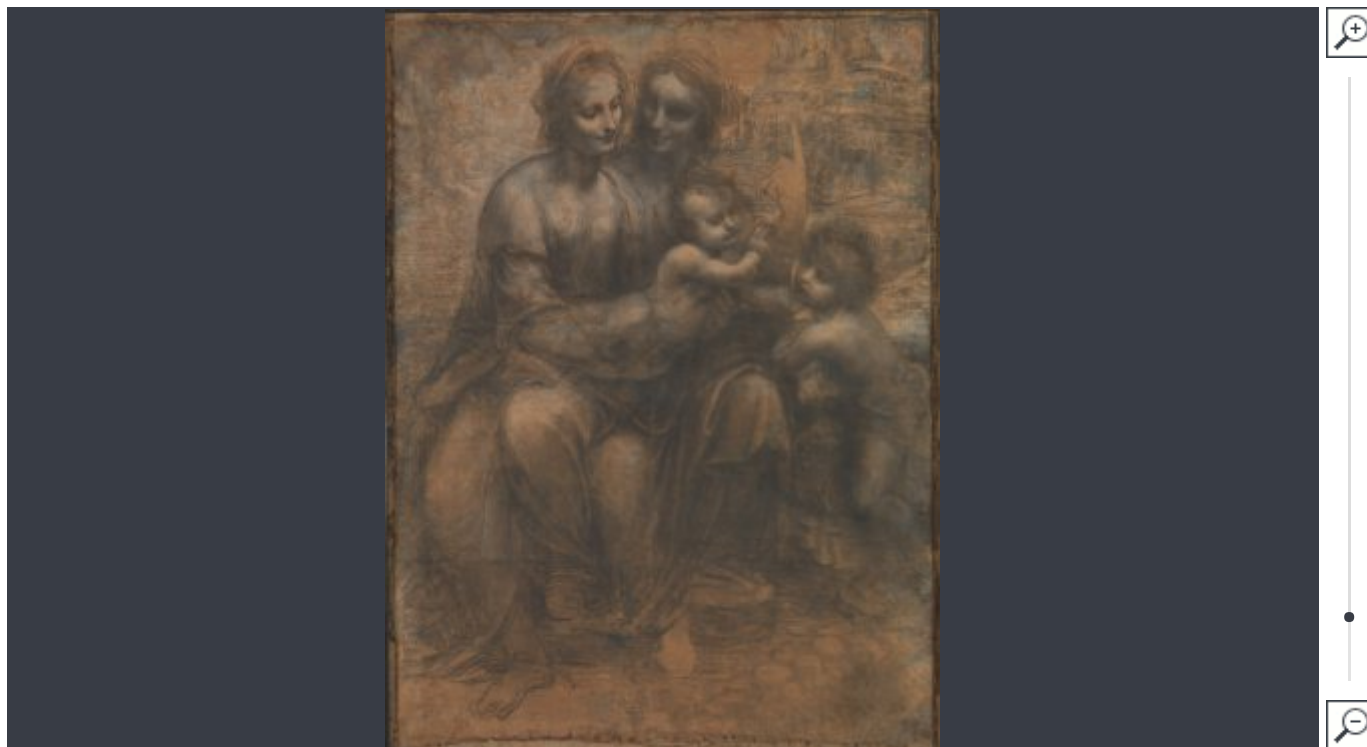
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The Burlington House Cartoon

about 1499-1500, [Leonardo da Vinci](#)



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£ 5

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could provide art materials for 40 people at a drawing event

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The National Gallery is an amazing institution. We are very lucky to have this amazing collection of artwork in the City and accessible for no fee.

The [Virgin Mary](#) sits on the lap of her mother, [Saint Anne](#). The Christ Child blesses his cousin [Saint John the Baptist](#) (the child on the right). Leonardo also treated the meeting of the two children in his two paintings of the [Virgin of the Rocks](#). Both works are set in a wild mountainous landscape.

Saint Anne's gesture, her finger pointing to heaven, alludes to Christ's future destiny. Since she does not look very old and seems intimately related to Saint John the Baptist, many scholars have proposed that she is [Saint Elizabeth](#), the Baptist's mother. However, there is no tradition of placing the Virgin upon Elizabeth's lap, whereas Saint Anne was often represented in this way.

This large drawing is a [cartoon](#), that is, a full-size preparatory study for a painting. Usually, in order to transfer a design onto a panel, the outlines of cartoons were pricked or incised. This example is intact. It must have been preserved in its own right as a finished drawing, although some areas have deliberately been left inconclusive or in rough outline.

A cartoon of a similar subject by Leonardo drew huge crowds when it was publicly displayed in Florence in 1501. This was probably made for the painting now in the Louvre, Paris. The National Gallery's cartoon may have been executed slightly earlier in Milan, perhaps after the French invasion of the city. Many artists drew inspiration from these complex and atmospheric drawings.

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Key facts

Artist	Leonardo da Vinci
Artist dates	1452 - 1519
Full title	The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne and the Infant Saint John the Baptist ('The Burlington House Cartoon')
Date made	about 1499-1500
Medium and support	Charcoal (and wash?) heightened with white chalk on paper, mounted on canvas
Dimensions	141.5 x 104.6 cm

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Further information

In depth

→ [Technical Bulletin: The Restoration of the Leonardo Cartoon](#)