



Marc van den Broek
Leonardo da Vinci Spirits of Invention
A Search for Traces

Leonardo da Vinci, a visionary and genius whose works have inspired – and repeatedly amazed and baffled – engineers, scientists and artists to this day, is the most prominent figure among the spirits of invention. The incredible wealth of his creations – sketches, illustrations and technical drawings – confronts experts with a conundrum. What influences from cultural history did Leonardo gather, redefine through his inventive spirit and dramatize with such confidence? How do these Renaissance impulses to survey and measure the world, to view it through the lens of technology and to clothe it in a garment of data impact our world today? This book offers soundly researched answers to these questions.

In this trip through time to the age of antiquity, to the medieval nomadic cultures of Asia and to early modern times, Marc J. M. van den Broek confronts Leonardo da Vinci's legacy with artifacts from China, Arabia and various Western cultures and discovers astonishing similarities. With numerous comparisons of drawings and serial illustrations, he allows readers to share in his discoveries step by step.

Spirits of Invention is a kaleidoscopic work. Featuring more than 300 illustrations and lively narrative texts, it is both an intuitively comprehensible artist's book and a multifaceted compendium of facts that guide the reader through Leonardo da Vinci's universe.

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The Author

Marc van den Broek was born on February 2, 1953, in the Flemish Renaissance stronghold and seaport of Antwerp, Belgium. At an early age he attended the Akademie voor Schone Kunsten and completed a course of studies at the Technische School voor Elektro-Mechanik, followed by further studies at the Institut voor Kunstambachten. In the early 1980s, van den Broek began working in the new medium of spatial installations, which was concerned above all with the symbiosis of art and technology, as embodied in his series of flying objects, known as Mutants. He began developing a series of large kinetic sculptures, which culminated in the Archaic Technological Metamorphosis (A.T.E.M.) at the end of the decade. During this period, van den Broek also worked on international projects in the field of Art in Public and collaborated extensively with technological research laboratories.

The early 1990s witnessed the completion of the kinetic sculpture entitled The Declaration of Independence. As a work of art, it postulates the end of the industrial age

and bids farewell to the era of materialism, while heralding the dawn of the age of immaterialism at the same time.

Inspired through his many years of work with industrial and business firms, van den Broek developed his project *The Impact of Art in Business*. With reference to Joseph Beuys's concept of "social sculpture," he defines and practices the symbiosis of art and business as a process of synergetic design. The artist pursued this approach with particular intensity during his years in New York (1998–2008), where he worked with a number of well-known international corporations.

Today, Marc van den Broek wrestles above all with the question of how, under the influence of digital technologies and the Internet, the various dimensions of our reality are transformed, how perceptions change and how these changes can be represented in art. These reflections are the basis for his short film #MEAT, which is closely related to the present book about Leonardo da Vinci.

Because Marc van den Broek recognizes a close parallel between the dawn of the Renaissance and the most recent millennial turn, he hopes that his work and this book will initiate and promote recognition of a new perspective. For a new view of past relationships inevitably affects our perception of the present and the future.