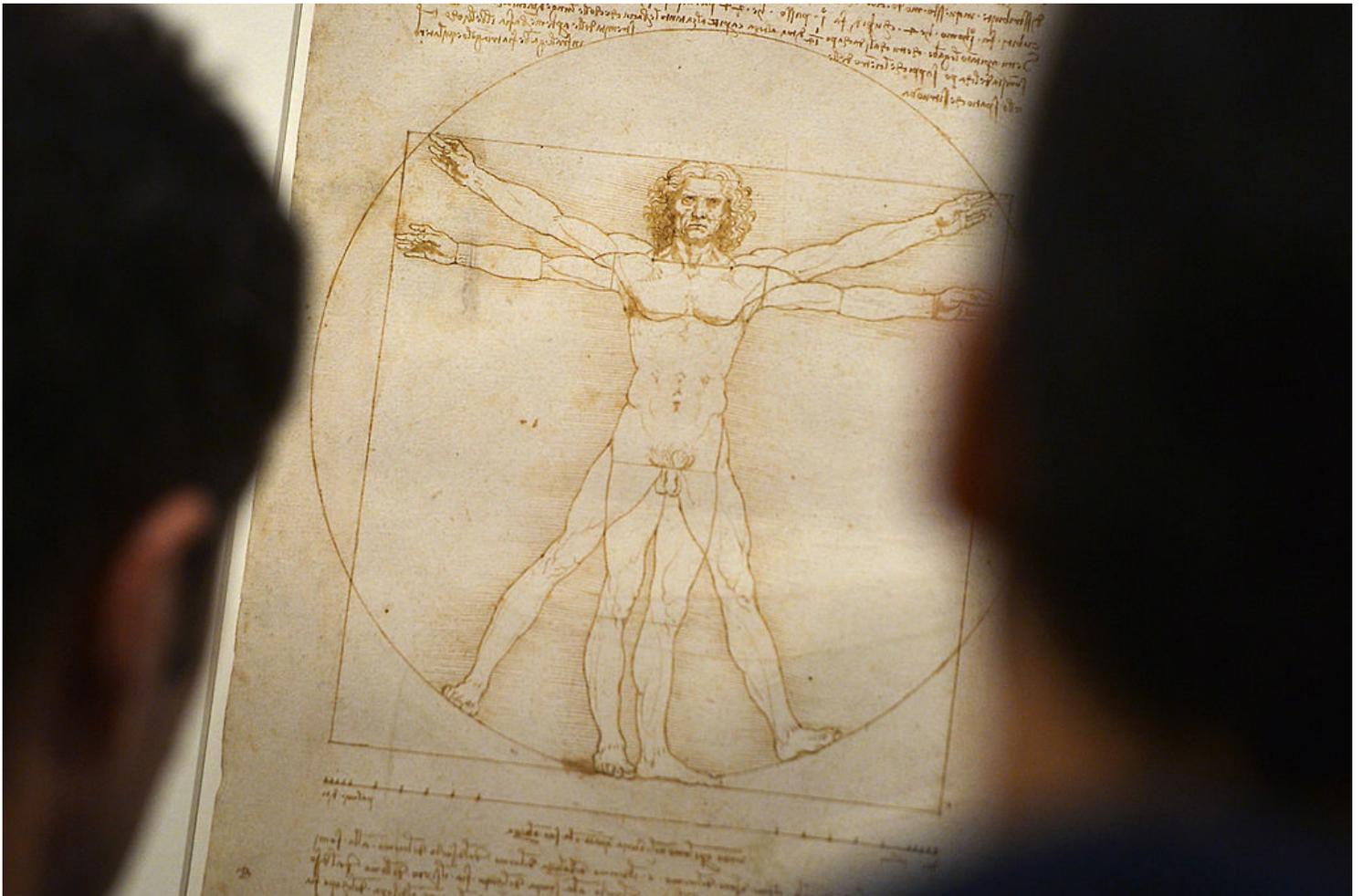


7 Scientific Pioneers Who Were Also Artistic Visionaries, From the Inventor of the Morse Code to the Founder of Neurobiology

Who says you can only have one calling?

Katie White (<https://news.artnet.com/about/katie-white-1066>), April 6, 2020



Leonardo da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man*. Photo by Gabriel Bouys/AFP/Getty Images.

Art and science are often thought to fall on opposite sides of the left-right brain divide, but history has proven time and again that many of the brightest minds are polymaths.

Leonardo da Vinci, the greatest of all the artist-scientists, once wrote, “To develop a complete mind: Study the science of art; Study the art of science. Learn how to see. Realize that everything connects to everything else.” His suggestion is being taken even today, with many medical schools requiring soon-to-be doctors to take art (<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/11/arts/improving-medicine-with-art.html>) and art history classes, while contemporary artists including Trevor Paglen, Anicka Yi, and Neri Oxman find influences in astronomy, biology, and geology.

From adventuring woman botanists to the drawing-enthused father of modern neuroscience, learn more about art history's great scientific minds below.

Ralph Eugene Meatyard (1925–1972)



Ralph Eugene Meatyard, *Lucybelle Crater and her 45-year-old husband's photo-Bell friend's sonshine, Lucybelle Crater* (1970-72). Courtesy of DC Moore Gallery.

Scientific Endeavors: Ralph Eugene Meatyard extended both of his careers, as a photographer and an optician, from a scientific and philosophical fascination with light and vision. Born in Normal, Illinois, Meatyard served in the military before becoming a licensed optician in 1949. A position with an optical firm would bring him to Lexington, Kentucky, in 1950. This firm also owned a photography company, which introduced the doctor to the medium. Profoundly influenced by Zen Buddhism (and a pen pal of the Trappist monk Thomas Merton), Meatyard would spend some three months looking through an unfocused camera to attain what he called a state of “No-Focus,” in which the appearance of an object was detached from its meaning.

Artistic Pursuits: Meatyard began taking photographs in the 1950s and would pursue the practice until his early death in 1972. His photographs were unusual for the time, and often included blurred figures, and, later, portraits of his children and himself wearing odd, monster-like masks. Meatyard earned little critical acclaim in his lifetime, though his works were presented alongside those of Ansel Adams, Aaron Siskind, and Harry Callahan in “Creative Photography,” an exhibition curated by Van Deren Coke for the University of Kentucky. His peculiar style often left him relegated to a regional style of Southern Gothic, though his posthumously published photo-book, *The Family Album of Lucybelle Crater* (named after the main character in Flannery O’Connor’s short story, “The Life You Save May Be Your Own”), earned him increasing institutional attention.