

## ARTS & BOOKS

### [On Queen Elizabeth's Da Vinci drawings, Random House fortunes, and plays in which "nothing happens, twice".](#)

[« Da Vinci 'on tour' for Queen Elizabeth's 80<sup>th</sup> »](#) By Emilie ROGER

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II will officially celebrate her 80th birthday in June (her real birthday being in April) and, to mark the event, ten of the world's most important drawings by Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) have begun a tour of British museums and art galleries (from 18 March 2006 to February 2007). Dating from 1485-1518, the drawings come from the Royal Collection and are preserved in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle. It isn't the first time the public can see them as they were already exhibited to celebrate the Golden Jubilee in 2002.

This exhibition splendidly demonstrates all the drawing techniques which the Renaissance master used – metal point, pen and ink, brush and ink, and red and black chalks. It also shows the huge scope of his interests including studies for painting, sculpture and architecture, research into anatomy, studies of botany, designs for a great canal to bypass the river Arno, as well as a light-hearted sheet of picture puzzles.

Sources: « Queen Gives Birthday Treat of Da Vinci Art, » *The Observer* 19 March 2006.

« Queen's Da Vinci Art Starts Tour, » BBC News 18 March 2006.

[www.royal.gov.uk](http://www.royal.gov.uk)

[Plagiarism trial boosts Random House sales.](#) By Ludivine GROSJEAN

Since the end of February, historians Richard Leigh and Michael Baigent have been suing Random House, which published Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code*. They contend that Brown infringed their copyright by stealing the central theme of their book: *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*, published in 1982 in London, ironically enough by the same publishing house.

The trial, widely covered by world newspapers, from *The New Zealand Herald* to *The Time of India* has proved a real boon for all parties involved. Sales of the non-fiction book went up by 745% in Britain alone,\* while the DVC, plagiarism or not, will remain the runaway best-seller of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Since its release in 2003, it has been translated into 44 languages and has sold more than 40 million copies worldwide.

Sources: \*«Lawsuit boosts *Da Vinci* sales, » *The City Press* 10 March 2006; « Lawyer: Unfair to Say "Da Vinci" Copied, » *The Washington Post* 09 March 2006; « Da Vinci Code of justice, » *The LA Times* 14 March 2006; « Authors "didn't have a leg to stand on" when they took on *Da Vinci Code*, » *The Australian* 17 March 2006.

[Reviving and celebrating plays in which "nothing happens, twice"](#)

By Deborah ADES

From 19 March-6 May, the "Beckett Centenary Festival" is at the Barbican Centre, London, and the Gate Theatre, Dublin. Both cities are celebrating the Irish playwright Samuel Beckett who was born in 1906 and won the Nobel prize for literature in 1969. His most well-known and influential play « *Waiting for Godot* » was first performed, in French, in Paris in 1953, and famously described by critic Vivian Mercier as a play in which « nothing happens, twice ». Its 1984 production, which had been overseen by Beckett himself at the time, will be revived.

Sources: « Champion of ambiguity, » *The Guardian* 20 March 2006; « Try again. Fail again. Fail better, » *The Economist* 16 March 2006; <http://www.beckettcentenaryfestival.ie/>