

**Letter to Sophia**

**November 15, 2017 | New York**

*My Dear Sophia,*

It's me again. This time, I decided to write a letter to you on a panel, and then paint over it. A message is concealed under layers of paint, perhaps to be discovered in the future, like Leonardo da Vinci's Christ Mundi.

Who are you, Sophia? My Mona Lisa?

We met in Two Boots Pizza/Video rentals on Avenue A East Village, New York nearly 20 years ago –you were the video clerk and I came to get my films. When my eyes saw your face for the first time, I thought you must have stepped out from one of Leonardo da Vinci's paintings. Your elusive beauty shocked me; I could not have asked for a better Renaissance look!

Perhaps Da Vinci was the one who sent you to me so I could continue evolving his brilliant pursuit for absolute art, even 500 years after –I fantasized! Without any hesitation, I asked you to pose for a painting.

You told me that I needed to talk to your parents, as you were only 18 years old at the time. After my request was accepted, we set up an appointment in my photographer friend Yoshi Ono's studio. This gift of having you in the studio prompted me to attempt the impossible: a composition that would conjure the beauty and mystery of a Leonardo da Vinci painting while portraying young women living here and now. Da Vinci was famous for achieving an illusion of graceful motion so his muses could be captured in a lifelike state. With the help of Yoshi and his lens, we were able to create images that would serve as references for my work.

It has been 20 years since this journey of painting you began. I have painted you five times in the hope that one day the universe will allow my portraits of you to bring us together again. This possibility is the driving engine behind my relentless pursuit to paint you. My goal is to capture the feeling of your unique presence through this portrait of your beauty and mystery.

I often wonder what it would be like to meet you in person now, after 20 years – would we recognize each other? Would I fall in love with the real you as I have fallen in love with the beautiful woman who I continue to paint?

How many paintings of you will it take to find you again? Only time will tell, and until this moment arrives I will not rest.

Sincerely yours,

*Janusz*