

THE GOLDEN RATIO

1482, sitting in Milan the words echo throughout Leonardo da Vinci's head. A painting of our saviors last supper for the Duke of Milan's family chapel. A tough feat to capture Jesus' holiness. His perfection. We humans can try only so hard. But while bad artists borrow, good artists steal. "Eureka!" he shouted. da Vinci decided to steal from one of the oldest artists. Mother Nature.

Jesus, da Vinci knew, had to sit in the middle. It wouldn't be fair to do otherwise. And while that would make him stand out, how would he portray Jesus as divine and perfect? The Divine Proportion-otherwise known as Phi-was the best solution. With Jesus in the middle of the painting, he would space the people to his right and the people to his left so that Jesus would draw the line dividing them, illustrating The Divine Proportion. What about the ceiling? That would be easy. The distance from the edge of the table to the tops of the disciples' heads, to the top of the disciples' heads to the ceiling would be Phi. The distance from the floor to the end of the tablecloth compared to the distance from the end of the tablecloth to the edge of the table would show the proportion. Everything from the windows in the back, to the paintings on the ceiling above would incorporate The Divine Proportion.

For a moment, da Vinci wondered what he would do if it weren't for Fibonacci and his discovery of his sequence 300 years ago. He read that the Fibonacci sequence is an order of numbers where the sum of a number and the one before it equals the next. The beginning of the sequence is 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34. It was later discovered that if you take two numbers next to each other, and divide the larger one by the smaller one, you would get a number near 1.618. The higher on the sequence you pull the numbers from, the closer to Phi or The Divine Proportion you get.

Four years later, stepping back from his work, looking up, a sense of pride and relief fills Leonardo da Vinci. He was finally complete. Chuckling to himself he realized how hidden his cheat sheet was. "You've done it again," he muttered to himself. "Another job well done." Nobody needed to know how many paintings he's used Phi in. Maybe one day they will. da Vinci laughs to himself. "Maybe when pigs fly," da Vinci jokes, "and the Spaniards discover a new world!"