

Team seeks to finally solve mystery of Da Vinci mural hidden behind wall using gamma ray camera

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(PhysOrg.com) -- A trio of players now invested in not only finding out if Leonardo Da Vinci's famous lost mural "Battle of Anghiari" is where they think it is, but also in trying to take a picture of it, has posted a project on [KickStarter](#) asking for contributions to help in the effort.

Da Vinci's mural was believed to have been painted on a wall in what is known as the Hall of Five Hundred, in Florence, Italy, a local

government headquarters. The work was subsequently covered or destroyed when a later regime came into office and commissioned artist Giorgio Vasari to create a fresco to replace Da Vinci's work. But Maurizio Seracini, a professor from the University of California, doesn't think Vasari ruined Da Vinci's mural. Instead, after extensive research, he's come to believe a wall was built directly in front of the wall that had the *Battle of Anghiari* on it, with some space between it to keep it from harm. Unfortunately however, there has been no way to prove it.

In a fortuitous turn of events, Seracini happened to meet photographer David Yoder, who just happened to shoot for major publications such as the New York Times, and more importantly, National Geographic Magazine (who is now helping fund the project). After working together on ideas for ways to find out once and for all if Da Vinci's mural was indeed where Seracini thought it was, Yoder met up with the third party to their consortium; Dr. Robert Smither, a physicist with Argonne National Laboratory, who has been working on a kind of gamma ray camera to be used for creating images of tumors in cancer patients. He thought the same technology might be used to create an actual image of the mural behind the wall, if it was indeed there.

The camera, if it can be built, must be portable so it can be transported to the site, and once there would work by sending neutrons through the first wall which would then hit the metals contained in the oil based paint that [Da Vinci](#) is believed to have used, on the wall behind. Those metals would then emit gamma rays which could be captured using copper crystals to form an image. Thus, the "camera" would not actually have a glass lens at all. In testing done at an Italian research center, it appears the technology would work as predicted, but, there's still one more problem, the lack of funds, hence the posting on Kickstarter. So far the team has collected \$21,514 of the \$265,000 needed with just 33 days to go.

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