

The Leonardo da Vinci Society

To celebrate the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Society
in early November 1986,

Professor David Freedberg

(Director, Warburg Institute)

will give a special lecture entitled

The Failure of Pictures:

From Description to Diagram in the Circle of Galileo

on Friday 4 November 2016 at 6.00pm

in the lecture room of the Warburg Institute,
Woburn Square, WC1

Professor Freedberg writes: When Federico Cesi and his friends in the Accademia dei Lincei – generally regarded as the first modern scientific society – decided to make and collect drawings of everything in nature, their main points of reference were Galileo and Leonardo. But the more drawings they collected the more they realized the impossibility of ordering and systematizing the multiplicity of nature. Despite the splendour of many of their drawings, most little-known until recently, and the environmental attentiveness of many others, they swiftly became aware of the near-futility of their efforts. Neither the telescope nor the microscope provided them with the essential clues to order that they sought, or the clear borderlines between species that the drive to more rigorous systems of taxonomy and classification required. Halfway through their efforts, Galileo subverted all traditional modes of understanding nature, and Cesi began to realize that pictures might have to yield to mathematics, and description to diagram. This lecture will retrace their journey with vivid examples, and conclude with the implications for our time.

All are welcome to attend. The Warburg Institute generously offers everyone a glass of wine after the lecture.