



THE HORSE THAT NEVER WAS

LEONARDO'S Milan patron, Lodovico Sforza, demanded the world's largest statue, a 23-foot-high bronze horse with rider, to be placed in a courtyard of his castle in Milan (right). With meticulous attention to detail, Leonardo sketched animals in the Sforza stables, then constructed a huge clay model, and finally devised a radically new process to cast the horse in a single operation. Iron framing (below) held the plaster mold for the head.

The molds were to be buried upside down, between circular ovens (left). Molten bronze—an incredible 79 tons—would pour through tubes into the molds (lower left).

Before casting could proceed, however, war intervened. Lodovico took the bronze to make cannon; in 1499 he lost to French armies, who occupied the castle and used the clay horse for archery practice. Just 200 years later French designers fashioned an equestrian statue of Louis XIV. Smaller but similar to Leonardo's design, it employed his casting technique. The method is still used.

BOTH DRAWINGS BIBLIOTECA NACIONAL, MADRID; TED SPIEGEL, BLACK STAR (RIGHT)

