

## ATRIUM TOUR

### ROGER BACON - WIZARD

Roger Bacon earned the moniker "Doctor Mirabilis," or "Wonderful Teacher," for his groundbreaking work in natural philosophy, optics, and experimental science. His innovative ideas and vision of the future contributed to his reputation as a "wizard" in the eyes of his contemporaries.

One reason for this perception was Bacon's belief in the potential of scientific discoveries to transform society. He advocated for the application of empirical methods, experimentation, and mathematics to understand and manipulate the natural world. This approach was highly unconventional for his time, as the prevailing scholastic tradition leaned heavily on the authority of ancient texts and theologians. Bacon's vision of using science to achieve wonders such as flying machines, automobiles, and submarines seemed fantastical, and thus, many considered him a wizard or sorcerer.

Bacon's work in optics and alchemy also contributed to his wizard-like reputation. He conducted pioneering research in the field of optics, which led to the development of lenses, mirrors, and other optical instruments. His fascination with the properties of light and color led to experiments in which he sought to manipulate them, which seemed magical to many during the 13th century.

Furthermore, his interest in alchemy, the predecessor of modern chemistry, and his attempts to uncover the secrets of nature and the cosmos were arcane and mysterious to casual observers. While Bacon did not advocate for the transmutation of base metals into gold, as some alchemists did, he did believe in the possibility of achieving a universal medicine, or panacea, capable of curing all diseases. These pursuits fueled the perception that Bacon possessed supernatural or magical powers.

**In many ways Bacon was like Leonardo da Vinci, a man born centuries ahead of his time. For example, he imagined**

- **a great ship being operated by one man without the need of oarsmen (steamships);**
- **a machine that would make possible the walking of men along the ocean floor (the diving bell);**
- **a vehicle that could be propelled below water (the submarine);**
- **a vehicle operating at high speeds without the need of any horsepower (the automobile), and**
- **a machine with a mechanical device in it that would make it fly above the earth (airplane).**

**He theorized:**

- ***“Someday we may read the smallest letters at an incredible distance”*** (binoculars)
- ***“We may cause the stars to appear wherever we wish.”*** (telescopes).
- **As for a new technology of light, there may sometime in the future appear *“that device by which rays of light are led into any place that we wish and***

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***are brought together by refractions in such fashion that anything is burned which is placed there” (laser technology).***

These inventions would all take six to seven more centuries to materialize.

While the concept of wizards as magical beings may be rooted in fantasy, the achievements of Roger Bacon during the 13th century were nothing short of remarkable.

