



William Hogarth (1697–1764)
A female nude, c.1735
 Black and white chalk on buff
 paper

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Hogarth wished to create an English grand style of history painting, and therefore created *The Pool of Bethesda* free of charge for St Bartholomew's Hospital.

The drawing on display in this exhibition generally corresponds with the nude woman seated on the centre right of *The Pool of Bethesda*. Hogarth wanted to try and show the sorts of diseases that were being treated at the hospital and it is possible that this woman leaning back towards her lover was intended to be read as suffering from venereal disease.

Some discussion on this drawing has centred around the idea that the woman is actually a celebrated courtesan called Nell Robinson – the connection to venereal disease may be a red herring: it's likely that Hogarth actually used an existing drawing for the painting, and the female models for life-drawing at this time would usually have been prostitutes.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

While he was honoured as a painter in his lifetime and was also the writer of a treatise on painting, Hogarth was often typecast as a satirist because of his mass-market, often satirical engravings.

He started his career as an apprentice to an engraver of arms and by 1720 had his own engraving shop. Hogarth's early works displayed French Rococo influence but then he came up with the idea of painting and engraving modern moral subjects.

His first caricature-filled picture-story was *The Harlot's Progress* of 1732. The paintings are lost, but Hogarth's engravings of them penetrated every class of

society. Later series, such as *The Rake's Progress* and *Marriage à la Mode*, made Hogarth a wealthy man.

He was the first British artist to be widely admired abroad, both for his paintings and for his 1753 treatise, *The Analysis of Beauty*.

STUDENT FOCUS QUESTIONS

- What evidence in this work indicates that Hogarth has been influenced by the Italian grand masters?
- In the complete work, for which this is a study, the figure may represent a person suffering from a sexually transmitted infection – is there anything about the pose of the figure that may support that idea?
- This work is a study for a large mural that the artist painted for free – what motive might the artist have had for doing that?

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

<http://www.haleysteele.com/hogarth/toc.html>

http://come.to/William_Hogarth

<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/spec/hogarth/main.html>