



Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665)

The Triumph of Pan, c.1635
Pen and ink with wash over black chalk and stylus

The Royal Collection © 2005, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

This drawing of *The Triumph of Pan* is a copy of the oil painting held in the National Gallery in London. However, it is not known whether Poussin completed the drawing before or after the painting was made. It is far too carefully drawn to be a preparatory sketch; and it is an exact reproduction of the oil painting, so it is very likely that it was produced after the painting – for what reason we do not know.

The frolicking figures inhabit only the foreground of the composition – this mirrors the shallowness of their impersonal behaviour: their drunkenness, their lust, and their singing and dancing in celebration of the god Pan.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Poussin was the greatest classicising painter of the seventeenth century and the Baroque period. Born in Normandy, France, he travelled to Italy when he was thirty and stayed there, returning to France only once on short trip to Paris.

Finished drawings by Poussin are rare. It is known that when Poussin drew it was a frenzied act of getting his ideas onto paper, and he would normally produce numerous sketches from one idea. He was the great painter of epic and narrative works, with the Greek gods, the Christian God, or the overwhelming force of nature as his most frequent subjects.

STUDENT FOCUS QUESTIONS

- How much space do the figures in this artwork occupy? Discuss.
- Poussin often created work at great speed – what in this artwork might indicate a different approach approach?
- How are the materials he used suited to his style of drawing?

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

<http://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?/html/p/poussin/>

<http://www.abcgallery.com/P/poussin/poussin.html>

<http://www.pinakothek.de/alte->

[pinakothek/sammlung/kuenstler/kuenstler_inc_en.php?inc=kuenstler&which=2886](http://www.pinakothek.de/alte-pinakothek/sammlung/kuenstler/kuenstler_inc_en.php?inc=kuenstler&which=2886)