



Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio) (1483–1520)

An allegorical figure of Poetry, c.1509–10
Black chalks over stylus underdrawing

The Royal Collection © 2005, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

Raphael's first major undertaking in Rome was a fresco series on themes of theology, philosophy, jurisprudence, and poetry in what was probably the Julius II's library in the Vatican Palace, a room now known as the Stanza della Signatura.

This drawing is a study for the allegorical figure of poetry painted in the vault of the chamber. The drapery of the study and the pose of the figure correspond with the fresco, but in the fresco the upper half of the body is clothed as well.

Raphael would first sketch his model nude and fix the proportions and pose – he would use a stylus that left only indentations on the surface of the paper. Black chalk was then applied over the indentations and the drawing was built up, allowing the legs to be seen through the soft drapery. A grid is visible in the drawing that would have aided the next stage of the reproduction of the figure.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Raphael was born in Urbino where his father, Giovanni Santi, was court painter. He almost certainly began his training there and would have known works by artists like Uccello and Piero Della Francesca from an early age.

Raphael studied at Perugia under Perugino, whose style is reflected in his earliest paintings, such as *The Crucifixion* (c.1503, National Gallery, London). In about 1504 he went to Florence, where he was strongly influenced by Leonardo and Michelangelo. He completed several Madonnas, as well as such works as *The Holy Family* (Madrid) and *The Deposition* (1507, Borghese).

In 1508 he went to Rome, where he produced his greatest works, including the frescoes in the papal apartments of the Vatican, and the cartoons for the tapestries of the Sistine Chapel (1515–16). In 1514 he succeeded Bramante as architect of St Peter's. His last work, *The Transfiguration* (Vatican), was nearly finished when he died.

STUDENT FOCUS QUESTIONS

- How is this work typical of Raphael?
- How has the artist represented the allegorical nature of the figure?
- What evidence can you see of the processes used by the artist to develop the work?

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

<http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/raphael/>

<http://www.artchive.com/artchive/R/raphael.html>

<http://www.abcgallery.com/R/raphael/raphael.html>