French Paintings and Pastels, 1600–1945

The Collections of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

Aimee Marcereau DeGalan, Editor

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Nicolas Poussin, *The Triumph of Bacchus*, 1635–1636

Artist	Nicolas Poussin, French, 1594–1665, active in Italy
Title	*The Triumph of Bacchus*
Object Date	1635–1636
Alternate and Variant Titles	*Le Triomphe de Bacchus*
Medium	Oil on canvas
Dimensions (Unframed)	50 3/8 x 59 3/4 in. (128.0 x 151.8 cm)
Credit Line	The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. Purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust, 31-94

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Fig. 1. Nicolas Poussin, *The Triumph of Pan*, 1636, oil on canvas, 53 1/2 x 57 31/64 in. (135.9 x 146 cm), National Gallery, London

On May 19, 1636, Marchese Pompeo Frangipane wrote to Cardinal Richelieu, chief minister to King Louis XIII of France from 1624 to 1642, that he had asked the Bishop of Albi Gaspard de Daillon to bring with him from Rome "two paintings of Bacchanals which the painter Poussin

has already executed in conformity with your wishes and intention."[1] In an undated letter, possibly of December 1636, Daillon reported to the Cardinal that he had now brought "the two paintings by Poussin" to the Château de Richelieu, the Cardinal's enormous, recently completed residence on the borders of Poitou and Touraine in the Loire Valley.[2] It is generally thought that both letters refer to *The Triumph of Pan* in the National Gallery, London (Fig. 1), and *The Triumph of Bacchus* in Kansas City. These two paintings, among others, were commissioned and/or assembled for the Cardinal's new public picture room, the Cabinet du Roi, in an effort to make clear his vision of a unified and powerful France.[3]

Richelieu was no stranger to utilizing art in this capacity. In 1622, he had commissioned an allegorical cycle of paintings by Peter Paul Rubens (Flemish, 1622–1625) celebrating the return of Queen Marie de Médicis to France following forced exile by Louis XIII, her young son.[4] She had become regent of France when the nearly nine-year-old Louis ascended the throne following the assassination of his father, Henry IV, in 1614. Mismanagement of the kingdom and endless political intrigues led young King Louis to take power in 1617 by exiling his mother (and her superintendent, Richelieu) and executing her followers.[5] Following their return in 1621, Richelieu became essential to Louis XIII as mediator between mother and son, and he rose to power quickly, becoming cardinal in 1622 and chief minister to Louis XIII in 1624, a position he retained until his death in 1642. The two mainstays of Richelieu's role as chief minister were consolidating power in France and keeping the Hapsburg Dynasty, which ruled in Austria and Spain, in check.[6] Richelieu was cunning and formidably intelligent. He deployed art to convey the glory of the state and the virtue of loyal service to the crown, relying on allegoric symbolism and historical parallels, either biblical or antique, to communicate these themes.[7] It is through this lens that one must consider the Bacchanal series Richelieu commissioned from Poussin for his Château de Richelieu in 1635–1636.

Fig. 2. Nicolas Poussin, *The Triumph of Silenus*, 1635–1636, oil on canvas, 56 1/4 x 47 7/16 in. (142.9 x 120.5 cm), National Gallery, London

The earliest full account of the château, and in particular the Cabinet du Roi, was published in 1676 by Benjamin Vignier, the governor of the château from 1662 to 1684.[8] The Poussins were hung together with five Renaissance paintings by Italian masters: Andrea Mantegna (ca. 1431–1506), Pietro Perugino (1626–1689) and Lorenzo Costa (ca. 1460–1535), which had decorated the studiolo of Isabella d'Este in Mantua from 1525 or earlier (today these paintings are in the Musée du Louvre, Paris).[9] Vignier describes the Cabinet du Roi as ten by twelve meters in area and some five meters high. It occupied the main floor of the southeast corner of the château. The wall paneling was divided into sections by ten caryatids between which were panels, some decorated with fleurs-de-lis on a blue ground, others with battles and triumphs (conquests) of marine gods. The caryatids supported a cornice about two meters above floor level, and the Poussins were placed between the cornice and the ceiling, together with the five paintings from Mantua.[10] Poussin's third bacchanal, *The Triumph of Silenus* (Fig. 2),[11] may have arrived after the other two; seemingly confirming this is Daillon's letter to Richelieu in late 1636, in which he implies he saw *The Triumph of Pan* and its pendant, *The Triumph of Bacchus*, as completing the ensemble. The *Pan* and *Bacchus* by

Poussin were on either side of the window on the east wall, and the *Silenus* must have been on the opposite wall between Mantegna's *Parnassus* (1497; Musée de Louvre) and Costa's *Allegory of Isabella d'Este's Coronation* (1504–1506, Musée du Louvre).[12] Inset into the chimneypiece was *The Liberality of Titus* (ca. 1637–1638; Harvard University Art Museums) by Jacques Stella (1596–1657). In the center of the ceiling was an oval painting of the *Deification of Hercules* (today lost; possibly after a design by Simon Vouet [1590–1649]), and in each of the four corners octagonal pictures of cupids carrying the arms of Hercules.[13]

The Triumph of Bacchus and *The Triumph of Pan* remained in the Richelieu family presumably until the second quarter of the 1700s, at which point they were sold and replaced with copies, now at the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Tours. When the originals appeared in Samuel Paris's sale in London in 1741, they made an impression on English antiquarian George Vertue, who recorded in his notebook that year: "Brought over from Paris lately, 4 several [*sic*] pictures of Nicolas Poussin, of large historical subjects—two I think bought by Sir Robert Bouverie and two others I have seen with great pleasure —one *The Triumph of Bacchus*—many figures finely designed—men and women satyrs, centaurs, etc, and all so well preserved, clear and strong in his best studied manner."[14] Many commentators saw and praised the two paintings while they were in England, singling out in particular *The Triumph of Bacchus* as "among the finest work of Poussin."[15] Gustav Friedrich Waagen, who saw the *Bacchus* in the 1857 Manchester Art Treasures exhibition, when it belonged to the Earl of Carlisle, called it "the most important picture here by the greatest master of the French School, going on to describe it as "rich in composition, of graceful motives, characteristic in the forms, clear in the color, and carefully finished."[16]

Despite these accolades, the attribution to Poussin has wavered. Anthony Blunt was the first to query the attribution to Poussin in 1966, believing *The Triumph of Bacchus* to be cold and mechanical in handling, with none of the delicacy and sensitiveness of *The Triumph of Pan*, then in the Morrison collection.[17] In support of this assessment, he cites doubts expressed by scholars in the French landscape exhibition of 1925 at the Petit Palais. Blunt believed the original to be lost, and that a copy was substituted when the pictures were sold from the Richelieu collection in the eighteenth century. Later, after seeing the *Bacchus* side by side with the National Gallery's *Pan* in a 1981 exhibition at the National Gallery of Scotland in Edinburgh, Blunt accepted the *Bacchus* as the work of Poussin but suggested the presence of studio assistance in both paintings.[18] While not doubting their autograph status, Pierre Rosenberg said the pair have often been respected rather than admired.[19] However, other Poussin scholars, notably Jacques Thuillier, were not convinced; he maintained that the Nelson-Atkins *Bacchus* was "a good old copy" and that "only radiography and a comparative study of the fabric support would make it possible to remove the doubts."[20] Possibly on these grounds, both the *Bacchus* and the *Pan* were omitted from a 1994 Poussin exhibition in Paris in the belief that they did not serve the artist's reputation.[21]

Hilliard Goldfarb, in the catalogue for a 2002 exhibition on Richelieu in Montreal, expresses a more sympathetic view: "The Edinburgh catalogue (*Poussin, Sacraments and Bacchanals*, 1981) asserts that the painting has been harshly cleaned at some time in its history and contends that the drier and colder tonalities of certain areas may reflect this. In reality the composition's palette is carefully orchestrated and enlivened by repeated highlights of red, lime green, honey yellow, coral and salmon pink. Most of the figures, especially the centaurs, the warm atmosphere, sky and landscape, and the handling of the vegetation argue forcefully for its autograph status. Awkward passages in the figures of the putti in the lower left, the musculature of the back of the river god do not appear to be of the standard of the others, but they have suffered from wear and losses."[22] Although favorable, this verdict misses the fact that the picture is overall in very good condition (see the accompanying technical entry) and the quality of the execution consistent throughout. The handling is drier than in *The Triumph of Pan*, and the colors more muted, but this is in conformity with Poussin's theory of "modes." In a famous 1647 letter to his friend and patron Paul Fréart de Chantelou, Poussin outlines his idea to treat individual subjects differently, not only through a variety of expressions but also through different styles of painting: some subjects would be rendered more delicately, and others with more strength.[23] Poussin's handling in the Nelson-Atkins composition may be a function of the painting's fidelity to archaeological sources, perhaps intended to be compatible with the works of Mantegna, with which it was destined to hang.[24] Compared to the more dynamic *Triumph of Pan*, the frieze-like composition may perhaps be said to approach the pedantic, but the painting is redeemed from academicism by the delicacy of the colors and the contained energy of the figures as they appear in procession parallel to the picture plane.

The archaeological precedent for *The Triumph of Bacchus* comes from ancient sarcophagi that depict Dionysius, the Greek equivalent to Bacchus. The centaurs and maenads (female followers of Bacchus) are common motifs in such reliefs, including, on occasion, the kind of dancing female figure in the background to the far right.[25] The cupid holding the reins of the two centaurs, which in antiquity is usually positioned on the rump of a satyr, has been transposed in Poussin's painting to the front of the triumphal car. His pose derives from a print by the Master of the Die (Italian, active ca. 1530–ca. 1560), after a drawing by Raphael (Italian, 1483–1520).[26] Many of the figures are crowned with ivy or vine leaves, both sacred to Bacchus: ivy since it is evergreen and a symbol of eternal life; the vine since Bacchus was the god of wine. This, too, is a motif evidenced in a multiplicity of sources, including another sixteenth-century print by the Master of the Die after Raphael, entitled *Sacrifice to Priapus*.[27] The putti in the foreground and on the chariot are crowed with laurel, a symbol of victory since the ancient games at Delphi.[28]

In the left background, the wreath on the spear is inscribed with the Bacchic cry, "Evoe, evoe," while the adjacent Pan holds his shepherd's crook and plays the pipes that he is said to have invented.[29] Hercules, carrying his club, holds in his other arm the tripod[30] he stole from Apollo, who is in turn depicted driving his chariot in the sky.[31] The leopard skin of the female rider of the rearmost centaur refers to Bacchus's conquest of India, in which his chariot was drawn by leopards—a motif traditionally ascribed to a literary source, Lucian's *Dionysus*.[32] To the far right, the maenad's thyrsus (staff), common in Bacchic rites, is decorated with a pine cone and a serpent, both fertility symbols associated with Bacchus.[33] The river god in the foreground, representing the river Indus, is another reference to Bacchus's Indian expedition, and the palm, another triumphal symbol. The overturned jar once contained wine.

The pose of Bacchus himself also has an antique source; it is taken from an ancient painting (now lost) copied in a drawing for Cassiano dal Pozzo's Paper Museum, possibly by Pietro Santi Bartoli (Italian, 1615–1700).[34] The subject of the lost painting is a triumph, possibly of the Goddess Roma, who is seated in the same pose as Poussin's Bacchus, although she is clad in drapery and wearing a helmet. Other motifs in *The Triumph of Bacchus* lack an antique precedent: the serpentine trumpet behind the satyrs is more closely related to an instrument invented around 1600. Likewise, the triumphal carriage of Bacchus is unlike the chariots in ancient reliefs and closer to a Renaissance pattern like the "floats" in the illustrations to Onofrio Panvinio, *Fastorum Libri V* (*Five Books on the Fasti*), published in Venice in 1558.[35] The wheels resemble those in a Poussin drawing in a private collection made after a print by Antonio Fantuzzi (Italian, active 1537–1550), after a battle scene by Giulio Romano (Italian, probably 1499–1546).[36]

Fig. 3. Nicolas Poussin, *The Indian Triumph of Bacchus*, ca. 1635–1636, pen, brown ink, and black chalk on paper, 7 15/16 x 12 3/8 in. (20.2 x 31.4 cm), Windsor Castle, Royal Library, London

There are a number of preparatory drawings for the painting, though not as many as for its companion, *The Triumph of Pan*. The best known of these is at Windsor Castle, London (Fig. 3).[37] Here the figures advance on a diagonal in typically baroque fashion. The motif of Bacchus's Indian triumph, only hinted at in the painting, is more evident here, since the chariot is drawn by leopards. Elephants and camels appear in the background, exotic animals associated with India and other far-off places. Next to the chariot, Silenus is shown on a braying donkey, another motif suppressed in the painting.[38] The somewhat damaged drawing in Kansas City (Fig. 4) is closer to the final result. The composition is now parallel to the picture plane and the pose of Bacchus more nearly established, but there are still many differences that elucidate Poussin's thought processes.[39] Generally speaking, the drawing is more frenzied than the picture, with more explicit Indian references in the animals.[40]

Fig. 4. Nicolas Poussin, *Study for The Triumph of Bacchus*, 1635, brown ink and blue-gray wash over black chalk on paper, 6 3/16 x 8 15/16 in. (15.72 x 22.68 cm), Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 54-83

Why Cardinal Richelieu should have specifically ordered paintings of bacchanals for the Cabinet du Roi has been much discussed. What remains certain is Richelieu's understanding of the propagandistic possibilities of art, as evidenced by his role in artistic commissions that collectively sought to reestablish the centrality of power and influence of France. As suggested earlier, the fidelity to archaeological sources of the three Bacchus paintings may have been encouraged by their destination as companions to works by Mantegna, an early Renaissance artist known for accurately sourcing ancient subject matter.[41] But this still does not explain Poussin's choice of subject. The various interpretations have been concisely summarized by Humphrey Wine.[42] According to Paola Santucci, based on parallels between Bacchus and Christian mysteries by some Christian writers (including Blaise de Vigenère in his edition of Philostratus), bacchanals are allegories of death and resurrection.[43] Charles Dempsey, in an article on Poussin's *Triumph of Venus* in Philadelphia—also a Richelieu commission—proposed a reference to the four elements or four seasons, but this seems unlikely, as Dempsey acknowledged, since the Philadelphia picture was never part of the bacchanal series.[44] Elsewhere he argued that the *Bacchus* showed the "borderline moment between the fruitful season and the season of death, in a year which following the ancients, had only three seasons."[45] He further argued that the *Bacchus* was one of a number of Poussins concerned with time and mutability but did not relate this interpretation to the other two bacchanals or discuss why, on this basis, they should have been appropriate to the cardinal or to the public space of the Cabinet du Roi. The unusual inclusion of Hercules in *The Triumph of Bacchus* has been elucidated by Malcolm Bull in reference to a sarcophagus then in the Aldobrandini Collection and today at Woburn Abbey, in which Hercules appears and which Poussin would have known (Fig. 5).[46] Bull also added that Richelieu was praised as a French Hercules and a French Neptune (reflecting his position as Superintendent of Navigation and Commerce) in a collection of Latin verses published in 1634, the *Epinicia Musarum*. The king, like Holy Roman Emperor Charles V before him, was also associated with Hercules, so the dual reference would have been appropriate for a Cabinet du Roi.

Fig. 5. *Indian Triumph of Bacchus and Hercules*, Roman, early third century, sarcophagus front, marble, Woburn Abbey, Bedfordshire

Bull further links the Poussin bacchanals to François Rabelais. He argues that Chinon, Rabelais's birthplace, was not far from the Château de Richelieu and that Richelieu, like Rabelais, would have been aware that vulgar subjects can allude to serious matters. Therefore, the bacchanals could be understood as quasi-Rabelaisian allegories of the Cardinal's virtues, achievements, and lands. However, as Wine points out, Richelieu at this time was cajoling those in his sphere of influence to live not at Chinon but at the newly built town of Richelieu, which was linked to the château not only by name but by a connecting avenue.[47] In addition, if the bacchanals were a shared joke between patron and painter, they would have been better located in the Cardinal's private apartments than in the public space of the Cabinet du Roi. According to Delphine Robin, the bacchanals were intended to be read together with the Mantuan paintings, the ceiling painting of the Apotheosis of Hercules, and Stella's *Liberality of Louis XIII and Richelieu* as evoking the return of peace, abundance, and joy following the military triumphs of Louis XIII, personified as Hercules in *The Triumph of Bacchus*.[48]

Robin's topical and political explanation is perhaps the most convincing so far, given the character, status, and ambition of Richelieu himself. However, it still does not quite explain why Bacchus in particular should have been chosen as the triumphal protagonist, unless Richelieu merely wanted to follow the celebrated precedent of the Ferrara bacchanals by Titian (Venetian, ca. 1488–1576) then in Rome.[49] Be that as it may, any such interpretive meaning seems to have been overlooked by the time Vignier published his account of the château in 1676.[50] By then, the primacy of the Bacchus theme had been reinforced by statues of the god all over the grounds, including one in a courtyard placed above a bust of Marcus Tullius Cicero. In relation to *The Triumph of Pan*, Vignier suggested a moralizing dialectic of the effects of drunkenness, not unexpected in view of the moral subject matter of some of the Mantuan pictures, including Mantegna's *Minerva Expelling the Vices from the Garden of Virtue* and Perugino's *Combat of Love and Chastity*.[51]

Since the completion of the bulk of this essay, new (and forthcoming) scholarship and technical study have combined knowledge of the ideas behind Poussin's paintings, many of which are rooted in an understanding of classical texts and contemporary mythologies, and a more nuanced awareness of his technical process.[52] Much of this new scholarship merges the idea of Poussin as a painter-philosopher—whom his many biographers portray as someone who would lay down his brushes to walk on the Pincio while expounding his ideas about art and philosophy to a group of followers—with those of an exacting practitioner who altered his approach to compositions, "even the texture and consistency of his pigments . . . into elements that not only create the illusion of representing the world, but also communicated ideas and values in their own right."[53] The thread-count studies of Poussin's three bacchanals (see accompanying technical essay) carried out in 2014 by the Nelson-Atkins team and academic researchers Robert Erdmann and C. Richard Johnson of the Thread Count Automation Project, has also shed fundamental new light on the technical foundation of these paintings.[54] Historically, there has been a level of skepticism or wholesale dismissal of technical studies on the grounds that they, in Pierre Rosenberg's words, propose to "supplant the art historian whose major attribute . . . is his 'eye'" with a study that aims to assert what is true through science.[55] However, after much consideration, Rosenberg concludes, these studies, performed in concert with curators, conservators, and scientists, provide a number of answers to questions that have long been issues of debate. It is on these collective grounds that Kansas City's *Triumph of Bacchus* by Nicolas Poussin firmly stands.

Ian Kennedy, 2008
Aimee Marcereau DeGalan, October 2021[56]

Notes

1. "Hò pregato Monsig^{e} il Vescovo d'Albis di portare a V^{ra} Em^{za} due quadri dè Baccanali, che il Poesino Pittore hà già forniti conforme al desiderio, et intentione di lei. Quà sono stati veduti con molto applauso e se saranno approvati dal giuditio anche di essa, io ascriverò a mia singolar fortuna havere impiegata non inutilmte la mia assistenza, come mi glorierò sempre di qual si voglia altra occasione haverò di poterla servire." Quoted by René Pintard, "Rencontres avec Poussin," *Poussin Colloque 1958* (Paris 1960), 1:33n7. De Daillon, son of the Count (later Duke) du Lude, left Rome for his diocese at the end of May (Pintard, "Rencontres avec Poussin," 32).

2. "Monseigneur/Après avoir pris congé de V. E. dans Amiens, je m'en alloy au Lude, ou iay esté dans le lit six sepmaines, tourmanté de la plus grande incommodité de genouil qu'homme eut jamais, aussi tot que ma santé ma permis de me mettre en chemin pour Alby, ie lay faict, et pour satisfaire au Commandement que V. E. me fit d'apporter icy les deux tableaux du poussin, iy suis venu passer, ie les ay veus avec ceux de Monsieur de Mantoue, lesquels quoy que bons n'approchent point de la beauté, et de la perfection des deux que iay apportés. Cela n'empeschera pas qu'ensemble ils ne rendent le Cabinet de la Chambre du Roy parfaictement beau." ["Monsignor / After taking leave of V.E. in Amiens, I went to Le Lude, where I was in bed for six weeks, tormented by the greatest discomfort in the knee that a man had ever had, as soon as my health allowed me to set out for Alby, I did, and to satisfy the Command that V.E. gave me to bring here the two pictures of Poussin, I came to pass there, I have seen them with those of Monsieur de Mantua, which are good [but] do not approach the beauty, and the perfection of the two which I have brought. This will not prevent them from making the Cabinet of the King's Chamber perfectly beautiful. " Translated by Aimee Marcereau DeGalan.] Archives des Affaires Etrangères, Paris, fonds français, 826 84, fol. 88, as

cited in Jacques Thuillier, *Nicolas Poussin* (Paris: Flammarion, 1994), 155.

3. This is the premise upon which the exhibition by Hilliard T. Goldfarb is based. See Goldfarb, ed., *Richelieu: Art and Power*, exh. cat. (Montreal: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 2002).

4. The Rubens's cycle was conceived not long after the queen mother's return from exile with the expectation of asserting her influence in French policy. The cycle glorifies and vindicates her reign; see Goldfarb, *Richelieu*, 6. See also Ronald E. Miller and Robert E. Wolf, *Heroic Deeds and Mystic Figures: A New Reading of Rubens's Life of Maria de'Medici* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989). See also discussion of Poussin's Galerie de Hommes Illustres in the Palais Cardinal by Sylvain Laveissière, "Counsel and Courage: The Galerie des Hommes Illustres in the Palais Cardinal, A Self-Portrait of Richelieu," in Goldfarb, *Richelieu*, 64–71.

5. Charles Tilly, "War making and state making as organized crime," in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). 174.

6. Peter Zagorin, *Rebels and Rulers: 1500–1660*, vol. 2, *Provincial Rebellion: Revolutionary Civil Wars, 1560–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 9; and C. V. Wedgwood, *The Thirty Years' War* (London: Methuen, 1981), 188.

7. Goldfarb, *Richelieu*, 7.

8. Benjamin Vignier, *Le Château de Richelieu ou l'histoire des dieux et des herros de l'antiquité avec des réfléxions morales par M. Vignier* (Saumur, France: Isaac et Henry Desbordes, 1676), 162–63.

9. For an in-depth treatment of the paintings in Richelieu's Cabinet, see D. Bastet, "Études iconographique des 'Bacchanales Richelieu' de Nicolas Poussin," in *Studiolo: Revue d'histoire de l'art de l'Académie de France à Rome* 4 (2006), 167–86.

10. A rough sketch plan by Léon Dufourny of 1800, published by John Schloder, shows how each of the paintings was sited at the time of Vignier's description. See Humphrey Wine, *The Seventeenth Century French Paintings* (London: National Gallery, 2001), 360.

11. For an overview of the National Gallery, *Silenus*'s detractors, and those who accepted the painting, as well as recent analysis that led to its acceptance, see Francesca Whitlum-Cooper, "Poussin's 'Triumph of Silenus' Rediscovered," *Burlington Magazine* 163, no. 1418 (May 2021): 408–15. For the technical thread-count study that laid the groundwork for such a reassessment of *Silenus*, see Mary Schafer and John Twilley's accompanying technical entry.

12. As former National Gallery, London, curator Humphrey Wine points out, the Cabinet du Roi may not originally have been intended to look exactly like this. See Wine, *The Seventeenth Century French Paintings*, 360.

13. Pierre Rosenberg, "Les Bacchanales Richelieu: ce que l'on sait et ce que l'on ne sait pas (encore)," in *Richelieu à Richelieu: Architecture et Décors d'un Château Disparu*, ed. Stijn Alsteens et al., exh. cat. (Milan: Silvana, 2011), 129–35.

14. George Vertue, "Vertue's Note Book, B. 4," in "Vertue Note Books: Volume III," special issue, *Walpole Society* 22 (1933–1934): 105.

15. John Smith, *A Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch, Flemish, and French Painters*, vol. 8, *The Life and Works of Nicholas Poussin, Claude Lorraine, and Jean Baptist Greuze* (London: Smith and Son, 1837), 110–11.

16. [Gustav Friedrich] Waagen, *The Manchester Exhibition; What to Observe: A Walk through the Art-Treasures Exhibition under the Guidance of Dr. Waagen: A Companion to the Official Catalogue* (London: John Murray and W.H. Smith and Sons, 1857), 23.

17. Anthony Blunt, *The Paintings of Nicolas Poussin: A Critical Catalogue* (London: Phaidon, 1966), no. 137, pp. 95–98, 162.

18. Anthony Blunt, "French Seventeenth-Century Painting: The Literature of the Last Ten Years," *The Burlington Magazine* 124, no. 956 (November 1982): 706–07. The painting was, however, only attributed to Poussin by Wild (1980) and rejected by Mérot (1990). See Doris Wild, *Nicolas Poussin* (Zurich: Orell Füssli, 1980), 1:23, 62–63, 63n4, 64, 89, 183, 198, 200, 211, 215; 2:66–69, 208, 243, 262, 264, 317; and Alain Mérot, *Nicolas Poussin* (New York: Abbeville, 1990), 84, 87–88, 92, 275, 305, 319.

19. “Mais nous ne pensons pas que leur sensualité figée, alliée au plus parfait scrupule archéologique soit aujourd’hui parfaitement comprise (pour tout dire nous les admirons plus que nous les aimons)” (But we don’t think that their frozen sensuality, allied to the most perfect archaeological scrulple is perfectly understood today [to be honest, we admire them more than we love them]). Translation by Aimee Marcereau DeGalan. See Pierre Rosenberg, *France in the Golden Age: Seventeenth-Century French Paintings in American Collections*, exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1982), 31–32, 308–09, 369, 378.

20. “Bonne copie ancienne,” “Seules la radiographie et l’étude comparative de la toile de support permettraient de lever les doutes.” Translation in text by Aimee Marcereau DeGalan. Thuillier, *Nicolas Poussin*, 254.

21. See Pierre Rosenberg and Louis-Antoine Prat, *Nicolas Poussin, 1594–1665*, exh. cat. (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1994).

22. Hilliard T. Goldfarb, ed., *Richelieu: Art and Power*, exh. cat. (Montreal: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 2002), 2, 244–45, 292–95, 298.

23. Poussin to Chantelou, March 24, 1647, in Charles Jouanny, ed., *Correspondance de Nicolas Poussin* (Paris: Jean Schemit, 1911), 350–52.

24. Poussin to Chantelou, March 24, 1647. For an excellent summary on Poussin’s theories of modes, see Helen Glanville, “Aspect and Prospect —Poussin’s Trumph of Silenus,” *Artibus et Historiae* 37, no. 74 (December 2016): 241–54.

25. For example, Friedrich Matz, *Die Dionysischen Sarkophage* (Berlin: Mann, 1968), vol. 2, no. 117, pl. 53 (del Pozzo copy in the British Museum of a sarcophagus now in the Museo delle Terme, Rome). See also Matz, *Die Dionysischen Sarkophage*, vol. 1, no. 9, pl. 13 (sarcophagus in the Farnesina, Rome in 1556).

26. Adam von Bartsch and Suzanne Boorsch, *The Illustrated Bartsch: Italian Masters of the Sixteenth Centuries*, ed. Walter L. Strauss and Veronika Birke (New York: Abaris Books, 1982), 29:187. See a print owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art here https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/396189.

27. An example of this print featuring a statue of Priapus and decorated with garlands by Bacchantes and goat-footed maenads, also attended by satyrs, Bacchus, and a baby goat, can be found at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1985.1.436, https://art.famsf.org/master-die/sacrifice-priapus-after-raphael-or-giulio-romano-19851436.

28. The ancient Greeks first introduced the laurel crown as an honorary reward for victors in athletic, military, poetic, and musical contests. The winners of the Greek Pythian Games held in Delphi every four years in honor of Apollo received a wreath of bay laurel. See *Statue of Hercules*, CE 100–199, Roman, marble with polychromy, 46 in. high, at the J. Paul Getty Museum, 73.AA.43.1, http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/124355/maker-statue-of-hercules-roman-ad-100-200/?dz=0.5253,0.2649,1.57.

29. Many of the classical sources for Bacchus, including Pan and his pipes, can be found in a second-century Roman marble sarcophagus of the *Marriage Procession of Bacchus and Ariadne*, at the British Museum, 1805,0703.130, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C 0703-130.

30. A sheet of studies of antiquities by Poussin (today at the Getty Museum) includes a sketch of a Roman tripod acquired by Nicolas Claude Fabri de Pieresc in 1629. See David Jaffé, “Two Bronzes in Poussin’s ‘Studies of Antiquities,’” *J. Paul Getty Museum Journal* 17 (1989): 42–45. In the Pieresc tripod, the legs support a bowl; in the tripod in the Kansas City painting, the legs support a circular rim into which an urn is inserted.

31. The motif of Apollo riding in his chariot across the sky can be found in many ancient sources as well as near-contemporaneous print sources, including the Master of the Die (after Raphael), *Apollo in His Horse-Drawn Chariot*, 1530–1560, engraving, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 49.97.327, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search

32. See *Lucian, of Samosata*, ed. and trans. A. M. Harmon, K. Kilburn, and M. D. Macleod (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1913). See also Anthony Blunt, *Nicolas Poussin: The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, 1958, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC: Text* (London: Phaidon, 1967), 1:137.

33. A thyrsus is a wand or staff of giant fennel covered with ivy vines and leaves, often topped with a pine cone, and carried during Hellenic festivals and religious ceremonies. See the ancient Greek sculpture of the *Braschi Antinous*, 138 CE, marble, Vatican Museums, Rome. The thyrsus is typically associated with the Greek god Dionysus or his Roman counterpart, Bacchus. See William Smith, William Wayte, and G. E. Marindin, eds., *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities* (London, J. Murray, 1890), s.v. "thrysus," http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.04.0063:entry=thyrsus-cn&highlight=thyrsus, accessed September 13, 2021.

34. Blunt, *Nicolas Poussin: The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, 1958*, 1:232; Francesco Solinas, *Arte e Scienza nella Roma Barocca: Le collezione di Cassiano dal Pozzo*, exh. cat. (Rome: Palazzo Barberini, 2000). The painting is now lost, but according to Bellori was discovered near the Theater of Marcellus. Giovanni Pietro Bellori engraved it in his *Fragmenta Vestigii Veteris Romae, ex lapidibus Farnesianis*, published in 1673. See Giovanni Pietro Bellori, *Fragmenta Vestigii Veteris Romae, ex lapidibus Farnesianis* (Rome: Ioannis Iacobi de Rubeis, 1673), 1.

35. Onofrio Panvinio, *Fastorum Libri V a Romulo Rege usque ad Imp. Caesarem Carolum V . . . Eiusdem in Fastorum Libros Commentarii* (Venice, 1558), 453–62. See Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2007).

36. Pierre Rosenberg and Louis-Antoine Prat, *Nicolas Poussin: 1594–1665; Catalogue raisonné des dessins* (Milan: Leonardo, 1994), no. 185, 1:352. Similar wheels appear in a print by the Master of the Die after Giulio Romano, *Cybele in Her Chariot* (Bartsch, *The Illustrated Bartsch*, no. 18-II, p. 29:175. A study of a chariot similar to that in the Poussin by Jacques Louis David was published in Pierre Rosenberg and B. Peronnet, "Un album inédit de David," *Revue de L'Art* 142, no. 4 (2003): 45–83. Since the chariot is not of antique design, it is likely that the drawing, which dates from the late 1770s, was made either after the original painting, which was then in England, or after a copy available in France.

37. Rosenberg and Prat, *Nicolas Poussin: 1594–1665*, no. 83, pp. 1:148–51.

38. The verso of a drawing in the Uffizi related to the *Triumph of Pan* features studies of centaurs, one rearing up as in the painting but holding a banner, the other on its knees with a cupid on its back, following antique precedents. See Rosenberg and Prat, *Nicolas Poussin: 1594–1665*, 1:156–57, no. 86.

39. The chariot is again more authentically antique. As in the painting, it is drawn by cavorting satyrs, the one nearest the chariot carrying a female figure. The elephants and camels, later suppressed, survive in the background. A satyr and maenad, also eliminated from the paintings, appear to the rear of the chariot. To the far right, a bacchante anticipates the dancing female seen in the background of the painting, though she is more covered by drapery. In the foreground the river god, instead of in profile and with his back to us as later, faces outward. Otherwise the foreground is relatively bare, lacking the overturned jar and putto climbing out of the water.

40. A sheet of studies in the Hermitage again addresses the two satyrs, in this case near their final form. See Rosenberg and Prat, *Nicolas Poussin: 1594–1665*, no. 89, pp. 1:162–63. A related drawing in Bayonne shows maenads with a thyrsus and a satyr abducting a nymph, though the pose of the maenad differs from the picture. See Rosenberg and Prat, *Nicolas Poussin: 1594–1665*, no. 90, pp. 1:162–63. A fragment of a drawing in The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, joined to another fragment of a Holy Family, again shows a female figure riding a satyr. See Rosenberg and Prat, *Nicolas Poussin: 1594–1665*, no. 91, pp. 1:164–65.

41. It is not clear whether Poussin ever saw the Mantegnas from the studio of Isabella d'Este before they were sent from Mantua to France in 1624–1629, but he would have been familiar enough with Mantegna's style from prints by or after Mantegna. A pen and wash copy by Poussin after Mantegna's *Triumph of Caesar* exists in a private collection in Paris; see Rosenberg and Prat, *Nicolas Poussin: 1594–1665*, no. 206, 1:402.

42. Wine, *The Seventeenth Century French Paintings*, 360–61.

43. Paola Santucci, *Poussin: Tradizione Ermetica e Classicismo Gesuita* (Salerno: Cooperativa, 1985), 27–30, 32, 132. See also Blaise de Vigénère, *Les*

images, ou Tableaux de platte peinture de Philostrate Lemnien (Paris: Abel Langelier, 1597).

44. Charles Dempsey, "Poussin's 'Marine Venus' at Philadelphia: A Re-Identification Accepted," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 28 (1965): 341.

45. Charles Dempsey, "The Classical Perception of Nature in Poussin's Earlier Work," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 29 (1966): 243.

46. Malcolm Bull, "Poussin's Bacchanals for Cardinal Richelieu," *Burlington Magazine* 137, no. 1102 (January 1995): 5–6, 9–11.

47. Wine, *The Seventeenth Century French Paintings*, 361.

48. Delphine Robin, *Étude iconographique des Bacchanales Richelieu de Nicolas Poussin* (PhD diss., Université Paris-Sorbonne, Paris IV, 1998).

49. The paintings, which were made for Alfonso I d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, are: Titian, *Bacchus and Ariadne*, 1522–1523, oil on canvas (applied onto conservation board 1968), 69.5 x 75 in (176.5 x 191 cm), National Gallery, London; *The Bacchanal of the Andrians*, 1523–1526, oil on canvas, 69 x 76 in (175 x 193 cm), Museo del Prado, Madrid; *The Worship of Venus*, 1518–1519, oil on canvas, 68 x 69 in (172 x 175 cm), Museo del Prado, Madrid.

50. Wine, *The Seventeenth Century French Paintings*, 361.

51. Vignier, *Le Chateau de Richelieu ou l'histoire des dieux et des herros de l'antiquité avec des réfléxions morales par M. Vignier* (Saumur, France: Isaac et Henry Desbordes, 1676), 162–63.

52. Chief among these scholars are Helen Glanville, whose forthcoming exploration of the syncretic/religious interpretation of *Bacchus*, grounded by a solid technical understanding of the artist's process, promises to forge new ground. Glanville has contributed many recent studies on Poussin's bacchanales that illuminate the course of her study to merge these two disciplines. See especially Glanville, "Aspect and Prospect—Poussin's Triumph of Silenus," *Artibus et Historiae* 37, no. 74 (2016): 241–54. A new publication and exhibition at the National Gallery, London, and the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, are also being realized around the idea of how Poussin's understanding of ancient sculptures and Renaissance paintings of figures engaged in dance, which he encountered in Rome, helped him confront the problem of the body's expressive potential in his paintings. See Emily A. Beeny and Francesca Whitlum-Cooper, *Poussin and the Dance*, exh. cat. (London: National Gallery Company, 2021).

53. As discussed by Sheila McTighe in her article, "Poussin's Practice: A New Plea for Poussin as a Painter," *Kermes* 27, nos. 94–95 (April–September 2014): 11. For a particularly acute version of the painter-philosopher aspect of Poussin, see James Elmes, *The Arts and Artists; or, Anecdotes and Relics of the Schools of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture* (London: John Knight and Henry Lacey, 1825), 2:44–45.

54. See Twilley, Myers, and Schafer, "Poussin's Materials and Techniques," 71–83. See also Robert G. Erdmann et al., "Reuniting Poussin's Bacchanals Painted for Cardinal Richelieu through Quantitative Canvas Weave Analysis," *AIC Paintings Specialty Group: Postprints 26; Papers Presented at the 41st Annual Meeting, Indianapolis* (Washington, DC: American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, 2013): 155–72.

55. See Pierre Rosenberg, "On the Developments in the History of Art," *Kermes* 27, nos. 94–95 (April–September 2014): 7.

56. Ian Kennedy, former Louis L. and Adelaide C. Ward Senior Curator of European Art, drafted the bulk of this essay during his tenure (2007–2013) at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. Research was updated and edited, with additional text and translations, by Aimee Marcereau DeGalan in 2021 in preparation for this catalogue. This essay is included with Kennedy's permission.

Technical Entry

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Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665) executed *The Triumph of Bacchus* between 1635–1636 as part of a bacchanal-themed commission for Armand Jean du Plessis, Cardinal de Richelieu, that included *The Triumph of Pan* (1636) and *The Triumph of Silenus* (ca. 1637), both of which are in the collection of the National Gallery of Art, London (Figs. 1 and 2). Following the success of the series, a number of high-quality contemporary copies were produced—at least seven painted copies of *Bacchus* are known—and, as with other Poussin paintings, the existence of copies led to a prolonged period of questioned authenticity. Uncertainty about the Nelson-Atkins painting was first raised by Paul Jamot in 1925: "It's the execution here that fails. It is exact, correct, but of a sort of cold and dead perfection."[1] Although the provenance history of *Bacchus* matches that of *Pan* until 1850, and the Nelson-Atkins painting was largely accepted as the original when the Richelieu series was reunited in 1981, some lingering doubts persisted in the literature. In 1994, Jacques Thuillier described *Bacchus* as a copy that "found defenders" and called for a scientific study to compare the series: "There is little chance that for these four works, painted over a short period of time and with the same destination, Poussin would have changed the type of canvas and preparation, or that his handling would have evolved much."[2] To answer many of the questions that Thuillier posed, a technical study of the Nelson-Atkins painting and a comparison of the Richelieu canvas supports were conducted in 2011.[3,4,5]

Examination has shown that *Bacchus* is well-preserved with no structural instability, but its appearance could be significantly improved with removal of deteriorated varnish residues, which are now over forty years old. A scientific study of the *Bacchus* palette was undertaken in anticipation of a conservation treatment that would require more information on the original materials and their alteration over time. The success of the canvas weave match in linking all three paintings provided the basis for the palette study and may contribute to solving an art historical mystery: Do variations in the artist's pigment use and the subsequent alteration of pigments influence the perceptions that sharply divided art historical opinion about whether the three paintings shared a common origin?

Canvas Weave Comparisons of the Richelieu Bacchanals

Historically, canvas weaves have been compared either by manually counting the average number of threads per centimeter in the warp and weft directions with the aid of magnification and a ruler, or counting them from radiographs in which the canvas weave is visible. The process was error-prone, somewhat subjective, and often too coarse for statistical measures of the quality of a "match" to have real meaning. More recently, automated methods applied to radiographs of paintings have greatly improved the accuracy of thread counts and led to new forms of comparison derived from distortions of the weave that are imposed during stretching the canvas or subsequent modifications in its mounting or format.

The need for a rigorous comparison of the canvases and the need to quantify the certainty of an outcome that proved surprising to some, by demonstrating that all three bacchanals of the Richelieu commission were derived from the same bolt of cloth and that the third original painting of the group was one that had long been regarded as a copy, led to important refinements for comparing their weaves and in the methods available to the field of art history for the study of other paintings.

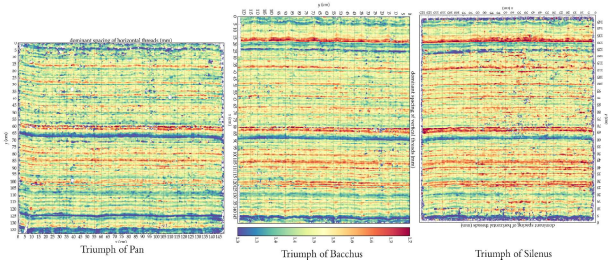

Fig. 6. Rotated and aligned warp thread spacing maps for all three canvases, shown in arbitrary sequence with the painted compositions in the same orientations and at the same scale. Diagram courtesy of Robert Erdmann.

The initial comparison conducted by Robert Erdmann and C. Richard Johnson under the rubric of the Thread Count Automation Project, using radiographs generously provided by the National Gallery of Art, London, for *Pan* and *Silenus* employed mathematical methods previously

used by Johnson and his collaborators.[6] The result provided objective measurements of the variability in spacings between the threads in both directions and the angles at which the warp and weft intersect on a centimeter-scale grid. The outcome of the canvas weave comparison—a triple-weave match among the three paintings—confirmed that all three supports originated from the same bolt of cloth (Fig. 6).[7] While this conclusion strengthens the widely held view that the Nelson-Atkins painting is original, the results held far greater implications for *Silenus*, which had long been considered a copy, although Pierre Rosenberg, Hugh Brigstock, and Henry Keazor believed it to be autograph.[8] A recent cleaning and in-depth technical study of *Silenus* has led to its reinstatement as an autograph work.[9]

Strong cusping along the right and left canvas edges of *Bacchus* and *Pan*, as revealed through the initial process, established a particularly close connection between these two paintings. However, the method required heavy intervention by the operator and was unable to deal with radiographic features that often interfered with the weave, including obscuring paint textures. It stopped short of being a thread-by-thread comparison and it lacked a means for human manual verification.

The development of an improved method, based on autocorrelation analysis and pattern-recognition algorithms, was prompted by the need to substantiate an outcome that ran counter to the widely-held opinion that *Silenus* was not the original version by Poussin. The result of doing this along five guide threads for the three paintings of the Richelieu commission demonstrated a single abrupt increase in the quality of the match at one, unique juxtaposition of the canvases.[10]

The challenge of making a full thread-by-thread demonstration of the match computationally feasible was subsequently taken up by Laurens van der Maaten under the direction of Robert Erdmann.[11] The results of this thrice-repeated match with increasingly sophisticated methods not only bolstered the case for a common origin of the three Poussin bacchanals, but also led to improvements in the methodology for other works.

Overview of the Painting Construction of *Bacchus*

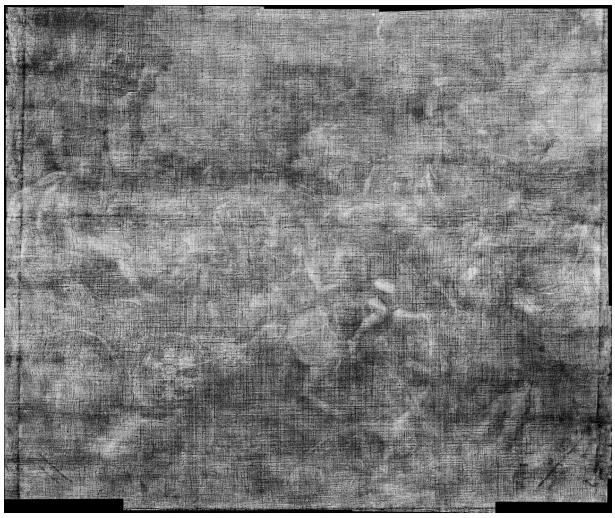

Fig. 7. Radiograph of *Triumph of Bacchus* (1635–1636). The radiograph composite was assembled by Robert G. Erdmann.

Bacchus was executed on a coarse, loosely woven, plain-weave canvas, which is featured prominently in the radiograph due to the low contrast of the thinly-painted composition (Fig. 7).[12] The tacking margins of the painting have been removed, and the wax-lined canvas is stretched across a modern support. The canvas was primed with a double ground, consisting of a lower reddish-brown layer followed by an upper beige layer (Fig. 8).

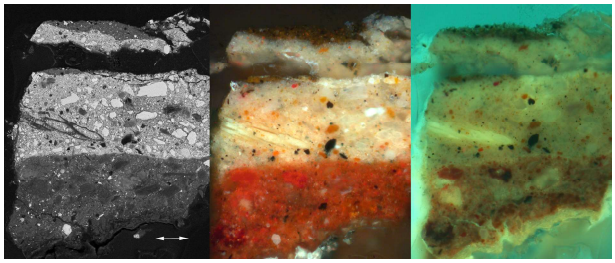

Fig. 8. Cross section from the center right background of *Triumph of Bacchus* (1635–1636), showing the thick layers of the double ground beneath a thin layer of brown. Left to right: Backscatter electron image; normal reflected light; ultraviolet fluorescence. Scale bar is 40 microns.

The priming layers appear to have been rubbed or sanded, as radio-transparent lines at the perimeter edges of the radiograph indicate a thinning of the ground at the inner edges and cross braces of a former underlying stretcher (Fig. 7). This feature can be seen in the radiographs of numerous other works by the artist,[13] although for *Bacchus*, these radio-transparent lines do not exist at all four perimeters, nor are they equidistant

from the painting edges. Additionally, cusping patterns are pronounced on the left and right, while diminished along the bottom edge, and missing at the top.[14] The varied positions of radio-transparent lines and intensities of cusping suggest that the dimensions of *Bacchus* may have been cropped on all four sides with a greater reduction in the overall height of the painting. Another possibility, however, is that the *Bacchus* canvas was obtained from a much larger, stretched and primed canvas, as demonstrated by *Extreme Unction* (1638-40; FitzWilliam Museum, University of Cambridge), which retains its original tacking margins and has radio-transparent lines on only two of its perimeter edges.[15]

Poussin's working method, as described by his biographers, was a painstaking process that involved a number of steps before paint was applied to canvas: quick sketches to develop the initial compositional concept; studies of illuminated wax models, often with additions of wet paper or fabric to simulate drapery; further sketching of live models; and pen and ink drawings.[16] For the artist's most complicated figural arrangements, like that of *Bacchus*, Antoine Le Blond de la Tour (1635–1706) described the artist's use of a partially-enclosed box with a small aperture at the front that allowed Poussin to view the wax models on a gridded board in perspective scale, to explore the effects of light and shade, and to assess the overall composition.[17,18]

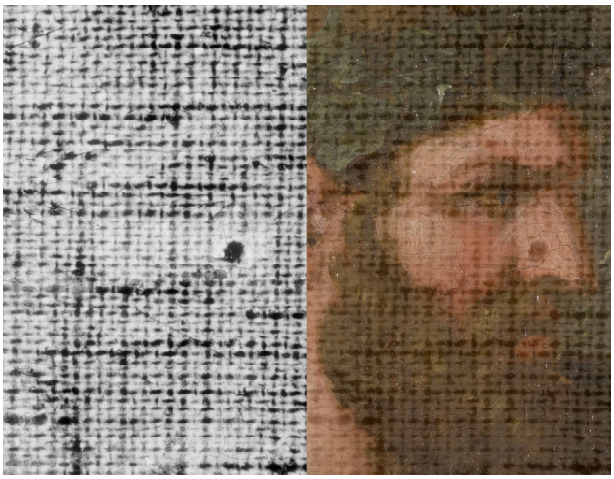

Fig. 9. On the left, radiograph detail of *Triumph of Bacchus* (1635–1636); on the right, an overlay of the radiograph and normal illumination (desaturated) details, showing the position of the vanishing point at Hercules' nose

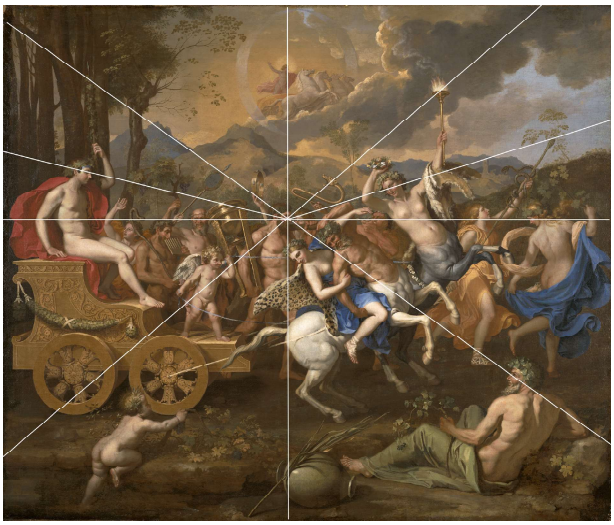

Fig. 10. Diagram of *Triumph of Bacchus* (1635–1636), showing key orthogonals passing through the vanishing point

The vanishing point of *Bacchus* is located on Hercules' nose and aligns with the flat surfaces of the chariot. Covered by later paint applications, the small hole where the ground and canvas were pierced (3 millimeters in diameter) is evident in the radiograph (Fig. 9). A vertical line passing through this point meets Apollo's eyes, while a horizontal line through this point intersects with a number of the procession revelers, traversing the eyes of Silenus (standing behind Cupid), the nymph who peeks over Hercules' club, the trumpeter, until punctuated by the rightmost bacchante who turns her gaze back toward the center of the painting (Fig. 10). Bacchus, the female centaur, as well as the river god and putto at the lower corners turn their gaze toward the vanishing point.[19] Orthogonal lines radiating from this location match the angle of the centaur's torso and an upper left tree branch and intersect with Apollo in the sky, the centaur's raised torch, and the pinecone tip of the thyrsus.[20]

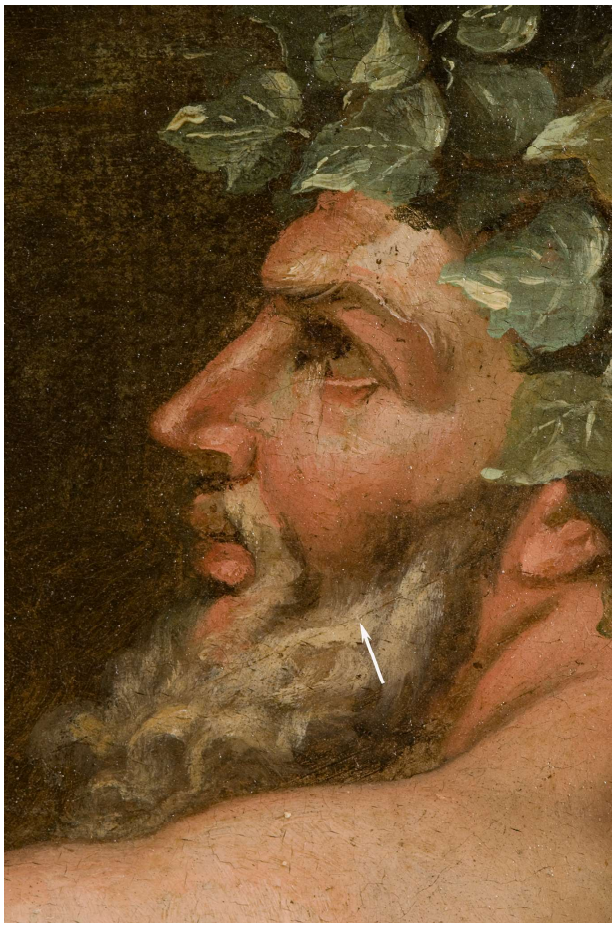

Fig. 11. Detail of the river god, *Triumph of Bacchus* (1635–1636), showing an incised line that passes through his ear and jawline

Like many works by Poussin, there are numerous short incisions made in the wet ground that are visible to the naked eye, some of which appear to have been used to position the figures (Fig. 11). A few incisions, like the inscribed "X" at the nape of the rightmost bacchante's neck (Fig. 12) and a similar feature on Apollo's raised hand (Fig. 13), may correspond to a geometric framework, although many of these marks were likely covered by the artist's paint. In her forthcoming research, Helen Glanville has identified an underlying "divine geometry" in *Bacchus*, a concept rooted in classical antiquity and the scriptures, as well as manuscripts of the period, specifically those of Matteo Zaccolini (1574–1630). In one geometric construction, she proposes that Poussin connected many of the figures (heavenly and earthly) in a large ellipse that surrounds the Bacchic revelers and passes through the "X" of the rightmost figure.[21]

Fig. 12. Photomicrograph with slightly raking light, revealing an incised "X" at the right bacchante's neck, *Triumph of Bacchus* (1635–1636)

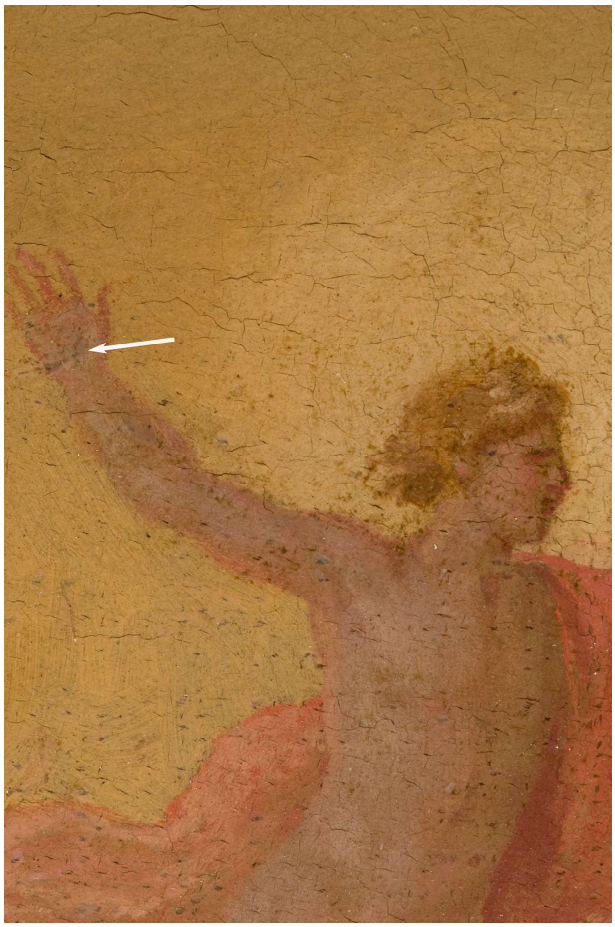

Fig. 13. Detail of Apollo with an incised mark on his raised hand (partially covered by retouching), *Triumph of Bacchus* (1635–1636)

No underdrawing is detected with infrared reflectography, although a few finely-painted dark brown strokes outline drapery in a sparsely painted area between Cupid's legs (Fig. 14). Poussin initially

constructed many of the figures with an underpainting of thin brown washes and opaque shades of brown, gray, and beige. Many of these layers remain visible in the final painting, as illustrated in Figure 15, where the underlying brown wash forms the shadows of the trumpeter's cheek, nose, eyes, and forehead. The use of the colored ground enables this construction, which would not be possible with the thin brown wash atop a reflective white ground. The figures were further developed with additions of opaque pink and peach, applied in a fluid manner with a narrow brush and confident, painterly handling (Fig. 16). Gradual transitions exist between the highlights, midtones, and shadows with less pronounced brushwork. Throughout the figures, glimpses of the cool gray-brown underpainting are contrasted by the intense, warm pink of the flushed cheeks, accents on the facial features, and contouring strokes (Fig. 17). Fine touches of pale green, like those on Hercules' fingernails (Fig. 18) and near the eyes of the river god and trumpeter (Figs. 11 and 15), accent many of the figures.[22] Using short curving strokes and wet-over-wet applications, Poussin produced the convincing fur of the spotted animal pelt, whereas the curls of the centaur's beard were dryly painted (Figs. 19 and 20).

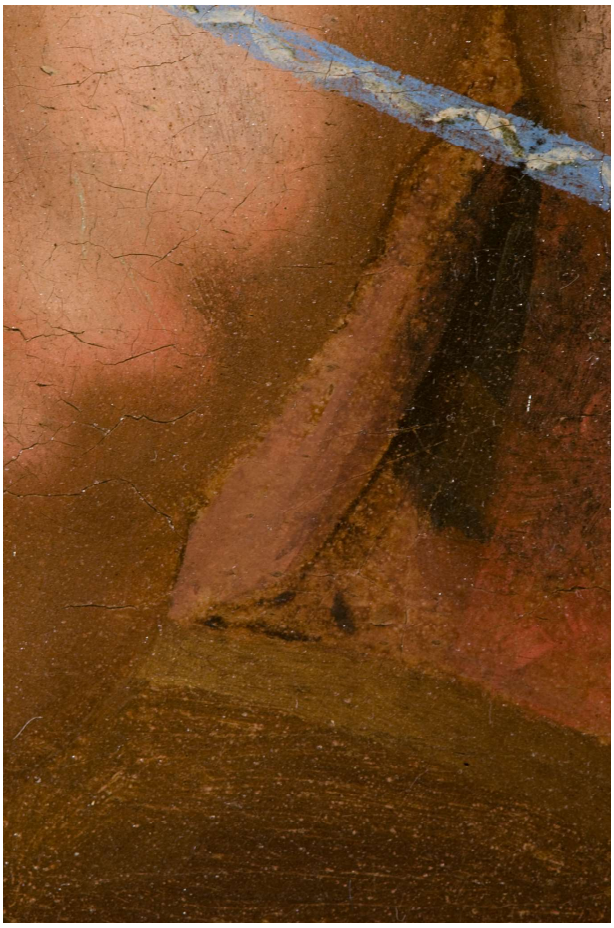

Fig. 14. Detail of *Triumph of Bacchus* (1635–1636), showing finely painted brown lines near Cupid's leg

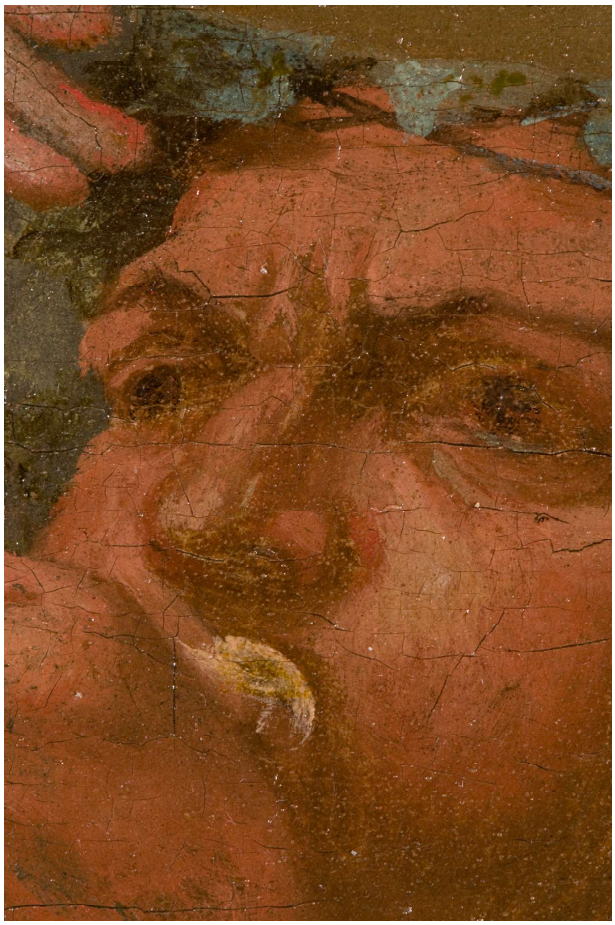

Fig. 15. Detail of the central trumpeter, *Triumph of Bacchus* (1635–1636)

Fig. 16. Detail of the river god's forearm, *Triumph of Bacchus* (1635–1636). Finely painted strokes of pink highlight and define the musculature.

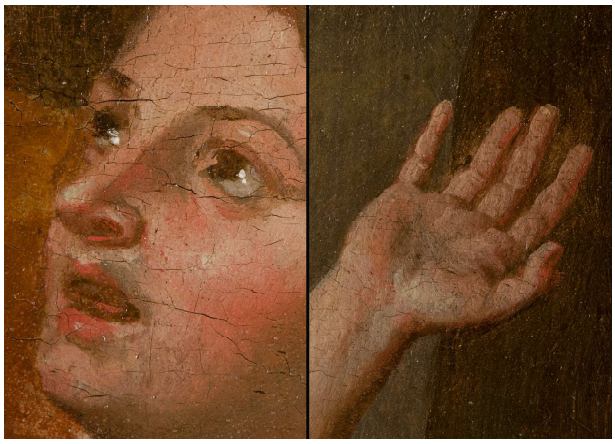

Fig. 17. Details of the leftmost bacchante's face and upraised hand, *Triumph of Bacchus* (1635–1636)

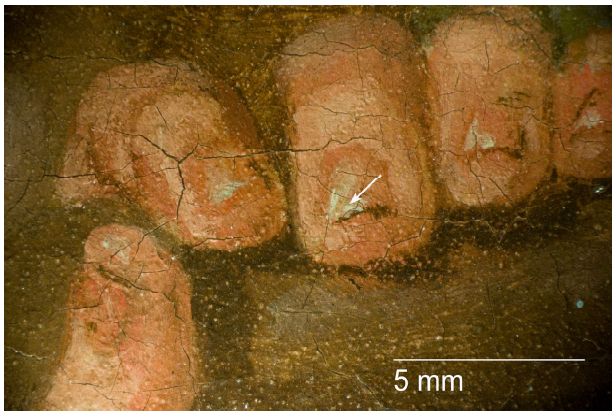

Fig. 18. Photomicrograph of green highlights on Hercules' fingernails, *Triumph of Bacchus* (1635–1636)

Fig. 19. Detail of the wet-into-wet paint strokes of the spotted animal pelt, *Triumph of Bacchus* (1635–1636)

Underlying pink paint associated with the river god's leg confirms that he was initially rendered as a nude figure, before the green drapery was painted on top.[23] Similarly, the figure of the rightmost bacchante was complete

before her blue robe was depicted, as revealed in the infrared reflectogram (Fig. 21).

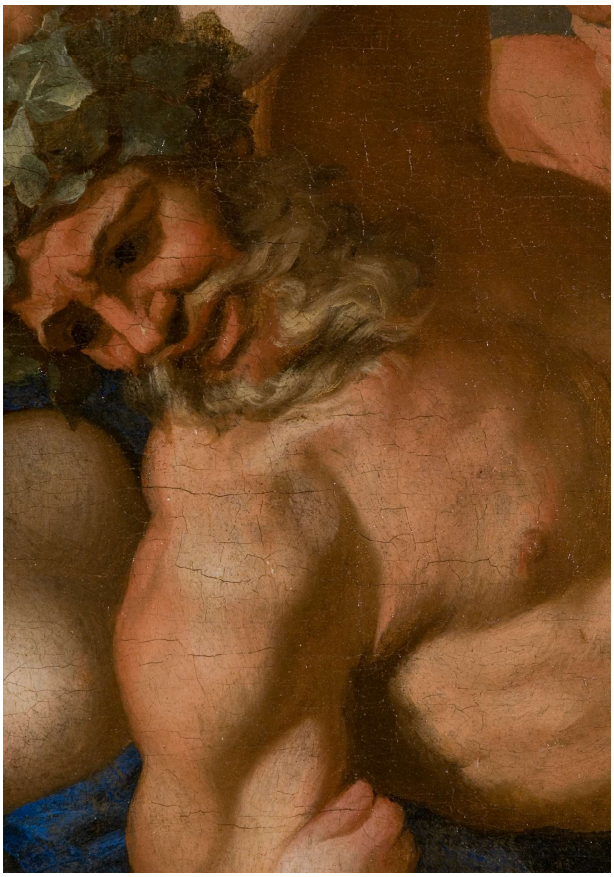

Fig. 20. Detail of the dryly painted, wet-over-dry brushwork of the centaur's beard, *Triumph of Bacchus* (1635–1636)

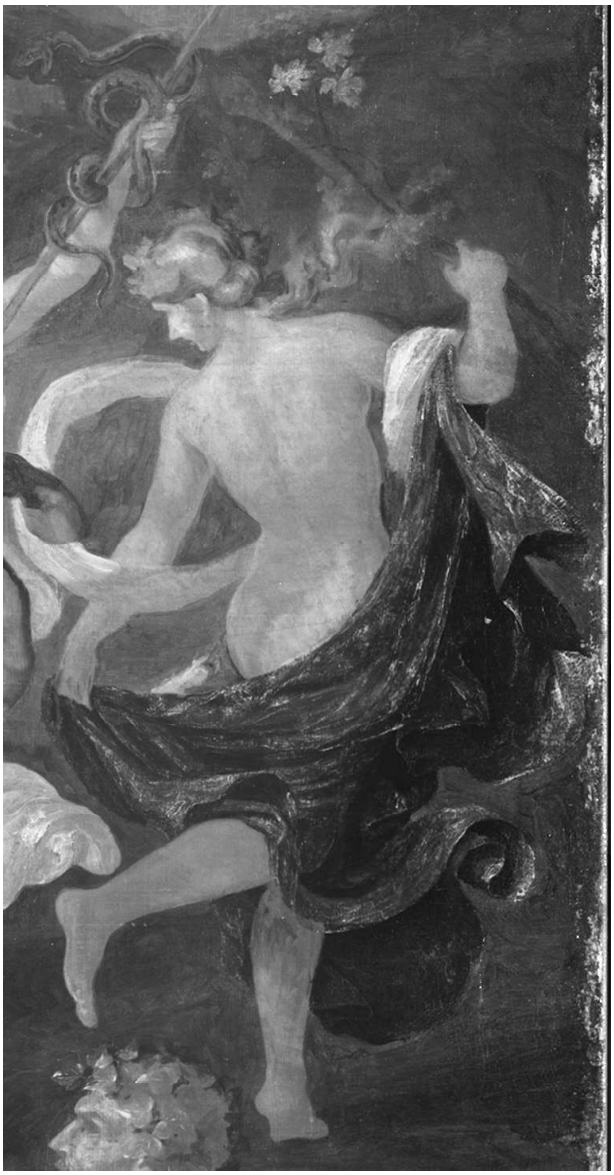

Fig. 21. Infrared reflectogram captured between 1.5-1.7 microns, of the rightmost bacchante showing the textures and opacity of the charcoal underlayer beneath the ultramarine blue robe. Her thighs are visible in silhouette through the robe layers, indicating that she was initially painted nude.

A radio-transparent passage at the upper left of the radiograph (Fig. 7) reveals that, in the early stages of blocking out the sky, the trees were left in reserve. These elements were painted directly on top of the beige ground, which remains visible where the edges of the trees meet the sky. The gray-blue central clouds were painted with zigzagging strokes, and streaks in the fluid paint reveal the movement and direction of the brush. Thin, streaky dark brown paint was applied to the foreground with loose horizontal strokes, followed by

additions of opaque paint that define the foliage, rocks, edge of the river, and other foreground elements.

Fig. 22. Photomicrograph of two tiny holes on the chariot wheel, partially filled with wax from the lining process, *Triumph of Bacchus* (1635–1636)

Fig. 23. Photomicrograph, green paint beneath the right sky of *Triumph of Bacchus* (1635–1636)

Fine lines, drawn through the wet paint with a sharply-pointed tool, mark straight lines on the chariot, the handle of the wreath-adorned spear, the legs of Hercules' tripod, and the handle of the thyrsus. Poussin used a sharply-pointed instrument, perhaps a drafting compass, to mark the circular shapes of the chariot wheels, leaving two pinholes on each wheel (one at the center and one on the inner circle) that are visible with normal illumination (Fig. 22) and radiography.

Despite Poussin's thorough preparatory process, a number of significant artist changes can be identified on *Bacchus*.[24] Green paint beneath the upper right sky corresponds to an early placement of trees that initially balanced those on the left (Fig. 23). The dark shape of this tree grouping is faintly visible in the reflected infrared digital photograph of Figure 24, extending 37 centimeters toward the center of the painting. Poussin's shift away from a symmetrical border of trees is significant when compared to *Pan* and *Silenus*, for as Christopher Wright observed, "all three [Richelieu]

compositions are set against a tree-filled landscape where the trunks form elaborate patterns except in *The Triumph of Bacchus* where they only occupy the left hand part of the background."[25] Infrared imaging also reveals that a highly reflective garment once draped across the trumpeter's body, and his shoulder and arm were repositioned three times. In one adjustment, his raised arm suspended red drapery above his proper left shoulder (Fig. 25). The garment can be inferred to have been painted with vermilion, based on this infrared behavior and the red hue that has emerged as aging of the overlying paint has increased its transparency. Additionally, this figure's dramatic serpent horn was initially a much simpler instrument with a flared end, similar to the trumpet depicted on the left side of *Pan*, with a strap or ribbon hanging below it. Infrared imaging also reveals that the rightmost female once held a staff with an oval-shaped tip, perhaps a second thyrsus, that was modified to become a branch (Fig. 26).

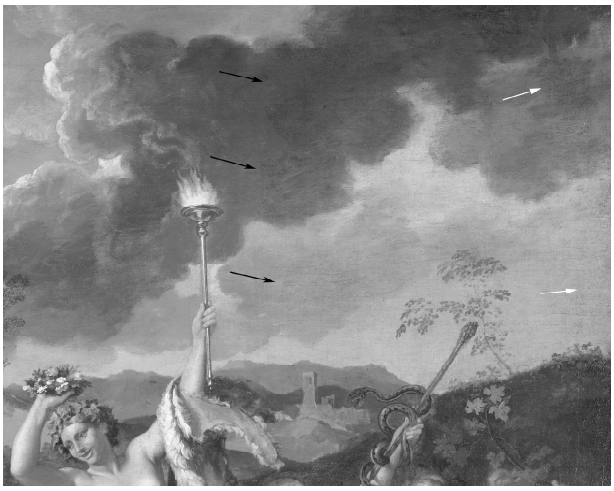

Fig. 24. Reflected infrared digital photograph captured between 850-1000nm, detail of the upper right sky, *Triumph of Bacchus* (1635–1636)

Fig. 25. Infrared reflectogram captured between 1.5-1.7 microns, detail of changes made to the trumpeter's shoulder and his musical instrument, *Triumph of Bacchus* (1635–1636)

Fig. 26. Infrared reflectogram of the rightmost bacchante, captured between 1.5-1.7 microns, *Triumph of Bacchus* (1635–1636). A pinecone-tipped thyrsus initially depicted in her right hand was replaced in the final composition with a vine branch.

Fig. 27. Reflected infrared digital photograph captured between 850-1000nm, detail showing the original placement of Cupid's quiver, *Triumph of Bacchus* (1635–1636)

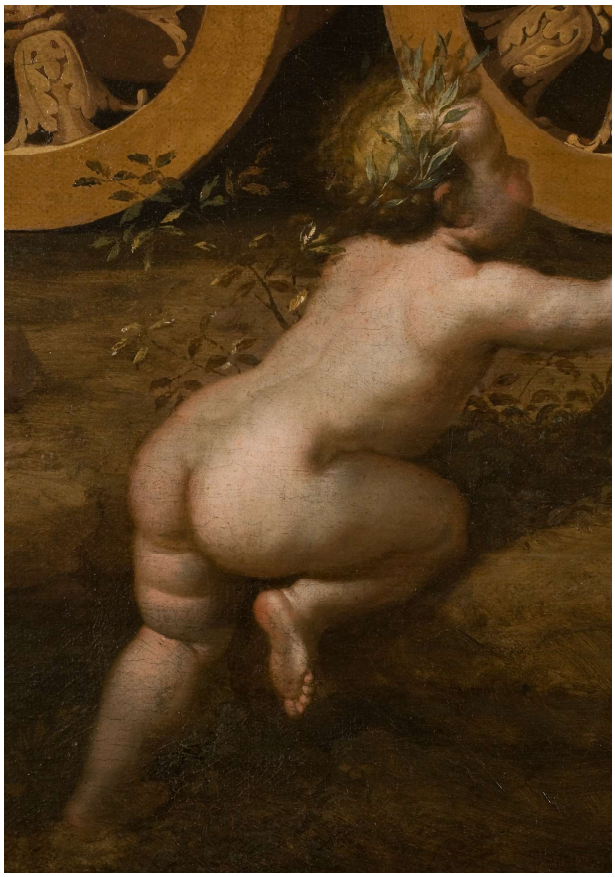

Fig. 28. Detail of the lower left putto, *Triumph of Bacchus* (1635–1636). The curving wheel of the chariot provides some opacity to the putto's profile and gives an indication of its original appearance without interference from the dark foreground. Paint abrasion has disrupted the subtle transitions of the thinly painted figure and exacerbated the influence of the dark underlying paint.

Pentimenti reveal that Cupid's quiver was originally placed along his proper left side (Fig. 27); two ribbons once hung from either side of the wreath above Silenus' head; both feet of the rightmost bacchante clad in orange were initially higher, and rather than the "V" shape visible today, her garment once curved across her proper right thigh. The pronounced curvature of the chariot wheel and dark foreground colors are visible beneath the lower left putto (Fig. 28) and overturned pitcher, indicating that these elements were introduced at a later stage of painting without the use of a reserve.[26] Numerous minor areas of repositioning or adjustment are evident among the drapery and figures. The pentimento of a tree branch on the center left appears to have been misinterpreted and strengthened with retouching (now discolored); the branch does not appear to have been visible early on, as it was excluded

from the copy of *The Triumph of Bacchus* (pre 1800; Victoria and Albert Museum).[27]

Poussin's Choice of Pigments

At the first level of scrutiny, the palette study entailed identifying which pigments were used and which were excluded from among those available to Poussin in the early seventeenth century. At a deeper level, we wished to know the roles played by the pigments in their different combinations and to learn, where possible, how those roles have changed due to aging effects, altering the painting's appearance. As shown below, iron earth pigments (naturally-occurring mineral mixtures in which iron plays a critical role in the color) are used in abundance throughout all of the paints. In addition, the iron earths used by Poussin in *Bacchus* are extremely diverse in both color and mineral type. When these complex mixtures are blended with each other, and diluted by lead white, their identification and understanding the roles they play in the appearance of the painting become extremely challenging.

There is an additional challenging aspect to the study of Poussin's palette created by his deeply philosophical approach to painting.[28] In keeping with the debates of his peers and early modern attempts to create a framework of thought uniting perspective, atmospheric/optical effects, and material properties with humankind's relationship to nature and the cosmos, he is thought to have incorporated small amounts of certain pigments for reasons unconnected with their practical performance in the paint.[29] In short, we do not know in some cases whether small additions of material with a limited influence on appearance were purposeful or not. Poussin may have included small amounts of certain pigments because they "belonged" there, in his worldview, whether they had a practical impact or not.

The distinctive traits of Poussin's work lie in the idiosyncrasies of his use of otherwise common materials. In some cases, these may reflect an underlying procedural philosophy unique to Poussin. It is in the identification of variants among similar materials available in his day, combinations used for his specific effects, and changes wrought on those materials by his preparation procedures, that one could expect to discover new characteristics of the artist's use of materials.

To obtain the most concise information possible about highly dispersed individual pigment grains, a heavy reliance has been placed upon elemental analysis of individual pigment particles using electron beam-excited x-ray spectrometry in the scanning electron microscope (SEM), and the correlation of these results to optical properties and Raman spectra.[30] Pigments identified in the ground and paint layers are shown in Table 1.

Pigments identified on *Triumph of Bacchus*
Lead white
Calcite
Charcoal
Bone black
Natural ultramarine
Various green iron earths
Goethite (natural hydrated iron oxide)
Sienna-type yellow earth
Umber
Lead-tin yellow, type I
Yellow lake on an alumina base
Red lake on an alumina base
Red ochre (fine-grained natural hematite)
Red lead oxide (minium)
Vermilion (natural cinnabar)

Table 1. List of pigments identified on *Triumph of Bacchus* (1635–1636)

Construction and Materials of the Double Ground

The colored ground plays an important visual role in the painting by influencing the tonality of overlying paints, some of which were never entirely opaque and which have become less so as a result of aging. The visible role of the ground is especially notable in setting the base color in the shadows of the river god's green drapery (Fig. 29). Aging effects in the ground strata, therefore, have an impact on ways in which the present-day appearance of the painting differs from when it left the studio. Knowing that the ground played a visual role under certain colors, and that this role might have needed to be suppressed or modified under others, we sought to locate intermediate paint applications such as washes or underpainting layers. Several cross sections contain the ground layers while others were taken exclusively to characterize the overlying paint.

Fig. 29. Detail of the green drapery below the river god's knee where the darkest green was sampled (center), exemplifying Poussin's use of the warm-toned ground, *Triumph of Bacchus* (1635–1636)

Prior investigators studying numbers of works by Poussin have taken an approach distinct from ours by quantifying the average major element concentrations in their grounds using electron-beam-excited X-ray spectrometry performed in the scanning electron microscope. Alain Duval included nine works by Poussin that he presented in this context of broader seventeenth- and eighteenth-century painting practice.[31] By working from cross sections, he bypassed complicating factors that are inherent to non-sampling methods for the analysis of superimposed layers, methodology that, in any case, was in its infancy at that time. However, a series of assumptions about how to allocate the responses for individual elements are required in his approach. For example, lead can exist in particulate form as lead white or red lead pigments and simultaneously as lead dissolved in the medium where it functions as a drier, or siccative, for oil.[32]

In a subsequent paper, Duval presented the results of this experimental protocol for the grounds of 26 works by Poussin.[33] He classified the ground layers into three types based on color and dominant elemental composition. He defined these classes as ferrugineous soils, ochres, and iron oxides, based upon their proportions of alumina, silica, and iron. With a single painting and no direct access to that body of data, our approach has been descriptive, rather than classifying, and focused on the individual constituents of the ground. In addition, we have observed that some constituents of the ground also play important roles in the upper paint layers. It should be borne in mind that a dark ground layer may contain the sediment collected from washing brushes whose color is overwhelmed by the dark earth minerals. In that case, minor amounts of costly or specialized pigments may not be indicative of purposeful additions to the ground.

The lower, ruddy ground in *Bacchus* is comprised mostly of earth pigments with a low content of lead white (Fig. 8).[34] The upper beige ground consists of lead white tinted by yellow, orange, red, and black pigments, including several forms of hydrated iron oxides, and traces of vermilion, red lead, and charcoal.[35] Lead white pigment particles in the beige ground vary markedly in shape, size, and crystal forms. Their size variation is extreme, ranging from less than one micron to over 50 microns in diameter. Among the coarse lead white grains there are both agglomerates of fine crystals and coarse, splintery fragments of individual crystals intermingled with finely-ground and highly-dispersed ones. Recent research has shown that lead white in these differing size ranges has often been refined by differing procedures, with the finest grades resulting from washing and levigation, leading to different proportions of its two main compounds: cerussite and hydrocerussite.[36]

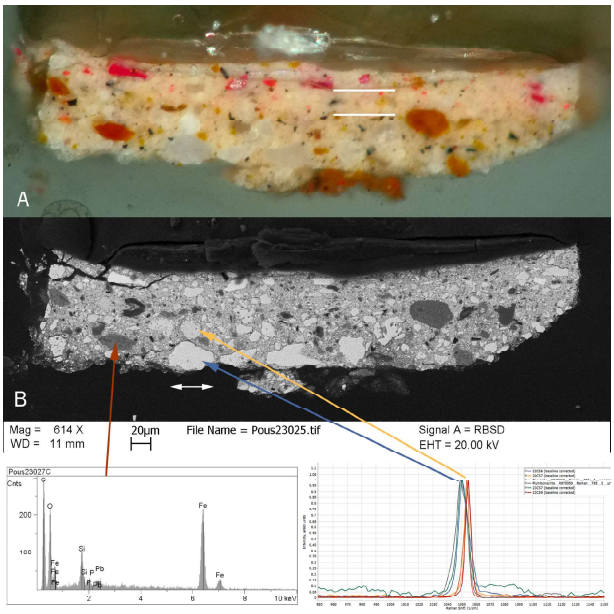

Fig. 30. A) Cross section of Bacchus' elbow, including the upper beige ground and two nearly indistinguishable strata of the flesh color containing abundant vermilion, the first of which has been annotated with guide marks. Reflected light with crossed polars. B) Backscatter electron image. Scale bar is 40 microns. The orange ferrous silica grain analyzed in the beige ground is exceptionally high in iron and was the only example that yielded a Raman spectrum (not shown) for the hydrated iron oxide mineral goethite. The beige ground in this location contains numerous coarse grains of lead white in two varieties whose optical reflectivity and atomic number brightness both differ. Raman spectra of these two coarse-grained classes, which occur throughout the painting, fall cleanly into categories correlating closely to reference standards for cerussite and hydrocerrusite from the RRUFF database as shown on the right.

In *Bacchus*, coarse grains that have not undergone refinement include internal microstructures retained from their "Dutch" production process of corroding lead plates with acetic acid vapor. Some grains with large internal subdivisions appear more translucent than their neighbors of similar size when those neighbors consist of fine interlocking grains or compact agglomerates of unconnected particles. Raman spectroscopy carried out on coarser grains in the ground and paints revealed that they fall into two distinct classes with different Raman spectra (Fig. 30) corresponding to cerussite and hydrocerussite that has been transformed from plumbonacrite during its production.[37] Therefore, it appears that lead whites of differing coarseness and qualities, some refined more than others, were intentionally combined with an objective that remains obscure today.

Construction and Materials of the Blue Robe

Brightly colored garments needed to be free of influence from the color of the beige upper ground and usually employ an intermediate layer. For the blue robe of the rightmost bacchante, this entailed the use of charcoal to create a more neutral base for this semi-transparent color. Five cross sections near the right side of the painting demonstrate that the blue-draped bacchante was left in reserve when the brown background was painted. The blue is underlain by a layer consisting mostly of coarse charcoal in lead white, whose thickness varies in response to the depth of blue color required at that point. The charcoal underlayer dominates the appearance of the robe in the infrared reflectogram, showing variations in its application (Fig. 21). The wide distribution in size of lead white grains seen in the upper ground is also characteristic of lead white in the black underlayer paint.

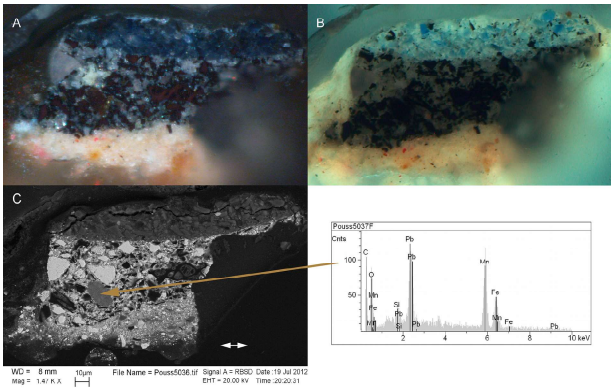

Fig. 31. A) Cross section from the blue robe shadow including the upper beige ground and all subsequent layers, showing the use of a thick layer of coarse charcoal and lead white as a base tone beneath the top layer of ultramarine, lead white, and charcoal. Reflected light with crossed polars. B) Ultraviolet autofluorescence that better differentiates the components of the blue layer. C) Backscatter electron image. Scale bar is 20 microns. A coarse grain of brown-black material corresponds to umber, with an excess of manganese over iron shown in the elemental analysis, used to further darken the base tone.

Testing revealed this preliminary application to be a thick black coat of charcoal and lead white with traces of lead-tin yellow and iron oxide. Traces of umber in its thickest shadow applications include coarse examples of deep brown manganese oxides (Fig. 31). The blue robe itself is based on lead white with ultramarine. A thin surface deposit of grayed calcium carbonate and gypsum impacts its appearance. Outside the shadow, the preliminary application contains more lead white than charcoal, followed by a top layer of lead white and ultramarine containing traces of vermilion and red ochre. The natural ultramarine of the top layer is mixed

with lead white of uniformly fine particle size in accordance with the depth of color required, with some areas containing virtually pure ultramarine.

Construction and Materials of the Peach Scarf

Bright glazes are evident in the shadows of the drapery and important for the peach-colored scarf swirling around the left arm of the rightmost bacchante. Unlike the blue garment, the scarf was painted over the brown background rather than left in reserve. It owes its color primarily to a yellow lake pigment prepared on a base of alumina and contains a high proportion of non-particulate lead in the medium, with few, and widely-dispersed, fine grains of lead white. The construction of the scarf near the shoulder entailed a yellow-brown underlayer of lead-tin yellow particles whose lead and tin proportions vary greatly, containing lead soap and lead chloride alteration products, cinnabar, lead white, alumina lake, and iron oxides. Uppermost is a yellow-brown layer containing yellow lake on alumina with a thin alteration layer of lead sulfate and lead potassium sulfate. The scarf has been thinned by abrasion and prior cleanings so that these alteration products, typically consisting of anglesite and palmierite, can be inferred to have developed subsequent to some prior cleaning. These species are widely encountered on painted surfaces, formed from the interaction of lead, sulfate, and potassium ions.[38,39,40]

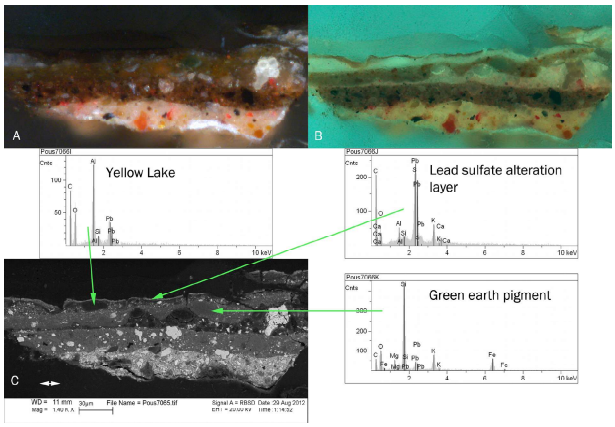

Fig. 32. A) Cross section from the peach-colored scarf near the bacchante's left hand, including the upper beige ground and all subsequent layers. The layers comprising the scarf are poorly resolved from the brown background layer. Reflected light with crossed polars. B) Ultraviolet autofluorescence shows that the scarf is comprised of three uneven layers atop the background color, the first and last of which contain large amounts of yellow lake pigment. Coarse lead white occurs in the first layer along with the lake but lead white is largely absent from the top layer. The nonfluorescent intermediate layer contains abundant earth pigments that function with the lake layers to give depth and opacity. C) Backscatter electron image showing the distribution of lead white in the various layers and a thin deposit of lead alteration products on top. Scale bar is 20 microns. Elemental analyses at the locations shown demonstrate that the lake is based on alumina and that the alteration skin covering it is comprised of lead-potassium sulfate compounds. The composition of a large translucent green grain among the earth pigments in the scarf is typical for one class that occurs throughout the green passages of the painting but might not have been expected to play a role in the bright peach color.

A second sample taken from the segment of the scarf between the left hand and buttock, where the underlying layers are more complicated, exhibits the same surface alteration phenomenon. The surface layer affects the scarf as a whole and is related to the formulation of the lake-rich top layer, which tests have shown contains some residual sulfate in the lake pigment. The layer also contains some small nodules of lead soaps that are the product of free fatty acids in the oil medium interacting with lead pigment. The construction of the scarf near the left hand entails three layers atop the brown background (Fig. 32). The brown background paint is rich in iron earths with calcite, lead white, and bone black. A thin, uneven application of coarse yellow lake with small amounts of iron oxides and lead-tin yellow forms the first layer of the scarf at this point. It was followed by paint rich in both green and orange iron earths, iron oxides, yellow lake, and relatively little lead white. The topmost layer is a glaze containing yellow lake. The use of some coarse green

earth in the middle stratum of the scarf is not obvious from its final color.

Construction and Materials of the Yellow-Orange Robe

The bright yellow-orange robe of the bacchante bearing the serpent on a staff was studied in two locations. The shoulder highlight was tested alone, and a sample of the flesh paint from below the raised hem that included the first version of the robe was studied stratigraphically. The first layer in the sample belongs to the skin beneath the former position of the robe, suggesting that like the river god and rightmost bacchante, the nude figure was painted and then draped. (The skin tones are discussed below.) The second stratum consists of the robe prior to the artist's modifications of the hem. It consists of a single layer containing lead white, pale lead-tin yellow deficient in tin, and orange ferrous silica grains that are an essential part of many paints in *Bacchus* (Fig. 33). The highlights applied over this layer at the shoulder consist of lead-tin yellow type I.[41]

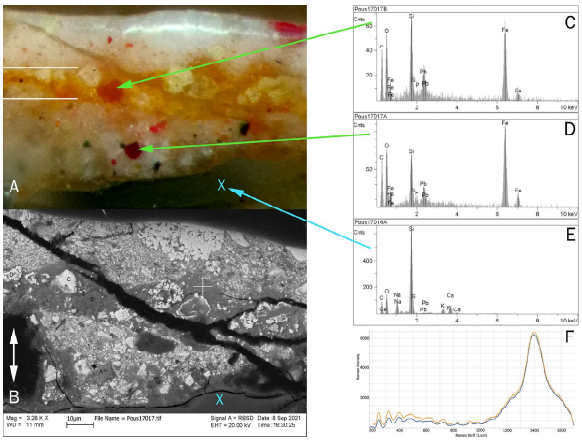

Fig. 33. A) Cross section detail of the thigh of the bacchante bearing a serpent-staff, in the region where the hem has been raised, containing the preliminary yellow-orange drapery, reflected light with crossed polars. The section begins with a small amount of the first rendering of skin color, followed by the yellow robe (annotated by guide marks) and the exposed skin of the final version. B) Backscatter electron image showing the morphology of lead-tin yellow in the middle layer. Scale bar is 20 microns. The elemental composition of the bright orange ferrous silica (C) in the yellow layer is typical of one of the most widely used materials in this painting. The darker orange grain in the first skin application is darker and higher in iron (D) than most examples of this class but is also distinct from the red ochre used elsewhere. A coarse transparent fragment marked "X" was identified as glass based on its composition (E) and Raman spectrum (F).

Construction and Materials of the Flesh Tones

Flesh tones vary from the ruddy color of earthbound figures such as Pan and the trumpeter to the flushed, lifelike tones of the bacchantes and the highly luminous skin of Bacchus who, in the humanist circles to which both Poussin and Richelieu belonged, could be associated with Christ and Apollo, patron of the arts.[42] Some flesh tones were constructed using the ground color as a base on which to apply highlights and shadows. For figures whose modeling is more gradual and subtle, an opaque color was mixed to be a skin midtone and then shaded with washes. While the skin tones represent some of the most fluid and uniform of the paints, they contain relatively large particles of brightly-colored pigments not quite visible at normal viewing distances. These include vermilion and ultramarine particles, large agglomerates of fine lead-tin yellow, and large green earth particles in both pale and deep green shades, as required to suggest the translucency of skin over musculature, without actually using a translucent paint (Fig. 34).[43]

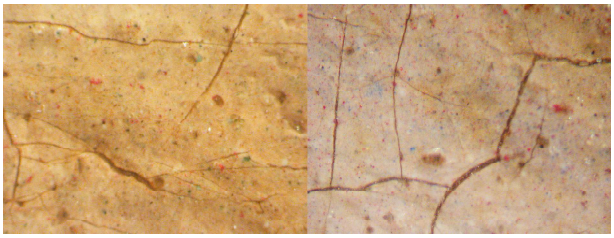

Fig. 34. Left) Photomicrograph of Bacchus' waist, showing coarse grains of vermilion, ultramarine, and green earth in the lustrous skin, 40x. Right) photomicrograph of the shin of the bacchante riding the centaur, showing coarse grains of ultramarine and vermilion, 35x.

Two skin samples from the yellow-robed, serpent-bearing bacchante were taken for comparison with that of Bacchus. The highlight flesh color of her thigh was sampled at the location previously described where the artist raised the hem by extending the paint of the thigh. The skin from the first position of the yellow-robed bacchante's leg is represented by only a few grains in the sample, including lead white colored by lead-tin yellow, orange and deep-red ferrous silica grains (more fully described below) and small amounts of vermilion and red lead. Quartz and a coarse example of potash-soda-lime-silica glass were also found (Fig. 33). This glass was differentiated from mineral silicates by its distinctive Raman spectrum. The various types and uses of powdered glass in painting have been described by Lutzenberger, et al.[44] It may play a role in increasing the translucency of the skin color here. The final application of skin color is mostly lead white with greatly varying particle sizes, colored by lead-tin yellow, charcoal, natural ultramarine, yellow ochre, and traces of red

ochre. It seems that the flesh color of this figure employs more lead-tin yellow to compensate for the intensity of the adjacent yellow robe and thereby maintain an optically harmonious overall appearance.

A darker, redder shade at the knee below this revision contains two, and possibly three layers, atop the beige ground. The first is a thin underlayer of orange comprised of vermilion in widely ranging particle sizes and a yellow iron earth. This is followed by a pink mixture based on lead white containing vermilion, with traces of ultramarine and umber. The deeper color of her knee relative to the skin of her lower leg employed an overlying wash containing very fine red ochre and yellow lake. Both flesh shades from this bacchante contain recognizable coarse particles of green earth in their surfaces, like those visible on the figure of Bacchus.

Fig. 35. Photomicrograph of Bacchus' thigh (shadow area), *Triumph of Bacchus* (1635–1636), showing examples of transparent quartz fragments that occur sporadically in the paint surface, but which can also be found in the paint and ground layers. Scale bar 2mm.

A cross section of the skin from Bacchus's right arm at the transition to the elbow shadow shows that the flesh was painted directly atop the upper beige ground. The cross section contains two subtly different skin layers, probably applied wet-over-wet, atop the upper ground. The lower of these is about 18 microns in thickness and the upper about 12 microns (Fig. 30). By comparison with the skin of the yellow-robed bacchante, the proportion of vermilion is higher in both layers. The figure of Bacchus and his swirling vermilion cape are the most luminous areas of the infrared image and the visual focus of the painting. The vermilion of the skin is required for the skin tone to "read" properly against the vermilion cape, much as an increase in yellow is required for the skin tones of the bacchante offset by her yellow-orange robe. Both skin strata in Bacchus' arm are very high in fine-grained lead white and each contains the orange ferrous silica. Traces of gypsum exist in the top layer and examples of yellow lake, calcite and ultramarine exist in the lower skin layer. Lead-tin yellow was not present in either layer at the point sampled from Bacchus' arm but scattered agglomerates are visible in the paint surface nearby. Pigments adhering to a fragment of varnish from the elbow shadow transition show that the surface was darkened by a thin wash of charcoal grains and yellow ochre.

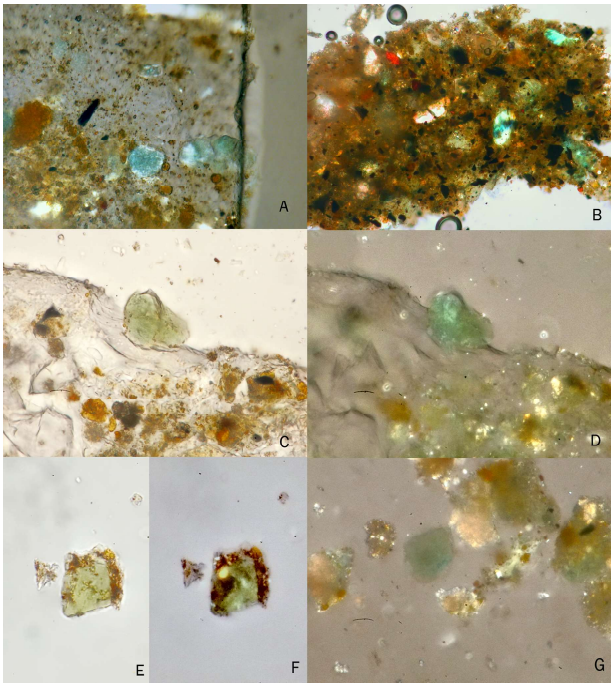

Fig. 36. Polarized light microscopy examples of dispersed green earth pigments from *Triumph of Bacchus* (1635–1636), in transmitted light. A) Fine-grained agglomerate of a strongly birefringent aquamarine type from the surface of the wreath leaf, partially crossed polars, 200x. B) Deep green, highly birefringent particles with splintery fracture in the rightmost dark tree trunk (overpainted by the sky revision) partially crossed polars, 200x. C) and D) Coarse, rounded polycrystalline grain of a pale green species with low birefringence from the sparse tree against the golden sky, without polars and with partially crossed polars, respectively, 400x. E) and F) Blocky fragment with moderate birefringence and adhering yellow ochre grains from ground layer, without polars and with partially crossed polars, respectively, 400x. G) Fine-grained, rounded agglomerates of an isotropic pale green earth from the sparse tree against the golden sky, with adjacent ocher and lead-tin yellow particles, partially crossed polars, 400x.

The role of quartz in light skin tones must be considered because fragments of this colorless mineral can occasionally be seen within the paint surface (Fig. 35). Unlike lead white and calcium carbonate, both of which are "colorless," widely-used white pigments, quartz cannot serve as a white pigment. Its proportion is never sufficient to imply that it was added to make the paint more translucent, but it is possible that by being used in coarse, splintered form it introduced some subtle, sparkling reflections. While quartz also occurs as a natural component of earth pigments in the ground and green paints, the luminous flesh tones lack these pigments. The quartz in these skin colors appears to have arrived independent of earth pigments, possibly as wear particles from grinding.[45]

Construction and Materials of the Greens

The only green drapery in the composition is that of the reclining river god. It is very similar in both appearance and composition to the green used for foliage, as befits a deity associated with earthly properties. This region of the painting is the most fresco-like in its dry, textured appearance (Fig. 29). Green iron earth pigments were used along with additions of lead-tin yellow to produce these greens. Occasionally, ultramarine was incorporated to adjust the hue, but greens always incorporate intrinsically green pigments rather than a mixture of blue and yellow pigments. No copper-based green pigments were employed in *The Triumph of Bacchus*. All greens are derived from green earths or combinations of green earth and yellow. Magnified observation of the paint layer reveals large differences of particle size and color among the green pigments that have been related to elemental composition, optical behavior, and transmitted light color during testing.

Five samples were studied that included green paints. In addition to the shadow green from the robe of the river god these include: the upper leaves of the sapling projecting from the hill near the right edge; foliage barely above the top of the same hill; the sparse tree standing against the orange sky beneath Apollo; and a leaf in the wreath of the rightmost bacchante. All of the greens incorporate small amounts of lead-tin yellow type I. The greens tend to be drab in this painting, verging on brown, as a consequence of the use of yellow and brown iron earth pigments in combination with lead-tin yellow and green earth. Therefore, the brown coloration of much of the foliage is purposeful and not a consequence of the decomposition of green pigments based upon copper compounds, nor of the graying of smalt, pigments that do not occur in this painting.

A cross section of the river god's shadow drapery confirms that the green is a thin, semi-transparent layer of green earth applied directly atop the beige upper ground layer which remains visible through it. The composition of the layer as a whole is nearly identical to that of the individual green earth pigment particles that it contains, with only a little lead white to aid drying of the paint and no lead-tin yellow or iron oxides to adjust its color. Rounded grains of green earth up to the size of sand particles (20 microns) provide the color.

The leaves of the sapling were painted atop two, wet-over-wet layers of the cloudy sky. Unlike the green drapery shadow, the leaf paint has been rendered opaque with a ten-fold increase in fine lead white, and includes orange ferrous silica grains, fine lead-tin yellow, and traces of vermilion in addition to the coarse green

earth. The lead-tin yellow grains range widely in composition from ones deficient in tin to ones with a large excess of tin relative to their lead content.

The leaves just above the hill were painted over a similar wet-over-wet, two layer sky but these were applied on top of a dark brown layer rather than directly over the beige ground. The dark layer beneath the sky is the trunk of a tree eliminated by the artist from the early composition. This green mixture is also opacified with lead white, but contains more of the orange ferrous silica. The lead-tin yellow here contains multiple examples of unreacted tin oxide left over from the preparation of the pigment.

The green of the sparse tree beneath Apollo lies atop a rosy hued sky. The paint of the sky here is a single thin layer (about 10 microns thick) over the beige ground that sets its underlying tone. The green of the foliage is much thicker than the sky at the location sampled (about 30 microns). Its lead content is intermediate between the two previous examples and much of it is present in the form of fine lead-tin yellow and non-particulate lead dissolved in the paint medium. Orange ferrous silica is an important part of the mixture and conspicuous white grains of unreacted tin oxide are associated with its lead-tin yellow. Particles of this green mixture adhering to a fragment of varnish in the sample provide views of their varied optical behavior in the polarizing microscope (Fig. 36 C, D, & G).

Only the uppermost leaf green was sampled from the head wreath, and it contains the same group of pigments. Their examination in the polarizing microscope provided some insight into the great variety of iron earth variations that elemental analysis alone does not disclose. In Fig. 36A, examples of the isotropic orange ferrous silica and lead-tin yellow are present, along with "green" earth minerals ranging in color from yellow to green to aquamarine, some of them highly birefringent and others isotropic, some fibrous, and others fine-grained and platey.

Two cross sections from areas where trees were covered by Poussin's revisions to the sky on the right (described above) provided additional indications of the complexity of the earth pigments. The overpainted trunks of the trees had originally been left in reserve, painted atop the upper beige ground rather than over the colors of the sky, using a very dark brown mixture. The mixture of the overpainted tree trunk is very high in earth pigments, including green earth (Fig. 36B) and the orange ferrous silica widely used throughout the painting. It is low in lead content, with only small, isolated particles of lead white.[46] Green earth is also a component of both grounds (Fig. 36 E&F).

All green earths owe their color to iron but individual examples vary widely in their mineral contents.[47] Elemental compositions averaged over green layer cross sections show that both magnesium and potassium were systematically present along with the requisite iron, silica, and alumina. However, by conducting elemental analyses on individual grains, two compositional classes were found to be present, one of which contains potassium iron silicate with very little magnesium, and another in which magnesium is prevalent and potassium diminished. In cross sections where the colors of large individual grains were apparent, their color often differed in accordance with these compositional differences.

Additional distinctions were found when optical properties visible in polarized light microscopy were examined. Rounded grains of three distinct green earth types can be found, each with its own color, internal crystal structure, and degree of birefringence (Fig. 36A). Another green earth, with deeper green saturation, stronger pleochroism, and occasional splintery morphology, occurs in other samples (Fig. 36B).

Distinctive Individual Characteristics of Poussin's Palette

The condition, composition, and particle size of lead-tin yellow in *The Triumph of Bacchus* is highly variable, with many coarse particles consisting of sintered, porous agglomerates (Fig. 33). The proportions of lead to tin vary between the extremes of pure tin oxide to nearly pure lead oxide, with color variations ranging from nearly white to the more typical lemon yellow.[48] The greatly varying proportions of lead to tin that were found seem certainly to be due to unreacted starting materials. The prevalence of non-particulate lead in cases that appear deficient in tin can be explained by the subsequent formation of lead soaps from unreacted lead starting materials.[49]

One of the principal ingredients of the paints and of both grounds, occurring in virtually every paint mixture, is an orange iron earth component that is unusual in several respects and which we have not encountered so widely employed in the work of other painters. It has a well-defined and simple composition yet does not correspond to a specific mineral species. Though never used alone, it often occurs in the absence of other iron earth minerals (such as clay or green earth), indicating that it is not a species introduced as part of a natural mixture. Energy dispersive X-ray spectra of dozens of

individual grains from all paints in which it occurs demonstrate that it contains iron and silica in varying proportions and lacks aluminum. A small response for phosphorus is present in many examples (Fig. 30). The grains on which the most accurate individual SEM analyses can be conducted are coarse, bright orange, and rounded, though the same composition can be found in smaller sizes where neighboring pigments contribute to the elements detected. The absence of aluminum indicates that they do not contain clay, nor any other form of aluminosilicate mineral. Our designation of them as "ferrous silica" acknowledges that there are no recognized mineral species that consist solely of silica and iron oxides or hydroxides.[50] One of the most common materials capable of yielding such an analytical result would be an intimate combination of separate minerals in the form of detrital (rounded) quartz particles bearing hydrated iron oxide coatings, a type of sedimentary grain abundant in many geological environments. However, the isotropic or very weakly birefringent optical behavior of these grains demonstrates that they are not typical detrital quartz. Furthermore, they do not possess iron coatings that are resolvable by either optical or scanning electron microscopy at magnifications where coated detrital grains are easily recognizable. Unlike coated grains, their color appears uniform through the interior when larger examples are transected in cross sections. The SEM often shows faint texture across the interior, with minimal atomic weight contrast, suggesting that the grains consist of an intimate mixture of the iron and silica on a scale too fine to resolve in the SEM.

Condition and Implications of Poussin's Choices of Materials

Pigments identified in the ground and paint layers are shown in Table 1. Several materials commonly in use in the seventeenth century that are conspicuous by their absence have important ramifications for the present-day appearance of the painting. Copper compounds such as azurite and malachite, their synthetic analogs blue and green verditer, the blue-green pigment verdigris (neutral or basic copper acetate), and the green copper-organic compound known as copper-resinate, are all absent. In varying degrees, all of these copper compounds create vulnerabilities in a painting due to their propensities to darken or adversely interact with other pigments. Poussin made use of the more stable of these, such as azurite, in other works, but their complete avoidance here eliminates several pathways for color degradation. When we see brown foliage in *Bacchus*, it is not a consequence of a deteriorated green copper pigment.

Smalt was another blue pigment widely used in the period that Poussin chose not to employ for *Bacchus*, though he used it in certain other works. Smalt is a blue glass whose color is contributed by a very small percentage of cobalt. Decomposition of the glass commonly leads to graying of the color of smalt—also avoided by its exclusion from this palette.

The yellow pigment orpiment (natural arsenic sulfide) is also absent, though Poussin used it for yellow highlights in certain other works. Orpiment can undergo several forms of autonomous alteration, including oxidation accompanied by a loss of color, and may adversely interact with other pigments to promote darkening through the formation of sulfides. These were also avoided in *Bacchus*.

Bacchus contains two lake pigments in red and yellow whose transparency assists in creating rich glaze colors. They also occur in small amounts in other paints and the ground layers. The organic dyes responsible for their colors remain unfaded but have not been identified. Both were prepared on a base of alumina derived from alum. Residual salts from the alum can be a factor in paint alteration and, indeed, there are examples both of residual sulfate in some of the lake particles and of their reaction products with lead inside the paint layers and in obscuring surface deposits.

The sole blue pigment found in *Bacchus* is ultramarine, the most-costly of the blue pigments of his day, which was refined from lapis lazuli usually procured from Afghanistan, its only old-world source. It was available in varying qualities and degrees of color saturation and that variation is apparent in different locations in the painting. Some occurrences employ deep blue grains while other areas have abundant pale examples. Areas painted primarily with ultramarine can undergo a loss of color saturation that is visually similar to the lightening effect of a blanched varnish, but uncorrectable through revarnishing. On the other hand, most instances of color change in the blues of *Bacchus* are the result of overlying deteriorated varnish residues, which can be addressed with cleaning.

Early documentation confirms that *Bacchus* was cleaned by Marcel Rougeron prior to its 1931 acquisition.[51] The current wax-lining and modern stretcher verify that a subsequent treatment occurred sometime between 1940 and 1973,[52] and in 1981 a synthetic varnish was applied to resaturate the colors of the painting.[53] In the past, scholars expressed reluctance about the authenticity of *Bacchus*, frequently citing (and in some cases

overstating) condition problems. While there is some subtle paint abrasion present, for example throughout the right sky, and disruptions to the gradual transitions of light and shadow on the lower left putto and river god's back,[54] the painting has not been drastically overcleaned or "brutally treated."[55] The putto is also affected by an increased transparency of the paint, which has caused dark underlying layers to become more prominent over time (Fig. 28). The discolored layers of synthetic varnish produce an overall gray tonality that diminishes Poussin's original colors. Additionally, a faint cleaning line is apparent in the upper left sky, leaving the left side slightly brighter than the right, and residues of yellowed natural resin varnish disrupt the folds of blue drapery (central and rightmost bacchantes) and produce a blanched appearance across the right foreground. A small amount of discolored retouching is scattered throughout, and fill material and retouching are present on all four outermost edges.

Concluding Remarks

The results of the palette study clarify the limited number of alteration phenomena that affect the appearance of *Bacchus* and rule out many forms of damage commonly encountered in paintings of the period, suggesting that cleaning and revarnishing alone would result in a significant improvement in appearance. The extent of prior restorations is small and instances where existing restorations negatively impact the appearance are very few.

In characterizing the palette and ways in which Poussin employed his materials, we have attempted to illustrate the selections that he made from those available to a painter of his stature and time, placing an equal emphasis on those that he omitted and potential pitfalls thereby avoided. We have also emphasized idiosyncrasies of the materials that could serve as useful comparisons to the materials used in the other works of the Richelieu commission, his wider oeuvre, and the work of his contemporaries. At the earliest stage of this study, the idea of a palette comparison between the three Richelieu bacchanals as a primary means of gauging their similarity and attributions was dismissed as being unworkable, in the short term at least, since the Nelson-Atkins collection holds only one work attributed to Poussin and because copies most likely to have been confused with his works are nearly contemporary in date and material sources. The remarkable success of the canvas weave match posed provocative questions about the criteria on which judgments against *Bacchus* and *Silenus* as original works by Poussin were based over much of the twentieth century. However, it also changed the landscape regarding the value of palette comparisons. In light of the canvas linkage, everything that can be learned from the painting materials of all three bacchanals will more accurately reflect the spectrum of Poussin's work. To that end, we look forward to cross comparisons of the results found here with Poussin's work in other collections.

Mary Schafer and John Twilley
April 2021

Notes

1. Paul Jamot, "Sur quelques tableaux de Poussin à propos de l'exposition du paysage français," *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de l'art français* (1925): 103. Translated from French by Nicole R. Myers, former associate curator, European paintings and sculpture, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.

2. Jacques Thuillier, "Poussin et la laboratoire," *Techné*, no. 1 (1994): 18. Translation provided by Nicole R. Myers, former associate curator, European paintings and sculpture, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. The fourth painting to which Thuillier refers is Poussin's *Birth of Venus*, sometimes titled *The Triumph of Neptune* (1635 or 1636; Philadelphia Museum of Art, E1932-1-1). The thread count of its canvas is markedly different than that of the other three, so that higher-level comparison was not undertaken. Mark Tucker, Aronson Senior Conservator of Paintings and Vice Chair of Conservation, Philadelphia Museum of Art, email message with the author, 2015. The authors thank Tucker for providing his manual thread counts that established this difference.

3. The authors are indebted to Nicole R. Myers, former associate curator, European paintings and sculpture, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, for her curatorial contributions to the study.

4. The scientific study of *The Triumph of Bacchus* was supported by an endowment from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for conservation science at The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.

5. Results from the technical study were disseminated in two prior publications. See John Twilley, Nicole Myers, and Mary Schafer, "Poussin's Materials and Techniques for *The Triumph of Bacchus* at the Nelson-Atkins Museum

of Art," *Kermes* 27, nos. 94-95 (April/September 2014): 71–83. Robert Erdmann, C. Richard Johnson, Mary Schafer, John Twilley, Nicole Myers, and Travis Sawyer, "Reuniting Poussin's Bacchanals Painted for Cardinal Richelieu through Quantitative Canvas Weave Analysis," *AIC Paintings Specialty Group: Postprints 26; Papers Presented at the 41st Annual Meeting, Indianapolis* (Washington, DC: American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, 2013): 155–72.

6. These made use of a mathematical function known as the Fourier transform, operating on a digitized version of the painting radiograph, centimeter by centimeter. See D.H. Johnson, R.G. Erdmann, and C.R. Johnson, Jr., "Whole-Painting Canvas Analysis Using High- and Low-Level Features," *Proceeding of the 36th International Conference on Acoustics, Speech and Signal Processing* (2011): 969–72; and D. H. Johnson, C. R. Johnson, Jr., and R.G. Erdmann, "Weave Analysis of Paintings on Canvas from Radiographs," *Signal Processing (Special Issue on Image Processing for Digital Art Work)* 93, no. 3 (March 2013): 527–40.

7. Robert Erdmann and C. Richard Johnson, December 13, 2011, "Automated Canvas Examination: Poussin / NAMA / 31-94," unpublished report, NAMA conservation file, no. 31-94. The canvas comparison and technical study were disseminated in two prior publications. See Erdmann et al., "Reuniting Poussin's Bacchanals Painted for Cardinal Richelieu through Quantitative Canvas Weave Analysis," 155–72. Twilley et al., "Poussin's Materials and Techniques for *The Triumph of Bacchus* at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art," 71–83.

8. Pierre Rosenberg, *Nicolas Poussin, 1594–1665*, exh. cat. (Paris: Réunion des museés nationaux, 1994), 226. Hugh Brigstocke, "Variants, copies et imitations. Quelques réflexions sur les méthodes de travail de Poussin," in A. Mérot, ed., *Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665), actes du colloque organisé au musée du Louvre par le Service culturel du 19 au 21 octobre 1994*, vol. I (Paris: La documentation française, 1996), 209–10. Pierre Rosenberg, "Les Bacchanals Richelieu: ce que l'on sait et ce que l'on ne sait pas (encore)," in P. Bassani, A. Gady, and S. Kespern, eds., *Richelieu à Richelieu: architecture et décors d'un château disparu*, exh. cat. (Silvana: Cinisello Balsamo, 2011), 132. Humphrey Wine, *National Gallery Catalogues: The Seventeenth Century French Paintings* (London: National Gallery, 2001), 380, 383n40–42.

9. Francesca Whitlum-Cooper, "Poussin's 'Triumph of Silenus' Rediscovered," *Burlington Magazine* 163, no. 1418 (May 2021): 408–15.

10. To demonstrate that a comparable outcome could be obtained from a guided traverse along a single thread, the innovation of using a "guide thread" visible in the radiograph, along which the spacing of every crossing thread could be manually entered, was introduced. The resulting set of spacing measurements could then be shifted, thread by thread, away from the apparent best match in both directions, and the quality of match in the resulting trial alignments plotted. See Erdmann et al., "Reuniting Poussin's Bacchanals Painted for Cardinal Richelieu through Quantitative Canvas Weave Analysis," 155–72.

11. Van der Maaten employed a machine learning approach that made a full comparison of the canvases in both directions possible at the level of individual thread spacings. The twelve-thousand, manually- extracted, thread-crossing measurements along the guide threads used in validation of the previous match were used in training of the new algorithm. Incorporated into van der Maaten's solution was a means for projecting the re-emergence points of individual threads that become locally obscured in the radiograph by heavy overlapping paint strokes, increasing the proportion of the canvas that could be included in difficult comparisons. This method eliminated reliance upon local averages of thread spacings and made full thread-by-thread comparisons possible. See L.J.P. van der Maaten and R.G. Erdmann, "Automatic thread-level canvas analysis," *IEEE Signal Processing Magazine* 32, no. 4 (2015): 38-45.

12. See film-based radiographs, no. 461, Nelson-Atkins conservation file, 31-94.

13. Similar radio-transparent lines have been observed in the radiographs of the following Poussin works: *Holy Family on the Steps* (1648; Cleveland Museum of Art), *Holy Family* (1640–1642; Detroit Institute of Arts), and *Holy Family with Ten Figures* (1649; National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin). See Carol Sawyer, assisted by Marcia Steele, "Poussin's Holy Family on the Steps: New Technical Discoveries, Comparisons, and the

Washington Copy," *Cleveland Studies in the History of Art* 4, (1999): 142n23.

14. The cusping is visible in the radiograph but was also verified by canvas weave automation. Robert Erdmann and Richard C. Johnson, December 13, 2011, "Automated Canvas Examination: Poussin \ NAMA \ 31-94," unpublished report, Nelson-Atkins conservation file, no. 31-94.

15. Helen Glanville, "'De lumine et umbra'—theory and practice, material and perception, in the paintings of Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665)" (PhD diss., Department of Art History, University of La Sapienza, Rome, forthcoming).

16. See Anthony Blunt, *Nicolas Poussin: The Andrew W. Mellon Lectures in Fine Arts, 1958* (London: Phaidon Press Ltd, 1967), 1:242–44. See also Diane DeGrazia and Marcia Steele, "The 'Grande Machine'," *Cleveland Studies in the History of Art* 4 (1999): 64–67.

17. DeGrazia and Steele, *Cleveland Studies*, 65-66.

18. According to Joachim von Sandrart (1606–1688), Poussin began using this method of placing the wax figures on a gridded board around 1630. Konrad Oberhuber et al., *Poussin, the Early Years in Rome: The Origins of French Classicism*, exh. cat. (New York: Hudson Hills, 1988), 208.

19. Similarly, technical study of *The Holy Family with the Infant Saint John the Baptist and Saint Elizabeth* (1650–1651; Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Cambridge, MA) has shown that the gazes of all figures, with the exception of the lower left putto, are directed toward the vanishing point. Rikke Foulke, "*The Holy Family with the Infant Saint John the Baptist and Saint Elizabeth*," *Kermes* 27, nos. 94–95 (April/September 2014): 90.

20. Avigdor Arikha has shown that incised lines in the paint of *The Rape of the Sabines* (ca. 1637–1638; Musée du Louvre, Paris) radiate from a "point of harmony." See Avigdor Arikha, *Nicolas Poussin: The Rape of the Sabines*, exh. cat. (Houston: Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1983), 28–32.

21. Helen Glanville, "'De lumine et umbra'—theory and practice, material and perception, in the paintings of Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665)", (forthcoming).

22. This aspect of Poussin's technique was first documented in the 1999 technical study of *The Holy Family on the Steps* (1648; Cleveland Museum of Art). See Sawyer, assisted by Steele, "Poussin's *Holy Family on the Steps*: New Technical Discoveries, Comparisons, and the Washington Copy," 122.

23. The authors thank Helen Glanville for pointing out the unclothed construction of the river god. Other examples of this technique include *Landscape during a Thunderstorm with Pyramus and Thisbe* (1651; Städel Museum, Frankfurt), *Venus Presenting her Arms to Aeneas* (1639; Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen), and *The Crossing of the Red Sea* (1632–1634; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne). See Helen Glanville, "Nicolas Poussin: Creation and Perception," *Kermes* 27, nos. 94–95 (April/September 2014): 20, 22; Laurie Benson and Carl Villis, "*The Crossing of the Red Sea* in the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne," *Kermes* 27, nos. 94–95 (April/September 2014): 63–64.

24. The presence of these significant compositional changes further validates the authenticity of *Bacchus*, since it would be highly unusual for a copyist to take liberties with primary components of Poussin's composition.

25. Christopher Wright, *Poussin Paintings: A Catalogue Raisonné* (London: Harlequin Books, 1985), 53.

26. The authors are grateful to Helen Glanville who observed that the vase was painted on top of the dark foreground during a joint examination of *Bacchus* in 2014.

27. The authors thank Ana Debenedetti, assistant curator, paintings and drawings, for information related to their copy of *The Triumph of Bacchus* (pre-1800; The Victoria and Albert Museum, London).

28. An approach that was not always attuned to his patron's expectations; see Helen Glanville, "Aspect and Prospect—Poussin's Triumph of Silenus," *Artibus et Historiae* 37 (74) (2016): 241–54.

29. H. Glanville, H. Rousselière, L. De Viguerie, and Ph. Walter, "Mens Agitat Molem: New Insights into Nicolas Poussin's Painting Technique by X-ray Diffraction and Fluorescence Analyses," in *Science and Art: The Painted Surface*, ed. Antonio Sgamellotti, Brunetto Giovanni Brunetti, and

Costanza Miliani (London: The Royal Society of Chemistry, 2014), 314–35.

30. Samples were prepared in two ways: as embedded cross sections and as fracture sections presented to the instrument without further preparation, apart from a conductive coating of evaporated carbon. Cross-comparisons have been made with optical microscopy and UV fluorescence microscopy, with a few confirmatory identifications carried out by Raman spectroscopy. Polarized light microscopy (PLM) has then been used to correlate differences in color and optical properties with individual pigment species. PLM has been especially important in disclosing differences among the green iron earths which share overlapping elemental compositions. The formal cross sections often provide a clearer view of the sequence of paint applications, while the fracture fragments often reveal pigment alteration and texture features more clearly. As others have noted, the dry, fresco-like appearance favored by Poussin often entailed using paints with a slight deficit of oil medium, resulting in samples that can be brittle and difficult to prepare for analysis.

31. A. Duval, "Les préparations colorées des tableaux de l'École Française des dix-septième et dix-huitième siècles," *Studies in Conservation* 37 (1992): 239–58.

32. Duval commented upon the difficulty of distinguishing fine-grained red lead when its color cannot be distinguished from other reds in a colored ground mixture. Our own tests have confirmed the use of fine red lead as a minor component of the grounds in *Bacchus* and the attendant difficulty of locating it.

33. A. Duval, "Les enduits de préparation des tableaux de Nicolas Poussin," *Techné* 1 (1994): 35–41.

34. Pigment species confirmed in the lower, dark ground include quartz, sodium feldspar, fine hematite (red ochre) and goethite (yellow ochre), ferrous silica, light green iron earth with undulose optical extinction, iron-magnesium aluminosilicates (green earth), and discolored medium with minor cinnabar, red lead, calcium carbonate, lead white, lead soap alteration products, potassium clay or mica, red lake on alumina, gypsum, bone black, and chromite traces. One example of a large red agglomerate containing calcium-potassium sulfate along with iron oxides points to a possible origin for the iron earth in a jarosite (potassium iron sulfate) formation.

35. Pigment species confirmed in the upper beige ground through SEM elemental analysis include lead white, quartz (some of it splintered and unworn), potassium feldspar, sodium feldspar, sodium-potassium feldspar, coarse hydrated iron oxide, ferrous silica grains, lead soap alteration products, calcite, very fine goethite (yellow ochre), and minor amounts of coarse red lake, clay, cinnabar, charcoal, and more rarely, ultramarine, gypsum, and potassium-calcium sulfate.

36. V. Gonzalez, G. Wallez, T. Calligaro, M. Cotte, W. De Nolf, and M. Eveno, "Synchrotron-based high angle resolution and high lateral resolution X-ray diffraction: Revealing lead white pigment qualities in old masters paintings," *Analytical Chemistry* 89 no. 24 (2017): 13203–11.

37. Raman spectra of these two coarse-grained classes, which occur throughout the painting, fall cleanly into categories correlating closely to reference standards for cerussite and hydrocerrusite in the RRUFF database as shown on the right of Figure 30. RRUFF id #s R040069 and R070059, respectively, https://rruff.info/about/about_general.php (accessed 9-18-21). B. Lafuente , R.T. Downs, H. Yang, and N. Stone, "The power of databases: the RRUFF project," in *Highlights in Mineralogical Crystallography*, ed. T. Armbruster and R. M. Danisi (Berlin: W. De Gruyter, 2015), 1–30. The hydrocerussite that matches most closely differs from other natural history specimens in the RRUFF compilation in being a pseudomorph after plumbonacrite. Recent work on details of the Dutch process for lead white production show that plumbonacrite is usually a short-lived intermediate that transforms to hydrocerussite in the final product, accounting for this distinction in the pigment.

38. A. van Loon, P. Noble, and J. J. Boon, "White hazes and surface crusts in Rembrandt's Homer and related paintings," *ICOM-CC Lisbon 2011: Preprints 16th triennial conference Lisbon, 19–23 September 2011,* 1–10.

39. Stephen W. T. Price, Annelies Van Loon, Katrien Keune, Aaron D. Parsons, Claire Murray, Andrew M. Beale, and J. Fred W. Mosselmans, "Unravelling

the spatial dependency of the complex solid-state chemistry of Pb in a paint micro-sample from Rembrandt's Homer using XRD-CT," *Chemical Communications* 55 (2019): 1931–34.

40. Steven De Meyer, Frederik Vanmeert, Rani Vertongen, Annelies van Loon, Victor Gonzalez, Geert van der Snickt, Abbie Vandivere, and Koen Janssens, "Imaging secondary reaction products at the surface of Vermeer's *Girl with the Pearl Earring* by means of macroscopic X-ray powder diffraction scanning," *Heritage Science* 7, no. 1 (2019): 1–11.

41. Prior to, and during Poussin's lifetime, lead-tin yellow was produced in two forms by calcining lead and tin oxides alone (designated Type I) and as a glassy material incorporating silica (Type II). Only type I occurs in *Bacchus*. During his career, the lead-antimony compound known as Naples yellow was beginning to replace the two varieties of lead-tin yellow, and Poussin employed it in some other works. However, Naples yellow was never encountered in *Bacchus*, either as a yellow pigment in its own right nor as a tinting pigment in mixtures.

42. Helen Glanville, personal communication, September 23, 2021.

43. In addition to the coarse species identifiable on the top surface, polarized light microscopy of the pale flesh shows it to be preponderantly lead white colored by the same isotropic orange ferrous silica species widely employed throughout this painting, traces of fine charcoal, and fine vermilion. Shadows often employ thin, transparent applications of charcoal and additional vermilion.

44. K. Lutzenberger, H. Stege, and C. Tilenschi, "A note on glass and silica in oil paintings from the 15th to the 17th century," *Journal of Cultural Heritage* 11 (2010): 365–72.

45. It cannot be excluded that some of the quartz originated as wear particles lost from stone implements used to grind the pigments. Sharp-edged fragments of colorless quartz and feldspar occur sporadically in the paints and both grounds but these are not typical of quartz in earth pigments, which are rounded by geological weathering and transport (detrital grains). It should not be surprising to encounter detrital grains of quartz and feldspar in the ruddy ground layer where earth pigments are prevalent, but quartz can often be found in layers where earth pigments are used very sparingly, such as the upper, beige ground. Sharp-edged fragments, unrounded by the wear typical of sedimentary minerals, are visible directly in the surface of the flesh paint used for Bacchus. Their lack of both rounding and staining by iron compounds suggest that these are not detrital sedimentary grains incorporated along with the earth pigments, implying some other source.

46. The layer contains plagioclase feldspar and owes its dark color to both bone black and charcoal (some of it extremely coarse) used together with umber. Bone black was not found alone as a black pigment in *Bacchus*. For example, it was not encountered in the black that was used as an underlayer for blue. It occurs elsewhere in mixtures of darker browns and in small amounts in the first ground.

47. C.A. Grissom, "Green Earth," in *Artists' Pigment: A Handbook of Their History and Characteristics*, ed. R.L. Feller (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1986), 1:141–67.

48. Because lead soap formations are sometimes evident within and adjacent to the agglomerates, it is not possible to rule out a role for extraction of lead from the lead-tin yellow pigment agglomerates by free fatty acids in the paint medium as cause of their condition. Lead soap formations are present, but do not visually affect the painting in large numbers. Dramatic eruptive or laminated growth structures consisting of lead fatty acid soaps such as those illustrated by Higgitt et al. were not encountered in this painting. Others working on older paintings from the fifteenth century have found red lead oxide within lead-tin yellow type I agglomerates and have speculated that this represents unreacted residual lead from the starting materials. The uptake of this uncombined lead oxide to form lead-fatty acid soaps inside the agglomerates represents an easier path to their formation than a mechanism requiring the breakdown of the lead-tin yellow compound as a prerequisite to soap formations. Red lead oxide was not observed within the agglomerates in *Bacchus* in either optical or electron microscopy, nor was it detected there by

Raman spectroscopy. See Catherine Higgitt, Marika Spring, and David Saunders, "Pigment-medium Interactions in Oil Paint Films containing Red Lead or Lead-tin Yellow," *National Gallery Technical Bulletin* 24 (2003): 75–95.

49. J. Boon, E. Gore, K. Keune, and A. Burnstock, "Image Analytical Studies of Lead Soap Aggregates and Their Relationship to Lead and Tin in 15th-Century Lead-tin Yellow Paints from the Sherborne Triptych," *The Sixth Infrared and Raman Users Group Conference-IRUG6, (Florence, 29 March–1 April 2004)*, ed. M. Picollo (Padova: Il Prato, 2005), 66–74.

50. The undetected presence of any light elements outside the range of our analysis methods would not suffice to identify the grains as any other known mineral type. Furthermore, the oxides of iron and silicon alone do not form a glass, suggesting that these grains are not a manmade furnace product.

51. Letter from Harold Woodbury Parsons, Nelson-Atkins art advisor, to J.C. Nichols, Nelson-Atkins trustee, December 11, 1931, Nelson-Atkins curatorial files.

52. Conservation records are incomplete from 1931 and 1973, but the wax-lining technique and replacement stretcher are consistent with treatments and materials from this period.

53. Forrest R. Bailey, March 3, 1981, examination report, Nelson-Atkins conservation file, no. 31-94.

54. Condition is an important factor in discussions of attribution, as both figures were described in the literature as being less successful passages. See Hilary Balon, "From Eminences to Entrepreneurs," in *Richelieu: Art and Power*, ed. Hilliard Todd Goldfarb, exh. cat. (Montreal: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 2002), 194.

55. Jacques Thuillier, *Nicolas Poussin* (Paris: Flammarion, 1994), 254. Translation by Nicole R. Myers.

Documentation

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Provenance

Commissioned by Armand Jean du Plessis, Cardinal Richelieu (1585–1642), Château de Richelieu, Poitou, by May 19, 1636–1642;

By descent to his great-nephew, Armand Jean de Vignerot du Plessis, 2nd duc de Richelieu (1629–1715), Château de Richelieu, Poitou, 1642–1715;

By descent to his son, Louis François Armand de Vignerot du Plessis, 3rd duc de Richelieu, maréchal de France (1696–1788), Château de Richelieu, Poitou, 1715;

To his wife, Élizabeth Sophie de Lorraine-Harcourt, 3rd duchesse de Richelieu (1710–1740), Château de Richelieu, Poitou, between 1734 and 1740 [1];

With Samuel Paris (active 1730s–1740s), London, by 1741 [2];

Purchased from Paris's sale in London, 1741/1742, lot 48, as *The Triumph of Bacchus*, by Peter Delmé (1710–1770), Grosvenor Square, London, 1741/1742–no later than 1770 [3];

By descent to his son, Peter Delmé (1748–1789), by 1770–1789;

Purchased from Delmé's posthumous sale, *A Catalogue of a Capital, Valuable, and Well-Chosen Collection of Italian, French, Flemish and Dutch Pictures, by the Most Esteemed Masters, the Whole in the Highest Preservation: Amongst the Above Are Two Most Celebrated and Noble Pictures by Nicolas Poussin, One Representing "The Triumph of Bacchus," the Other "The Sacrifice to the God of Pan;" Ever Esteemed The Most Capital of His Works; Also a Superbe* [*sic*] *and Beautiful Landscape by Claude Lorraine*, Christie,

London, February 13, 1790, lot 63, as *The Triumph of Bacchus*, by John Ashburnham, 2nd Earl of Ashburnham (1724–1812), Ashburnham Place, Battle, Sussex, 1790–1812;

Probably by descent to George Ashburnham, 3rd Earl of Ashburnham (1760–1830), Ashburnham Place, Battle, Sussex, 1812–1830 [4];

By descent to his son, Bertram Ashburnham, 4th Earl of Ashburnham (1797–1878), Ashburnham Place, Battle, Sussex, by July 20, 1850;

Purchased from Ashburnham's sale, *Catalogue of the Entire and Valuable collection of Italian, Flemish, Dutch, and French Pictures, the Property of the Earl of Ashburnham*, Christie and Manson, London, July 20, 1850, lot 63, as *The Triumph of Bacchus*, by George William Frederick Howard, 7th Earl of Carlisle (1802–1864), Castle Howard, York, 1850–1864;

Inherited by his younger brother, Reverend William George Howard, 8th Earl of Carlisle (1808–1889), Castle Howard, York, 1864–1889;

By descent to his nephew, George James Howard, 9th Earl of Carlisle (1843–1911), Castle Howard, York, 1889–1911;

Inherited by his widow, Rosalind Frances Howard, Countess of Carlisle (née Stanley, 1845–1921), Castle Howard, York, 1911–1921;

By descent to her son, the Honorable Geoffrey William Algernon Howard (1877–1935), Castle Howard, York, 1921–1931;

Purchased from Howard, through Georgiana Isabella Blois (née Frances, 1888–1967), London, by The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO, July 30, 1931.

Notes

[1] The painting appears in the duchesse's posthumous inventory, dated June 23, 1741. She and her husband were married in 1734.

[2] In a notebook entry from 1741, George Vertue mentions that several pictures by Poussin were "lately" "[b]rought over from Paris" to London, and that he saw "with great pleasure" the *Triumph of Bacchus* that year. See "Vertue's Note Book, B. 4," in "Vertue Note Books: Volume III," special issue, *Walpole Society* 22 (1933–1934): 105.

[3] According to the handwritten manuscript of Richard Houlditch Jr., dated circa 1760, *The Triumph of Bacchus* was sold as lot 48 to Peter Delmé on the second day of Samuel Paris's sale, which took place in "1741/2." See "[Mr. Paris's Sale of Pictures, 1741/2,] 2nd Day's Sale," ca. 1760, *Sales Catalogues of the Principal Collections of Pictures (One Hundred and Seventy One in Number) Sold by Auction in England within the Years 1711–1759, the Greater Part of Them with the Prices and Names of Purchasers*, vol. 1, p. 112, manuscript MSL/1938/867–868, National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

[4] In the Last Will and Testament of John Ashburnham, 2nd Earl of Ashburnham, he leaves the remainder of his real estate and personal estate to his son, George, Lord Viscount Saint Asaph, which probably included the painting. See "Will of the Right Honorable John Earl of Ashburnham," The National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/1534/95. Thanks to Brian Phillips, Research Assistant, The Keep, Woollards Way, Brighton, for his assistance in locating this will. George was a Trustee of the British Museum, London, beginning in 1810.

Related Works

Nicolas Poussin, *The Triumph of Pan*, 1635–1636, oil on canvas, 53 1/2 x 57 1/2 in. (135.9 x 146 cm), National Gallery, London.

Nicolas Poussin, *The Triumph of Silenus*, 1635–1636, oil on canvas, 56 1/4 x 47 1/2 in. (142.9 x 120.5 cm), National Gallery, London.

Preparatory Works

Nicolas Poussin, *Centaur Carrying a Nymph; Holy Family with Temple (fragments)*, ca. 1635, pen, brown ink, and brown wash on two sheets of joined paper, 9 11/16 x 6 5/16 inches (9.3 x 16.0 cm), Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Nicolas Poussin, *Two Centaurs*, ca. 1635, pen, brown ink, and touches of gray wash on paper, 5 1/16 x 8 1/8 inches (12.9 x 20.7 cm), Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

Nicolas Poussin, *Two Rearing Centaurs with Two Figures behind Them*, ca. 1635, pen, brown ink, brown wash on paper, 3 5/16 x 2 15/16 inches (8.3 x 7.5 cm), The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg.

Nicolas Poussin, *Two Studies of a Bacchante; Centaur Carrying off a Young Woman*, ca. 1635, pen, brown ink, and brown wash on two sheets of joined paper, 3 3/4 x 8 inches (9.5 x 20.3 cm), Musée Bonnat, Bayonne.

Nicolas Poussin, *Study for "The Triumph of Bacchus,"* 1635, brown ink and blue-gray wash over black chalk on paper, 6 3/16 x 8 15/16 inches (15.7 x 22.7 cm), The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO, 54-83.

Nicolas Poussin, *The Indian Triumph of Bacchus*, ca. 1635–1636, pen, brown ink, and black chalk on paper, 7 15/16 x 12 3/8 inches (20.2 x 31.4 cm), Windsor Castle, Royal Library, London.

Known Copies

Jan de Bisschop (1628–1671), *The Triumph of Bacchus*, seventeenth century, pen, brown ink and brown wash, 16 1/16 x 19 1/4 inches (40.8 x 48.9 cm), T. Cottrell-Dormer Collection, Rousham House, Oxfordshire, Great Britain.

After Nicolas Poussin, *Triumph of Bacchus*, probably ca. 1740, oil on canvas, 64 9/16 x 58 1/4 inches (164 x 148 cm), Musée des Beaux-Arts Tours, France.

After Nicolas Poussin, *Triumph of Bacchus*, oil on canvas, 56 11/16 x 58 1/4 inches (137 x 144 cm), Le Musée Sainte-Croix, Poitiers, France.

After Nicolas Poussin, *The Triumph of Bacchus*, oil on canvas, 54 3/4 x 57 1/16 inches (139 x 145 cm), Musée des Beaux-Arts de Béziers, France.

After Nicolas Poussin, *The Triumph of Bacchus*, oil on canvas, 46 1/16 x 58 11/16 inches (117 x 149 cm), formerly Musée Paul Fourché, Orléans, France, destroyed 1940.

After Nicolas Poussin, *The Triumph of Bacchus*, by second half of the seventeenth century, oil on canvas, 35 7/16 x 46 7/16 inches (90 x 118 cm), Musée des Beaux-Arts d'Orléans, France.

After Nicolas Poussin, *The Triumph of Bacchus*, by second half of the seventeenth century, oil on canvas, 59 1/16 x 57 7/8 inches (150 x 147 cm), Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen, France.

After Nicolas Poussin, *The Triumph of Bacchus*, by 1800, oil on canvas, 50 x 59 7/16 inches (127 x 151 cm), Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Exhibitions

The Art Treasures of the United Kingdom, Manchester, England, May 5–October 17, 1857, no. 598, as *Triumph of Bacchus*.

Le paysage français de Poussin à Corot, Petit Palais, Paris, May–June 1925, no. P271, as *Le triomphe de Bacchus*.

Durlacher Brothers, New York, March 12–April 6, 1940, no. 5, as *The Triumph of Bacchus*.

Masterpieces of Art: Exhibition at the New York World's Fair 1940, Masterpieces of Art pavilion, Flushing Meadow Park, Queens, New York, May–October, 1940, no. 60, as *The Triumph of Bacchus*.

An Exhibition of Great Paintings in Aid of the Canadian Red Cross and of Small Pictures by Members of the Ontario Society of Artists, The Art Gallery of Toronto, November 15–December 15, 1940, no. 31, as *Triumph of Bacchus*.

Venetian Tradition, The Cleveland Museum of Art, November 9, 1956–January 1, 1957, no. 33, as *The Triumph of Bacchus*.

Trends in Paintings, 1600–1800, Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY, October 2–November 3, 1957, unnumbered, as *Triumph of Bacchus*.

Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Exhibition, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO, December 1958, hors cat.

Nicolas Poussin, 1594–1665, The Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, OH, January 4–February 2, 1959, The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, February 11–March 10, 1959, unnumbered.

Anatomy and Art, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO, May 8–June 5, 1960, no. 90, as *Triumph of Bacchus*.

Nicolas Poussin, 1594–1665, Villa Medici, Rome, November 1977–January 1978, no. 22, as *Le triomphe de Bacchus*, Städtische Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, January 27–March 12, 1978, no. 21, as *Der Triumph des Bacchus*.

Poussin Sacraments and Bacchanals: Paintings and Drawings on Sacred and Profane Themes by Nicolas Poussin 1594–1665, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh, October 16–December 13, 1981, no. 24, as *The Triumph of Bacchus*.

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Richelieu: Art and Power, The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, September 18, 2002–January 5, 2003, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne, January 31–April 20, 2003, no. 126, as *The Triumph of Bacchus*.

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municipal de Richelieu, France, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Tours, March 12–June 13, 2011, no. 125 (Tours only), as *Le Triomphe de Bacchus*.

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