

Factsheet

The Triumphs of Caesar by Andrea Mantegna

- The *Triumphs of Caesar* represent some of the most important Italian Renaissance paintings in the world. Collectively they constitute the largest area of Renaissance painting in a single pageant on display outside of Italy.
- The series was painted by Andrea Mantegna - the son of a master carpenter, probably between c.1484-1505. Mantegna was born 1430/1 and died in 1506. He trained in Padua and was the Court painter to the Gonzaga family from 1460.
- The *Triumphs of Caesar* were probably commissioned by Mantegna's patron Francesco II Gonzaga and were painted in the period 1485-94. They are said to represent a transitional phase in Mantegna's style, revealing a more pliant use of line and lyrical sense of movement.
- A 'Triumph' was the greatest honour that could be given to a Roman general. Classical subjects like Julius Caesar (c.102-44BC) were greatly admired in the Renaissance, in this case for his military and literary skills. This particular triumph would appear to unite at least two of his greatest campaigns; the victory over the Gauls and recovery of Pontus in Asia Minor.
- The series of nine paintings depict soldiers carrying captured booty, elephants and other exotic animals and also Caesar on a triumphal chariot.
- Each canvas measures 2.66m x 2.78m. In total they cover an area more than 70 metres square.
- The works were painted in tempera - a mixture of egg yolk and pigment.
- The paintings were bought for Charles I in 1629 by his agent, Daniel Nys, who obtained an impressive collection for the king which included works by Titian, Raphael and Caravaggio - all for the sum of £25,000.
- The canvasses have been displayed at Hampton Court Palace since their arrival in England in 1630, apart from a brief three month spell in 1992, when they were hung in the Royal Academy of Arts.
- After the execution of Charles I in 1649, the Triumphs were listed in an inventory and valued at £1,000. However Oliver Cromwell decided not to sell

the paintings as their importance to the nation was too great.

- The paintings deteriorated to such an extent that visitors in the 19th century deplored their decayed condition.
- Today eight of the paintings can be seen in their restored state, however the painting entitled The Captives was left in an uncleaned state in the 1962-1974 restoration as no original paint lay below the surface.
- Over the years the Triumphs have been hung in various parts of Hampton Court Palace. Today they are displayed in the Lower Orangery, in a setting which recreates the interior of the Palace of San Sebastiano in Mantua, Italy, where the paintings were hung from 1506 in a specially built gallery. The lighting and positioning of the paintings conjures up the illusion that the Roman procession is moving right in front of you.
- The titles of the individual paintings in The Triumphs of Caesar are as follows:
 - I The Trumpeters
 - II The Triumphal Carts
 - III The Trophy Bearers
 - IV The Vase Bearers
 - V The Elephants
 - VI The Corselet Bearers
 - VII The Captives
 - VIII The Musicians
 - IX Julius Caesar on his Chariot