



Poussin` Paintings : A Study in Art-Historical Methodology

David Carrier



Employing the methodologies of the new art history as well as some tools provided by poststructuralism, historiography, and analytic philosophy, Poussin's Paintings offers a novel approach to the art of Poussin. David Carrier begins with a comprehensive analysis of Poussin's self-portraits, which provides the starting point for a critical discussion of the traditional strategies of Poussin scholarship and for an evaluation of the status of this artist. Carrier shows that Poussin can be properly understood only by seeing how his visual and political culture differs from ours. Carrier examines the traditional approaches of Poussin scholars, noting the limitations of their views and showing how they not only shape our image of the artist but also restrict our ability to properly grasp his concerns. Carrier also considers the important conceptual claims of connoisseurs and reveals how their work invokes an implicit theory of Poussin's development. Carrier then focuses on a group of paintings concerned with erotic themes, demonstrating the inadequacy of traditional accounts of these pictures. He extends his analysis to a discussion of Poussin's landscapes, which have a different and more important place in his development than the older accounts claim. Carrier places Poussin within the artistic and political culture of seventeenth-century Rome. He asserts that artists of the time were concerned with the problem of belatedness and that Poussin attempted to return to the tradition of the High Renaissance, reworking images from that tradition in response to his own visual culture. Carrier argues that Poussin's art is thus best understood as a response to that setting for baroque art, and he relates Poussin's work to the later tradition of French history painting.

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