

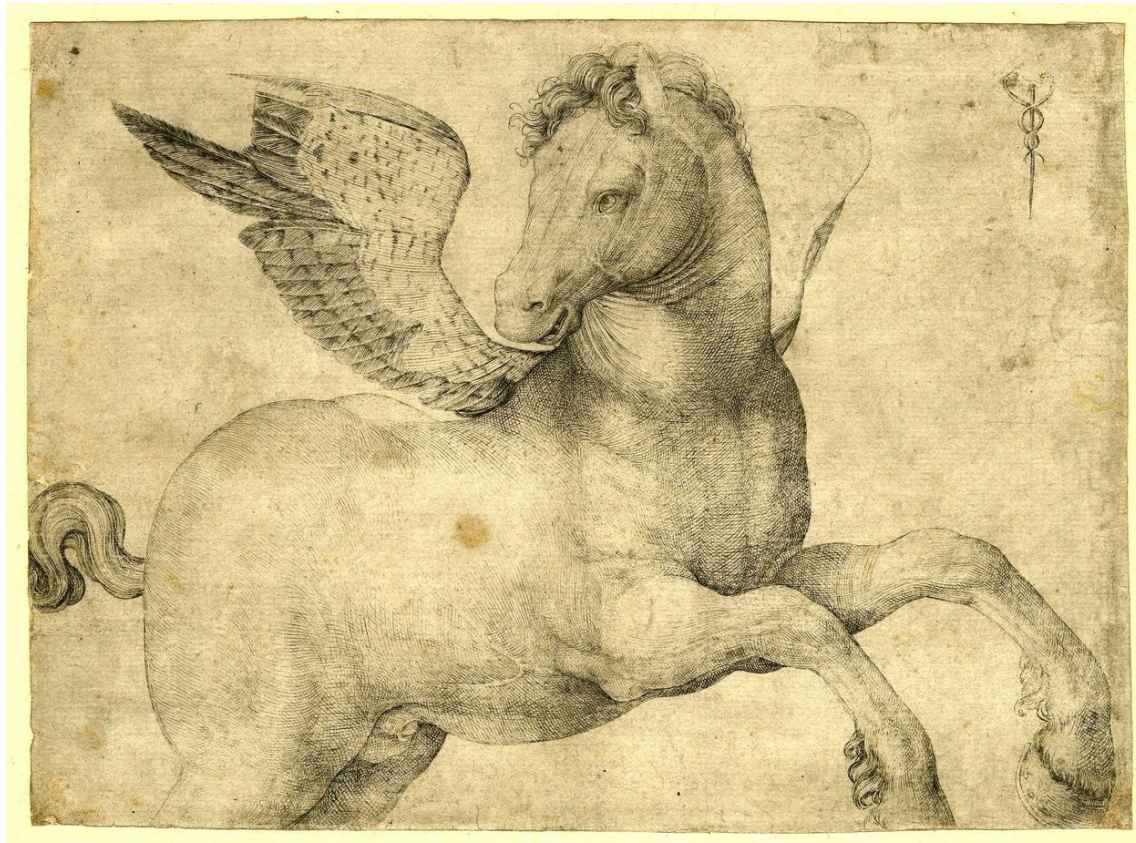
# the Whitworth

## Audio Descriptions transcript

May 2022

### AUDIO DESCRIPTIONS

Audio descriptions of artworks from the collection of the Whitworth, The University of Manchester.



**AUDIO DESCRIPTION:** Pegasus, Jacopo de Barbari (1509 – 1516)

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Jacopo de' Barbari was a painter, draughtsman and printmaker and the first Italian Renaissance artist of note to travel to Northern Europe. An acquaintance of Albrecht Dürer, he worked as a court painter in Wittenberg, Nürnberg, Frankfurt an der Oder, and the Dutch court. His prints were signed with a caduceus, alluding to the god Mercury's dominion over printing as a form of written communication. The caduceus is in the top right corner of this piece. The emblem originates from Greek mythology and consists of a staff which is thought to have been carried by Hermes, the Greek messenger god of Magic, sometimes referred to as Mercury, and typically there are two snakes entwined around the staff, as depicted here. Jacopo de Barbari features the caduceus so often in his works that he is in fact known as the Master of the Caduceus.

In addition to his paintings, he is known to have produced twenty-nine engravings and three large woodcuts. This piece, 'Pegasus' is one of such engravings.

This piece depicts a drawing of a Pegasus, otherwise known as a winged horse, a creature stemming from Greek mythology. Pegasus is a unique creature in Greek mythology owing to the fact that it isn't a monster. He is looked upon with much positivity and is a celebrated being. His form is always that of a white horse with wings and he's thought to have assisted Zeus by retrieving his thunder and lightning from where it was created. Pegasus's parents are thought to be Poseidon, the god of the sea, and Medusa, a monstrous gorgon whose hair is made of snakes.

The engraving has an aged colouration, the paper is quite yellowish in tone. Whilst the markings of Pegasus are generally still well pronounced, there are areas of fading and a few brownish blotches or foxing, which is hardly surprising considering the age of the piece.

Pegasus almost fills the entirety of the paper, which is in landscape format and measures 155mm in height and 224mm in width. The body is side on and at a slight angle towards us with the head and front legs facing to the right hand side of the piece. The front legs are elevated but the hoof of its right leg falls below the edge of the paper. The majority of the body is in shot apart from this hoof and also its hind legs, which would've been in the lower left corner. Therefore we don't know if Pegasus is standing in a reared position or in a state of flight. The wings appear to be in a semi spread position and the head is turned to look behind him. I say 'him' as we can clearly see male genitalia.

The engraving is very classical in style and very articulately rendered. The markings are very tightly and neatly executed allowing for varying grades of shaded areas. The head, neck and front leg muscles are particularly defined, with areas of cross hatching to create greater depth and shadow. This is most prominent along the neck, chest and under belly. His mane and tail are curly but not to the point of looking wild, in fact his hair almost looks like it's been neatly coiffed – his forelock is a plethora of tumbling curls falling over his forehead, which is centrally parted. He also has curly hair growing on his front fetlocks, similar to a goat. His wings are feathered like that of a bird's and seem disproportionately small with the body for flight to be possible, if a Pegasus wasn't a mythical creature. However as the wings appear to be partially spread we know we're not seeing them at their full width. Unlike a lot of depictions of Pegasus, he's heavy-set rather than slender, his body is of a muscular build. The facial details extend to vein and muscle definition, giving the drawing an anatomical quality. He carries a gentle yet playful facial expression which is perhaps suggested by his slightly parted mouth, subtly smiling.

The reared, elevated stance of the Pegasus gives us a sense of stature, strength and power. He is proud and confident. After all he is the hoofed master of the land and winged master of the sky, encompassing beauty and majesty.

Pegasus represents heightened power of the natural forces, spiritualisation and the capacity to invert evil. He also symbolizes the potential of life beyond the physical world to the realm where the spirit can soar without limit.

Finally in the top right corner of the piece there is a Rod of Asclepius, featuring two snakes wrapped around a staff. Asclepius was the Greco-Roman god of healing and medicine. The staff symbolizes authority and the snakes symbolize rebirth, healing and rejuvenation.