

The Ceiling Painting in the King's Bedchamber

This ceiling painting represents Hercules being taken up to Olympus in reward for his virtue, strength and courage – making a deliberate and flattering comparison to Charles the Second.

In the centre of the painting, Zeus, the king of the gods, is seated on a cloud. He clutches the thunderbolt that is his attribute and leans down towards a naked Hercules, arms and legs flailing. Hermes, the messenger of the gods, in his helmet, little black wings on his heels, draws Hercules upwards, watched by the gods. Among them are Athena with her spear, Dionysus with his grapes and Hera, Zeus's queen, sitting with her peacock on a cloud.

The frame of the picture is a trompe l'oeil, which is painted to look like real wood. Various animals have wings and paws tipping over the edge, and on one side, with enormous soft brown eyes, is a pair of King Charles spaniels.