

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

ALEFOUNDER, John

Greenstead-Juxta-Colchester, Suffolk bpt
5.X.1757 – Calcutta 20.XII.1794

The son of a carpenter, architect and surveyor of the same name (declared bankrupt in 1762), Alefounder entered the Royal Academy Schools on 4.X.1776 (aged “19 last Sepr”) as an architecture student. He was awarded silver medals in 1782 and 1784. He exhibited miniatures at the Royal Academy from 1777 to 1793; he also worked in oil and pastel, making portraits, theatrical scenes and other pieces. He was associated with Kauffman and Bartolozzi, who engraved his work. Alefounder is recorded as exhibiting from Ave Maria Lane, London (1777, with his father); at Mrs Angiers’, Wardour Street (1779); at Mr Booth’s, 81 Strand (1780) and at Mr Ireland’s, Bow Street (1781). A portrait (neither medium nor subject described) was dismissed by the critic in the *London courant*, *Westminster chronicle & daily advertiser*, 1.V.1782 as “So, so.”

Around 1784 he married a Maria Jane Curd or Evans (the register entry has not been located), and moved to 25 Bow Street. In 1785, having first made a will (11.I.1785, mentioning his wife’s name; proved in London 10.X.1795) he travelled to India (his wife remained in London) where, after several attempts, he committed suicide. It has been suggested that this was a response to the unexpectedly difficult economic conditions (some eight British portrait painters in Calcutta were far more than the tiny market could support), but Humphry’s description of him as “melancholy mad” offers a simpler explanation. This is consistent with the advertisement placed in the *Calcutta gazette and oriental advertiser*, 21.IX.1786, in which Alefounder appeals for the return of his pictures and materials which had been sold without his consent during a recent “illness”; there is no mention of pastel.

Bibliography

Bénézit; Brieger 1921; Clive Dewey, *Modern Asian studies*, XVI, 1982, p. 687; Foskett 1987; Howard 2010; Myrone 2022; Oxford DNB; Saur; Sée 1911; Waterhouse 1981; Williamson 1918; Peter Alefounder [website](#), accessed 19.IV.2011

Pastels

J.102.101 Poetry, pstl, 56x43 ov. (Sackville Gallery 1911). Exh.: Paris 1911, no. 1. Lit.: Sée 1911, repr. p. 331 Φ



J.102.103 Music, pstl, 56x43 ov. (Sackville Gallery 1911). Exh.: Paris 1911, no. 2

J.102.104 A lady, chalks, Royal Academy 1779, no. 1