

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

ANSEAUME, Nicolas

Léry, Normandie 20.V.1730 – Paris 7.IX.1786
Nicolas, or Pierre-Nicolas, Anseume [Ansiaume, Ansiome, Anciaume, Anteaume, Antheaume, etc.; he appears to have preferred Ansiome], who died in Paris, rue de Richelieu, à Phôtel des Deux-Siciles in 1786 (scellés apposes..., AN Y15297), was said to be a pupil of La Tour by the owners of the Messier portrait (a later chalk drawing of the astronomer by Ansiaume also exists), a suggestion supported by the terms of La Tour's first testament of 20.X.1768: "M^{rs} Restout, Montjoye, Ensiaume partageront mes crayons de pastels et couleurs et toutes mes études qui ne seront pas sous verre ou glace et qui ne sont pas collez sur des cartons ou des toiles". The hand appears to be the same as that of the "Ansiome" who provides some biographical information on the back of the pastel of an unknown woman some 10 years earlier.

This allows us to identify him as the Nicolas Anseume born 20.V., baptised 21.V.1730 at Léry, the son of César and his wife Anne Vedi (the parrain, Pierre Anseume, was illiterate). He is described somewhat imaginatively as "peintre de l'Académie royale" in the document published by Guiffrey. According to this, Ansiaume was a peintre en pastel, living in the rue de Richelieu, à Phôtel des Deux-Siciles (confirmed by a partage des biens, 29.XI.1786, AN MC XXVIII/524; inv. p.m. carried out by Paillet, 20.IX.1786, AN MC XXVIII/523). The inventory included "tableaux au pastel de fruits, portraits, têtes de fantaisie études de têtes au pastel certains d'après Rosalba", as well as portfolios of prints, mannequins, an easel and other tools.

In 1785 the pastellist Boze recorded a debt of 624 livres to Ansiaume for the hire of a mannequin used in his portrait of Louis XVI. Ansiaume left some 5680 livres in cash and a valuable library; his heirs included the children of the maître-doreur Pierre Allais (often confused with the pastellist Jacques-Charles Allais *q.v.*), whose widow was born Marie-Françoise Ansiaume (Nicolas Ansiome, peintre was godfather to Pierre-Nicolas Benjamin, son of Antoine Allais, according to the records at Saint-Sulpice, 9.IV.1784). In the inventory of Louis-Joseph Lefebvre (17.II.1799, AN MC XXVIII/590) a mannequin by Ansiaume was valued at 60 francs.

According to E.-J.-J. Barillet, *Sur le mannequin...*, Paris, 1809, Anciaume [sic], peintre de portrait, made mannequins of which "la mécanique en étoit simple et solide; les formes, à en juger par ses dispositions intérieures, devoient être assez pures." He noted that Huot and Rabillon (*q.v.*) continued to make these.

Guiffrey thought Ansiaume was nothing more than a painter of mannequins, but we now know better. A miniature *Ruine d'architecture* painted by "le sieur Anteaume" was in the inventaire de l'Académie de Saint-Luc on its dissolution and could be another product of this obscure artist.

Bibliography

B&W, p. 74; Boze 2004; Guiffrey 1885, pp. 114–116, doc. CCCXVI; pp. 187f, doc. CCCLXIII; Herluison 1873

Pastels

J.1076.101 Charles MESSIER (1730–1827), astronome, pstl, 56x46, 1771 (Paris, Observatoire, inv. P.Po 33. Legs Mme veuve Callon, née Messier 1944). Lit.: *Le Pays lorrain*, 1932, p. 425 repr. A/r Desportes pnt., 1771 (*olim* Nantes PC) [Croix de la Légion d'honneur added p.1806] ☐



J.1076.103 Homme, âgé de quarante ans environ, de mi-corps, de ¾ à dr., les yeux regardant le spectateur, perruque poudrée, catogan ramené sur l'épaule dr., habit bleu foncé, la main g. repliée dans le gilet de soie fond jaune à fleurs, cravate blanche, jabot et manchettes de dentelle, pstl, 56x46 (comte de L... [Paul Sohège]; Paris, Drouot, Bernier, Sortais, 1.IV.1909, Lot 23 n.r., as by Ansiome, H275)

J.1076.104 Femme au bonnet, pstl, 45x36, inscr. verso "Fait par Monsieur/Nicolas Ansiome/natif de leri en normandie âgé de 31 ans en janvier 1761" (Monaco, Sotheby's, 20–21.II.1988, Lot 248 repr., est. H5–7000, H5550) ☐



Photo courtesy Sotheby's