

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

BERMINGHAM, Nathaniel

Dublin ?1712 – ?London p.1774

Bermingham was born in Dublin, perhaps c.1720, although he may be the Nathanl. Bermingham, son of Thomas and Dorothy, of Plunkett Street, christened 21.IX.1712 at St Nicholas Without, Dublin. Apprenticed to a herald painter, Bermingham was a specialist in the technique of paper-cutting, which he used to create coats of arms (such as those of the 5th Earl of Cork, London, 7.V.2009, Lot 53) and similar découpages (“Britannia mourning Frederick, Prince of Wales”, V&A). An “Owl in cut paper” was in the Strawberry Hill sale (17.V.1842, Lot 123); Walpole also owned one of his fables from *Æsop*. Bermingham moved to London before 1744, advertising in Mortimer’s *London directory* of 1763 as “an improver of a curious art of cutting out portraits and Coats of Arms in Vellum, with the point of a pen-knife”. Initially monochrome, at some stage he used pastel to colour cut profile heads pasted onto a dark background, with edges shaded in pastel. The handful of pastels which have survived show the resultant distinctive sharp treatment and a high quality of finish. It should be noted that this technique must have faced considerable practical difficulties, and it is unclear if the pastel was applied before or after the cut-outs were affixed to the backing. His portraits, landscapes and other paper cut-outs were sold by Mrs Laetitia Pilkington (who described him as “a most ugly, squinting, mean-looking fellow”) in her print shop in London from 1744. Bermingham exhibited at the Society of Artists in 1774. Similar pastel profiles were made by Lucas Bateman (*q.v.*).

Bibliography

Paul Caffrey, in Gorry Gallery, Dublin; exh. 2–12.III.2005, no. 11 repr.; Crookshank & Glin 1978; Crookshank & Glin 1994; McGuire 1939, pp. 13f; *Memoirs of Mrs Laetitia Pilkington*, Dublin, 1776, II, p. 171; Saur; Strickland 1913; Lucy Trench, ed., *Materials & techniques in the decorative arts; an illustrated dictionary*, London, 2000, p. 343; *The register of st Nicholas Without 1694–1739*, Exeter, 1912, p. 38

Pastels

Lady Arbella DENNY, née Fitzmaurice (1707–1792), pstl, graphite/ppr, 24x19.5 (Representative Church Body, Dublin. Sir Edward Denny; don: Magdalen Asylum, Leeson Street, Dublin –1958). Exh.: Hamilton 2008, no. 10 repr., as by Hamilton [new attr.]
ψ



Mrs FARMER, née Burton, as Miss Burton, 24x22.8

Mrs FARMER, née Burton, as Mrs Farmer, pstl/ppr, 25x20 ov. (La Touche family, Bellevue, Co. Wicklow; Dr Joan Buchanan Mitchell; Gorry Gallery, Dublin; exh. 2–12.III.2005, no. 11 repr.). Lit.: McGuire 1939, no. VII repr. Φ



Mrs MORTON, née Sarah Brooke of Haughton Hall, Shropshire, pstl, 12.7x10 ov., inscr. verso “Mrs Sarah Moreton daughter of W Brook of Haughton. Grandmother of Mrs Sarah Atkin [?Atkis]” (PC 2011) ψ



Gentleman, pstl, ov. Lit.: McGuire 1939, no. VI repr. Φ



Gentleman in a brown coat, pstl, 25x19 ov. (Castletown House 0058). Attr.; olim attr. Hamilton Φ



Photo © The Castletown Foundation, courtesy of The Office of Public Works

Young boy, profile, pstl/cut-out ppr, 25.3x20.1 ov., c.1780 (Dublin, NGI, inv. 19236. Don Matthew Russell 1985). Lit.: *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 1870–71, repr. ψ



Lawyer, from ?Trinity College, Dublin, pstl/ppr, cutout, 20x18 ov. (Aylsham, Keys. 7.X.2011, Lot 46 repr., attr. H. D. Hamilton, est. £120–150) [new attr.] ψ



Lady with pearls in hair, lace shawl, in profile to left, pstl, 24.2x19 ov. (London, Christie's South Kensington, 21.II.2007, Lot 1291 repr.,

as French sch., 19th century, est. £500–800;
Philip Mould 2007, as by Lawrence; London,
Christie's South Kensington, 11.III.2008, Lot
82 repr., circle of Lawrence, est. £300–400
[new attr.] φ



Lady in white dress, profile, to right; & pendant:
lady in blue dress, profile, to left, pstl on cut
out sheet, on laid paper, 18x? ov. (Irish art
market 2008) φ



Lady in blue dress, profile, to left, pstl, ov. (Tom
Wnuck of Rochester, New York; sale p.m.,
Geneseo, NY, Cottone Auctions, 23.XI.2002,
Lot 283, \$468) [new attr., ?]φ



Boy; profile to left; & lady, profile to left