

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

BESNIER, Mlle

f. Orléans 1770–75

In two letters to Desfriches of 6.IV.1772 and 31.XII.1772, Louis-André de Grimaldi (1736–1806), évêque du Mans mentions a certain Mlle Besnier. She, and two of her heads which apparently Desfriches had sent to Greuze, came up in a conversation between Mgr de Grimaldi with the painter, who felt that her talents had been underestimated by the critics. He proposed to return the two works (which may have been copied after engravings) to Desfriches with his opinion. A pastel portrait was also to be sent, and the difficulties of packing it without risk were discussed. A letter from Mme Greuze to Mlle Bénier of 30.IV.1773 (Fondation Custodia, inv. 2006-A.443, addressed to her “chez M. Défriche à Orléans”) reports that Greuze praised her talents to the bishop. Perronneau also mentions Mlle Bénier in letters to Desfriches (2.I.1770, 4.V.1772), no doubt the same person as in the letter dated merely “vendredy, 1772” he discussed the idea of spending more time in Orléans. “je seray très aise de voire souvent Mademoiselle Bénier, de la voire peindre, elle est pleine de reconnoissances pour vous car dans mon dernier voiage de Paris, il i a 2 ans édemie, elle ne sessa de me dire quelle joie elle resentoit du cas que vous fesiez d’elle. Son caractère gaie, active, sage me l’a fait estimé particulièrement.” Mlle Besnier advertised in the *Etrennes orléannais* in 1775 as a “peintre en mignature”, rue de la Lionne, Orléans, and indicated that she gave lessons. She may have been related to the orfèvre Nicolas Besnier (– 1754) who directed the manufacture de Beauvais.

Bibliography

Edmond Pilon, *Muses et bourgeois de jadis*, Paris, 1908, p. 262; Ratouis de Limay 1907, pp. 102f, 126, 128, 129; Vaillat & Ratouis de Limay 1923, p. 112