

# Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

## Online edition

### BRESSON, Mme

fl. Paris 1772

Some care is necessary in identifying the artist of this fine pastel from the brief inscription which informs us that the author, M<sup>de</sup> (for Mme, not Mlle de) Bresson, was a pupil of F.-H. Drouais. It is probably the sitter rather than the artist who was 26 years old.

The dealer offering the pastel in 2020 understandably suggested that the artist was related to the engraver, draughtsman and supplier who advertised widely using the names “Bresson de Maillard”, “Maillard de Bresson”, “Maillard Bresson” etc., none of which seems to be found in genealogical records. However the advertisements consistently include references to “le sieur Maillard” etc., dessinateur, rue Saint-Jacques, offering “toutes sortes de petites vignettes, emblems, fables, devises, joliment enluminées, sur des sujets moraux & autres” (*Feuille nécessaire*, 24.XII.1759; the earliest notice found so far is in the *Journal historique sur les matières du tems*, LXXIV, .XIII.1753, p. 413). He also published illustrated juvenile almanachs, such as the *Étrennes divertissantes ou Collection d'histoires agréables*. In the *Journal de littérature, des sciences et des arts*, III, 1779, p. 285, he announced a new dye for printing characters on fabric. The *Petites Étrennes* for 1762 describe “le Sieur Bresson de Maillard” as “Découpeur ordinaire & privilégié de feu Monseigneur le duc de Bourgogne & des Enfants de France”. In the *Mercur de France* (24.VII.1779, p. 238), the same emblems are offered by “le Sieur Bresson Maillard, Graveur-Coloriste, de l'Académie de S. Luc, rue Saint-Jacques”, and in addition “l'épouse & la fille dudit Sieur Bresson, montrent aux Dames à dessiner & à peindre dans ce genre”, as well as composing verses which they would inscribe on greetings cards etc. Both ladies coloured all types of prints and armorials. The business was evidently taken over by the daughter, as “Mlle Bresson, graveur, rue S. Jacques” was listed as a supplier of “emblèmes, devises, fables, bouquets &c” in the *Almanach sous-verre* for 1788 (p. 513, replacing the entry for Bresson de Maillard on p. 194 of the 1782 edition).

It seems most probable that this Bresson de Maillard was Louis Bresson, graveur de l'Académie de Saint-Luc. He may have been born c.1715, the son of a maître tailleur who died in 1731. On 6.VII.1756 at Paris, Saint-Benoît, he married Marie Desmonts, daughter of Gervais Desmonts and Louise Coeffé; she had been born on 8.III.1730 in Montabard (Orne). He died in 1784 leaving one minor child, Louis-Antoine Bresson; his widow disclaimed the estate which was pursued by creditors.

But can the pastellist be identified with Marie Desmonts? None of the contemporary notices make any mention of pastel, despite the evidence that this is a work of quality requiring a level of skill which would surely have been marketable at the time.

### Bibliography

Lemoine-Bouchard 2008; Sanchez 2004; AN etc.

### Pastels

J.1802.201 Homme en habit brun, pstl, 53x44 ov., sd / “P Bresson”, inscr. verso “Peint à 26 ans année 1772//Par M<sup>de</sup> Bresson Elleve/de M<sup>r</sup> Drouet peintre du Roy” (PC; Noblesse des Grands Siècles Valérie Pagé, Proantic, 2020) φ

