CAROLINE LUISE Markgräfin von Baden, née von Hessen-Darmstadt

Darmstadt 11.VII.1723 – Paris 8.IV.1783

Caroline (or Caroline: a form she did not use) Luise von Hessen-Darmstadt married Karl Friederich in the Académie de Saint-Luc in 1752 (a curious picture for the Protestant artist to have exhibited, or for the Lutheran princess to acquire); it remained in her collection but is untraced after her posthumous inventory. However she herself copied it, as we know from a letter from Charlotte Sophie Gräfin Bentinck to Caroline Luise of 27.XII.1758, after her return to Vienna from a visit to Karlsruhe, in which she praised the princess’s “superbe tête de la Vierge”, calling it a “beau chef d’œuvre” and inviting her to present it to Maria Theresa; its fate is unclear.

In contrast to other royal or noble amateurs, Caroline Luise can be seen to have mastered pastel (and also oil and chalk drawing) to a high, professional standard, showing great skill in recreating detail (some of which is now lost in the originals). Her pictures were certainly not just what they painted for amusement” (to borrow Reynolds’s jibe against her teacher), and her equal mastery of the messier craft of oil painting reinforces her difference from the ladies admitted as honorary members of so many European academies with a token submission in pastel. Her taste, with its penchant for Northern school cabinet paintings, was consonant with this meticulous craftsmanship. It is surely not coincidence that when Perronneau produced a replica of his famous Mlle Huquier in the Louvre for the Markgräfin, he worked in an entirely different technique than normal, smoothing away his graphic strokes to produce a fully blended alternative that would appeal to a pupil of “point-de-touches” Liotard.

It may seem puzzling that so accomplished a pastellist should have confined her output to copies but this is misunderstanding her objectives. Pastel painting was an amateur’s means of deeper engagement with the pictures she loved rather than an end in itself.

Caroline Luise was admitted to the Danish Kunstakademi in 1763, with a Tod der Kleopatra after Netscher as reception piece. She formed the collection which is the nucleus of the Tod der Kleopatra exhibition and associated publications. In 2016 an online database of her correspondence and collections was launched by the Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, the Staatlichen Kunsthalle Karlsruhe and the Università della Svizzera italiana.

Monographic exhibitions
Karlsruhe 1983: Caroline Luise, Karlsruhe, 1983

Bibliography

TREATISES

Pastels
J.2.101 AUTO-PORTRAIT, en habit rouge, avec ordre russe de Sainte-Catherine, psbl, 37.8x44.6 cm, c.1780 (Baden-Baden, Neues Schloss, K 429). Lit.: Kircher 1958, no. 479 n.r., ?Autoportrait


Serennisime mieux que personne au monde, saura a apprecier ce beau morceau. Her correspondence (published in 1933, ed. G. Kircher) extended across Europe. Between 1766 and 1768 she was kept abreast of developments in Paris by Claude Pougé de Saint-Aubin (q.e.), although curiously he has little to say about pastel.

The subject of numerous publications, including a biography by Jan Laats (1990), Caroline Luise’s work, collections and circle were given encyclopaedic coverage in the 2015 exhibition and associated publications. In 2016 an online database of her correspondence and collections was launched by the Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, the Staatlichen Kunsthalle Karlsruhe and the Università della Svizzera italiana.

Online edition

Neil Jeffares, Dictionary of pastellists before 1800

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Updated 29 June 2020
12.104 SELBSTBILDNIS or VOLTAIRE, pstl, 1758
(sent to Voltaire 1758)
12.105 Die kranke Frau, pstl/pchm, 37.5x30.5, 1757
Exh.: Baden-Baden 1981, no. 6.1.2 n.r.;
Karlsruhe 2015, no. 87, repr. p. 137. A/r
Frans van Mieris d. Ä. pnt., 1667

12.107 Der Tod der Kleopatra, pstl/pchm, a/r
Caspar Netscher, 55.2x44.5, sd
“Fair par
Caroline Louise Margrave de Bade Dourlac
1764” (Copenhagen, Kunstakademi, inv. KS
30). Exh.: Karlsruhe 1983, no. 176 repr.clr;
Karlsruhe 2015, no. 98, repr. p. 153. Lit.:
Lauts 1980, pp. 200ff repr.

12.109 Jeune femme, regardant de face, les bras
appuyés sur une balustrade d’un balcon de
pierre, coiffure poudrée, manteau de velours
bleu garni de fourrure, manches garnies de
dentelles, corsage ouvert en pointe, ruban noir
au cou, les mains cachées dans un manchon
rouge, pstl, 26x21 (don de l’artiste: Jean-
Étienne Liotard 1746; vente p.m., no. 188,
D/25 6cr. desc.: Tilanus 1897). Exh.: Liotard
1897, no. 10, as by Liotard. Lit.: Humbert,
Revilliod & Tilanus 1897, p. 109, à/r Liotard;
L&R 84 n.r.; R&I, pp. 139, 350 n.r.; Jeffares
2009 [à/r La Tour, marquise de Sesmaisons;
cf. Stanislaw Leszczyński, marquise de
Bassompierre]

12.110 La dévote, pstl, 1754 (Caroline Luise; don:
M. de Vosoles, Intendant d’Alsace)
12.111 Ein Frauenzimmer, mit säugendem Kind;
& 12.112 Spitzenköpplerin, pstl (Caroline Luise
inv. p.m., 29–30.vi.1784, no. 513). Lit.:
Lauts 1984
12.113 Venus und Amor, pstl/pchm, a/r van der
Waerff, 37.5x30.5 (?seen by Boswell 1764;
Baden-Baden 1981; PC 2015). Exh.: Baden-
Baden 1981, no. 6.1.13, repr. p. 63; Karlsruhe
214, as in Karlsruhe, Staatliche Kunsthalle, as
Pan und Flora, a/r Caspar Netscher

12.115 Tête de la Vierge, pstl, a/r Liotard, 1492491
(Caroline Luise; vue 1758 par la comtesse
Bentinck; Caroline Luise, inv. p.m., 29–
30.vi.1784, no. 410, Maitre Dolorosa,
ebauchird). Lit.: Lauts 1977, p. 53; Lauts 1984;
R&I, p. 351 n.r.
12.116 Ein Frauenzimmer, ein Kind säugend
en pastell (Caroline Luise inv. p.m., 29 –
30.vi.1784, no. 591)
12.117 Ein Frauenzimmer, ein Kind säugend
en pastell (Caroline Luise inv. p.m., 29–30.vi.1784, no. 513, as
“Frauenzimmer von Pastell, an der
Klippellade”; inv. 1829, no. 77). Lit.: Lauts
1984, à/r G. Dou pnt. (Karlsruhe)
12.118 Klein Portrait, pstl (Caroline Luise; inv.
p.m., 29–30.vi.1784, no. 404)