

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

CARON, Marie-Josèphe, Mme Louis Guilbert

Paris bpt 13.II.1725 – 21.XII.1784

Also Carrón in Spanish sources. “Doña María Josefa Carrón” was appointed académica de mérito at the Real academia de bellas artes de San Fernando in 1761; her morceau de réception was a pastel of an architect and professor at the academy. Known to be a native of Paris, she is here identified as one of the five sisters of Beaumarchais and cousin of the pastellist Suzanne Caron (*q.v.*). The daughter of the clock-maker André-Charles Caron, she was baptised at Saint-Innocents, Paris, 13.II.1725; her godmother, Jeanne-Josèphe de La Borde, may have been the aunt of the fermier general Jean-Benjamin de La Borde. On 27.XI.1748 at Saint-Jacques-de-la-Boucherie, Paris, she married a Louis Guillebert or Guilbert (1717–1772), maître maçon.

Soon after, financial difficulties beset Guilbert, and the couple settled in Madrid c.1756 when he was appointed architecte du roi d’Espagne. He worked on projects such as the church of Santa Victoria in Córdoba in 1759. Marie-Josèphe had been accompanied to Madrid by one of her younger sisters, Marie-Louise, who became involved with a Spanish official, José Clavijo y Fajardo, resulting in Beaumarchais’s 1764 trip to Madrid to rescue her honour (a story which inspired Goethe’s first play). In Madrid Marie-Josèphe established a fashion shop, while her husband went mad and died. In a letter of 1770 from Madrid she applied to become a member of the Académie de peinture et de sculpture at Marseille; her request was repeated on 17.XII.1770 before being answered on 25.I.1771 indicating the approval of the Académie subject to a reception piece. On 25.V.1771 Marie-Josèphe wrote from Toulon to thank the Académie, but in another letter she explained the delay in sending her reception piece caused by the death of her husband and a serious illness which made her so weak “qu’elle ne peut pas précisément dire si c’est de ce monde ou de l’autre qu’elle a l’honneur d’écrire à l’Académie”. By 17.XII.1771, still in Madrid, she had recovered sufficiently to send the portrait of a Marseillais, lieutenant-colonel, “qui remplira à tous égards la place que l’Académie destine à son ouvrage”; no medium is specified. She described herself as a “faible élève de l’école de Paris”.

In 1772 she returned to Paris, penniless, and relied upon her brother for support for herself and her two children, until her death 21.XII.1784: she took refuge in the Communauté des filles de la Croix at Roye in Picardie under the name of Mme Salzédo. (She is said in Spanish sources to have died in Madrid in 1823, but this is not correct.)

In the salon de Saint-Luc of 1753, Jacques-Charles Allais exhibited a lost portrait (probably in pastel) of a Mme Guilbert, which it has been suggested could be Caron (Voiriot 2025); if so, it hints at her training of which nothing is otherwise known. If correctly identified the portrait might be the pastel of Caron in Beaumarchais’s home in the 1770 inv. p.m. of

his second wife; it, or another pastel of or by her, might also be one of several pastels in Beaumarchais’s own inv. p.m., 1800 (some unddescribed, including portraits de famille, and another of “une femme espagnole”).

Bibliography

Bénézit; Dussieux 1856, p. 241; Jal; Eugène Linthillac, *Beaumarchais et ses oeuvres. Précis de sa vie et histoire de son esprit*, Paris, 1887, p. 369; Louis de Loménie, *Beaumarchais et son temps*, Paris, 1873, I, p. 35; Parrocel 1890, II, pp. 256–57; Sepúlveda 2007; Soubeyroux 2006; Voiriot 2024; Voiriot 2025

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Bénézit; Dussieux 1856, p. 241; Jal; Eugène Linthillac, *Beaumarchais et ses oeuvres. Précis de sa vie et histoire de son esprit*, Paris, 1887, p. 369; Louis de Loménie, *Beaumarchais et son temps*, Paris, 1873, I, p. 35; Parrocel 1890, II, pp. 256–57; Sepúlveda 2007; Soubeyroux 2006; Voiriot 2024

GENEALOGIES [Caron](#)

Pastels

J.2003.101 Don Diego de VILLANUEVA (1715–1774), arquitecto, profesor de dibujo y de perspectiva en la Escuela de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, pstl, 1761 (Madrid, Real academia de San Fernando, inv. 1801, no. 241). Exh.: Madrid 1840. Lit.: Dussieux 1856, p. 241 n.r.; Soubeyroux 2006, p. 83 repr.; Voiriot 2025, fig. 2 ♀

