

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

CHRÉTIEN, Gilles-Louis

Versailles 1754 – Paris 1811

Chrétien was a musicien de la chapelle du roi until, around 1783–86, he invented the celebrated physionotrace, a kind of pantographic machine which permitted the mechanical tracing of profile portraits in just a few minutes. Customers were offered either an immediate, life-sized chalk drawing, for 6 livres “the “grand trait”), or, for 15 livres (24 if the plate was taken) they could collect 12 impressions of a reduced size engraving. Chrétien exhibited at the salons from 1793 to 1799; he worked alone from 1786 or in partnership with Quenedey 1788–89, with Fouquet 1789–99 (*qq.v.*), and later with Bouchardy or Fournier. Quenedey in particular developed the technique, making the drawn profiles in a few minutes, while assistants were engaged to make the engravings. Records of drawings executed with this device are often misdescribed.

Bibliography

Bénézit; Hennequin 1932; Lemoine-Bouchard 2008; inventaire des physionotrases, in preparation, www.lemoinebouchard.com

Pastels

William Richardson DAVIE (1756–1802), pstl, 45.1x36.5, 1800 (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina). Lit.: National Society Colonial Dames of America, *North Carolina portrait index 1700–1860*, North Carolina, 1963, p. 64 repr.