

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

COLSON, Jean-François Gilles, dit

Dijon 2.III.1733 – Paris 1.III.1803

Son of Jean-Baptiste (*q.v.*); initially a pupil of Frère Imbert at Dijon, then of Nonnotte in Lyon, he became peintre, architecte et sculpteur to the duc de Bouillon, under whose patronage he remained up to the Revolution. He was unmarried; his brother, the actor Jean-Claude Gilles Colson de Bellecourt (1725–1778), was a former pupil of Carle Van Loo who abandoned painting for the stage. A member of the Académie de Saint-Luc, Colson exhibited also at the open salons of 1793, 1795 and 1799. He was listed in the *Almanach des peintres* of 1776 as a portraitist, rue du Petit Bourbon, près Saint-Sulpice. His portraits offered excellent likenesses, with simple but satisfying poses and good perspective.

His obituarist, Nicolas Ponce (*Athénée des arts*, 9 vendémiaire, an XII), wrote “Il peignait aussi le pastel avec une grande facilité. La Tour, dont la réputation est si connue, l’avait sollicité, mais sans succès, de se livrer à ce genre exclusivement. En général, ses portraits étaient de la plus exacte ressemblance. Ses choix d’attitudes, quoique simples, étaient heureux; sa parfaite connaissance de la perspective lui faisait tirer un parti avantageux d’un espace borné. Ses talents lui auraient ouvert, sans doutes, les portes de l’Académie, si la franchise avec laquelle il s’exprimait quelquefois sur les productions des membres de ce corps respectable ne lui eût fait craindre de s’y présenter.”

However none of his pastels has survived. Saunier lists the portrait of his father in Dijon as the sole example, but this is an oil painting (unless there is another version). The copy after Colson’s famous painting *Le Repos* is not sufficiently distinctive to be attributed. The remaining record is an attribution on an unexplained basis.

According to the *Mémoires secrets*, 18.X.1775, Colson was the author of an anonymous critique, *Observations sur les ouvrages exposés au Salon du Louvre, ou Lettre à M. le comte de ****, 1775: he was described as a “mauvais Peintre de portraits & encore plus mauvais Ecrivain.”

Bibliography

Bellier de La Chavignerie & Auvray; Bénézit; Chabeuf 1916; Chatelus 1991, p. 282; Gault de Saint-Germain 1808, p. 290; Grove 2000; Le Brun 1776; P. L., “Notice sur J. Fr. Gilles Colson, peintre”, *Revue universelle des arts*, XX, 1864, pp. 196–202; Ratouis de Limay 1946; Rosenberg & Stewart 1987; Sanchez 2004; Charles Saunier, *Les Arts*, 1920, no. 186, pp. 1–10; Saur; Toledo 1975; Tourneux 1898; Wright 1992

Pastels

J.2342.101 Angélique DROUIN, pstl, 75x60 (J. Mathey, Paris; acqu. Kaiser-Wilhelm Museum, Krefeld, inv. 221). Lit.: NARA OMGUS RG 260 box 464, as pstl

~grav. Jean-Baptiste Michel (1748–1804)



~cop. Frédérique O'Connell, pnt., 90x72, 1854 (Comédie-Française, inv. 10070). Lit.: Monval, no. 94

≠?pnt., 74x60 (Louvre, inv. MNR 667, as ?Colson, ?Tocqué; restituted 2014: PC) [cf. Allais]

Femme âgée, pstl, 27x21 (Paris, musée Carnavalet, inv. D.4065, as by J.-Fr. Colson), v. *Éc. fr.*

J.2342.106 Dame de qualité, pstl, 72x57 (Rouen, Fournier, 30.XI.1976, Lot 219 n.r., attr., ff3800)

J.2342.107 Le château de cartes, pstl/ppr, 55.5x44.5, inscr. “Drouais le fils/1761” (Sigismond Bardac; don: vente aux enchères pour les éprouvés de la guerre, Paris, Petit Palais, Lair-Dubreuil, Henri Baudoin, 13–23.VI.1917, Lot 5, ff2000. José Del Valle; vente p.m., Paris, Petit, Lair Dubreuil, 28–29.V.1931, Lot 20 n.r., *Éc. fr.* Paris, Drouot, Pescheteau-Badin, 5.X.2020, Lot 43 repr., est. €300–500). Lit.: *Figaro*, 15.IV.1917, p. 2 n.r.; *Figaro*, 15.VI.1917, p. 4, as by Fr.-G. Colson [??attr.; inscription added later] φ?α



Anon. related pastels

Le repos, une jeune femme endormie, pnt., 1759 (Dijon)

J.2342.11 ~cop., pstl, 39x33 ov. (Paris, 18 [28?].III.1985, Lot 76 repr., Carriera, est. ff25–30,000. Paris, Drouot, 11.VI.1990, Lot 76 repr., est. ff25–30,000) [new attr.] Φv



J.2342.112 ~cop., pstl/ppr, 46x38 ov. (San Francisco, Bonhams, 25.I.2009, Lot 1006 repr., follower of Colson, est. \$2–3000, b/i; San Francisco, Bonhams, 17.V.2009, Lot 6003 repr., follower of Colson, est. \$1–2000) φ



~grav. Dupuis (Bratislava, Slovenska NG, G2973). Lit.: Saur n.r., as original work by Colson père