

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

COOKE, Robert

fl. London, Bath 1787–1802

Drawing master, pastellist and miniaturist. Farington records a description of Cooke's method for fixing chalk drawings in 1801, from which it appears that Cooke made pastels and resided in Bath for several years before moving to London by 1801. Cooke's recipe mixed alcohol, powdered rosin, camphire and hartshorn, and was applied to the back of a drawing, rubbed in with fingers; it worked with black and red chalks, but not white (which, like crayons, would become dull in colour), except for flake white. On 6.VIII.1802 Farington noted that Cooke was at Windsor giving lessons to the Queen and Princess Elizabeth (he does not however appear in the Royal Household accounts). He is evidently the R. Cook, portrait painter, from 412 Strand, opposite the Adelphi, recorded at 4 Church Street, Bath in his advertisement in the *Bath chronicle* for 6.XII.1787: "well known for his peculiar method of teaching the art of taking Likenesses upon mechanical principles", he offered to teach "the art of painting in hard Crayons, in a manner peculiar to himself", in sizes from 5 inches to 12. He claimed long to have exhibited at the Royal Academy. In fact (according to Graves) R. Cook exhibited first in 1785 (from 42 Bedford Street); in 1801 he was described as "professor of Perspective to Her Majesty and Princesses". However Graves erroneously conflates him with the painter Richard Cook RA (1784–1857). Graves also lists an "R. Cooke" who exhibited portraits 1812–14 from Greek Street, among them one G. F. Cooke, perhaps the actor. Wakefield's directory includes in its alphabetical list of artists, "Robert Cook", "painter in crayons, miniature & oil, 402, Strand."

Bibliography

Farington 1978–84, IV, p. 1495, 5.II.1801;
Myrone 2017; *Wakefield's directory*, 1790, p. 350;
British artists' suppliers at npg.org.uk; Index of Bath artists