

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

COURTOIS, Nicolas-André

Paris 30.XI.1733–p.1808

Enamellist, miniaturist, pastellist and draughtsman, *agréé* in 1770 as an enamellist; peintre du roi 1782, rue Dauphine, à l'Phôtel de Mouy; he was also on the register of orfèvres de Paris in that year. Baptised at Saint-Laurent 30.XI.1733 (not 1734 as in many sources), he was the son of Jacques-Mathurin Courtois, maître rubanier, and, on 8.XI.1748, he was apprenticed to Noël Bigand, maître graveur, for six years for a premium of 600 livres (AN MC/XXXIV/571). Other documents in the Archives nationales demonstrate that he was connected to various artistic families. He was married (on 30.IV.1764) to Angélique-Julie de Buigne or Debuigne. A son, André-Honoré, was born in 1765, and a daughter, also Angélique-Julie, in 1767.

Apart from some landscape drawings, his surviving work consists mainly of enamels – several in the Louvre are evidently competent. He exhibited miniatures and enamels at salons between 1771 and 1777. In the Salon de 1771, some of the enamels he showed were copied from other masters, some from life: Diderot noted “On s’en aperçoit aisément dans ceux-ci par le dessin, la touche et la couleur. Les autres se ressentent du moins un peu des maîtres qui leur ont servi de modèle.” An advertisement by M. Courtois, Maison de M. Neau, no. 6, rue du Canivet, in the *Journal de Paris* (14.XI.1790) offered lessons at 15 sous, describing himself as “Un Peintre, de l’Ecole françoise, dans la Mignature, dont la vue est trop fatiguée pour continuer son état”. Eye trouble may explain why he took up pastel, but the single study in this medium in the 1777 salon was described by the critic in *La Prétresse* as “au dessous du médiocre”.

By 1782 he had run into financial difficulties, recorded in a contrat d’atermoiement with his creditors. Courtois and his wife were living in the rue Canivet, Faubourg Saint-Germain by 1788 when they sold their furniture; he was still there on 17.VIII.1793, according to a carte de sûreté giving his age as 61, and again on 9.VIII.1798 when his wife died). His daughter Angélique-Julie was married in Saint-Sulpice 15.XII.1808 when her father was apparently still alive (only her mother is indicated as deceased on the fiche in the Collection Mayet), contrary to most sources that give his death as 1806 (but without source). However another document (AN F-25-2875, 2 frimaire an XII) indicates that in 1803, “Citoyen Courtois, peintre, âgé de 70 ans” sought admission to the Hospice de Mont-Rouge, “attendu le défaut de moyens suffisans” to meet his needs.

Another pastel from 1777 surfaced in 2010: it is a copy of a painting by Paulus Moreelse of which a number of versions are known (Centraal Museum, inv. 5316; château de La Motte-Tilly; Leipzig; New York, Sotheby’s, 3.VI.1988, Lot 30 etc.); one of these, probably that copied by Courtois, was engraved by Maurice Blot for J.-B.-P. Le Brun’s *Galerie des peintres flamands...*, Paris, 1792–96. A number of his drawings were engraved by Demarteau.

Bibliography

Bellier de La Chavignerie & Auvray; Bénézit; Chatelus 1991; Guiffrey 1915, p. 238; Lemoine-Bouchard 2008; Pappe & al. 2008; Ratouis de Limay 1946; Sanchez 2004; Saur

Salon critiques

Anon. [Mathieu-François PIDANSAT DE MAIROBERT], “Première Lettre sur les peintures, sculptures et gravures exposées au Sallon du Louvre le 25.VIII.1777”, *Mémoires secrets*, XI, 1779, 9.IX., 15.IX., 221779, p. 40:

Je ne ferai que vous indiquer Mrs. Pasquier, Hall, Courtois & Weiller, destinés spécialement au service de l’Amour, à peindre ces beautés, dont l’existence furtive ne doit durer qu’aussi longtems que la passion de celui qui les commande. Ce genre est trop borné, trop futile pour s’y arrêter.

Anon., “Exposition des ouvrages de peinture, ...” *Affiches, annonces et avis divers*, 1777, 38, 17.IX., p. 152:

Parmi les portraits peints en émail & en miniature, on doit remarquer ceux de MM. Hall, Courtois, Weiller & Pasquier; mais c’est le premier qui remporte tous les suffrages.

Anon., *La Prétresse ou nouvelle manière de prédire ce qui est arrivé*, [salon de 1777], Rome & Paris, 1777:

[La Tête d’homme par Courtois est] au dessous du médiocre.

Anon., “Exposition des peintures...”, *L’Année littéraire*, 1777, VI, p. 343f:

Je n’omettrai point, Monsieur, de vous parler des miniatures. MM. Hall, Weiller, Courtois & Pasquier ont donné chacun des preuves de leurs talens.

Anon., “Exposition au Salon du Louvre des peintures...”, *Mercur de France*, X.1777, I, p. 184:

MM. Pasquier, Courtois & Weiller ont aussi attiré les yeux du Spectateur par la finesse de leur coloris, & la délicatesse de leur pinceau.

Pastels

J.2446.101 Tête d’homme, pstl, Salon de 1777, no. 163

J.2446.1015 Jeune dame en robe bleue, pstl/ppr bl., 68x59, sd “Courtois P/1778” (Gennevilliers, Aguttes, 22.V.2023, Lot 11 repr., éc. fr., est. €400–600) φ



J.2446.102 Vénus avec deux colombes, pstl, 81x64.5, sd verso “Courtois P/...1777” (Galerie Ratton Ladriere 2010). A/r Paulus Moreelse (1571–1638) pnt., c.1628 φ

