

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

DAVID, Jacques-Louis

Paris 30.VIII.1748 – Bruxelles 29.XII.1825

The foremost portraitist of the Napoleonic age was a pupil at the Académie royale in Paris from 1765, under the protection of Vien, with whom he had studied at the École de la rue Montmartre. He won various prizes, including the prix de Caylus in 1773 awarded to David for his only known pastel, and the first Grand prix the following year. He was *agrégé* in 1781 and *reçu* in 1783: his *morceau de réception*, *La Douleur d'Andromaque* (Louvre), reverts to the same theme as his pastel, although the orientation differs. Consistent with his revolutionary zeal he declined to remain in France after the restoration of the Bourbons.

David, who was a cousin (first, two times removed) of Boucher, married Marguerite-Charlotte Pécoul 2.V.1782; they were divorced 6 ventôse 1794 (16.III.1794), with a deed of separation 17 floréal an II (6.V.1794), but they later remarried 12.XI.1794. The lengthy inv. p.m. contains no mention of any pastel by David or anyone else, but it does contain details of his properties, including the house at 121 rue du Coq-Saint-Honoré (later renumbered as 9 rue du Coq) which was originally purchased by his father-in-law Pécoul in 1776. It was occupied by the colourman René Coiffier (until 1810) and then by a former David pupil, Alphonse Giroux.

According to a story related by Desmazes 1874 (pp. 73ff; repeated by Goncourt 1881, p. 254), Boucher's widow Marie-Jeanne Buzeau (1716–1796) asked David to update the La Tour pastel of her exhibited in 1737; he did so by changing the hairstyle to match the La Tour portrait of her daughter. The result (apparently [J.46.133](#)) shows signs of alteration but whether David was responsible seems highly improbable, as is the story, which originated with a certain Mme Fozembas (a step-daughter of Mme Boucher's grandson), probably the wife of a painter who had been rejected from the Salon on several occasions.

Monographic exhibitions

David 1948: *David. Exposition en l'honneur du deuxième centenaire de sa naissance*, Paris, Versailles, 1948. Cat. M. Florisoone

David 1989: *Jacques-Louis David, 1748–1825*, Paris, musée du Louvre; Versailles, Musée national du château, 26.X.1989– 12.II.1990. Cat. Antoine Schnapper & Arlette Sérullaz

David 2025: *Jacques-Louis David*, Paris, musée du Louvre, 15.X.2025 – 26.I.2026. Cat. Sébastien Allard & al.

Bibliography

Bellier de La Chavignerie & Auvray; Bénézit; Brookner 1980; Dumont-Wilden 1909; Gahtgens & Lugand 1988, p. 336; Grove 2000; New York 1999a; Northampton 2005; Ottawa 2003; Paris 1974b; Rosenberg 2007; Rosenberg & Prat 2003; Sanchez 2004; Saur; Toledo 1975; Warsaw 2009; Wright 1992

Pastels

[J.2592.101](#) La Douleur, pierre noire, pstl/ppr, 53.5x41, concours de la Tête d'expression

1773 (Paris, ENSBA, inv. EBA 727. Académie royale). Exh.: Rome 1904; Paris 1933f, no. 42; David 1948, no. M.0.91; David 1989, no. 7 repr. Lit.: Percival 1999, pl. 8b; Percival 2001, p. 205, fig. 2; Rosenberg & Prat 2003, no. 5 repr. φ

