

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

DESRAIS, Claude-Louis

Paris 1746–25.ii.1816

Engraver and draughtsman. He was the grandson of Louis Desrais (–1740), maître peintre doreur and son of Louis-André Desrais, peintre de l'Académie de Saint-Luc, whose wife, Nicole-Marie Pitoin, married secondly Pierre Fixon, sculpteur du roi, and thirdly (in 1789, the year before her death) Jacques Thierry, docteur en médecin. Claude-Louis was married to a Marie-Sophie Félix.

In .x.1766 he enrolled in the école de l'Académie royale, “age de 19 ans ½” under the protection of Cazanove (switching to Cochin in 1771), living with his father in the rue des Fontaines (the same address appears in a carte de sûreté issued in 1793). He appeared at the salons de la Jeunesse from 1768, exhibiting drawings of religious subjects which showed “l'effet, l'invention, de la facilité” (1768). Two years later he was criticised for poor finish, but in 1771 his bistre drawing of the martyrdom of saint Laurent was praised. He was still exhibiting wash drawings in 1799, when he described himself as a pupil of Casanova. In the same year he signed (as “peintre dessinateur”) the petition to have Vigée Le Brun removed from the list of émigrés. He was listed as a peintre-artiste et dessinateur in the *Almanach du commerce de Paris* in 1811, rue du Paon-Saint-André, 4.

Evidently however he earned his living making drawings for Esnaults & Rappilly's fashion plates and small portrait engravings; a good many of these survive (a group of eleven small heads of ladies in the d'Abernon sale, 1929), but so far only two signed pastels have emerged. Engravings by Le Beau and others often credit Desrais as the draughtsman when the originals are after other artist (e.g. the portrait of the maréchal de Saxe after Liotard): whether he is responsible for the pastel version of the doctor Bouvart is thus unclear.

Bibliography

Bénézit; Sanchez 2004

Pastels

J.2718.011 Michel-Philippe BOUVART (1717–1787), chev. de Saint-Michel, anatomiste, de l'Académie royale des sciences, en robe de chambre, pstl, ov. (PC 2009) [new attr., ?] φα



~grav.: Le Beau a/r Desrais, en habit noir, jabot

J.2718.101 Garçon jouant de la flûte; & pendant:

J.2718.102 jeune fille au chapeau, pstl, 40x32 ov., s ←/↘ “Desrais” (Miles Barton 2011) φ



J.2718.105 Deux jeunes filles, en robe bleue; & pendant: J.2718.106 en robe rose, pstl, 40x30 (Miles Barton 2012). Attr. φα

