

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

ERIKSEN, Vigilius

Copenhagen 1722–1782

Eriksen, or Erichsen (in work transliterated from Russian), was a history and portrait painter, miniaturist and pastellist. A pupil of Johann Salomon Wahl, Hofporträtmaler to Christian VI, although he was already a successful portraitist, in 1755 he competed unsuccessfully for the history painting prize at the academy. In 1757 Eriksen travelled to St Petersburg and became painter to Catherine the Great, remaining until 1772. Here his success was such that, in 1763, Andreas Schumacher noted that he charged the same fee as Louis Tocqué. Apart from the imposing imperial portraits he painted, the Empress also commissioned her own portrait in old Russian dress. Although lost, it is known from copies and engravings, and may be the pastel for which Eriksen received 300 roubles in 1769 (Central State Historical Archive of St Petersburg, ф. 468, оп. 1, ч. 2, ед. хр. 3882, л. 238). The payment may alternatively refer to Eriksen's curious portrait of a 108-year old peasant from Tsarskoye Selo with her children, executed in the frieze-like pastel reminiscent of work being done at the same time by Lorenzo Tiepolo (*q.v.*). Three years later a full-length oil version was commissioned by the Empress, and this was later engraved. In 1772 Eriksen returned to Copenhagen, where he was made court painter and later a counsellor of state. The Rosenberg pastel of the Danish queen shows his work in this medium to be of a very high quality, with strong colours and a painterly finish.

Bibliography

Troels Andersen, "Vigilius Eriksen in Russia, 1757–1772", *Artes*, 1965, I, pp. 45–93; Bénézit; *Dansk biografisk Lexikon*; Grove; Elizabeth Renne, "Catherine II through the eyes of Vigilius Eriksen and Alexander Roslin", *Catherine the Great and Gustav III*, 1999, pp. 97ff; Saur

Pastels

J.3028.101 Frederik, lensgreve AHLEFELDT af Langeland (1702–1773), general av kavalleriet, kammerherre, ridder av Dannebrog 1729, pstl. Lit.: *Danmarks adels aarborg* 1929



J.3028.103 Tsaritsa CATHERINE II, née Sophia Frederika Augusta von Anhalt-Zerbst (1729–1796), in old Russian costume, a traditional kokoshnik headdress, fur-trimmed bolero, embroidered dress and elaborate pearl

necklace, pstl, a.1769 (lost). Lit.: Jacob von Stählin, cited Mikhail B. Piotrovsky, *Treasures of Catherine the Great*, 2000, p. 45 n.r.

~grav. Christoph Melchior Roth

~cop., pnt. (don: Dr Thomas Dimsdale 1769; desc.: R. Dimsdale, Barkway, England)

~~grav. William Dickenson 1773

~cop., pnt. (Salisbury, Woolley & Wallis, 12.XII.2012, Lot 454 repr.)

J.3028.108 Arveprins FREDERIK (1753–1805), pstl, 62x47, c.1772; & pendant: J.3028.109 arveprinsesse Sophie Frederikke (1758–1794), pstl, 61.5x50 (Frederiksborg, Nationalhistoriske Museum, A2121/2122). Lit.: Frederiksborg kat. 1943, no. 4962/4963 n.r.

J.3028.11 JULIANE MARIE, dronning af Danmark, née von Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel (1729–1796), pstl, 59.1x46.0, c.1777 (Rosenborg Slot, De Danske Kongers Kronologiske Samling, inv. 14-30) Ф



Photo courtesy De Danske Kongers Kronologiske Samling

J.3028.113 A 108 year old peasant from Tsarskoye Selo with her children, pstl/pchm, 62x49.5, sd v "V. Eriksen pinxit 1768" (Moscow, GTG, inv 5204. St Petersburg, Palais de marbre, 1796. Senator Fedor Ivanovich Pryanisnikov (1793–1867), St Petersburg, 1844; Moscow, Rumyantsev Museum 1867–1915). Lit.: Alphonse-Toussaint-Joseph-André-Marie-Marseille de Fortia de Piles, *Voyage de deux Français en Allemagne, Danemarck, Suède, Russie et Pologne*, Paris, 1796, III, p. 27 n.r., "tableau d'un vérité admirable"; Louis Viardot, *Les musées d'Allemagne et de Russie*, Paris, 1844, p. 423 n.r., as famille de paysans des bords du Volga, peint pendant le voyage de Catherine en Crimée; *Императорский Московский Публичный и Румянцевский музеи. Отделение изящных искусств: Каталог картинной галереи*, 1915; Andersen 1965, p. 72 n.r.; Яков Владимирович Брук, *У истоков русского жанра: XVIII век*, 1990, pp. 143ff, fig. 118; *Государственная Третьяковская галерея: каталог собрания. Серия Рисунок XVIII-XX веков*, 1996, no. 287 Ф



~"en grand", pnt., 233x162, sd 1771 (Hermitage, inv. Ж-3914. Comm. Catherine II, 600 roubles. Acqu. 1925)

~grav. James Walker 1791; reissued 1792. Lit.: *Санкт-Петербургских ведомости*, 28–31.X.1791 ~cop. Olga Kablukova, miniature, 1815

Anon. related pastels

Tsaritsa CATHERINE II, née Sophia Frederika Augusta von Anhalt-Zerbst (1729–1796), wearing the star and ribbon of the St Andrei, before a mirror, pnt., 265x203, 1762 (Hermitage)

J.3028.12 ~cop., in an ermine cloak, pstl, 73x55 c.1770 (St Petersburg, GRM) Фк



J.3028.122 ~cop., pstl, ov., c.1770 (St Petersburg, GRM). Lit.: Горбачева 2002, repr. Фк



Tsarevich Pavel Petrovich, later Tsar PAUL I (1754–1801), wearing the orders of St Andrei and St Anne, pnt., 61x49, sd "Eriksen/1764" (Copenhagen, Davids Samlung, inv. 21/1962)

J.3028.125 ~cop., pstl/ppr, 59.3x48 (London, Christie's, 25.XI.2003, Lot 98 repr., as by Bonnet, est. £6–8000; London, Bonhams, 28.XI.2005, Lot 7 repr., est. £4–6000, as by Bonnet) ФкФ



~cop. *Sompsois, q.v.*

~full length version, pnt., sd "V. Eriksen pinx.
1766" (Hermitage, inv. ГЭ-9909)

~grav. Bonnet