

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

FOSSIER, Louis-Denis

Paris 1725–8.II.1793

Decorative artist and draughtsman known in Paris from 1744. He was the son of Louis Fossier, valet de chambre-tapissier du roi et de Mme la duchesse (himself the son of Nicolas and Jeanne Gérard), and his wife, Elisabeth Martin-Delatour, who had married at Paris, Saint-Eustache, 8.II.1720. He was thus a relative of the painter Pierre-Charles Trémolières, *q.n.*, of whom his father took charge on the latter's arrival in Paris in 1719 and sent him to J.-B. Van Loo.

"Louis-Denis Fossier, peintre" inherited (AN MC/XCII/600, 30.IV.1756) an annuity of 400 livres p.a. from his father. He was a witness on the death certificate of Trémolières's widow, the miniaturist Isabelle Tibaldi who had remarried Yves-François Labbé (Saint Eustache, Paris, 12.IX.1773), where he signed as "dessinateur de l'Académie des Sciences" (the same description was given when he witnessed marriages in 1776, 1779 and 1781, when he was shown as living in rue Saint-André). He was appointed to this place c.1773 (1775 according to Lavoisier's memorandum, but evidently incorrect) following the death of John Ingram (1721–c.1770), the English engraver who taught Pierre-Étienne Falconet and others (Ingram, who was paid 900 livres p.a., was replaced by three artists, one of the other two being Le Gouaz, each on 300 livres p.a.). In addition to this role, Fossier was engaged to provide drawings for the memoirs of the Académie after the Imprimerie nationale ceased to print them in 1771.

On 15.V.1765, at Saint-Sulpice, aged 40, he married Louise Dandeville (1735–1809), aged 30, the daughter of Claude and Jeanne Barbier; their son André-Louis, was baptised at Saint-André des Arts, 11.V.1773, with Louis-Pierre de Trémolières as parrain. A daughter, Félicité, died in Allemand, Marne, 4.IV.1771 (perhaps she had been sent to a wetnurse there). It was probably another daughter, six years old, whose grave (but not fatal) illness was described in some detail by the eminent physician Antoine Portal; Fossier, by then "ancien" dessinateur de l'Académie, was living in the rue Saint-André-des-Arts. Also in this street, 24 rue [Saint] André, died, aged 67, "Louis-Denis Fossier"; his death was recorded on 8.II.1793 by his cousin Claude Naulin, employé au greffe (Tables de successions, DQ8). (A tuition of 1768, AN Y4910^B, connects Fossier with the Naulin family through his mother; he was then living in the rue Mazarin.) On his death, his widow sold a stock of drawings to the Académie for 2592 livres. She died, aged 74, in the rue Poupée, registered 1.III.1809 (DQ8).

Antoine-Laurent Lavoisier left manuscript *Observations sur le feu citoyen Fossier dessinateur de l'Académie des sciences*, 1793 (in the Académie's archives, MS 1228–4/); Fossier engraved plates for some of Lavoisier's scientific papers. Patas engraved 28 of his drawings for the *Abrégé historique et portatif des principaux faits des rois mérovingiens*, Paris, 1775. The subject matter of his work ranged from diagrams of technical and industrial equipment such as printing presses or textile machines to natural history, including a

deformed duck of which Fossier printed an illustration and description "Le Canard Chat" (1778; an impressoin in the British Museum, inv. 1914,0520.595). Several portrait engravings after Fossier's drawings are known: one, of the duc de Brissac, was derived from a portrait by Pougin de Saint-Aubin (*q.n.*). He is surely the M. Fossier who made a portrait of Polly Wilkes (*q.n.*) and remained in contact with her father in Paris in 1765.

Bibliography

Bénézit; Anne Chassagne, *La Bibliothèque de l'Académie royale des sciences au XVIII^e siècle*, 2007; Antoine-Laurent Lavoisier left manuscript *Observations sur le feu citoyen Fossier dessinateur de l'Académie des sciences*, 1793 (archives de l'Académie, MS 1228–4); Mariette 1858, V, p. 346; Antoine Portal, *Mémoires sur la nature et le traitement de plusieurs maladies*, Paris, 1808, III, p. 144ff; Saur; P. C. Trémolières (*Cholet, 1703 – Paris, 1739*), exh. cat., musée de Cholet, 29.VI.–30.IX.1973, pp. 56f

Pastels

J.3214.101 Maximilien-Alexis de Béthune, prince d'Henrichmont et Boisbelle, dit duc de SULLY (1750–1776), en chasseur, pstl, 45.9x37.5, sd verso 1758 (Barnard Castle, Bowes Museum, inv. BM 462) Φ



Photo courtesy The Bowes Museum, County Durham

~v. pseudo-pendant, *Éc. fr.*, duc de SULLY, frère

J.3214.105 Mary "Polly" WILKES (1750–1802), m/u (John Wilkes 1765) [attr.]