

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

GAULT de SAINT-GERMAIN, Pierre-Marie

Paris 1754–1842

A pupil of Durameau at the école de l'Académie from 1771, Gault was both a painter and a picture restorer; rue du Faubourg-Saint-Honoré, vis-à-vis rue de Saint-Florentin, no. 377. He exhibited mainly landscapes at the Salons from 1791 to 1801. In 1788 he married the Polish artist Anna Rajeczka (*q.v.*). In 1789 he applied unsuccessfully to replace the late Godefroy at the Cabinet de la restauration des tableaux. He claimed to have invented a special technique “qui est incapable, par sa pétrification d'altérer la superficie” of the pictures. This may have been a precursor to the disastrous introduction of bitumen into oil painting for which he is thought to have been responsible. (He is not to be confused with the celebrated charlatan, the comte de Saint-Germain, whose mysterious secret of enhancing the colours of his oil paintings was mentioned by Mme de Genlis.)

During the Terror Gault de Saint-Germain moved to Clermont-Ferrand, where he became professeur de dessin at one of the regional écoles de dessin (among his pupils, Degeorge, *q.v.*, left a few early pastels) and then conservateur des monuments. He also published works on the history of art (notably *Les Trois Siècles de la peinture en France*, published in Paris in 1808), and invented mechanical perspective devices.

Pastels were rare in his œuvre, and it seems likely that some, if not all, of those recorded are in fact by his wife (there are also confusions with the miniatures by Jacques-Joseph de Gault). The two pendant children seem to be characteristic of her (and not of his) work; although apparently dated two years before the artists' marriage (so that the traditional attribution was retained in Jeffares 2006), it seems more probable that the marriage in fact occurred earlier than the inference from Mme Gault's letter to Bacciarelli; alternatively the date on the pastel may have been altered or misread.

Bibliography

Bellier de La Chavignerie & Auvray; Bénézit; Chatelus 1991, p. 204; Jeannerat 1935, p. 221ff; Leclair 2001, p. 58f; Lemoine-Bouchard 2008; Ratouis de Limay 1946; Sanchez 2004

Salon critiques: 1791

Pastels

AUTO PORTRAIT, pstl (François-Martial Marcille; Paris, Pillet, 4–7.III.1857, F41). Lit.: *Revue universelle des arts*, v, 1857, p. 378

??La duchesse d'ANGOULÈME; & pendant: ??Le dauphin (Paris, Drouot, 29.IV.1912, Lot 7 & 8 repr. Mme Michel Ephrussi 1920. Cailleux 1953. Paris, Drouot, Rossini, 2.IV.2004, Lot 10 repr.). v. *Mme Gault de Saint-Germain*

Peintre, m/u, Salon de 1791, no. 325