LA TOUR, Maurice-Quentin de
Saint-Quentin 1704–1788

Part V: Named sitters R–Z
Part IV: Named sitters M–Q
Part III: Named sitters E–L
Part II: Named sitters A–D
Part I: Autoportraits

Chronological table of documents relating to
La Tour
Contemporary biographies of La Tour
Tropes in La Tour biographies
Family background
Genealogy

Follow the hyperlinks for the remaining sections.

MAURICE-QUENTIN de La Tour was the most important pastellist of the eighteenth century. His œuvre consists almost entirely of pastel portraits, both final works and associated preparations in chalk, occasionally with some pastel. He exhibited more pastels (and more portraits) at the official Paris salons than any other artist during the eighteenth century, and his importance has inevitably made him the subject of much scholarly attention. This has yielded limited information about some of the most interesting questions. The biographical details of a handful of more or less contemporary sources (Mariette’s sensible account, written in 1772, is the most useful, but is not without error; Duplaquet’s eulogy is a classic and second-hand – written at the invitation of the École gratuite de dessin, he was not the bureau’s first choice; while Bucelli d’Estrees adds useful detail, it is too late to be reliable, and is not independent of Duplaquet) have been endlessly repeated (uncritically, even uncritically, even

much space; the “Delatour” which appears in some contemporary documents may be more strictly accurate, but de La Tour is accepted so widely (Debrie 1991 and Debrie & Salmon 2000, as well as the major retrospective La Tour 2004; he is indexed under L in all standard art historical dictionaries, the BfK and Gerry UNAL) that the sformance, if such it be, is followed here. D’Alembert called him Latour, while Voltaire addressed him as de la tour. Roettiers engraved his name as DE LA TOUR on a medalion. One should note that the flexibilities of handwriting allowed subtleties such as the discernible gaps between the nevertheless curvilinear De la tour seen in a letter to Belle de Zuylen, or the distinct capital in DeLaTour on his 29.XI.1774 expert report, found again in the codicil to his will and on the Académie register, 27.VI.1778. (La Tour’s brother Charles also signed De_La_Tour: 12.IX.1761.) A similar progression may be seen in his father’s increasingly elaborate penmanship: by the time (28.III.1720) of the baptism of the pastellist’s half-brother Jean-François, his father was clearly separating the particle from “La Tour”, as did his own father Jean de La Tour, a maître mason. Jean’s signature is found in numerous parish registers, usually accompanied by his monogram (which may also be his mason’s mark), JLT in a circle.

Family background
Parish records for Saint-Michel, Laon indicate that Jean de La Tour was literate and a respected member of the community in that he appears as witness or parrain on numerous deeds. His eldest son Françoise (the artist’s father) was a musician; he is said to have served in the army (as trompette in the duc du Maine’s company in 1719). By 1719 François was a maître écrivain in Laon, fought a legal case over his drawing in 1718). By 1719 François was a maître écrivain, in the Service historique de la Défense, he stated in a letter of 2.XI.1789 that he retired from the service some 15 years previously – all this consistent with the éloge in Charlet (1807), the artist’s influence at court was no doubt responsible for this. However La Tour’s elder brother Charles had obtained a position as directeur des vivres in Italie by 1736, before the artist had any such power; Charles, whom La Tour evidently admired (see his letter to Marigny of 21.VII.1766, after Charles’s death), seems to have caught the eye of the war minister Angéville and was sent to Corsica for several years in 1738 in a senior capacity. (It is notable too that while Charles mentioned two other brothers in his will of 26.XI.1755, he omitted Jean-François, perhaps because he had already arranged his commission.)
La Tour left his native Saint-Quentin by the age of 15. According to tradition, on his arrival in Paris he sought advice from the engraver Nicolas Tardieu who sent him to several artists, of whom Louis de Boullongne is reputed to have shown the most interest in his raw talent. His initial training was under the painter Claude Dupouch (not Spoede, a confusion arising from Mariette; curiously Spoede, (not Spoede, a confusion arising from Mariette; curiously Mariette, an error in the name is confirmed by his baptismal entry in 1713; he was 22, just three years older than La Tour) and Madeleine Lefèvre (a tricoteuse de bas). Dupouch later arranged for him to travel to Holland in 1722, since his cousin Anne de Boullongne (an illiterate tricoteuse de bas) bore his first child by the end of 1722, since his cousin Anne de Boullongne bore his first child, and he returned to Paris because his travelling companions had died. (This might conceivably refer to Lord Whithworth, who after coming back to Paris he returned to his house in Paris. Even his wife died in 1744, but this proved erroneous, and was disclaimed in favour of an annuity of 2000 livres, which in turn remained under discussion with the executors until 1770).

La Tour is said (but the cliché is applied to most pastellists of this era) to have devoted his whole life to pastel following Carrera's visit to Paris in 1720–21 (he made two not very accomplished pastels that are known, one of which, in the Louvre since 1722, may have inspired his own 1737 autoportrait à l'index, while the other, now in Dijon, was most probably copied after it was acquired in 1732 by Jean de Bouligne). Duplaquet also appears to be the source for the suggestion that La Tour left his native Saint-Quentin by the age of 15. According to tradition, on his arrival in Paris he sought advice from the engraver Nicolas Tardieu who sent him to several artists, of whom Louis de Boullongne is reputed to have shown the most interest in his raw talent. His initial training was under the painter Claude Dupouch (not Spoede, a confusion arising from Mariette; curiously Mariette, an error in the name is confirmed by his baptismal entry in 1713; he was 22, just three years older than La Tour) and Madeleine Lefèvre (a tricoteuse de bas). Dupouch later arranged for him to travel to Holland in 1722, since his cousin Anne de Boullongne bore his first child, and he returned to Paris because his travelling companions had died. (This might conceivably refer to Lord Whithworth, who after coming back to Paris he returned to his house in Paris. Even his wife died in 1744, but this proved erroneous, and was disclaimed in favour of an annuity of 2000 livres, which in turn remained under discussion with the executors until 1770).

Early works

Lépicié published in 1734 of an engraving of La Tour's pastel of Richer de Rhodes-De La Motière provides the starting point for his securely accepted work and he was by then 30 years of age. (A portrait of Mme de Bouillongne from 1733 is documented but lost.) Prints of Fontenelle and the actor Thomasin (r. infra) must also date to this period. It is not immediately clear on what basis La Tour thought Restout "avoue la clef de la peinture."

La Tour's immediate neighbours included Silvestre Desportes and Pasquier; both other La Tour artists were also living in the same street – rue Saint-Honoré, corner of rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, address – rue Saint-Honoré, corner of rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, address – rue Saint-Honoré, corner of rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, address – rue Saint-Honoré, corner of rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré. Their portraits of the Italian comic known as Thomassin, who died in 1739. It is known only from an etching of the portrait dated 1724, an associate of René Frémin (both were at the Académie royale 1701), subject of one of La Tour's most brilliant early pastels.

A letter published in 1780 but since largely overlooked (from the cryptic entry for the lost portrait it mentions in B&W) provides some important clues about La Tour's early progress. Undated, it was sent by “Laroque” to “M. Tour” (Another report of La Tour being in London in 1724), an associate of René Frémin (both were at the Académie royale 1701), subject of one of La Tour's most brilliant early pastels.

Opposite slightly earlier is La Tour's first portrait of his friend, the abbé Hubert, a member of Swiss family of bankers who had converted to Catholicism and was taken up by the cardinal de Rohan in the 1720s and by Chauvelin. An adventurer who belongs (and actually appears) in the pages of Smollett, from the 1730s he was close to the Riche de Pouplinière, Paris de Duche, and discusses a portrait of a Marx Richer whose father was in the gendres and whose uncle were said to be influential; her unfinished portrait by La Tour was mentioned, with his address – rue Saint-Honoré, corner of rue du Chantre – which, as Tourneux noted pointed the latter estate when he died in 1744, but this proved erroneous, and was disclaimed in favour of an annuity of 2000 livres, which in turn remained under discussion with the executors until 1770.)

The galeries du Louvre

La Tour was granted a "logement", or apartment, in the galeries du Louvre, in 1745. In 1750 he moved from the third (marked C in contemporary plans, an see gentilhomme for references) to the eighth (H) logement, the brev being erroneous reported in numerous sources as an appointment to the title of "peintre du roi", to which of course he was already entitled. The apartment in which he lived must have been lost. It was similar in size, but slightly different in layout: both were over five levels, with cellar, ground floor, first, mezzanine and second floors; while the gross area of each floor was up to 85 sq. m, the usable space to perhaps half that level. The light source in the principal rooms was northerly. La Tour's immediate neighbours included Silvestre until 1750, and later Nollet and Lorioz, and Desportes and Pasquier; but other La Tour subjects who were also illustres (those enjoying

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the privilege of legatures) included Restout, Lemoyne, Chardin, Dumont le Romain and Cochin.

La Tour at the Académie royale - April 1737, rya 1746, conservateur 1751, La Tour exhibited regularly at the Salons until 1773, omitting only 1765 (in 1759 he appeared in the livre but withdrew his exhibits as he was dissatisfied with the hang, according to Diderot): about 120 pastels in all, some 60% of which are known today. From a letter of 19.I.1740 from the duc d'Aumont, in charge of the Menus plaisirs, we know that Madame Adélaïde borrowed La Tour's portrait (perhaps the 1737 self-portrait). His dominant position was already established by the 1741 Salon, where he exhibited the monumental portrait of the président de Rieux. La Tour's relationship with de Rieux was established as early as 1738, when he was commissioned to paint a portrait of the magistrat's wife, Mlle de La Fontaine-Solère; and the artist became an habitué of de Rieux's château de Passy.

It was not until 1746 that La Tour was finally rya. In 1737 he had been set portraits of François Lemoyne and Jean-Baptiste Restout. Lemoyne committed suicide a few days later, and Jean-Baptiste Van Loo was nominated instead: La Tour's work for the Bâtiments du roi seems to have commenced c.1744, according to the accounts summarised in Engerand 1901 (pp. 269–71: v. list infra and TABLE). Three curators were commissioned at 1500 livres each, among them the duc d'Ayen, later duc de Noailles, whose native Provence created a further hurdle, before La Tour finally submitted Restout alone for his reception. Later (31.X.1750) he also presented the portrait of Dumont le Romain as a gift; it is often erroneously described as a morceau de réception – Salomon 2018, p. 169, argues that La Tour needed to present a second piece to advance to the level of conservateur, but there is no obvious mechanism for this within the prescribed list of the Académie, and he may instead have given it in order to be able to retrieve the Restout which he wanted to “improve”.

Royal portraits
La Tour's work for the Bâtiments du roi seems to have commenced 1744, according to the accounts summarised in Engerand 1901 (pp. 269–71: v. list infra and TABLE). Three curators were commissioned at 1500 livres each, among them the duc d'Ayen, later duc de Noailles and a future president of the Académie, and he may instead have de camp du roi at the time. Evidently successful, the commissions were followed by eight pastels of the royal family for 12,000 livres (two of the king, two of the queen, three of the dauphin and one of the dauphine), made 1746 and paid 1752. In that year La Tour was also granted a pension of 1000 livres by the Bâtiments du roi. Later portraits included the second dauphin, Marie-Joséphine de Saxe, the first in 1747, now known only from a miniature copy (La Tour also portrayed her half-brother, Maurice de Saxe, at the same time, and other members of the Saxe family later). Under Marigny, directeur des Bâtiments du roi from 1755 to 1777, who was the real power in the duc de Noailles' absence, La Tour's clientèle extended to many of the leading members of the Saxe family later). Under Marigny, directeur des Bâtiments du roi from 1755 to 1777, who was the real power in the duc de Noailles' absence, La Tour's clientèle extended to many of the leading members of the Saxe family. His clientèle extended to many of the leading members of the Saxe family later). Under Marigny, directeur des Bâtiments du roi from 1755 to 1777, who was the real power in the duc de Noailles' absence, La Tour's clientèle extended to many of the leading members of the Saxe family. La Tour's worklist connect to those documents.)

Responses to La Tour at the salons
In each salon from 1738, La Tour was always the object of critical assault, but he and his work had almost always received more praise than his rival's. The 1741 portrait of the président de Rieux was described by Mariette as an “ouvrage de la plus longue haleine et qu'on n'en avoit point vu au pastel de pareille taille.” Mariette was describing the portrait of Duval de l'Épinoy shown at the 1745 Salon as “le triumpe de la peintre en pastel.” Generally the praise was lavish, with occasional reservations, as when Gautier-Dagory 1753b questioned the “affections de joye” of Manelli, and its juxtaposition with the academicians and philosophers merely exacerbating the incongruity.

One widely overlooked salon critique, the letter to the duchesse de Bouillon to the Journal pour quelques ouvrages marqués (5.1745, pp. 291ff), even alleged that a cabal of academicians had formed; jealous of his success, they had propagated the idea that pastel was an inferior medium. Also overlooked until recently are the references to La Tour in the correspondence of Mme de Graffigny with her friend Devaux. Writing of the salon of 1742 (which she visited with Nicolas Vannevelle, q.v.), she picked out the La Tour pastels as masterpieces, “surtout le sien, peint avec un chapeau à point d'Espagne, detroussé d'un coté, qui lui fait un ombre sur le visage. C'est un morceau parfait: je ne pourrais m'en arracher.” The anonymous critic in the Mercure (omitted from B&W and ignored in the subsequent literature, such as the discussion of Perronneau's Rembrandtism in Arnott 2014) pointed out this “portrait inimitable de Louis, dans le goût du Rührbant.” Six years later she was horrified when she asked him about the piece: it had been intended for the UHizi, he told her (this appears to be the only mention of this plausible commission; the pastel there purporting to be La Tour is unconvincing), but she had foolishly shown it to Louis XV, whose enthusiasm was not what La Tour hoped for; accordingly he tore it to pieces. (It is exteable that this is the portrait Diderot mentions – Salon de 1767 – as having been shown in the famous confrontation between La Tour's self-portrait and Perronneau's; later authors have all assumed it was the autopsorl ajout shown in 1750. The artist's many self-portraits occupy a central place in his œuvre – indeed there are several examples where he seems to have projected his own features onto his subjects’ at least as judged from other portraiture. His pupil Ducreux not only had the same penchant for self-portraiture, but managed himself to take on the appearance of his master in 1785.) Again, in a letter to Madame Du Deffand of 27.I.1755, La Tour told her that he had also destroyed that “l'I la encore brûlé parce qu'il avait donne un faux trait”, although it was of a size to have commanded a fee of 10,000 livres. Whether La Tour should be taken literally is unclear. The pastel now in the Louvre was not exhibited until 1755; it shows the addition of a new head on a separate sheet.

Diderot admired La Tour and his unrivalled ability to understand the mechanism of physiognomy and gait; but his phrase, “marchiniste merveilleux”, has been repeated uncritically. The full sentence was “Ce peintre n'a jamais rien produit de verve, il a le genre du technique, c'est un marchiniste merveilleux”; Diderot hints at an emotional vacuum.

La Tour's clientele
La Tour's subjects ranged from the royal family, whom he depicted in majestic poses with somewhat idealised faces, to his circle of artists and intellectual friends, where the contrast reflect spontaneity and warmth. While the portrait of Duval de l'Épinoy might seem regal in its grandeur, Mariette tells us that the secrétaire du roi treated La Tour as a friend (this is confirmed in the abbé Le Blanc’s letter of 4.IV.1751, where the critic sent his regards also to be transmitted to Le Riche de La Pouplinère). His clientele extended to many of the leading figures from the worlds of diplomacy, war, politics, finance, music and literature. (These categories have provided the basic structure for recent studies of his work; however to pursue them properly requires the prosopographic approach only possible in the future, and the complete catalogue with supporting genealogies essayed here; hyperlinks in the sitters’ names in the worldlist connect to those documents.)

It is also clear that the choice of clients for La Tour was as important as the content, for the client: the prestige from exhibiting a portrait of a great man was enormous, as is clear from d'Allemberg's account of the pastel that La Tour did not make of Montesquieu (Éloge de Montesquieu, e. VII.1755). Again, a letter according to Mme Du Deffand of 27.I.1753, d'Allemberg

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wrote that “La Tour a voulu absolument faire mon portrait,” suggesting that, while he may have wanted to overcharge wealthy financiers, he was as anxious to establish his credentials as painter of the intelligentsia as many of them were to have their portraits shown in public. The point was particularly evident from the 16 portraits La Tour exhibited in 1753.

The versions of La Tour’s portraits of Rousseau remain confused despite numerous iconographical studies as well as a good many contemporary documents, from the former as well as to the latter in correspondence. (La Tour’s name also appears among the recipients of presentation copies of a number of Rousseau’s books, and they remained friends for many years.) The fullest surviving pastel may be that in Saint-Quentin from the artist’s studio, which may or may not be the primary version shown in the Salon of 1753. Rousseau promised an (autograph) copy of it to Mme d’Epiny in 1757, the artist planning to bring it to Montmorency, but before the réplique was ready, Rousseau had quarrelled with Mme d’Epiny, and instead he gave it the duc and duchesse de Luxembourg. In 1762 Rousseau told Mme de Verdelin that La Tour had only made one copy of it, which he knew only by Luxembourg location; the other might be the one she had seen with Jullienne. Two letters from Rousseau’s printer Pierre Guy dated 18.XII.1763 make it quite clear that the Cathelin engraving showing Rousseau in Armenian dress was based on a version altered by La Tour himself, copied from clothing worn by real Armenians he had summoned; of this version no trace is now known. La Tour gave this, or another version to Rousseau in 1764; it travelled from Paris to Mottiers securely wrapped so that Mme Alixan de La Tour was unable to inspect it when she facilitated its despatch. This was later said to have been given to Madame Le Boy de La Tour (the version now in the musée Jean-Jacques Rousseau at Montmorency), but an alternative narrative is that Rousseau sent it to Earl Marischal in Potsdam in 1765. La Tour’s image was the only portrait of him that met with Rousseau’s approval (“M. de La Tour est le seul qui m’ait peint ressemblant” he wrote to Rey in 1765, dismissing the suggestion that Liotard’s “peintre”, quite possibly an inducement for the d’or to “les domestiques de M. de Latour, qui m’aiment” to “quitter le commerce du tableau pour faire tours les têtes de Madame”, “à faire tourner une tête et à faire circular l’air entre la figure et le fond en reflétant le côté éclairé sur le fond, et le fond sur le côté ombre”). Backgrounds are usually of graded darkness, without accessories; but in a few of his more important pastels, overcast skies are shown.

La Tour eschewed the extreme deconstructionist approach evident in Chardin and Perronneau, but the degree to which his brush-hatching is allowed to lead—which can be seen from the overall conception or psychological penetration of his finished works; balance is always maintained. His lighting is subtle, frequently using the technique he learnt from Restout of “faire tourner une tête et à faire circular l’air entre la figure et le fond en reflétant le côté éclairé sur le fond, et le fond sur le côté ombre”. Backgrounds are usually of graded darkness, without accessories; but in a few of his more important pastels, overcast skies are shown.

The process in relation to one portrait, that of Belle de Zuylen which La Tour undertook on his trip to The Netherlands in 1766, is unfolded not only in his own letters but those of the sitter herself. La Tour worked, not in Slot Zuylen herself, but on copies of her portrait at the Louvre, appearing on the propped-up one at the Louvre. La Tour’s portrait of Chardin that exhibits an extreme case of the bold hatching: a Louvre portrait of Chardin that exhibits an extreme case of the bold hatching: a Louvre conservation report of 1943 attributed the appearance to lead-white restorations which had revealed underdrawing, and dismissed the work as beyond repair. In another example, from 1757, the white strokes on the face and neck are clearly later additions, which had revealed underdrawing, and dismissed the work as beyond repair. In another example, from 1757, the white strokes on the face and neck are clearly later additions, which had revealed underdrawing, and dismissed the work as beyond repair. In another example, from 1757, the white strokes on the face and neck are clearly later additions, which had revealed underdrawing, and dismissed the work as beyond repair. In another example, from 1757, the white strokes on the face and neck are clearly later additions, which had revealed underdrawing, and dismissed the work as beyond repair.
in two autoportraits, J.46.1101, J.46.1096, are illustrated in Moreau-Vauchier 1913, pl. xii, opp. p. 104, n.g. “Finir,” Encyclopédie méthodique.) The critic Bailleul de Saint-Julien explained at some length why the use of deliberate hatcheting (by both La Tour and Perronneau) designed to be seen at some distance was justified in the imitation of nature, in much the same way as a draughtsman would exaggerate emotions in the theatre. By the Salon of 1753, 17 of the 18 pastels shown displayed a new style, according to the critic Pierre Estève, in that their colours were not painted on, but had to be viewed at a distance; this seems just to have been a development of the tendency already observed in earlier salons, and the objection was dismissed as imaginary by another critic who argued that any differences reflected the diversity of La Tour’s subjects.

It remains today easier to identify his work on the basis of pose and composition than on handling as such. For the lawyer Beaucourt, writing about the 1763 Salon, La Tour’s works could not be recognised by their style or handling, but only by their extreme perfection which he compared to the clarity of Pascal’s thinking.

La Tour is also famous for ruining his works by later alterations in an attempt to improve them. The portraits of Restout and Dumont le Romain in the Louvre (now damaged beyond repair) are a prime example of the process-as-verbaux, evidencing his borrowing the works long after they were completed. It is often thought that this occurred after senility had set in, but this habit was ingrained far earlier, as can see from Mme de Graffigny’s correspondence (v. supra) as well as Katherin Read’s 1751 letter:

I don’t doubt his getting money by his great merit and great price, not from hisquantity of work, unless he leaves off that custom of rubbing out which he practised but too much, although I can scarcely blame it in him as a fault, as it proceeded from an over delicacy of Taste and not from a light headness as was alleged, for he has no more of that about him than is natural to and becoming a French man.

As an inveterate experimenteur, La Tour devised many approaches to the question of fixing pastel. Some of his failures are evident visually, such as the watermarks on his famous approach, believing that, as Marie Fel put it, “les riches devoit payer pour les pauvres.” Famously for the (second) Pompadour pastel he demanded the unprecedented price of 48,000 livres, but this was not paid in full. This was the sole example of overcharging: soon after his portrait was painted, Voltaire fulminated that La Tour demanded a further 4800 livres (possibly a misreading of 1800, but still a very large amount) for writing a book about Paris. In 1764, versions of his portraits were sold by La Tour, who was alleged, for he has no more of that about him than is natural to and becoming a French man.

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arrangement meant that La Tour’s default was harder to manage than might be expected from this family of ferrmers généraux, promoted by Mme de Pompadour and connected to the Sanlot and other families in La Tour’s clientele.

La Tour’s friends: artists

La Tour’s genuine altruism towards his fellow artist was evidenced by the story told by Cochin in his life of the modest and unassuming Parrocel who in 1743 La Tour interested to secure him a royal pension (in the 1746 Salon, no. 55, Parrocel exhibited a sketch belonging to La Tour, possibly a token of gratitude; La Tour had a small collection of paintings by his friends; among them in his brother’s will were works by Carle Van Loo, Wouvermans, Greuze, and possibly Vien). Apart from Cochin, the intimate circle around Parrocel included also Silvestre and Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne (La Tour’s friend with whom he was attested in Vigle Le Brun’s Succession; it may date back to his apprenticeship with Dubouss, who was close to the Lemoyne family, v. supra). Lemoyne owned a copy of La Tour’s portrait of Parrocel, and he who portrayed and was portrayed by La Tour, twice; the second of these was included in the Salon de 1763 “sous le même numéro” with another of La Tour’s intimate friends, the abbé Pomnyer. When Pomnyer wrote to La Tour in 1762, he mentioned Chardin and his wife; and it was Chardin with La Tour who were deputed to inform the magistrate of his election as associé libre of the Académie in 1767. In 1774 when Chardin retired from the Académie he presented them with the pastel La Tour had given him in 1760.

From about 1750, La Tour had a liaison with the singer Marie Fel which lasted more than 30 years until senility forced his retreat to his family home at Saint-Quentin. He left his memory dated in attendance (or Liotard whom I meant to commend (from more expensive than British artists like Pond. (but he is the Colonel’s painter), admirable in little pieces of common-life, and upon Liotard was seen a La Tour preparation, “On nous pilerait tous dans un morceau comme celui-ci.” (Blanc 1865).

By 1742 his celebrity was such that the visiting Ottoman ambassador Mehmet Said Pasha (who had been portrayed by Coypel on his 1721 trip with his father) demanded a portrait by him (the report in the Mercure noted already the patience the siter required to sit for La Tour). In a letter of 7.X.1749, Daniel Wray wrote to his friend Philip Yorke to advise him on things to be done in Paris: “Call in too at Chardin’s, who paints little pieces of common-life, and upon Liotard (but he is the Colonel’s painter), admirable in crayons”, acknowledging however that they were more expensive than British artists like Pond.

Several weeks later Wray added: “Give me leave to correct a mistake in my last letter. The Crayonnis whom I meant to commend (from Hogarth’s testimonial to Voltaire). I confounded him with Liotard the Miniaturist-painter.” Among those who did were the Earl of Coventry and his brother, Marie Néret, receiver au grenier de sel and another local philanthropist.

Science and literature

In a letter to Desfriches of 18.V.1785, the German painter Rhynlein recalled a dinner 25 years earlier “chez M. de la Tour le célèbre peintre en pastel, qui m’ayant accroché et retenu par un bouton de mon habit me fit suer sang et eau en me parlant astronomie où il n’entendait rien, tout comme m’y, à ce que j’appris ensuite.” La Tour owned several telescopes by Dolland which he mentioned in his will, with rather bizarre provisions for their disposal by ballot. Unlike John Russell (q.v.) he does not seem to have used them for any constructive purpose.

La Tour’s interests in scientific matters were superficial, if broad ranging — including apparently an interest in the varied tree roots under the Scine. This can be traced through to research by the abbé Soulavie. Similarly the interest in the Montgolfier brothers may have been stimulated by Pierre Baral, an engineer who had surveyed Corsica where La Tour’s brother Charles had served.

It seems that La Tour even had aspirations as a writer: when Necker arrived in Paris around 1750 to join the banque Vernet, La Tour, who knew Isaac Vernet, showed Necker a comedy which he had written “tournément de la folie de bel esprit”, to Necker’s embarrassment. Contemporary reputation

During his lifetime La Tour enjoyed an unequalled reputation, which curiously only the Académie d’Amiens elected him an honoraire, according to Duplaquet). Already by 1742 his celebrity was such that the visiting Ottoman ambassador Mehmet Said Pasha (who had been portrayed by Coypel on his 1721 trip with his father) demanded a portrait by him (the report in the Mercure noted already the patience the siter required to sit for La Tour). In a letter of 7.X.1749, Daniel Wray wrote to his friend Philip Yorke to advise him on things to be done in Paris: “Call in too at Chardin’s, who paints little pieces of common-life, and upon Liotard (but he is the Colonel’s painter), admirable in crayons”, acknowledging however that they were more expensive than British artists like Pond. Several weeks later Wray added: “Give me leave to correct a mistake in my last letter. The Crayonnis whom I meant to commend (from Hogarth’s testimonial to Voltaire). I confounded him with Liotard the Miniaturist-painter.” Among those who did were the Earl of Coventry and his brother, Marie Néret, receiver au grenier de sel and another local philanthropist.

Phantheon

La Tour’s reputation suffered after his death, except perhaps in his native city of Saint-Quentin. Although the école gratuite de dessin was sold as desmus, it fell into desuetude during the Revolution, the inventories launched in the 1790s in the écoles des beaux-arts did not reestablish it, as happened in 1805; the chevalier Coupé de Saint-Donat published an obituary in the Journal des arts. But elsewhere neglect was profound: when some of the pastels from La Tour’s studio were offered to the Louvre in 1835, Alexis-Philip Yorke to advise him on things to be done in Paris: “Call in too at Chardin’s, who paints little pieces of common-life, and upon Liotard (but he is the Colonel’s painter), admirable in crayons”, acknowledging however that they were more expensive than British artists like Pond. Several weeks later Wray added: “Give me leave to correct a mistake in my last letter. The Crayonnis whom I meant to commend (from Hogarth’s testimonial to Voltaire). I confounded him with Liotard the Miniaturist-painter.” Among those who did were the Earl of Coventry and his brother, Marie Néret, receiver au grenier de sel and another local philanthropist.

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commerce", and that if conserved the portrait of Maria Theresa he was offered would only be worth £100–400. But "il est portait au pastel très beau et tel bien esclus qu’ils aient, sort d’une tarte petite tailer quand ils ne reprendent pas des personnes connu." This echoed an earlier report (24/1.1825) on the offer by Pierre-Louis-Alexis Dulligie (nefice of La Tour's executrix, abbe Dulligie; his cousin Valentin left a group of pastels to his partner, Filly-Pascal-Vidal, and Desmaze in 1873) to the Louvre of a group of busts studies, "faisantes preto", among them heads of Louis XV and the dauphin, which would hardly fetch £150 each at auction (Duhême comm. p.c.). Again, on 14.VI.1817, Périgot commented on three pastels by La Tour offered by the marquise de Ferrières, that they had "beaucoup de merite comme tous ceux de Lator, mais ce genre de peinture etant peu en faveur dans ce moment", the value of all three was at most £50–200.

With the help of the Goncourts and other enthusiasts for the dix-huitième, La Tour's importance was reestablished by the end of the nineteenth century. This process commenced in the middle of the century, with enthusiastic descriptions of the pastels in the Louvre by Arèsse Housay (1849), Julien de La Rochenoire (1853), Théophile Gautier (1855), the Goncourts (1867), and Champfleury (1853), all of which emphasized the dominance of La Tour and the portrait of Mme de Pompadour in particular (the Louvre had a dozen more La Tour from the earliest times). In 1837 the museum de Saint-Quentin opened, and started to exhibit the collection of La Tour pastels left to the Ecole de dessin. In 1849 an inventory was taken, published in catalogues issued from 1856 (many of the sheets will bear the paraph "Mt" presumably of Félix Mennechet, the school's administrator). Visits to Saint-Quentin were noted by artists such as Guagin, Matisse and Mary Cassatt and writers including Maurice Barrès and Anatole France. The young artist anatomist Anatole de Montaiglon wrote an impassioned letter to his friend Robert Wheaton from Saint-Quentin in 1845 (manuscript, Morgan Library; e. Critical fortune vivacité and vitality, unequalled except by the busts of Lemoyne.

Eagerness
Unlike many of these contemporaries, La Tour seems to have had limited interest in popularising or making money through the systematic dissemination of engravings of his works, although the importance of several subjects (Voltaire, Rousseau in particular) ensured their popularity then and later, and the medium may well have been his early steps auta for Lépicié's 1734 engraving of Richard de Rhodes and for prints of Fontenelle and the actor Thomasin; however Nicolas Tardieu did not engrave his work). But the variety of engravings employed (among them Aubert, Beauvarlet, Cartelinh, Dupin, Flippard, Moïre, Petit, Surgeule and Willie) suggest that no longer term business association was envisaged. Some were by Claude Millet, and for example – whose portrait La Tour actually made; he also made that of Gravelot, whose only contribution to the œuvre gravé was the ornaments for a print of Lidovendal.

Copies, pupils
A good many repetitions of La Tour's works were made in his lifetime, some are evidently autographs (and it by no means follows that the first version is the best): Salmon however correctly observed that La Tour only made one version of each of his portraits (copies, particularly of those in the Saint-Quentin collection, abound). La Tour himself reused his own compositions, and even facial features, for other sitters. Others may be contemporary copies by unrelated artists: at the Menur plaîturs, for example, artists such as Louis-François Aubry (q.v.) made pastels of the royal family quite probably after La Tour's models. A substantial proportion however were probably made by pupils working under La Tour's guidance (although we must remain ignorant of exactly how this was organised: even as early as 1736 when Voltaire's portrait was to be copied, we learn that Voltaire knew the copy was to be made by a female pupil). Among the most pastellists La Tour evidently had a substantial studio, and the practices and names of those involved have yet to be fully uncovered. Numerous claims to have been his "pupil" require sceptical evaluation (and possibly indicate no more than having been granted the privilege of watching the master at work), although Dureux's claim to have been his "only pupil" cannot be correct (one suspects that Dureux's work lists contain a number of lost copies of La Tour portraits). Among the pastellists he is supposed to have taught one can name also Assiaume, Labbé-Guérard, J.-A.-M. Lemouse, Montjoie, Neilson, Read, J.-B. Restout, Mme Roslin, as well as obscure figures such as J. Allais, Dambaze and Tirman (q.v.). To these suspects one might add the lengthy list of artists to whom he bequeathed "leurs portraits et miniatures" in his will (were these their portraits, his portraits of thurn, or their copies of his works). Copyists such as Mlle Navarre (in pastel), Frédou (in oil) and engravers such as G. F. Schmidt (q.v.) must also have frequented his studio. Amateurs such as Belle de Charrière also visited, and Diderot also described watching him at work. Schmidt's 1742 engraving of the artist's autoportrait à l'œil de brou was evidently distributed to a number of ballads; as it was greeted with verses from both the abbe Mennechet and Thomas Laffichard.

The quality of the pastel copies by pupils has remained largely a matter of speculation. Some pastellists, for instance, believed the work is of limited achievement, nevertheless is identified as the author of a copy of La Tour's autoportrait given to the abbé Mangeot in 1755: it was reproduced by the Bulletin des correspondants, which hibernated (until latest 2000) was universally assumed to be autograph and widely believed to be a masterpiece exhibited in the salon of 1750. Vointot, not listed as a pupil, nevertheless made a number of lost copies of La Tour pastels which appeared in his parents' estate inventory (1747), as well as a copy of the La Tour portrait of the dauphin commissioned for the "service du roi" in 1752 (150 livres; medium unspecified; Vointot also copied a Naturel royal portrait for the same price); later he produced a surviving pastel copy of the Rousseau portrait, of considerable merit. That an established artist produced copies of La Tour's pastels over a period of at least six years from 1735 to 1741, suggests the depth of this industry, unique among eighteenth century pastellists.

Even pictures in the "fonds de l'artiste" at Saint-Quentin may not be immune from miscegenation with studio copies created in La Tour's lifetime, and possibly students' work at the Ecole gratuite de dessin. The question of modern copies also arises more widely. In 1835 the conservator at Saint-Quentin, Louis Lemastre, who had introduced a system of seals to protect the La Tour pastels, was accused by a predecessor, Edouard Pingret, of having substituted copies of La Tour pastels for the originals, but the accusation was held to be without foundation – although René Le Clerc, in a notebook made c.1950 when he was conservateur at Saint-Quentin, listed a number of pictures he considered o be poor modern copies, substituted for stolen originals (he was particularly disturbed by the more vigorously worked faces such as Père Emmanuel). Fleury and Brière subsequently questioned four of the works in the collection. Three years later Pingret, on the accusation of the collector Alphonse Mennechet de Barival, the portrait of Manelli, having seen an identical work in a Paris dealer's – probably the copy Drillol de Nodon recorded as belonging to Quentin Dufour around this time (see Saint-Quentin 2012b, pp. 90f). In a 1904 letter to Maurice Tourneux, Élie Fleury questioned the entirety of the collector Alphonse Mennechet de Barival (brother of the administrator of the École gratuite at Saint-Quentin) and challenged the authenticity of some of the pastels Saint-Quentin acquired from him. Later Fleury (1908) warned readers of copies by Adolphe Deligne and Jules Degrange, both directors of the École gratuite at Saint-Quentin, as well as by their pupils, Émile Vellot, Jules Chevreux and Charles Escot; artists such as Raphaël Bouquet and J. Wells Champney also produced high quality work during the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. Raymond Casse (1927) noted that "Drôle de Nodon mentions an Auguste Williot by whom only oil landscapes are known", while numerous unidentified hands have produced copies that are sometimes difficult to detect. Some are sufficiently accomplished that they can appear superior to the autograph versions, and are only detectible with certainty when the construction and materials are
examine. (Mme Claude Latour, convicted in 1947 of faking paintings by Utrillo, claimed to be the great-great-granddaughter of the pastellist; but there is no evidence that she attempted to forge his work.)

**Frames**

Little is documented about La Tour's frames (see Jeffares 2018m). The magnificent trophy frame for the président de Rieux may be to a design by Calmer (as Gimpel suggested in his *Journal*, 4.XII.1918), but no document confirms this. Pons 1987 notes that the sculpteur Louis Maurizan submitted an invoice in 1748 for frames for portraits of Louis XV and Marie Leszczyńska, citing the "terms de Maurizan pour les dessins dont un par Mr de la Tour", but the frames in the Louvre may not correspond to those described. In 1749 he made a lime-wood frame for the portrait of the new dauphin. But Didier-Bérot commenting on the abbé Lattaignant in the Salon de 1767 mentions its "petit cadre de bois noir", and in relation to the pastels shown in 1769 mentions "Quatre chefs-d’œuvre renfermés dans un châssis de sapin, quatre Portraits". Most of the preparations in the artist's atelier were described in his brother's 1806 testament as in "cadres noirs"; these, like so many others (including that of Mme de Pompadour), have been changed.

**Questions**

Besnard & Wildenstein's 1928 monograph (essentially written by Georges Wildenstein with a short introduction by Albert Besnard, whose name nevertheless appears on the title page as co-author) made a creditable attempt at establishing the œuvre (the extent of its errors and omissions may be gleaned from our B&W catalogue); it also gathered together a useful collection of primary documents. It has not yet been superseded in scope, despite the more accurate and far better illustrated works by Christine Debré and Xavier Salmon and the discoveries presented in the 2004 exhibition at Versailles. The B&W catalogue includes a great many works in upper and lower case type, indicating that no opinion on attribution is meant. (Mme Claude Latour, convicted in 1947 of faking paintings by Utrillo, claimed to be the great-great-granddaughter of the pastellist; but there is no evidence that she attempted to forge his work.)

**Monographic exhibitions**

*La Tour 1917, v. Mansourg 1917*

*La Tour 1930: Exposition des pastels de M. Q. de la Tour (1704–1788) appartenant au musée de Saint-Quentin et au musée du Louvre, La Société du XVIIIe siècle, Paris, Salle de l’Orangerie, 12.VIII.–25.IX.1930*

*La Tour 1981: Pastels de Maurice-Quentin de La Tour, Paris, musée du Louvre, cabinet des dessins. [no cat.]*


*Hervé Cabezas, in Salmon & al. 2004*


*Cat. Jean-François Méjean, in Salmon & al. 2004*

**Bibliography**


_Salon critiques:_ 1738, 1739, 1741, 1742, 1745, 1746, 1747, 1748, 1751, 1753, 1755, 1757, 1759, 1761, 1763, 1767, 1769, 1771, 1773

**Genealogies**

*La Tour, Desanges, Curley, Henn, La Tour, Mme de la Tour, Mme de Pompadour*

*Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*