

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

LINWOOD, Mary

Birmingham 18.VII.1755 – Leicester 2.III.1845
Needlework artist and school mistress. She exhibited with her mother, Mrs Hannah Linwood (who in 1764 established a boarding school for girls at Belgrave Gate, Leicester which Mary took over), at the Society of Artists in 1776. (Similar work was being done in London at the time by, among others, Liotard's copyist, Hélène Thomasset and Mary Knowles; Walpole 1937 attributes the genre to a Miss Gray (Joyce Gray, later the wife of the dean of Norwich, Philip Lloyd), and noted Lady Caroline Conway as the "greatest mistress". Another early pioneer who attracted Queen Charlotte's support was Phoebe Brame, Mrs Wright, brought to notice by the pastellist John Saunders, *q.v.*) Ten years later she was awarded a silver medal by the Society "for submitting to the inspection of the Society, as examples of works of art, and of useful and elegant employment, three pieces of needlework, representing a hare, still life, and a head of King Lear." She made numerous copies in needlework after artists ranging from Guido Reni and Carlo Dolci to Gainsborough, Reynolds, Russell and M. W. Peters. These she exhibited for nearly some forty years in old Savile House, Leicester Square; they were sold at auction after her death. Her own portrait by Russell (1785) shows the artist with a book entitled "Da Vinci on Painting"; she was also portrayed by Beechey, by Samuel Shelley (miniature, New York, 20–21.I.1927, Lot 97 repr.) and by Hoppner around 1800. In Rev. Thomas Towne's *Art of painting on velvet* (1811, p. 6), she is cited as much for her perseverance as her taste.

The suggestion that she herself was a pastellist was made in contemporary reports that, despite no formal instruction in drawing, "she has uncommon merit in painting, both in crayons, distemper and colours."

Bibliography

Belsey 2019; Alexander Stephens, "Miss Linwood", in *Public characters*, London, II, 1799, pp. 543ff; *Monthly mirror*, IX, .I.1800, pp. 7–9, with portrait; Robert Chambers, "Miss Linwood's exhibition", *Books of days*, London, 1863, I, p. 348–49; Oxford DNB; Strobel 2016