

# Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

## **MICHEL y BALLERNA, Dorotea**

*fl.* Madrid 1793

Daughter of the sculpture director at the Real academia de bellas artes de San Fernando, she was herself admitted as an aficionada in 1793. She is said to have worked in pastel, although the 1801 and 1804 inventories record only a male nude drawn on blue paper (glazed and framed), 1793, and a drawing after an antique sculpture, 1794.

Her family background was artistic. Her uncle, Robert Michel (Le Puy-en-Velay 1720 – Madrid 1786), was trained in France but settled in Spain in 1740 where he rose to be primer escultor de rey d'España. Robert married Rosa Antonia Ballerna, sister of a silversmith Rafael Ballerna (1712–1773) from Vitoria. Dorotea's father, Pierre-Antoine-Simon Michel (Le Puy-en-Velay 1728 – Madrid 1809), known as Pedro Antonio Simon Michel in Spain, where he settled in 1748, following his brother. Pedro was also a sculptor and became director of sculpture at the Academia de San Fernando in the early nineteenth century. Pedro Michel married his sister-in-law's niece Bárbara Ballerna y Retola, daughter of Rafael; she was born in 1744.

Of their recorded children, Cecilia, Manuel, Dorotea, Bibiana, Rosa and Pedro, Dorotea and Bibiana were both pastellists; Bibiana, who also worked in miniature, was made an academicien in 1818, submitting a pastel head of San Francisco de Paula. We cannot be sure of Dorotea's age, but amateurs were admitted young (María Micaela Nesbitt, for example, was admitted in 1820 aged 19 with a pastel after Sassoferrato). In an 1812 document, Pedro's orphaned children are named as Bibiana and Rosa. This may be because Dorotea was already dead, or simply that she had attained majority.

A pastel of a young girl by Perronneau, made in Madrid 1776 and showing the niece of M. Michel, premier sculpteur du roy d'Espagne, probably depicts Dorotea or her eldest sister Cecilia.

### **Bibliography**

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