

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

MAUCOURT, Claude

Passavant-en-Argonne 1.IV.1714 – London brd 8.XII.1767

Engraver and portraitist in oil, miniature, watercolour and pastel. Gault de Saint-Germain knew him only as a mezzotint engraver after his own drawings. Maucourt's background is a little confused; his forename has hitherto (until research here, 2021) been given as Charles.

On 7.V.1739 (contrat, AN MC/ET/XLIX/603) he married Anne-Geneviève Humblot, the daughter of Antoine Humblot (?1684–1758), marchand graveur à Paris (improbably alleged to be a pupil of La Tour in the 1808 Lamy sale which included two large chalk drawings by him of La Tour and Rousseau, no doubt copies of the pastels) and his deceased wife Anne-Claude Jollain (–1737), daughter of the marchand graveur François-Gérard Jollain; he was then described as “Claude Maucourt, secrétaire de M. le président de Rieux”, the son of Pierre Maucourt (1674–1743), a marchand in Passavant-en-Argonne and Marguerite Gérard (1677–1727), as confirmed in the parish register for his baptism at Passavant. The witnesses to the marriage included (for the groom) Gabriel Bernard de Rieux and Charles-François d'Hallencourt de Drosmenil, évêque de Verdun, and (for the bride) Gérard Jollain, libraire, Gaspard du Change, graveur du roi, de l'Académie royale, and other relatives from the world of engraving. Maucourt's signature on the contract matches that on his pastels. It is unclear if he knew La Tour's pastel of his employer or whether this influenced his decision to take up portraiture as a career.

His earliest appearance as an artist seems to be in Gersaint's catalogue of the collection of Bonnier de La Mosson (1744), where no. 858 was a portrait of Mgr de Vintimille copied in ink after the Drevet print, “fini avec toute la patience possible...avec une exactitude & une précision étonnante.”

Maucourt's first wife died, 30.VI.1748, rue des Deux-Portes, Paris (registre des scellés apposés, AN Y21; Maucourt was recorded as a maître peintre, but renounced the succession); and this may have prompted him to travel.

He was in Schwerin in 1751, where in 1752 he painted a three-quarter length portrait of Herzog Christian Ludwig II. (Staatlichen Museum, Schwerin). It is possible that he was in Bayreuth around this time, where the anonymous Bayreuth pastellist (*q.n.*) produced a series of pastels that stylistically resemble his work (he cannot however have been the “Nürnberger Pinsler” whom Wilhelmine mentioned in a letter to her brother Friedrich der Große in 1747).

He was evidently the Claudius Maucourt, described merely as “vagus ex Champuni” [for Champagne, the artist's district of birth], who married Margaretha de Laigue in the Catholic church of Sankt Aposteln in Köln on 18.XI.1754. An anonymous pastel of Clemens August as Grand Master of the Teutonic Order is here attributed to him (2023).

In 1755 he was in Düsseldorf, where he painted a series of local citizens; there he may have influenced Huin (*q.n.*).

Maucourt moved to London and exhibited at the Society of Artists from 1761. The correspondent in the *St James's chronicle*, 25–27.V.1762 reported that “Mr Maucourt's miniatures are, I think, much better than his other Portraits.” (It is unclear if the five portraits included in addition to the four miniatures were in oil of pastel.) Portraits of Joseph Haydn and David Garrick in oil are known from early 20th century sales, the latter sd 1764. A competent oil of a child holding a had, sd 1763, appeared at auction (London, Christie's, 23.IV.2009, Lot 104). In addition to portraiture he produced history subjects in mezzotint, published by Boydell; there were also some grotesque and satirical pieces, including a drawing of Liotard (Vevey, musée Jenisch; an oil version is in Amsterdam). He was listed in Mortimer's *Universal Director* for 1763 (p. 18) as Claudius Maucourt, portrait painter, Johnson's Court, Fleet Street.

Walpole records the death of Maucourt, “a German, painter and mezzotinter”, in .I.1768 (it was also reported in *Gazetteer and new daily advertiser*, 7.I.1768, “a few days since”, where his age was erroneously given as 60). In fact Claude Maucourt [sic] was buried in St Pancras Old Church on 8.XII.1767. A Marie-Anne Maucourt, perhaps a daughter, married a François Noël (a confectioner, bankrupt in 1787) in St George's Hanover Square on 1.I.1781; a son, John Hugo, was baptised in the same parish in 1787.

The surviving pastels retain a distinctively French smoothness of execution combined with a Teutonic, provincial woodenness of expression.

Bibliography

Alexander 2021; Bénézit; Dussieux 1856; Foskett 1987; Gault de Saint-Germain 1808, p. 277; Guiffrey 1885, p. 261; Lemoine-Bouchard 2008; Walpole 1828, p. 323; Waterhouse 1981

Pastels

J.5236.101 Johann Hieronymus BLUMHOFF (–1755), jülich-bergische Registrator; & pendant: J.5236.102 spouse, née Anna Maria Elisabeth Custodis (1716–1756), Tochter von Franz Heinrich Custodis, pstl/card, 53x37.5/53.5x39, sd \nearrow 1755 (Düsseldorf, Stadtmuseum, inv. SMD C2/3) ϕ



J.5236.105 Leopold Ignaz BLUMHOFF (–1772), pfälzischer Hofrat dem Kurfürsten, Altrat der Stadt Düsseldorf, pstl/card, 53x37.5, 1755 (Düsseldorf, Stadtmuseum, inv. SMD C4) ϕ



J.5236.106 CLEMENS AUGUST Erzbischof und Kurfürst von Köln (1700–1761), pstl (Schloss Augustusburg, Brühl) [new attr. 2023] ϕ



J.5236.107 Rudolf CUSTODIS, pstl/car, 53x37, 1755 (Düsseldorf, Stadtmuseum, inv. SMD C5) ϕ



J.5236.108 Georg Christoph FAHLMER (1687–1759), churpfälzischer Commerzienrath in Mannheim; & pendant: J.5236.1082 seine zweite Frau, née Maria Starck (1701–1780), pstl, inscr. “gemahlt in Düsseldorf den 30ten Septembris 1755 von Monsieur Maucourt” (Frau Ernst Hasenclever, Remscheid-Ehringhausen 1899). Exh.: Düsseldorf 1899, no. 1087/1088 n.r.

J.5236.109 Anton WISSELINCK (1702–1771), Hofmaler und Galerieinpektor, pstl/card, 54x38, 1755 (Düsseldorf, Stadtmuseum, inv. SMD C48) φ



Photos courtesy Sotheby's

J.5236.121 Pastel, inscr. “gemahlt in Düsseldorf den 30. 7bris 1755 von Monsieur Maucourt”. Exh.: Düsseldorf 1899, no. 1087 n.r.



J.5236.111 Man, pstl/ppr, 56x40, s ↗ “Maucourt Pinxit”; & pendant: J.5236.112 woman, pstl/ppr, 56x40 (London, Sotheby's, 6.II.2005, Lot 686 repr., est. £2–3000, b/i. Paris, Drouot, Binoche, Giquello, 15.X.2014, Lot 3 repr., est. €1000–1500) Φσ

