

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

MÉRELLE, Pierre, le fils

Paris 1713–1782

The younger Mérelle (or Merelle) was the son of Pierre-Paul (*q.v.*; there are confusions between their work). Mérelle fils was only *reçu* by the Académie de Saint-Luc in 1760 (rue des Moulins, butte Saint-Roch), and he seems not to have exhibited after the 1751 Salon. He married Jeanne-Antoinette Pierrès de La Cour in 1754. In 1776 the *Almanach des peintres* listed among portraitists “Mérelle, rue Montmartre, peint le pastel”. He died in 1782 (not 1762 as in one erroneous source), and in 1785 his widow died, at 17 rue de Cléry.. There was an adult son (in 1789), Louis-François Mérelle, and two minor children, Angélique-Constance and Auguste-Joseph, were protected by their uncle, Claude-Théodore Mérelle de Joigny, avocat au parlement. Pierre Mérelle’s first cousin was the portrait painter Pierre de Lorme. It is possible that his daughter was Mlle Mérelle, an émigrée who published *New and complete instructions for the pedal harp* in London c.1800 and whose financial difficulties were noted by Danloux (*Journal*, 1910, p. 117).

A posthumous sale took place at the hôtel Bullion, 27.1.1783 & seq. (Basan), but included mainly prints, with a dozen drawings and the painter’s equipment.

Very little of Mérelle’s œuvre is known today. He made numerous copies after Nattier and Liotard of members of the royal family and other subjects. In 1751 he was commissioned by the duc de Gesvres to provide several copies of portraits by Nattier and Liotard for 300 livres each, no doubt to supplement his father’s two oil portraits en pied of the dauphine and of Madame Victoire given by the sitters to the duc for Saint-Ouen. As these were also priced at 300 livres, it seems likely that the son’s works were also portraits en pied, in oil rather than pastel. One speculates whether, for example, the pendants of M. et Mme Roger which he exhibited at the Salon de Saint-Luc in 1751 are misprints for copies of the Nattier portraits of M. et Mme Royer who might well be described as “dans son cabinet” and “en habit de bal” respectively. The portrait of Duclos in the Prault sale could also have been after Nattier.

Mérelle’s association with Nattier was also personal: he signed the marriage contract between Nattier’s eldest daughter and Tocqué and attended the wedding at Saint-Roch in 1747, when he was living at the rue Phéliepeaux. Mérelle had also played a small role in a curious incident a few years earlier (1743) involving this daughter and a M. de Valbonne (probably Antoine Mercurin de Valbonne, chevalier de Saint-Louis, capitaine de cavalerie, régiment d’Archias, from Alsace), who described himself as aide-de-camp to the comte de Caylus and had developed a passion for the girl; he had apparently arrived at Mérelle’s home, rue Saint-Denis, where she, Mérelle, and Nattier were dining; when Nattier refused to allow his daughter to marry Valbonne, he drew his sword, Mérelle succeeded in removing it, but in the ensuing scuffle Nattier’s brother-in-law M. de La Roche was injured.

Mérelle was also close to Boucher, who attended his marriage in 1754. One wonders whether the set of pastels in the Montullé sale include some of those pastiches after Boucher which seem to be of good quality but with a more enamelled finish than Boucher’s graphic technique. Other copies after Carriera are recorded. Some of these works were sent to Russia through Jean-Baptiste-Pierre Le Brun.

There is a brief mention to three “tableaux” by M. Mérelle in Wille’s journal, for 29.VII.1766; the German artist records his reply to the bishop of Callinique at Sens, telling him that two of the pictures, which his son had seen, were worth 244 livres each, and the third, 15 louis d’or. No doubt he had been called to adjudicate a dispute. One of these may be the portrait of the collector Nicolas La Pinte de Livry, évêque de Callinique, known from a drawing by Jean-Michel Moreau le Jeune (Versailles, inv. GRAV. 3775).

A number of pastels in the Prault collection attest to Mérelle’s friendship with this important family of publishers (Prault also signed the Nattier–Tocqué marriage contract), and thus his connections with the artists who married into this family, namely the Pineau family of decorators (a Pineau design survives for the frame of a lost Nattier portrait of Mme de Pompadour) and Jean-Michel Moreau, who married Pierre Prault’s granddaughter Françoise-Nicole Pineau, the subject of a pastel by Nattier. In 1770 Moreau engraved a portrait by Mérelle of her father Dominique Pineau, decorator and maître-sculpteur; this portrait was probably the anonymous pastel in the family collection. Although the pastel of Dominique Pineau in the group does not correspond with the engraving, the immediacy of the composition is similar to that of the artist’s children, the only securely attributed pastels known today. While it is reasonable to assume that Mérelle executed the other pastels from this family, the attribution of these portraits must remain tentative until a larger body of work is established. It is not excluded that they are by Nattier himself; but it does seem plausible that Mérelle was responsible for a number of pastels that have a refinement close to autograph Nattier works, and may well have been misattributed.

Apart from the portrait engraved by Moreau, a number of galant subject pieces by Mérelle were engraved by Duflos, Darcis (*Le Sommeil interrompu*) and Pitou (*L’Art de plaire; & Le Désir de charmer*).

Bibliography

AN MC ET/XLII/857, 30.1.1761, tontine; AN Y5177A, 1–15.1.1789; Bénézit; Borjon 1985; Doria 1921; Dumont-Wilden 1909; Guiffrey 1885, p. 261; Guiffrey 1915, pp. 35, 390f; Hugues 2004, p. 69 n.r.; Ratouis de Limay 1946; Renard 1999, pp. 75f; Salmon 1997a, p. 115; Sanchez 2004; Vernes 1961, p. 69; Wille 1857

Salon critiques: Saint-Luc 1751

Pastels

Madame ADÉLAÏDE de France (1732–1800), a/r Nattier (duc de Gesvres, château de Saint-Ouen, 300 livres)

[Charles Pinot] DUCLOS [(1704–1772), de l’Académie française], historiographe de France, 51x43 (Laurent-François Prault; vente p.m., Paris, Hubert, Le Brun, 27.XI.1780, Lot 36, 24 livres)

Madame LOUISE de France (1737–1787), la tête a/r Liotard (duc de Gesvres, château de Saint-Ouen, 300 livres)

La dauphine [MARIE-JOSÉPHE de Saxe (1731–1767)], a/r Nattier (duc de Gesvres, château de Saint-Ouen, 300 livres)

[Charles] de MONTULLÉ de Saint-Port [(1751–)], en petit hussard, avec son chien, pstl/ppr, 39x31.5 (PC 2007) [new attr., ?] φ



Philippe NERICAULT DESTOUCHES (1680–1754), de l’Académie française, auteur dramatique, l’auteur du *Glorieux*, pstl, Salon de Saint-Luc 1751, no. 137 (M. Prault, père)

Le fils de l’auteur, pstl, 46x41, 1765; & pendant: La fille de l’auteur, pstl, 46x41, 1765 (Jubinal de Saint-Albin, Paris; Mme George Duruy 1908; M. Jolibois 1942). Exh.: Paris 1908a, no. 66/67, no pl. Lit.: Dreyfus 1905, repr.; Ratouis de Limay 1946, pl. LXI-92/93 φ



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Dominique PINEAU (1718–1786), de l’Académie de Saint-Luc, de ¾, la tête de face, perruque à trois rang de boucles, cravate blanche, jabot de dentelles

~grav.: Moreau le jeune, a/r Mérelle, 1770. Lit.: Bocher 1883, no. 42 n.r.; Borjon 1985, n. 29, n.r.

Dominique PINEAU, en veste de soie couleur vert pâle, foulard de soie des Indes, pstl (Émile Biais 1892). Lit.: Biais 1892, repr. p. 33; Biais 1899, p. 387 n.2 n.r., anon. [new attr.; cf. Nattier] φ



Nicolas PINEAU (1684–1754), sculpteur ornemaniste, en habit brun, coiffé d'un foulard de cotonnade rouge, pstl (Émile Biais 1892). Lit.: Biais 1892, repr. opp. p. 15, anon.; Biais 1899, p. 387 n.r., anon. [new attr.; cf. Nattier] **◆**



~repl., pstl (Mme veuve Paul Pineau 1892). Lit.: Biais 1892, p. 24 n.2 n.r.

Pierre PRAULT (1683–1768), libraire-imprimeur, pstl (Pineau 1892). Lit.: Biais 1892, repr. p. 37, anon. [cf. Méréelle] **◆**



M. ROGER [?Royer] dans son cabinet, pstl, Salon de Saint-Luc 1751, no. 136

Mme ROGER [?Royer] en habit de bal, pstl, Salon de Saint-Luc 1751, no. 136

Madame SOPHIE, a/r Nattier (duc de Gesvres, château de Saint-Ouen, 300 livres)

Madame VICTOIRE, a/r Nattier (duc de Gesvres, château de Saint-Ouen, 300 livres)

Quatre femmes "à la Boucher", pstl, 40.6x32.5, 1760 (Méréelle fils; acqu. Jan Hope 1760, Df60 each). Lit.: "De kunstverzameling van John Hope", in J. P. Filedt Kok & al., *Verzamelen in Nederland*, 1982, p. 204, nos. 308–311, door Merelle te Parys 1760, Haarlem 2001, p. 156 n.r., as anon., acqu. from Méréelle, collectionneur

Femme "à la Boucher", pstl, 54x46, 1760 (Méréelle fils; acqu. Jan Hope 1760, Df60 each). Lit.: "De kunstverzameling van John Hope", in J. P. Filedt Kok & al., *Verzamelen in Nederland*, 1982, p. 204, no. 312

Deux bustes de femmes, pstl a/r Boucher (Bignon; Paris, Remy, 1772, 36fr14)

Femme couchée dans un bosquet, pstl, 44.6x33.5 (Achille-Joseph de Robert de Lignerac, duc de Caylus; Paris, Remy, 19.IV.1773 & seq., Lot 49, 61 livres 1 sol)

Vénus & l'Amour, a/r Boucher, 24.3x29.7 (Achille-Joseph de Robert de Lignerac, duc de Caylus; Paris, Remy, 19.IV.1773 & seq., Lot 49a: 24 livres 1 sol)

Une jeune Villageoise, jolie de figure, pstl, ov. (de La Tour Daigues, chevalier de Saint-Louis, officier aux Gardes-Françaises; vente p.m., Paris, Hayot de Longpré, Basan, 15.V.1777 & seq., Lot 56, 24 livres)

Femme nue et couchée détachée d'un arbre par un homme, pstl, 59.6x70.4 (Jean-Baptiste-

François de Montullé; Paris, Le Brun, 22–30.XII.1783, Lot 108). A/r Boucher pnt. *Silvie libérée par Aminte*, de Tasso [=? Roger délivrant Angélique de Boucher, *q.n.*]

Femme vue à mi-corps et couchée sur son lit, pstl, 54.1x43.3, a/r Boucher (Jean-Baptiste-François de Montullé; Paris, Le Brun, 22–30.XII.1783, Lot 110)

La Dormeuse & son pendant, pstl, a/r Boucher, "retouché et figuré par Boucher", 37.8x29.7 (Jean-Baptiste-François de Montullé; Paris, Le Brun, 22–30.XII.1783, Lot 109 with pendant, 60 livres, Lebrun)

=?Une dormeuse; & Une autre tête, pstl, 40.5x32.4 (Prault; vente p.m., Paris, Le Brun, 27.XI.1780, Lot 35, 37 livres)

=?La Dormeuse & son pendant vue en buste, pstl "retouché par Boucher", 48.6x40.5 ov. (Paris, Le Brun, 12.II[III].1782 & seq., Lot 164 with pendant, 61 livres, [Antoine-Charles] Dulac)

=?La Voluptueuse & la Dormeuse, deux bustes de femmes, pstl, a/r Boucher (Duterrage; Paris, 20.XII.1790 & seq., Lot 82 with pendant)

Buste de femme, pstl, a/r Boucher (Mesnard de Clesle; vente p.m., Paris, rue Saint-Étienne, coin du Boulevard Poissonnière, 1.I.1804 & seq., Lot 14 n.r., as by Fr. Merel, fr3)

Étude de femme sur un lit, pstl (Mesnard de Clesle; vente p.m., Paris, rue Saint-Étienne, coin du Boulevard Poissonnière, 1.I.1804 & seq., Lot 15 n.r., as by Fr. Merel, fr1)

Jupiter & Calipso [PCallisto], pstl; & pendant: Jupiter & Léda, pstl, a/r Boucher, 59.6x70.4 (Jean-Baptiste-François de Montullé; Paris, Le Brun 22–30.XII.1783, Lot 107 =? Michallon; vente p.m., Paris, 30.III.–4.IV.1818, Lot 524 with pendant, as Jupiter et Antiope)

Quatre têtes, pstl, a/r Boucher (Vincent Donjeux; Paris, Jeluseau, Le Brun & Paillet, 29.IV.1793 & seq., Lot 677, 32 livres 4; P)

Pan & Syrinx; & pendant: Alphée & Aréthuse, pstl (Paris, Boileau, Constantin, 6.III.1794, Lot 157)

Deux pstls a/r Boucher & une femme qui lit, assise dans un bois (Denis-Pierre-Jean Papillon de La Ferté; Paris, Landais, Le Brun, 20.II.1797, Lot 166, fr18)

Deux têtes de femme, pstl, 40.6x32.5, a/r Boucher (Denis-Pierre-Jean Papillon de La Ferté; Paris, Landais, Le Brun, 20.II.1797, Lot 209)

La joueuse de musette ([Ange Déglise; vente p.m.] Paris, 22–23.V.1924, fr3000; Paris, 17.XII.1935, fr1600)