

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

O'KEEFFE, John

Dublin 24.III.1747 – Southampton 4.II.1833
Miniaturist, draughtsman and landscape painter before becoming an actor and successful playwright. His *Recollections* (1826) include a picture of the training obtained in the Dublin Society schools at Shaw's Court, Dame Street, under Robert West, with whom he was placed at an early age. According to his own account:

I was designed by my parents and my own inclination for a painter, and not above six years of age when I was placed at Mr West's, the Royal Academy, Shaw's Court, Dame Street, Dublin. West was a Waterford man, and took painting studies in Paris, under Boucher, a disciple of Le Brun, distinguished for his painted series of Alexander's Battles....whilst I was at West's academy, he took a very fine, highly finished drawing of me, in black and white chalks: I was then about eight years old: it is in the Guido style. and from this drawing the boys used to study. The late Mr Francis West, son, and successor to his father for the mastership of the academy, carefully preserved it, and it is still in being, as many of my friends had latterly told me they had seen it.

By 1756 O'Keeffe was joined by Hugh Douglas Hamilton (*q.v.*). He turned from crayon to small whole-length watercolours early on, and soon decided to abandon art for the London stage. From the mid-1770s his eyesight deteriorated. O'Keeffe's brother Daniel was a miniaturist.

Bibliography

Bénézit; Crookshank & Glin 1994; McGuire 1939, p. 15; O'Keeffe 1826

Pastels

J5634.101 SELF-PORTRAIT, crayons, a.1764. Lit.:
O'Keeffe 1826, I, p. 100 n.r.

J5634.102 M. BARTLETT, a German, husband of the artist's aunt, crayons, a.1764. Lit.:
O'Keeffe 1826, I, p. 100 n.r.