

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastelists before 1800*

Online edition

SARTORI, Felicità, Frau Hoffmann

Pordenone 7.IX.1713–24.VII.1782

The daughter of a notary in Pordenone, Felicità was born and baptised there, in the church of San Giorgio, on 7.IX.1713 (research by Stefano Aloisi, cited Fadelli 2021). There seems to be no justification for the spelling Felicità which is widely found (including here until 2023). She received her early training from her uncle, the engraver Antonio dall'Agata, in Gorizia. He arranged for her to join the studio and household of Rosalba Carriera (*q.v.*) in Venice, around 1728. The circumstances of this are mired in legend: Séguier 1752 described the ruse of her joining as a servant in his letter to Dezallier, who wondered if it could be true (Dezallier d'Argenville 4.1.1753). In fact (as Fadelli 2021 noted), this conflated Felicità Sartori the artist with her exact homonym and cousin, born in Pordenone in 1724 and who joined Rosalba's household as a maid c.1744; it was she who was mentioned in Rosalba's will, to receive the modest sum of 100 ducats.

When Sartori the artist arrived in the studio, Carriera's reputation was at its peak, and the demand for repetitions of her work in pastel and miniature was supposedly shared by Sartori and Carriera's sisters. Sartori worked also with other artists, including an etching after Piazzetta for the frontispiece to A. M. Zanetti's *Delle Antiche Statue Greche e Romane* ..., 1740.

Although Sartori remained close to Carriera throughout her life, soon after making a copy of Rosalba's 1740 pastel of Friedrich Christian von Sachsen to be engraved by Carlo Orsolini, she was invited to Dresden around 1741 by August III's counsellor Franz Joseph Hoffmann Graf von Hoffmannsegg (1696–1750), Hofrat, Acciserath und Geheimer Kämmerer (the subject of a pastel by Mengs). Hoffmann had been ennobled that year, having been valet to August der Starke as well as to August III., looking after their erotic needs as Le Bel did for Louis XV as one historian primly puts it (Eduard Vehse, *Geschichte der deutschen Höfe*..., XXXIII, 1854, p. 136.) She accepted, and the following year she married Hoffmann – not without misgivings, given the 17 year age gap, but only (according to legend) after she was ennobled to overcome the courtier's reluctance to marry beneath his social station.

The circumstances of the execution of Mengs's portrait of Hoffmann are related by Azara (*Works of ...Mengs*, 1796, I, p. 9): Mengs had recently made the portrait of Annibale in Dresden, but the Elector doubted that one so young should have the skill to do so, and commanded that “in presence of an Italian paintress, a disciple of the celebrated Rosalba Carriera, he should take the likeness of her husband”; his success led to further commissions of the ruling family.

Belotto painted a view of Graf Brühl's garden in Dresden in 1747 (Dresden, inv. 602; engraving, BM 1878,0112.261) taken from the house of “sieur Conseiller Hoffman” according to the lettering; Roettgen 1999 (p. 286) states that the couple are reputed to be shown in the

foreground (although no figure that might be the Gräfin is obvious).

After Hoffmann's death in 1749, her movements have been unclear until clarified by Fadelli 2021. One older source suggested that she remarried and moved to Bamberg, while others suggested that she was still in Dresden in 1753 where, according to Mariette, she died in 1760 (the *dae* which appears in almost all published sources including here until 2024). However the *Nuovo dizionario storico* (1796, although not it seems mentioned in the French original from which that work was derived) states that she returned to Italy and died there in 1766. We now know that Felicità was remarried to a nephew of her first husband, Lothar Franz Hoffmann (c.1725–1809) (he was recorded as matriculating in the Universität Bamberg in 1740/41, originating from Mainz; another uncle was Franz Josef Anton Hoffmann, an important physician and Generalstabsmedicus to the Saxon army) and that they returned to San Giovanni del Tempio, Sacile, Pordenone, where he was godfather at a baptism in 1761. Felicità died there on 24.VII.1782, the parish register recording the death of the “moglie del nobil s.r maggior Lotario Offman Sassone dopo molti mesi di penosa infermità in età d'anni 70 c.a con tutti li S.simi Sacramenti morì e dalla Sanità licenziato il cadavere fu sepolto in questa chiesa nell'arca della nob. famiglia Ovio.”

Although Pietro Guarienti, in Orlandi 1753 (but omitted in later editions), called her an “eccelente Pittrice di pastelli, e minatura”, Sartori's surviving authenticated works seem all to be miniatures, many drawn from celebrated pastels by her teacher (some are erroneously described as in pastel); some oil copies after Rosalba are also recorded. Her early biographer, known only as Abate N.N., mentions that she learned pastel, but seems rapidly to have specialised in making miniature copies. The extent of her work in pastel is unclear, and it would not be surprising if some of the numerous pastel répliques of Carriera are by her pupil. Some 19 miniatures have survived in Dresden, made after her move.

An interesting indication of her earlier work is found in a notice dated Venice, 26.XII.1788, published in London in Sastres's *Il Mercurio italico*, I, 1789, pp. 63f, by the abate Sartori (the subject of a pastel by Carriera, and perhaps her anonymous 1755 biographer, the “abate NN”) seeking to sell a number of pictures by Rosalba (5 works) and by her pupil Felicità Sartori made “before she went to the Court of Saxony” (11, including a black chalk drawing, two small oils, a number of “ritrattini”, no doubt miniatures, and the three items listed below which may be in pastel). He was her eldest sibling, Giovanni Battista Cosmo, born 15.X.1710, taking holy orders in 1733. He is named Giambattista in Zanetti 1771, p. 449. He or a homonym is listed in 1787 as the parish priest of S. Giuliana in Padua, and is a Dottore (Giuseppe Toaldo's *Tavole di vitalità*). Rosalba also portrayed another Giambattista Sartori (born 1709, the son of an Antonio Sartori, so not a sibling of Felicità and possibly unrelated), together with his wife, née

Lucietta Pellegrini, a niece of of Rosalba's brother-in-law.

Bibliography

Stefano Aloisi, “Alcune precisazioni anagrafiche su Antonio Dell'Agata e Felicità Sartori”, *AFAT. Arte in Friuli. Arte a Trieste*, XXX, 2011, pp. 79–82; Bénézit; Fadelli 2021; Levati 1822, V/II, pp. 124f; Manzano 1884–87; Mariette 1851–60; *Nuovo dizionario storico, ovvero storia in compendio di tutti gli uomini che si sono resi illustri* ..., 1796, VII, p. 287f; NN 1755; Orlandi 1753; Filippo Pedrocchi, in Turin 2003; Puhlmann 2003; Sani 1989; Sani 2003; Sastres 1789; Séguier 1752

GENEALOGIES [Sartori](#)

Pastels

J.655.101 AUTOPORTRAIT, pstl/ppr, 55x45 (Köln, Lempertz, 18.V.1996, Lot 1069 repr., est. DM8000, b/i) ϕ



J.655.103 Clorinda SARTORI [Sig.ra Bergonzi, née Clorinda Sartori (1714–1789)], pstl (Lodovico Alvise Manin; acqu. 1777, 55 zecchini with 7 others, as Rosalba; palazzo dei Manin ai Servi, inv. c.1777, no. 34, as by Rosalba; inv. 7.XII.1799, no. 32, as Felicità Sartori, 3 zecchini). Lit.: Tormen 2009, p. 245

J.655.104 Milord WALPOLE, in abito di maschera, m/u, a.1741 (abate Sartori 1789). Lit.: Sastres 1789, p. 64 n.r., “ritratto bellissimo” [?Copy of Carriera, *Lord Boyne*]

J.655.105 Gentiluomo, pstl/ppr, 61x46 (Milan, Sotheby's, 4.VI.2003, Lot 132 repr., est. €6–8000; Swedish PC; Uppsala Auktionshammare, 14.VI.2023, Lot 617 repr., est. SwKr20–30,000, SwKr175,000. London, Sotheby's, 3.VII.2024, Lot 35 repr., est. £20–30,000, £18,000 [=£21,600]) Φ



Photo courtesy Sotheby's

[J.655.108](#) Inverno; & ?Estate, m/u, a.1741 (abate Sartori 1789). Lit.: Sastris 1789, p. 64 n.r.

[J.655.109](#) Cleopatra, pstl (Lodovico Alvise Manin; acqu. 1777, 55 zecchini with 7 others, as Rosalba; palazzo dei Manin ai Servi, inv. c.1777, no. 32, as by Rosalba; inv. 7.XII.1799, no. 28, as Felicita Sartori con assistenza della Maestra, Cleopatra, 5 zecchini). Lit.: Tormen 2009, p. 245