

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

SISSON, Richard

Dublin bpt 19.VIII.1722–1767

Irish portraitist, miniaturist and pastellist. A homonym (possibly a grandfather) was active as an artist in Dublin 1686–1707, recorded as painting the altar-piece at Christ Church Cathedral. The pastellist was baptised on 19.VIII.1722 at St Mary's, Church of Ireland, the youngest of six children of Robert and Frances Sisson. Robert was a “joiner” by profession, a term which included architecture and house building (he was responsible for No. 66 Capel Street, with “one of the finest wainscotted interiors in the city”). They were presumably connected with Jonathan Sisson, a prominent merchant engaged in the linen trade, with a factory in Lucan (but the exact connection is not evident from surviving documents).

Before becoming apprenticed to the portrait painter Francis Bindon, Sisson was at the Quaker school in Ballitore, Co. Kilkenny with Edmund Burke (who later sat to him, commissioned him to paint their fellow-pupil Richard Shackleton and called him “a very dear and deserving friend” in a letter to James Barry, 26.IV.1767, after his death). He travelled in France and Italy, and was recorded in London 1759–60. He evidently encountered Sir Horace Mann in Florence, and later was engaged by Horace Walpole to produce a machine and a drawing; Walpole describes his frustration with the progress in letters to Mann of 26.III. and 24.V.1760, calling him a “shuffling knave” and similar abuse.

On his return to Dublin he took an active part in the Society of Arts exhibitions, exhibiting oil portraits 1765–67. He married a Miss Smith in 1763, but died soon after at his home in William Street. His widow opened a school.

Bibliography

Alexander 2021; Christine Casey, *The buildings of Ireland: Dublin*, 2005, p. 106; Ingamells 1997; McGuire 1939, p. 15; Sée 1911; Strickland 1913; Waterhouse 1981; *The early life, correspondence and writings of the Rt Hon. Edmund Burke*, ed. A. W. Samuels, Cambridge, 1923, p. 103