

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

SOMPISOIS, Jean-François de

fl. 1755–97

French miniaturist (variously spelt Sampçoi, Sampsoy, Sampsua, Samsu, Sompsoi, Sumpsois etc., or in Russian Сампсуа or Самца) working on ivory and vellum, and occasionally in pastel. According to Комелова 1992, de Sompsois was the son of a Swiss mercenary in the service of the duc de Gesvres; he may well have belonged to the noble, but fallen, family from Champagne which receives the briefest of mentions in the *usuels*). De Sompsois was in St Petersburg by 1755, possibly from as early as 1751, and perhaps left for a short period. In 1756 he returned to St Petersburg and was commissioned by prince Pyotr Feodorovich and his wife, the future Catherine II, to do eleven portraits of the ladies-in-waiting of the court cast as the Seasons, the Continents and the Elements; they are now in the Chinese Palace at Lomonosov. De Sompsois was back in Paris by 1760, where his wife, Marie-Anne Langlois, veuve Lescot, died (rue de Tournon). Presumably it is she who appears with the artist in a double portrait described in verses by de Rosoi. His final departure from Russia is variously reported as 1763 or 1761, just after he executed a remarkable miniature of the Tsaritsa Elisabeth I for the Esterházy presentation box, although a pastel of the future Tsar Paul I is thought to have been executed not before 1764. In 1765 Augustin de Saint-Aubin engraved one of his Russian portraits.

According to tradition de Sompsois combined his artistic activities with those of a secret agent (he even appears in historical novels of Valentin Pikul). This is possibly an inflation of the curious story about the artist mentioned by Catherine the Great in a letter to Charles Hanbury Williams of 17.IX.1756. She relates how the artist went to the Grand-Duke to show him “some portraits” (quite possibly those of the ladies-in-waiting), and took the opportunity to complain the French envoy. This was the curious figure who called himself Sir Mackenzie Douglas, Scottish by birth, a former Jesuit and Jacobite who had emigrated to France and persuaded Louis XV to appoint him envoy to St Petersburg with the chevalier d'Éon as assistant. Pyotr told him to mind his own business, while Catherine raised the matter with de Sompsois threatening him with the Fortress or the custody of Alexander Shuvalov.

He was presumably the “de Sompsois, écuyer” who appears in a list of eleven associés libres of the Académie de Saint-Luc in 1775. He was in The Hague in 1778, where he was *requ* maître-peintre, but there followed a curious incident recorded in the minutes of the corporation on 28.VII.1778: on being reminded to pay his fees, M. de Sompsois pleaded that he was a French nobleman and never had anything to do with common guilds. The governors resolved that he should be taught that no-one, noble or otherwise, is exempt from the fees. In the same year de Sompsois was recorded in La Haye-du-Puis in Basse-Normandie. He was however back in the Netherlands in 1782 when he made a series of portraits of the Gevaerts family, and is also located there later in the

1780s and 1790s. A miniature of the comte de Provence, sd 1797, is his last recorded appearance.

The known pastels show a predilection for distinctive cool colours. The allegorical themes were of course influenced by Carriera, but the rather wooden compositions are unlikely to have found favour in the highly competitive Paris market, and may account for his travels. They were however among the earliest pastels seen in Russia (he preceded Bardou and Schmidt, *qq.v.*), and contributed to a vogue in the second half of the century.

Bibliography

Bénézit; Laurens Johannes Bol, *Aart Schouman*, 1991; A. Bredius, *Oud-Holland*, 1901, p. 81; Горбачева 2002; Guiffrey 1885, p. 263; Guiffrey 1915, p. 19; Earl of Ilchester, ed., *Correspondence of Catherine the Great, when Grand-Duchess, with Sir Charles Hanbury-Williams*, London, 1928; В. Г. Клементьев 1992, “Портреты Жана де Сампсуа в коллекции Китайского дворца-музея”, *Памятники культуры. Новые открытия. Ежегодник 1990*, Москва, 1992, pp. 298–307; Г. Н. Комелова, “Миниатюрист Франсуа Самсуа в России”, *Россия-Франция. Век Просвещения*, Санкт-Петербург, 1992; Lemoine-Bouchard 2008, pp. 456, 472; Oranienbaum.org website; Pappe & al. 2008; RKD database; Schidlof 1964–65, II, p. 771; Thieme & Becker; Барон Николай Николаевич Врангель, “Очерки по истории миниатюр в России”, *Старые годы*, X.1909, pp. 539ff

Pastels

AUTO PORTRAIT avec son épouse [née Marie-Anne Langlois], m/u. Lit.: Barnabé Farmian de Rosoi, *Œuvres mêlées*, London, 1769, II, p. 147

Pierre-Laurent Buirette, dit Dormont de BELLOY (1727–1775), comédien, auteur dramatique, en Russie 1757–61, m/u

~grav.: Augustin de Saint-Aubin, 1765. Lit.: Bocher 1879, no. 17 n.r.

~grav. Chr. F. Fritsch

E. B. BUTURLINA en Feu, 1756 (Lomonosov, Chinese Palace. Comm. Catherine II; Menshikov Palace, Oranienbaum, –1820; Hermitage museum –1853). Lit.: Горбачева 2002, repr. φ



Dekker, v. Gevaerts

Johannes van DIJK (1718–1798), hoogleraar aan de Illustre School te Maastricht 1765,

amateurtekenaar, pstl, 56x45, sd 1789 (Warnsveld PC). Lit.: rKD repr. φ



Mme Ocker GEVAERTS (∞ 1782), née Catharina Dekker (1752–1798), pstl, 33x27.5, sd → 1782 (PC). Lit.: rKD φ

Maria Jacoba GEVAERTS (1767–1837), pstl, 33x27.5, sd 1782 (PC). Lit.: rKD φ

Margaretha Hendrika GEVAERTS (1771–1848), pstl, 33x27.5, sd 1783 (PC). Lit.: rKD φ

Mme Johan Repelaer (∞ 1794), née Adriana Alida GEVAERTS (1769–1858), pstl, 33x27.5, sd 1783 (PC). Lit.: rKD φ

Johan GEVAERTS (1773–1847), pstl, 33x27.5, sd → 1783 (PC). Lit.: rKD φ

Jhr Leonard Robert GEVAERTS (1774–1864), pstl, 33x27.5, sd 1783 (PC). Lit.: rKD φ

Paulus GEVAERTS (1763–1836), pstl, 33x27.5, sd → 1782 (PC). Lit.: rKD φ

Mme Arnold Willem Nicolaas van Tets (∞ 1799), née Cornelia GEVAERTS (1775–1851), pstl, 33x27.5, sd 1782 (PC). Lit.: rKD φ

Mlle Auguste GRONIER, pstl, 51.5x35, sd 1790 (Bern, Dobiaschofsky, 6.V.1994, Lot 309 n.r.)

?Nicolaas HARTINGH (1752–1795); & pendant: spouse (∞ 1772), née Louise Elisabeth Ernestine Meyners (1755–1798), pstl, sd ?1790 (Baarn PC). Lit.: rKD n.r.

Abraham Johan van der HOOP (1775–1826), pstl, 39x29, sd 1785 (Slochteren, Fraeylemaborg). Lit.: rKD repr. φ



Mevr. Jan Nanning van der HOOP, née Adelgunda Christina Wolthers (1752–1806), pstl, 50x41, sd ✓ 1785 (J. G. van der Hoop, Groningen, 1907. PC 2011). Lit.: Moes 1897–1905, II, no. 9246 φ

~repl., 39x29, s (Slochteren, Fraeylemaborg). Lit.: W. Wijnaendts van Resandt, *Het geslacht van der Hoop*, 1926, repr. Lit.: rKD repr. φ

Carel Gerhard HULTMAN (1752–1820), staatsraad, gouverneur van Brabant, pstl, 41x32, sd 1794 (Vallendar, Koblenz, PC 1964). Lit.: rKD n.r., attr.

E. S. KURYAKINA [née Héléne Stepanovna Apraxina (1735–1768)] en Été, 1755 (Lomonosov, Chinese Palace. Comm. Catherine II; Menshikov Palace,

Oranienbaum, –1820; Hermitage museum – 1853). Lit.: Горбачева 2002, repr.; Перова 2006, p. 53 repr. ♡



Anna Maria NAHUYS (1766–), pstl, 60x44.5, sd “De Sompsois 1791” (s Gravenhage, VendueHuis, .III.2007, Lot 25 n.r., with 2 pendants, est. €900–1200, €1400. London, Bonhams Knightsbridge, 13.IV.2011, Lot 261 repr., inconnue, est. £400–600, £300). Lit.: rKD repr. ♡



M. O. NARISHKINA, holding a basket of fruit, Autumn, pstl, 1756 (Lomonosov, Chinese Palace. Comm. Catherine II; Menshikov Palace, Oranienbaum, –1820; Hermitage museum –1853). Lit.: Перова 2006, p. 20 repr. ♡



Paul Petrovitch, later Tsar PAUL I (1754–1801), pstl, p.1764 (St Petersburg, GRM)

Young lady, elegantly dressed, half length, pstl/ppr, 63.5x55.5, sd “De Sompsois 1791” (Amsterdam, Christie’s, 11.II.1993, Lot 257 n.r., D/300–500)

Huberta Catharina NAHUYS (1768–1834), pstl, 60x44.5, sd “De Sompsois 1791” (s Gravenhage, VendueHuis, .III.2007, Lot 25 n.r., with 2 pendants, est. €900–1200, €1400). Lit.: rKD repr. ♡



Willem Adriaan NAHUYS (1732–1815); & pendant: spouse, née Anna Cornelia

Zoutmaat (1735–1810), pstl, 59x44 (dochter Geertruida Elisabeth Nahuys; desc.: PC, The Hague) Lit.: rKD repr., manner of de Sompsois ♡

Willem Frederik NAHUYS (1771–1800), pstl, 60x44.5, sd “De Sompsois 1791”; & 2 pendant ladies, pstl, 59x44, each sd 1791 (s Gravenhage, VendueHuis, .III.2007, Lot 25 repr./n.r., est. €900–1200, €1400. Amsterdam, Glerum, 8.III.2010, Lot 121 repr., without pendants, est. €600–1000, €550) ♡



A. N. NARISHKINA en Air, 1756 (Lomonosov, Chinese Palace. Comm. Catherine II; Menshikov Palace, Oranienbaum, –1820; Hermitage museum –1853). Lit.: Горбачева 2002, repr. ♡



M. V. SALTIKOVA en Automne, 1756 (Lomonosov, Chinese Palace. Comm. Catherine II; Menshikov Palace, Oranienbaum, –1820; Hermitage museum –1853). Lit.: Горбачева 2002, repr. ♡



Four pstls of the Thomassen à Thuessink family, v. Dutch sch.

Assuerus de Sandra VELDTMAN (–1803), pstl, 39x29, 1785 (Slochteren, Fraeylemaborg). Lit.: rKD repr. ♡

Hendrik de Sandra VELDTMAN (1756–1816), pstl, 39x29, 1785 (Slochteren, Fraeylemaborg). Lit.: rKD repr. ♡

Wolthers, v. van der Hoop

Homme en habit gris, pstl/pchm, 81.7x66, sd “De Sompsois pinxit”, 1755–60 (Hermitage OR-43410. All-Union Society “Antiquariat”; acqu. 1938). Exh.: St Petersburg 2001, no. 50 repr. Lit.: Каменская 1960, no. 98 repr. ♠



Four ladies-in-waiting from the small court, as the Seasons, pstl, 1760 (Lomonosov, Chinese Palace)

Three ladies-in-waiting from the small court, as the Continents, pstl, 1760 (Lomonosov, Chinese Palace)

Dame en bleu tenant un loup, pstl/ppr, 82x67, 1760 (Moscow, Pushkin Museum, inv. 3140)

GZK, Leningrad, –1938). Lit.: Данилова
1995, p. 293 repr. ф

