

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

SHELLEY, Samuel

London bpt 22.IX.1754–22.XII.1808

The miniaturist's date of birth has traditionally been given as 1750, but his admission to the Royal Academy Schools on 21.III.1774 states that he was "17 last August", implying 1756. In fact Samuel was born to George and Susannah Shelley of High Street, Whitechapel, and baptised at St Mary's, Whitechapel on 22.IX.1754. (George and Susannah Morley were married on 14.IV.1748 at All Hallows London Wall. Their children George, John, William and Susannah were baptised between 1750 and 1758.)

He exhibited at the Society of Arts (1770) and the Royal Academy (from Whitechapel, 1774–77; 78 Salisbury Street, 1777; Lichfield Street, 1779; 16 King Street, 1780–81; Henrietta Street, 1782–1794; George Street, Hanover Square 1794–1808). Known for his copies of Reynolds, he also made watercolours, prints, book illustrations and some pastels which were engraved by J. R. Smith, Caroline Watson, Bartolozzi and Ryder. His submissions to the 1790 Royal Academy exhibition included whole length portraits of a nobleman and a lady in their coronation robes, a pastel version of one of which appeared in 2004; initialled SS, it might be an autograph repetition, but it the only example apart from a lost drawing in the artist's estate sale. If there is a pastel version of the pendant, it has not been recorded.

"Samuel Shelley from London" died 22.XII.1808 and was buried at St Mary at Finchley, Hendon, 8 days later. His will was proved 4.II.1809; his wife Harriet was already dead, but the remarkably intricate provisions included an annuity to his father George Shelley (who would die in 1811) of Spring Street. His brother William is also mentioned, while his sister Susannah was to receive his household effects and a life interest in such of his "pictures drawings and miniatures as she may choose". A series of six codicils included a bequest to his brother Captain John Shelley. A sale of his collections of books, prints, drawings and miniatures took place in London on 22.III.1809.

Bibliography

Foskett 1987; Graves 1905; Oxford DNB; Sée 1911

Pastels

Countess of KINNOULL, née Sarah Harley (1760–1837), miniature, Royal Academy 1790, no. 364, whole length portrait in coronation robes

~grav. Caroline Watson, mezzotint, 28.6x21, 1798, "From a painting in miniature of the same size by Sam. Shelley – Engraved by Caroline Watson engraver to her Majesty"

J.6758.104 ~version, pstl, 98.5x70.3, sd ← "S.S. 1798" (London, Sotheby's Olympia, 20.IV.2004, Lot 147 repr., Continental sch., est. £1500–2000, b/i. Nottingham, Mellors & Kirk, 8–9.VII.2025, Lot 785 repr., as by Shelley, of Kinnoull, est. £1000–1500; Nottingham, Mellors & Kirk, 5–6.VIII.2025, Lot 572 repr., est. £1000–1500) [new attr., identification 2006] Φβνσ



J.6758.108 Cupid, in crayons (artist's sale, p.m., London, Peter Cox, 22–24.III.1809, Lot 60 part, 2 gns)

Portraits in other media

Robert Auriol Hay-Drummond, Earl of KINNOULL (1751–1804), miniature, Royal Academy 1790, no. 302, whole length portrait in coronation robes

~grav. Caroline Watson, mezzotint 1799