

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

VERNEZOBRE, Jean-Nicolas

Paris 1719–1789

Peintre de l'Académie de Saint-Luc (*reçu* 1750), quai Pelletier, Vernezobre is best known today as a supplier of pastels and as the subject of a pastel by La Tour. His father Jean-Anne Vernezobre (–1764) was a marchand mercier in Paris; in 1719 he purchased, for 25,000 livres, one of the 40 Parisian offices of conseiller du roi, agent de change. The family lived in an artistic milieu; his mother left his sister 20 pictures, and there was evidently a connection with La Tour's teacher Claude Dupouch, since the 1713 posthumous inventory of Dupouch's mother (who also lived in the quai Pelletier) recorded a debt of 130 livres from Vernezobre's father.

Jean-Nicolas was married twice: his first wife was Françoise-Marguerite Desbois (*q.n.*), and apparently a pastellist. His second wife, whom he married in 1760, Angélique-Félicité Lefèvre (who left him a further three sons), is not known to have been an artist, but she was the daughter of Jean Lefèvre (–1744), peintre, ancien directeur de l'Académie de Saint-Luc and his wife, Angélique-Martine Berthelot, who had been a witness at Vernezobre's first wedding. A number of the nine Lefèvre children were painters, among them the pastellist Jean-Baptiste Lefèvre (*q.n.*).

A flower painter, it is unclear if Jean-Nicolas himself worked in pastel, although he may well have been responsible for the 1777 signed pastel that cannot be by his first wife, nor by his brother Mathieu Vernezobre (*q.n.*), whose posthumous inventory in 1762 included a pastel. Vernezobre's cousin, Geneviève Vernezobre de Laurieux, died in 1770; her will noted that she “travaillait en peinture”, confirmed by the presence of a number of portraits and “tableaux” she left, together with painting materials; but not explicitly pastels. There is no evidence that Vernezobre's sister, also Geneviève, was an artist; neither was married.

Vernezobre advertised in *Le Mercure*, XX, 1756, p. 236:

Le Sieur Vernezobre, Peintre, continue de débiter avec succès les Crayons pour peindre en pastel. Il se flatte d'avoir trouvé le secret de rendre tendres ceux qui sont ordinairement trop durs, & les pointes s'en soutiennent: les assortimens sont plus parfaits qu'à l'ordinaire. Il demeure sur le Quai Pelletier, au Lion d'or.

His first wife's estate inventory (AN MC CXXII/711, 11.III.1760), included a stock of 6534 pastel crayons (valued at 330 livres), as well as an account book “Livre de Vente du Pastel” maintained throughout the marriage, from 1751 to 1760. The accounts listed some 26 of Vernezobre's clients, among them Huquier, Loir, Lion, Cherfils, Allais and the abbé de Saint-Non (see Jeffares 2018f for the full list). This list of debtors excludes other clients who had settled their accounts, and so does not exclude the possibility that artists such as La Tour used Vernezobre pastels. The “marchandises et utensils servant en l'art de peinture” were valued by Claude Pougin de Saint-Aubin and Jean-Baptiste Lefèvre (*qq.n.*); in

addition to the made-up pastel crayons, there were—

Onze razoirs a manches de corne servant pour les pierres de couleur, jugés ensemble cy...8#

Soixante sept livres de couleurs differens servant à la composition des pastels jugés la somme de soixante dix huit livres deux sols

Cinq pierres à Broyer avec leurs molettes prisés ensemble la somme de Trente livres

Trois chevalets, deux portes origineux, une Boîte à couleurs <composée de ses palettes ...et Brosses> prisé au valeur de huit livres

Among the creditors was a Sr [?]Jean-Pierre Solvet, marchand de couleurs, owed 217 livres for unspecified items, and a Sr [Denis-Charles] Buldet, m^e peintre, 59 livres 8 sols 6 deniers for supplying “verre blanc qu'il lui a faites”, and Sr [Jacques] Langlois marchand de couleurs, 162 livres.

In 1761 an anonymous advertiser in the *Affiches de Lyon* (17.XI.1762, p. 182) listed for sale “Une boîte de pastel assortie, de Paris, de M. Vernesobre”. An example of one of his boxes (in two levels, 34x18.5x6 cm overall dimensions) from 1772 is in a Swiss private collection (*v. Prolegomena*). Its label states:

A L'IRIS

Rue de Gèvres, par le bout du Pont Notre-Dame, la Boutique en face du Passage du Quai de Gèvres, à côté du Caffé. A Paris.

VERNEZOBRE Maître Peintre, ci-devant Quai Pelletier, pour les bons Crayons de Pastel, vend aussi toutes sortes de bons Crayons à dessiner, Mine de Plomb fine d'Angleterre, & des Crayons dans toutes les couleurs pures avec lesquelles on lave comme à l'Encre de la Chine, & on peint en mignature; toutes sortes de Couleurs aussi pour la mignature, Couleurs fines en huile, Toiles à Pastels, Toiles imprimées pour l'huile, & tout ce qui concerne la Peinture. 1772.

In 1779 he was evidently still supplying these, from the pont Saint-Michel, when the chevalier de Boufflers (*q.n.*) wrote to ask his sister to buy “un assortiment de pastels fermes pour peindre le paysage et la figure en petit”, from “un marchand de couleurs nommé Vernezobre”, for 24 livres. In *Le Provincial à Paris* (1787, p. 75), “crayon[s] de pastel, du sieur Vernezobre” were listed “au méridien, quai Pelletier”.

Vernezobre's own inventory listed the contents of his studio, but provided no detail of the “différens tableaux peints au pastel et à l'huile” as they were “portraits de famille”. The business was continued by his son, Victor-Noël, who trained as a painter (living with his mother still at 48 quai Pelletier in 1797), but from 1809 he was “fabricant de crayons”. The *Almanach du commerce de Paris*, 1811, contained an entry for “Vernezobre, pastels, crayons à dessiner, couleurs fines, rue Pavée-Saint-Sauveur, 10” (the present-day rue Tiquetonne); this appears again in 1816.

Bibliography

Goulon-Sigwalt 1995; Gaston Maugras, *La Marquise de Boufflers et son fils le chevalier de Boufflers*, Paris, 1907, p. 414; Jeffares 2018f

GENEALOGIES [Vernezobre](#)

Pastels

J.754.101 Femme, sd “Vernezobre pinxit, 1777” (Charente PC 1946). Lit.: Ratouis de Limay 1946, as by Mme Vernezobre [new attr.]