

# Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

## Online edition

### VISPRÉ, François-Xavier

Paris? c.1730 – London p.1794

Vispré, dit Saverino, was from a Huguenot family in Besançon; his father, François Visprez or Vispray was a limonadier. While his brother Victor (*q.n.*) was born in Besançon, it now seems that François-Xavier was born in or near Paris, where he received his artistic training. He was in Paris in 1750, where he engraved portraits of the royal family after Liotard as well as a pastel by Allais. He is noted in the *Correspondance littéraire* (13.VII.1750) as “un Allemand qui grave en manière noir”. In 1755 he advertised in the *Affiches, annonces et avis divers* as “Vispré, de Besançon, peint d’après nature sur des miroirs de toilette et sur autres glaces des fleurs, des fruits et des oiseaux...toutes sortes d’ornements chinois”. He also published *Le Moyen de devenir peintre en trois heures, et d’exécuter au pinceau des ouvrages des plus grands maîtres, sans avoir appris le dessin* (1756). The following year found him in Bristol and he then worked in London, exhibiting at the Society of Artists between 1760 and 1783 from addresses in Soho. On 12.IV.1764 the marriage is recorded at St Anne’s, Soho between Francis Xaverius Vispre and one Mary Hunter. From 1776 to 1780 he was in Dublin with his brother Victor; in the Dublin exhibition of 1777, he showed miniatures and portraits in crayons, while his brother showed fruit pieces on glass. In 1786 he published *A dissertation on the growth of wine in England*, Bath, 1786, on the basis of which he was included in Felton (1830) as “a most inoffensive man, of the mildest manners, and of the purest integrity”, much esteemed by Sir Joshua Reynolds. A correspondent sent extracts of the *Dissertation* to the *Gentleman’s magazine* (.VIII.1791, p. 705), calling the author “an ingenious French gentleman” whom he had met at Sir Gregory Page-Turner’s (Vispré exhibited an oil portrait of the baronet at the Royal Academy in 1788). He sent portraits and religious pieces (medium unspecified) to the Royal Academy exhibitions of 1788 and 1789, from 78 St Martin’s Lane. In 1794 he was in Cambridge, advertising portraits for 3–6 gns each.

His pastels are said to show the influence of Perronneau, but that of Liotard is more evident in the Ashmolean picture, which closely resembles the *Dame lisant sur un sofa*; it is on vellum. A pastel of George III, a pseudo-pendant to Liotard’s Viscount Downe, is close to the signed Garrick pastel, and is tentatively attributed to Vispré. Some idea of his art may also be gained from the mezzotints he engraved after Liotard. The handful of signed works do not allow one to resolve the evident confusion between Vispré’s work and that of his brother, although Victor’s recorded work all seems to have been painted on glass. (One wonders if this is a reference to a number of trompe-l’œil paintings depicting framed pictures with broken glass.) Provisionally therefore one assigns all the Vispré pastels to François-Xavier, who also worked in miniature, oil, watercolour and on glass. One should note that his use of paint was very similar to pastel, and some auction records have been confused (e.g. the oil portrait of

Céleste Regnier, who may or may not have been the lawful third wife of the sculptor Roubiliac).

#### Bibliography

Bénézit; Edwards 1808, p. 160; Samuel Felton, *On the portraits of English authors on gardening*, London, 1830, p. 157; Gault de Saint-Germain 1808, p. 311; Geysant & Heymer 2009; Grove 1996; Lemoine-Bouchard 2008; R&L p. 715; Stewart & Cutten 1997; Strickland 1913; Waterhouse 1978; Waterhouse 1981; Wright 2006

#### Salon critiques

Society of Artists 1760, *Imperial magazine*, 1760, p. 246 : Mr Vispré. A celebrated painter in crayons, has two portraits, one of them the famous sculptor Roubiliac, the man himself alive, breathing and just going to speak; most admirable! and himself never cut in marble a better...

#### Pastels

SELF-PORTRAIT, crayons, ov. Lit.: Felton 1830, n.r.

Charles-Geneviève-Louis-Auguste-André-

Timothée d’Éon de Beaumont, dit le chevalier d’ÉON (1728–1810), m/u, Society of Artists 1765, no. 146

~grav.

John FARR reading Horace’s *Odes*, pstl/vl, 44.8x60.5, s “Vispré pinx” (Oxford, Ashmolean, inv. WA1978.53. Richard Farr; George Gibbs of Belmont; Henry Huck Gibbs, 1<sup>st</sup> Lord Aldenham; Alban George Henry Gibbs, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lord Aldenham; London, Sotheby’s, 24.II.1937, Lot 127, as Victor Vispré, unknown man, £50; Gerald Reitlinger; don 1972). Exh.: London 1906, no. 106. Lit.: Brown 1982, no. 1851; Charles Saumarez Smith, *Eighteenth century decoration*, London, 1993, repr. clr; Whiteley 2000, no. 828; Roy Porter, *Enlightenment*, London, 2000, repr.; Outram 2006, pp. 76f repr.; R&L p. 400 n.r. φ



David GARRICK (1717–1779), actor, in a blue coat, pstl, 57.2x48, s “Vispré”, c.1760 (London, Garrick Club. Don Major R. Woodhouse 1924). Exh.: Buxton 1981, no. 27. Lit.: Ashton & al., 1997, no. 245 repr.; Ingamells 2004, p. 186 n.r. φ



~version, pstl, 57.2x49.5, s “Vispré”, c.1760 (Sir W. Bromley-Davenport; London, Sotheby’s, 11.VI.1947, Lot 3). Lit.: Ingamells 2004, p. 186 n.r.

Mrs David GARRICK, née Eva Maria Veigel (1724–1822), dancer, as Mme Violette, pstl, c.1760 (Sir W. Bromley-Davenport; London, Sotheby’s, 11.VI.1947, Lot 3).

GEORGE III, in a blue coat, pstl/ppr, 58x48 (Wykeham Abbey, desc.). Lit.: Millar 1963, p. 190, related to Liotard; R&L R12, fig. 816, ??Liotard; Jeffares 2009 [new attr., ?] ψ



~pseudo-pendant, Viscount Downe, v. Liotard  
Lit.: Ingamells 2004, p. 186 n.r.

Mrs Philippe-Jacques de LOUTHERBOURG, née Lucy Paget (1745–1828), in a blue dress, pstl, 64x49.5 ov. (desc.; A. E. Saunders. London, Sotheby’s, 21.III.1974, Lot 63, £1400, adv. *Burlington magazine*, CXVI/852, III.1974, p. xli repr. London, Christie’s, 22.XI.1977, Lot 105 n.r., as Francis Cotes, £700. London, Sotheby’s, 19.III.1981, Lot 134 repr.). Attr. Vispré suggested Sir Ellis Waterhouse Ⓢ



Photo courtesy Sotheby’s

Louis-François ROUBILIAC (1702–1762), pstl/ppr, 62.2x54.6, Society of Artists 1760, no. ?63 (New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, B1977-14-132. Sitter; desc. great-grandson, François Roubiliac Conder, 1870; his daughter, 1928. London, Christie's, 20.III.1953, Lot 53, as by La Tour. David Drey, London, 1976; Cyril Humphris; acqu. Paul Mellon, .XI.1976). Exh.: New Haven 1979, no. 51 repr.; New Haven 2001, no. 6 repr., attr. Lit.: *The art journal*, .VII.1870, 259; Esdaile, *Roubiliac*, 1928, pp. 180–90; Johnson 1976, no. 82, as Cotes; Kerslake 1977, I, p. 238; II, pl. 697, attr. Vispré; Tessa Murdoch, "Louis François Roubiliac and his Huguenot connections", *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of London*, XXIV, 1983, pp.40–42, 45, pl. VI ◻



Photo courtesy Christie's

Mme Louis-François ROUBILIAC, née Nicole-Céleste Regnier, pnt., 76x63.5, c.1760 (London, V&A, inv. P.43-1953; dep.: Osterley). Lit.: Murdoch, *ibid.*, pl. V, as ??pastel

Miss VERNON (*Attingham Park, National Trust, inv. 607876*), v. Cotes

[George Frederick Nugent, Lord Delvin, 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of WESTMEATH (1760–1814), secretary of the order of St Patrick 1783], pstl/pchm, 51.7x41.2, [c.1783] (London, Christie's, 18.IV.2000, Lot 78 repr., circle of Liotard, ?member of the house of Hannover, est. £3–5000. Newmarket, Rowley's, 24.II.2009, Lot 323 repr., circle of Liotard, est. £1500–2000. London, Christie's South Kensington, 20.VII.2010, Lot 452 repr., circle of Liotard, est. £600–800, £875). Lit.: Jeffares 2006, p. 623Aiv, Swiss sch. [new attr., ?; new identification, ?] ◻



Nobleman, pstl, Society of Artists 1772, no. 342  
Gentleman, pstl, Society of Artists 1775, no. 280  
An artist, pstl, Society of Artists 1783, no. 300  
Young gentleman, m/u, Royal Academy 1788, no. 331  
Gentleman, m/u, Royal Academy 1789, no. 305  
*Man* (London, Sotheby's, 21.I.1982, Lot 74, attr., *unknown man*) [v. a/r Mengs, *Conyngbam*]  
Venus, pstl, Society of Artists 1760, no. 65  
Lady, pstl, Society of Artists 1773, no. 358‡  
Lady, pstl, Society of Artists 1775, no. 278  
Lady with a dog, pstl, Society of Artists 1775, no. 279  
Lady, pstl, Society of Artists 1776, no. 160

Lady, pstl, Society of Artists 1780, no. 303\*  
Lady, m/u, Royal Academy 1788, no. 290  
Lady, m/u, Royal Academy 1788, no. 292  
Lady, m/u, Royal Academy 1788, no. 330  
Lady, m/u, Royal Academy 1789, no. 290  
Portraits, pstl, Society of Artists 1760, no. 63  
Fancy head, pstl, Society of Artists 1760, no. 64  
Pastel, Society of Artists 1770, no. 142  
Conversation piece, pstl, Society of Artists 1772, no. 343  
Portraits, crayons, Dublin 1777  
An Infant Jesus considering the cross, m/u, Royal Academy 1788, no. 3  
St John the Baptist, m/u, Royal Academy 1789, no. 110