

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

VERTUE, George

London 17.XI.1684–24.VII.1756

Engraver, antiquary, art critic etc. His parents were Catholics in the service of James II. Vertue was apprenticed to the engraver Michael Vandergucht for seven years from 1702, subsequently setting up independently. His reproductive work for Kneller, and in particular his portrait of George I, established his reputation. In 1717 he was appointed engraver to the Society of Antiquaries. Apart from an œuvre of more than 500 prints, he left extensive collections of books, drawings and prints dispersed by auction after his death, 16–22.III.1757, and some forty volumes of notes on the history of art acquired and published (1762–71) by Horace Walpole as *Anecdotes of painting in England*.

Only one pastel is known, signed on the reverse, and engraved by him for his series of portraits of English poets. According to one of the engravings, the original was a portrait belonging to John, Lord Somers; there are various versions of this image, thought by Vertue to be by Honthorst but now reattributed to Abraham van Blyenberch (c.1575–1624). Another pastel copy is in the British Museum, attributed to Luttrell.

Bibliography

Alexander 2021; Oxford DNB

Pastels

J.7552.101 Ben JONSON (1572–1637), poet and dramatist, pstl/bl. ppr, 38x28.8, sd *verso* “Ben Johnson/1710./fe G. Vertue” (Oxford, Ashmolean, inv. W.A.C.IV.1.15. Sutherland). Lit.: Brown 1982, no. 1841, pl. 509. A/r Abraham van Blyenberch pnt., c.1617 (London, NPG 2752) φσ



~grav. Vertue, reverse, 1711, for series of English poets

~grav. Vertue, with cloak omitted, frontispiece for Jonson's *Works*, 1756