

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

WEST, Robert

Waterford c.1720? – Dublin 1770

The son of a Waterford alderman, Robert West was trained in Paris, and is reported as having been a pupil of Van Loo and Boucher (although the evidence for his Paris period is unsatisfactory). He “principally excelled in his drawing of the human figure in chalk and crayons” (Pasquin 1796c). Few of his works survive; it is however as the leading light in the Dublin Society school of drawing that West’s importance lies. The drawing school was first established in George’s Lane, Dublin in the early 1740s along the model of the Académie royale, with the students progressing from copying set drawings to models and life studies. Later ornamental design, sculpture and architecture were added. West taught drawing from 1744, and was appointed director when, in 1757, the school became more formally organised and relocated to Shaw’s Court off Dame Street. In 1763 he was suspended on account of mental illness, and although reinstated in 1770, he died soon after. Among the Irish pastellists he trained or influenced were his son Francis Robert West, Hugh Douglas Hamilton, Thomas Hickey, the Healys, Watson, Pope, Lawrence and Forrest (*qq.v.*). It is likely that he is responsible for some of the common themes that run through his pupils’ work: a light, airy technique, using chalk as much as pastel (many of these “pastellists” worked in monochrome, grisaille chalks which may or may not involve pastel in the strict sense), and in some cases working at a larger than life scale.



Bibliography

Bénézit; Crookshank 1969; Crookshank & Glin 1994; Crookshank & Glin 2002; Cullen 1984; *Dictionary of Irish biography*; Dublin 1969; Hamilton 2008; O’Keeffe 1826; Oxford DNB; Pasquin 1796c; Stewart & Cutten 1997; Strickland 1913; Waterhouse 1981; Wright 2006

Pastels

Mrs James ABINGTON, née Frances Barton (1737–1815), actress, bl., white chlk/br. ppr, 24x20 ov., s. “R. West delt” (London, Garrick Club. Charles Mathews). Lit.: Ashton & al. 1997, no. 2 φ



The Rt Hon. Henry Boyle, Earl of SHANNON (1682–1764), speaker of the Irish House of Commons, ?grisaille pstl or chlk/ppr, 62x40.5 (London, Christie’s, 17.v.2001, Lot 58 repr., attr., est. £6–8000, £6000) φ