

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

WATSON, Mrs William

? – Dublin p.1774

William Watson's wife was an artist, exhibiting in Dublin in 1767 (a Dutch kitchen in needlework, from College Green), five crayons in Dublin the following year and in 1770 and 1772. She also showed flower paintings or watercolours at the Free Society in 1771. It appears that she took up art professionally to support herself after her husband's death in 1765.

Her name is unknown, but Irish church records and Beetham's genealogical abstracts note half a dozen marriages of William Watsons recorded in Dublin around the right time. Eliminating those described as bookseller, merchant, staymaker and skinner, the most plausible is the William Watson of City of Dublin Gentleman and Mary Ward of the parish of St Ann Spinster, at St Anne, Dublin, 2.VIII.1757.

Crookshank & Glin 1995 (pp. 28, 74) surmise that she might be the "Mrs Watson" mentioned in a letter from Lady Knapton ("send for a Box of Colours that Mrs Watson has for me") which must date to before the death of Letitia Bushe (17.XI.1757). This is rather uncertain.

Pasquin praised her for her services to the females of Ireland, as "an improver of their taste in the articles of personal adornment". She seems also to have collected natural history curiosities; a specimen of what must have been a death's-head hawk moth, although described as a butterfly, was in the possession of "the ingenious Mrs Watson, fruit and flower painter, Dublin" according to Charles Smith in 1774.

Bibliography

Bénézit; Breeze 1985; Crookshank 1969; Crookshank & Glin 1995; Crookshank & Glin 2002; Dublin 1969; Sée 1911; Charles Smith, *The ancient and present state of the county and city of Waterford*, Dublin, 1774, p. 348; Waterhouse 1981; Wright 2006

Pastels

J.7826.101 Five fruit pieces, crayons, Dublin 1768, no. 115–19

J.7826.102 Two fruit pieces, crayons, Dublin 1770, no. 52

J.7826.103 Four fruit pieces, crayons, Dublin 1770, no. 53

J.7826.104 A bunch of grapes, crayons, Dublin 1772, no. 79