

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

BECKER, Ferdinand Wilhelm

?Köln c.1756 – Bath brd 19.III.1825

The honorary exhibitor at the Royal Academy in 1793, whose name is given by Graves (1905) as “E. Becker” (perhaps from the catalogue’s Esq.), is surely the topographical draughtsman Ferdinand Becker. He later exhibited landscapes at the British Institution in 1810, giving his address as 13 Gay Street, Bath. Although he made a number of engravings, he was primarily a watercolourist. In 1794 he advertised that he had “found our a new mode to facilitate the art of drawings and assist natural genius” using a method of “blots”, probably that of Cozens. He was then living in lodgings at 21 Brock Street, Bath. By 1798 he had moved to 17 Queen Square, where new examples of his landscape drawings were to be seen; he was listed there as a “landscape-painter and drawing-master” in the *New Bath guide* for 1802. At some stage he also taught twice a week at Miss Lee’s school, Belvedere House, Bath.

He was executor of the £2000 estate left by the Italian singer and composer Venanzio Rauzzini on his death in Bath in 1810. In 1812 Becker married a Marianne Deverel of Clifton. He died at 39 Green Park Buildings “universally esteemed and lamented”, aged 68. His widow Marianne, who appears as his executor in the death duty register, died at the same address in 1855; her estate of some £28,000 was left to various charities and to establish a fund for poor clergymen. The year and place of Becker’s birth are given on some websites as Bath, c.1739, without obvious authority, and are less likely to be correct than Farington’s suggestion that he was born in Cologne; the year given here is inferred from his age at death.

Bibliography

British Museum collection database; Raymond Keaveney, *Views of Rome*, New York, 1988; Cecilia Powell, entry in exh. cat., *Savage grandeur and noblest thoughts. Discovering the Lake District 1750–1820*, Wordsworth Museum, Grasmere, 2010; Mollie Sands, “Rauzzini at Bath”, *Musical times*, XCIV, 1953, p. 111; Sloane 1982

Pastels

J.1368.101 A landscape, morning composition, crayons, Royal Academy 1793, no. 643

J.1368.102 A landscape, evening composition, crayons, Royal Academy 1793, no. 664