

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

BELZONS, Jean, dit Zolbius

?Nantes 1768 – Charleston 1801

French miniaturist and painter of stage sets. He may have been the Jean-Antoine Belzon born to a goldsmith in Nantes in 1768. Apparently a pupil of David, he exhibited at the Salon de la Jeunesse in 1791 before emigrating to America. By 1792 he was in Charleston, where he adopted the name of Zolbius (possibly a misspelling of Zolbins, itself an approximate anagram of his name). His career can be followed from entries in the *City gazette and commercial daily advertiser*: on 25.XI.1794 he married Jane or Julia Sully, an actress, sister of the painter Thomas Sully, who was Belzons's pupil before they apparently came to blows. The following year he advertised miniatures at five pounds a likeness (*Charleston city gazette*, 16.VI.1795). He may not have met with great success (Dunlap says "he was a very poor painter"), as by 1797 he was advertising drawing lessons, including "the Art of Drawing in Crayons, Water Colours, India Ink, etc."

Bibliography

Bénézit; Theodore Bolton, *Early American portrait painters in miniature*, New York, 1921, p. 8; Karel 1992, p. 65f; Lemoine-Bouchard 2008; Prime 1932, II, pp. 5f, 44; Rutledge 1949