

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

BLAKEY, Nicolas

London bpt 1.IX.1713 – Paris 20.XI.1758

Also Nicholas; Blakay, Blackey etc. The draughtsman and engraver was a son of the clockmaker William Blakey who, together with another Jacobite from London, Henry Sully, accepted John Law's invitation to set up a factory at Versailles, with 150 English clockmakers and other workers skilled in the production of steel. Blakey died in 1748, but his clock-spring factory at Villiers-sur-Morin was continued by his son William or Guillaume (maître horloger in 1750), who, though born in London in 1711, was naturalised (in 1758) and married a Marguerite-Elisabeth Aumerle (in Paris, Saint-Philippe-du-Roule, 7.XII.1746; fonds Andriveau; she was baptised 17.III.1727 at Paris, Saint-Paul, to Charles Aumerle, a perruquier, and his wife, Marie Martin, who had married in Paris in 1720). Mme Blakey established as a *mercière* privilégiée; her shop in Paris sold a wide range of items of imported Sheffield steel. (By 1762 Marguerite-Elisabeth was "séparée quant aux biens" from her husband in legal documents concerning a business debt.) William's scientific interests extended also to surgical devices such as hernia bands, about which he published a book in 1792. In 1735 William Blakey lodged the painter Théodore André, brother-in-law of the pastellist Charles Martin (*q.v.* for André's conversion and death; perhaps he was related to Marguerite-Elisabeth Aumerle's mother).

Although most sources suggest that Nicolas was born in Ireland at an unknown date, he is surely the Nicolas Blakey, son of William and Elizabeth, baptised at St Martin-in-the-Fields on 1.IX.1713; his brother was baptised to the same couple in the same church on 21.X.1711. (Their parents were the William Blakey and Elizabeth Slade married at All Hallows, London Wall on 14.V.1710 – the mother's maiden name mistranscribed as Hade on their son's 1746 marriage index card cited above.) Nicolas evidently divided his time between London and Paris: he was certainly in Paris from 1739 when he executed an oil portrait of the Jacobite James Keith, brother of the Earl Marischal. The same year his portrait of Louis XV, based on a bust by Lemoine, was engraved by Le Blon.

Over the next two decades he provided illustrations for books published in London, working with Francis Hayman and others for Dodsley and the Knaptons; he also provided illustrations for Hunter's anatomical treatises and for Diderot's *Mémoires sur différents sujets de mathématiques*. In 1747 he attended the pauper's funeral of his friend Andrew Lawrence, known as André-François Laurent (*q.v.*) in Paris. The *Universal magazine*, .XI.1748, listed Blakey as "an eminent painter." "Nicholas Blakey, painter" was recorded in Martlet-court in the Westminster election of 1749 (he voted for Sir George Vandeput, Bt rather than the successful Lord Trentham). A manuscript note by William Hunter in Hatton Garden, dated 15.vi.1749, explains drawings made by Blakey from nature of a female foetus (Hunterian Library, Glasgow,

inv. GB 247 MS Hunter HF192; Thomas 1960, repr.; medium not specified).

Blakey died in Paris in 1758, accompanied by his brother Guillaume. Nicolas's wife, Geneviève-Thérèse Foineau, survived him; they had been married abroad (she was alive when her sister Angélique died, inventaire 17.XI.1762; Guillaume's wife may be the Elizabeth who died in 1770, described as Nicolas's widow). Among his effects were a number of miniatures intended to decorate boxes, as well as "douze petits dessins au crayon, sur vélin et sous verre, dans des bordures de bois noirci..." which disappeared a week before his death, no doubt to escape the clutches of the French treasury, which was entitled to the estate of all deceased foreigners. These drawings may include pastel, but are more likely to be in the artist's habitual graphite on vellum.

Bibliography

Baltimore 1984, pp. 100f; Crookshank & Glin 1994; Crookshank & Glin 2002; Edwards 1808; Figgis 2014; L. Hilaire-Pérez, "Échanges techniques dans la métallurgie légère...", in Jean-Philippe Genet & François-Joseph Ruggiu, eds., *Les Idées passent-elles la Manche?*, Paris, 2007; Gorry Gallery, Dublin, cat. 24.VI.–8.VII.2009, pp. 4ff; Guiffrey 1884, II, pp. 271ff; "Account of Thomas Major's confinement in the Bastille, 1746", *Monthly magazine*, 1809, p. 546; Oxford DNB; Sargentson 1996; Saur; Strickland 1913; K. Bryn Thomas, "A female foetus, drawn from nature by Mr Blakey for William Hunter", *Medical history*, 1960, 4/3, pp. 256f; Waterhouse 1981; *Universal magazine*, .XI.1748; *A copy of the poll for the City and Liberty of Westminster*, 22.XI.–8.XII.1749, London, 1749; parish records

Pastels

J.157.101 LOUIS XV (1710–1774), m/u, a/r Lemoine
~grav. Jakob Christoffel Le Blon (1667–1741), 1739. Lit.: *Gaulois artistique*, 6.III.1929, p. 182 repr.; Baltimore 1984, no. 24 repr.
J.157.103 L'abbé Noël-Antoine PLUCHE (1688–1761), prêtre, m/u
~grav. Louis-Jacques Cathelin



J.157.106 Creation of Adam; & pendant: J.157.107 creation of Eve, charcoal, blue, red chlk, blue pstl, 6.1x9.6 (San Francisco, FAM, Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts, 1963.24.295/296. Le marquis de

Chennevières, L.2072. Berniker. Moore S. Achenbach (1878–1963) 1948; don) φ



J.157.108 La paix entre Henri V et Charles III, cr./pchm
J.157.109 Deux têtes de monstres, cr./pchm
J.157.11 Plusieurs paysages, cr./pchm
J.157.111 Le sacrifice d'Abraham, m/u
J.157.112 Des fleurs, m/u