

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

BRÉA, Paul-Raphaël

Chartres 1738 – Paris 1774

There is much confusion among the various paintings and portraits made in the eighteenth century by homonyms of the Nice religious painters Louis and Jean-François Bréa active in the 15th century. The “Raphael Bréar” recorded in the 1780 sale catalogue has not been traced, but is likely to be a misprint for the Chartres painter Paul-Raphaël Bréa, a member of an extended family of artists of Italian origins. His grandfather, Gian Paolo, or Paul, Bréa, peintre, settled in Chartres in the late seventeenth century, and married a Marie d’Anthuille or Danthuille; their daughter Madelaine married Pierre Berny in Chartres (Saint-Martin-le-Viander, 22.x.1721, where parish registers record the various generations noted here and in the genealogy), while their son, Pierre-Louis-François Bréa, is thought to be the author of a portrait of the oculist Collette known from an engraving by Petit. This work is however similar to a painting signed and dated 1752, several years after François’s death, and other records suggest that there were still more homonyms at work, in oil at least. The portrait of Josefa, marquesa de Aguayo, sd “Bréa pinxit, Nice, 1732” seems to be by the same hand as an unknown sitter signed and dated “par François le jeune et par Lénay en 1728”. Other examples possibly by a member of the Chartres family include a painting in the church of Saint-Sever in Rouen, signed and dated 1745, a 1754 female portrait reported in 1905 and a portrait of the Swiss guard C.-D. de Meuron, made c.1760, signed “Paul-Joseph Bréa”, who may be the same as the portraitist of Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle who signed “J. Paul Bréa” in 1753. Research by Nathalie Lemoine-Bouchard indicates that Jean-Paul-Joseph Bréa (sometime “de Bréa”) was the brother of François, and the father of Charles-Paul-Jérôme (*q.v.*). Since François Bréa was dead by 1749, it would seem that Paul-Joseph should be credited with the impressive still life in the Bowes museum signed “Pein Par de/Brea Le pere/auriginaire de/Monnaco/1761”.

On 26.x.1735 François Bréa married Marie-François Petit, daughter of the Chartres painter Paul Petit. A number of children were born, the last in early 1748; Marie-Françoise was buried on 27.ix.1749, already a widow. Their son, Paul-Raphaël Bréa (baptised 15.iv.1738), peintre, was married in 1761 to a Marguerite Laine or Laisné. They had two children, Marie-Isidore and Adolphe-Nicolas-Joseph, before Raphaël’s death; his inventaire après décès was completed in Paris, 16.v.1774, and his widow also appears in the registres de tutelles concerning their minor children. In both these documents, Raphaël is described as “maître peintre de l’Académie de Saint-Luc”; unfortunately no address is given.

Two pastels from the 1760s, signed Bréa, have hitherto been assumed to be by his cousin Charles-Paul-Jérôme de Bréa, who is only known to have made pastels much later and whose portraits differ from these somewhat awkward, but Italianately coloured, pastels. It is

plausible that they should be reassigned to Raphaël. It would follow that he may well be the inventor of the pastel fixing method advertised in 1771, and would then also be the picture dealer described in those reports. That has not yet been established definitively.

Bibliography

Salmon 1997a, p. 152; “Iconographie de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle”, *Cahiers lasalliens*, 49, 1989, p.117ff; Victor Advielle, “Notice sur le chevalier de Berny”, *Bulletin de la Réunion des sociétés des beaux-arts des départements*, XXI, 1897, pp. 172–87, p. 186; Gabriel Gillard, “Collette de Chamseru”, *Mémoires de la Société archéologique d’Eure-et-Loir*, x, 1896, p. 389f; Archives nationales, AN Y5329, inv. p.m.; registres de tutelles, 16.vi.1774

GENEALOGIES [Bréa](#)

Pastels

J.1792.101 La tête de Moïse, pstl (Paris, Copreaux, 20.III.1780 & seq., Lot 116)