

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

BROWNE, Alexander

fl. London 1659; –1706

Artist, supplier, teacher, auctioneer, printseller and author, at the Blue Balcony, Little Queen Street, London (an address shared with William Salmon, *q.v.*), later Holborn Bridge, “practitioner in limning”. He assembled *A compendious drawing-book* (presented to Samuel Pepys 27.V.1669; Browne gave lessons to Mrs Pepys), published in 1669 under the title of *Ars pictoria*; it described mezzotint processes and included recipes for fabricated sticks of coloured chalks. It drew on the author’s earlier *The whole art of drawing, painting, limning, and etching* (London, 1660), originally invented and written by the famous Italian painter Odoardo Fialetti (*q.v.*). The second edition appeared in 1675 with an important appendix which included “Also the several Ways of Making *Cryons* Or *Pastils*, with the several Ways of Working with them.” The text of this closely matches that of Salmon’s *Polygraphice*. In the *London gazette* for 14–17.IV.1684 he advertised his collection of over 100 mezzotint plates after Van Dyck and Lely for printing which he had obtained an exclusive 14 year royal license, to be sold “at his House in Little Queen street at the blew Balcony near Lincolns Inn fields, where any Person may be furnished with all manner of foreign Prints and draughts, and all manner of Liming colours.” Two years later he advertised prints after Largillierre. In a letter to her daughter (13.II.1682), Dorothy, Lady Browne (wife of Sir Thomas Browne, but not apparently related to the limner) wrote to convey another daughter’s request for her to “by her a set of croians which will cost a crown she us told; perhaps cheaper” from “Mr Browns att the Blew belkcaney in Little Queens Street.”

Bibliography

Joan Bennett, *Sir Thomas Browne: “a man of achievement in literature”*, Cambridge, 1962, p. 51, transcribing the address as “Bell & Key”; Oxford DNB; [TREATISES](#)