

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

GIBSON, Richard

?Cumberland 1615 – London 20.VII.1690

English miniaturist, known as the Dwarf on account of his stature (1.17 m.). Details of his birth remain unclear: traditionally in Cumberland in 1615, but Edmond somewhat improbably suggested he was the Richard Gibson born to John Gybson, a “picturemaker”, and baptised at St Dunstan-in-the-West on 7.VII.1605. He enjoyed success at court and taught the future Queen Anne. Before 1650 he worked for the 4th Earl of Pembroke: Aubrey records that a pension of £100 was awarded to “Mr Richard Gibson, the dwarfe, whose marriage Mr Edm. Waller hath celebrated in his poems, as the Marriage of the Dwarfs, a great master in miniture.” From 1677 to perhaps 1688 he was in The Hague, as tutor to Princess Mary. His wife, née Anne Shepherd, was the same height (she appears as attendant to Mary, Duchess of Richmond, in a painting by Van Dyck at Blenheim); Scharf credits the Hampton Court pastel of the queen to her. Several other members of the family were artists, notably his daughter, Susan Penelope, Mrs Rosse, a miniaturist, and his nephew Edward Gibson (*q.v.*), who was probably the son of his brother Edward who died in 1790. Gibson’s will, made in 1677 but proved 1690, clarifies these relationships: a life interest his real estate left to his wife Anne, then to pass to his three daughter, Susana Penelope, Rose Ann and Elizabeth, with any residue to the children of his brother Edward Gibson by his wife Margaret. He also left a gun by Harman Barne (gunmaker to Charles II) to his friend William Towers (who had in fact died in 1678), a picture collector and dealer who had also worked for Pembroke and travelled to France with the future Charles II.

He is thought to have taken up crayons under the influence of Lely (*q.v.*). The two sheets in the British Museum seem significantly different in technique and level of accomplishment.

Bibliography

John Aubrey, *Natural History of Wiltshire*, 1847 ed., p. 91; Croft-Murray & Hulton 1960; Edmond 1978; Foskett 1987; Foster 1914–16; Neil Jeffares, “William Towers”, *wordpress*, 2023; London 1987a; New Haven 1979; Pilkington 1852; George Scharf, *Catalogue...of the pictures in Blenheim Palace*, 1862, pp. 31f; Woodward 1951

Pastels

J.3472.101 Queen HENRIETTA MARIA (1609–1669), ?watercolour, 40.6x30.4 (Hampton Court, King’s writing closet, 1819; Royal Collection, RCIN 452651). Lit.: W. B. & G. Cooke, *Description of the plates of Thames scenery...*, 1818, as by Gibson a/r Van Dyke, m/u; Pyne 1819, II, p. 59, anon., crayons; Scharf 1862, p. 33 φ

J.3472.103 Young girl holding a basket of flowers, cr. clr/buff ppr, 25.1x19.8, sd ← “RG/1669” (British Museum 1900.0717.41. Colnaghi; acqu. 1900). Lit.: Foster 1914, no. 161, pl. lxiii; Woodward 1951, n.r.; Croft-Murray & Hulton 1960, no. 3, pl. 140 Φ



J.3472.105 Little girl with a coral necklace, holding a doll and a pack of cards, cr. clr/ppr, 25x19.8 (British Museum 1900.0717.40. Colnaghi; acqu. 1900). Lit.: Croft-Murray & Hulton 1960, no. 2 [?attr.] φα

