

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

GRATISE, Sébastien

fl. London 1790–99

Also Gratis, Gratitien; Sebastian. The French-born miniaturist was known for his portraits of the French royal family which were engraved widely. He was active also in the court of Köln before coming to London, where he exhibited at the Society of Artists and the Royal Academy 1790–95. The inscription on a miniature self-portrait (art market 2016) provides some biographical details:

S^{bn} Gratis, peintre de la cour de cologne et Royale academien de londres a peint son portrait l'année 1790 au mois de juillet mois memorable a tout bon francais. ce portrait vous crie vive la constitution vive la liberté. Ma rue great windmille street hay market paroisse de St James.

It is however unclear why AKL suggests that he was also a pastellist. This may be a confusion with a passage in the *Public advertiser*, 4.III.1791 announcing that

Three celebrated French artists, in different ways, have lately come to this kingdom, M. Mesnier in oil, M. de Creux in crayon, and M. Gratis in miniature painting. The little encouragement given to the arts in the present state of their country has made them emigrate, in hopes of finding that encouragement in this kingdom, which it has ever been ready to afford to men of merit in every way.

One wit had already remarked of “M. Gratis and M. Mosnier” (in the same paper, 4.II.1791) “J’espère que le premier ne peindra pas ici suivant *son nom*, & que l’autre de sera pas reduit de vivre *d’ausmones*.”

Gratise did not however leave as quickly as Mosnier or Ducreux. On 20.IX.1797 he married the illiterate Elizabeth Benn at St Martin-in-the-Fields (the allegation made two days earlier describes him as a miniature painter). The rate books show him at St Albans Street East in 1795–97, in a house with a rental value of £45, the second highest in the street.

Bibliography

AKL; Foskett; Goodden 1999; Schidloff 1964; Gerrit Walczak, “Die Französische Revolution und der Kunstmarkt Englands: Jean-Laurent Mosnier in der Londoner Emigration”, *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, LXIX, 2006, p. 41