

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

KEYSE, Thomas

Gloucester 1721 – Bermondsey 1800

Painter of fruit and flower pieces; exhibited at the Free Society, Society of Arts and Royal Academy from 1766 until 1799. In 1770 he founded Bermondsey Spa. On 23.III.1764 he was awarded a bounty of 30 gns “for the discovery of his method of painting in fixed crayons” by the Society of Arts. The award however was conditional upon the disclosure of his secret method, which he vouchsafed before the committee on 9.VI.1764, to their satisfaction; the full minute gives a detailed account of the preparation of these wax crayons and of each of the colours used. Apparently the crayons could not be effaced, either by rubbing or water; “a small fruit-piece [by him] ... was washed in presence of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, &c. without destroying the crayon, or injuring the picture.” It was exhibited again in 1797. Although no longer in the collections of the RSA, what may be an earlier experiment in the medium, dated 1763, appeared at auction in 2016; it appears quite dark overall.

A report of the prize in the *St James's chronicle*, 7.VI.1764, revealed that he was “a painter in Fleet Street.” A portrait of him by Samuel Drummond was engraved by John Chapman and issued in 1797.

Bibliography

Museum rusticum et commerciale, II, 1764, p. 376; “Memoirs of Thomas Keyse, Esq.,” *The monthly visitor*, II, .XI.1797, pp. 385ff; Oxford DNB; RSA archives; Waterhouse 1981; [Treatises](#)

Pastels

J.4288.101 Still life of fruit, pstl, 30.5x46, sd ✓ “T KEYSE. 1763.” (Selborne, Hannam’s, 2–3.XI.2016, Lot 842, est. £600–800) φ



J.4288.104 A fruit-piece, fixed crayons, 1764 (the artist –1797)