

LAVOISIER, Mme Antoine-Laurent, née Marie-Anne-Pierrette Paulze

Montbrison 20.I.1758 – Paris 10.II.1836

Wife of the fermier général and chemist Antoine-Laurent Lavoisier (1743–1794), Marie-Anne Paulze seems to have been gifted in many areas, assisting her husband in his researches, translating scientific papers into French, and developing a considerable talent as an artist which she employed to make the engravings to illustrate her husband's papers. She was born in Montbrison (Auvergne) to Jacques Paulze, sieur de Chasteignolles, a fermier général, and his wife, niece of abbé Terray; she married Lavoisier in Paris, Saint-Roch, on 16.XII.1771, at the age of 13. Her father and husband were among the 28 former fermiers généraux guillotined on the same day, 19 floréal an II.

Grimaux (1992) confines himself to writing that the putative pastel *Autoportrait* portrays “M.lle Paulze enfant” but the family tradition suggests that “le petit pastel serait un autoportrait réalisé avec l'aide de David qui donnait à M.lle Paulze des leçons de dessin”. The association with David is marked by the celebrated 1788 double portrait of Mme Lavoisier and her husband. On receipt of Mme Lavoisier's oil copy of the famous Duplessis portrait of Benjamin Franklin on 23.X.1783, Franklin wrote: “I have long time been disabled from writing to my dear friend, by a severe fit of the gout, or I should have return'd my thanks for her kind present of the portrait, which she has herself done me the honour to make of me. It is allow'd by those who have seen it to have great merit as a picture in every respect; but what particularly endears it to me, is the hand who drew it.”

In 1804 Mme Lavoisier married the American physicist Sir Benjamin Thompson, Graf von Rumford (1753–1814); his portrait was done in pastel by William Lane. This marriage did not last long. She was also admired by Pierre-Samuel du Pont de Nemours. Some of her work descended to the Chazelles family.

Bibliography

Beretta 2001; Fahy 2005; Grimaux 1992; Hoffmann 2002; Madeleine Pinault-Sorensen, “Madame Lavoisier, dessinatrice et peintre”, *La revue du Musée des arts et métiers, Conservatoire national des arts et métiers, Musée national des techniques*, .III.1994, pp. 23–25; Poirier 1993; David Pullins & al., “The Lavoisiers by David...”, *Burlington magazine*. .IX.2021, pp. 780–91; Smeaton 1989

Pastels

J.4648.101 ?AUTOPORTRAIT, pstl, ov. (desc. PC 1999) ◊



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