

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

LESSELINE, Pierre

fl. Caen 1741–; 3.VII.1775

The pastellist, whose name is mistranscribed as “Belsetine” in the 2018 sale catalogue, must be the portraitist Pierre Lesseline (or de L’Esseline as he preferred to write his name, no doubt claiming kinship with an old noble family from Bayeux) known from a handful of oil portraits with dates up to 1760. This “peintre estimé de Caen” is described in various sources as a pupil of Nattier, Tocqué or Restout, but the sources for these claims are unverified – Rouxelin reports him as having been influenced by Restout, although Gouzi 2000 (spelling his name Lessenine) discusses him as a pupil.

Bénet 1899 published extracts from the departmental registres d’impositions (vingtième industrie): Lesseline is recorded in the rue Saint-Jean, paroisse Saint-Pierre between 1741 and 1760, when the tax was reduced from 3 livres to 30 sols, on the grounds that “il fait peu de chose et l’on assure que ladite somme est tout ce qu’il peut payer”. He is then recorded at rue des Quais from 1763 until a final entry for 1773 is struck out, with the word “mort”. (Gouzi nevertheless cites parish registers showing him still alive in 1792; this is probably a confusion with a homonym.) In one register (for 1767), “Pierre Lesline, peintre” is shown as the acquirer of the property from one Étienne Le Roy; the entry is amended to “Vengeon et Lesseline, héritiers de Daniel Lesseline, fils dudit Pierre.” This suggests the Pierre Lesselin whose sons Pierre and Daniel attended the wedding of their sister Marie to one François Dalechamps 25.V.1741 was also a painter. That Pierre was married to a Basile Halot. Pierre fils, who must have been born a.1720, was married before 1738 to a Mlle Pigache and remarried after her death to Marie-Marthe-Madeleine Le Fournier (–1771), and he is surely the painter and pastellist.

Lesseline appears in another legal document at Bayeux, 1.VI.1759: in a sale of land at Missy and at Noyers by François-Guillaume Bauquet de Grandval, lieutenant général criminel au bailliage de Bayeux, to “Pierre Lesseline, bourgeois de Caen, y demeurant paroisse Saint-Pierre”, the price was set at 15,300 livres, together with a promise by Lesseline to “faire et donner le portrait audit sieur de Grandval, estimé à la somme de 120 livres, duquel portrait il le saisira le plus tôt possible.”

An oil of a man in armour appeared at auction in London (Phillips Bayswater, 11.XII.2001, Lot 257). In 2019 the mBA at Caen acquired a superb oil of Mme Vauquelin de Vrigny, sd 1749. Marcheteau de Quinçay 2023 provides a thorough account of the artist’s work, mostly in oil, and some further biographical details, including a date but not location for his death, but gaps in the parish registers still leave some lacunae in his biography.

Bibliography

Bénet 1899; Georges du Boscq de Beaumont, *Souvenirs normands*, 1903, p. 158; Georges du Boscq de Beaumont, *Bulletin de la Société ds beaux-arts de Caen*, IX, 1909, p. 23f; Gomicourt 1901;

Gouzi 2000, p. 153; Christophe Marcheteau de Quinçay, “Le digne retour du portraitiste Pierre Lesseline sur les cimaises du musée des Beaux-Arts de Caen”, *Cahiers du musée des Beaux-Arts de Caen*, 2023/4, p. 56–65; Rouxelin 1768; Penny Arthur, private communication, 2018 **Pastels**

J.1406.101 François-Noel Dallet ou DALET (Saint-Victor de Metz, 27.VIII.1716 – Valognes 1775), fils de Germain Dalet, intéressé dans les affaires du roi, neveu du supérieur du college de Valognes, cr. clr, inscr. *verso* “peint en pastel par M^r de L’Esseline peintre de Caen, en aout 1756” (Caen, mBA, inv. 2020.1.1. Pforzheim, Kiefer, 8.XII.2018, Lot 873 repr., est. €1200; Pforzheim, Kiefer, 16.II.2019, Lot 5671 repr., est. €800) ☐

