

MILLET, Joseph-François, dit Francisque

La Fère 26.VI.1699 – Versailles 16.VI.1777

Contrary to all sources hitherto (2021), Joseph Millet Francisque was the cousin, not the son, of the landscape painter Jean Francisque Millet (c.1666–1723), although he may well have been his pupil. Confirmed by his age at death he was born in 1699, not 1697, to Pierre-Antoine Francisque Millet “peintre” (probably the Pierre Millé, peintre who in 1679 attended the funeral of François Millé Francisque, who died aged 36, the father of Jean Francisque Millet) and Marie-Anne Dufresne; his godparents were Armand-Charles de La Porte, duc de Mazarin (1632–1713) and Hélène-Albertine Le Picart, baronne de Bousies.

Joseph Millet Francisque was *agrégé* 1733 as a landscape painter, *reçu* 1734; he became maître à dessiner des pages de la reine. His life seems to have been spent at Versailles, largely among musicians, a number of whose mariages he witnessed. He was married twice: first, at Versailles, Notre-Dame, on 11.V.1739, to Marie-Anne Ruffet (aged 29), the mother of his two daughters; and secondly, at Versailles, Saint-Louis, on 26.XI.1754, Madeleine Maniclerc (aged 49, 5 years his junior): a witness was Claude Francisque, garde-chasse, his brother. On his burial entry (Versailles, Saint Louis), he was described as “Joseph Millet Francisque...écuyer, peintre de l’Académie royale de peinture et sculpture”, aged 78; it was witnessed by his two sons-in-law, Jean-Charles Riqueur and Jean-Sébastien Piercourt – the latter was an ordinaire de la musique du roi whose wife had died a few months earlier.

He occasionally used pastel for portraits, all of which are now lost with the exception of an apparently signed work known only from a 1912 reproduction which is too poor to assess (but looks like a later pastiche). Diderot dismissed him rapidly, in 1765 and 1769 – “Pont Notre-Dame” is a pejorative term reserved for the “croûtes” sold in the boutiques there in the eighteenth century (*v.* Michel 2007) – although for Mariette, the Poussin-influenced “...paysages de ce peintre son fort estimés; ...tout y est riant.” Laing (in Boucher 1986, p. 60) numbers him among the “uninspired exponents of the fag end of the Claudian and Poussinian traditions.”

Bibliography

Bellier de La Chavignerie & Auvray; Bénézit; Gault de Saint-Germain 1808, p. 294; Mariette 1851–60; Ratouis de Limay 1946; Sanchez 2004

Salon critiques

Denis DIDEROT, *Salon de 1765*, ed. Sez nec & Adhémar 1957–67, II, p. 107:

Millet Francisque, 53, 54:

Autres paysages et têtes en pastel

Au pont Notre-Dame.

Charles-Joseph MATHON DE LA COUR, *Lettres à Monsieur *** sur les peintures, les sculptures et les gravures exposées au Salon du Louvre en 1765*:

[23.IX.1765, p. 9] M. MILLET FRANCISQUE a donné quelques Paysages & deux Têtes au pastel, qui m’ont paru foibles. Je les ai quittés pour examiner un Portrait par M. NONNOTTE. ...

Anon., “Nachricht von dem Gemälden, welche im vorigen Jahre [1765] im Louvre ausgestellt gewesen”, *Neue Bibliothek der schönen Wissenschaften und der freyen Künste*, II/2, 1766, p. 182:

Hr. Millet Franzisque. Eine Landschaft, auf welchem die heil. Genevieve von dem heil. Germain, Bischoffe von Auxerre, eigesegnet wird. Verschiedene andere Landschaften, nebst 2 Köpfen in Pastel.

Denis DIDEROT, *Salon de 1769*, ed. Sez nec & Adhémar 1957–67, IV, p. 84–87:

Mais puisqu’il me reste du temps et de l’espace, il faut que je me débarrasse, et vous aussi, d’une demi-douzaine de pauvres diables qui ne valent pas ensemble une ligne d’écriture: d’un MILLET FRANCISQUE, fort honnête homme, à ce qu’on dit, mais mauvais paysagiste

Pastels

J.5394.101 M. [?Sébastien] GODONESCHE [(– ?1757)], ordinaire de la musique du roi [basse-taille depuis 1718], pstl, Salon de 1745, no. 126

J.5394.102 M. PRUNIER, prêtre de la paroisse Saint-Louis à Versailles, pstl, Salon de 1743, no. 71

J.5394.103 M. SOUBAIN, avocat en parlement, professeur aux belles lettres, Salon de 1745, no. 125

J.5394.104 Tête d’un vicillard, a/r nature, pstl, Salon de 1745, no. 127

J.5394.105 Tête de saint Paul, a/r nature, pstl, Salon de 1745, no. 128

J.5394.106 Dame, pstl, s → (A. E. Smith 1912). Lit.: *Connoisseur*, XXXIV, 1912, p. 250 repr. [??attr.] φπ



J.5394.108 Deux têtes, pstl, Salon de 1765, no. 54

J.5394.109 Les dindons près des meules, soleil couchant, pstl, 26x35, s (Paris, Drouot, 28.III.1923, Lot 85 n.r., H130)