

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

REILY, James

?Dublin ?c.1730 – Rochestown, Co. Meath 1778
No doubt also Riley, Reilly, Riely etc. There is no evidence for his birth other than that he was educated at the Blue-Coat school, Oxmantown (now a suburb of Dublin), 1745–48, before being apprenticed to Samuel Dixon, for whom he coloured prints. He was then sent to Robert West. In 1760 he married a Jane Blackney in Co. Meath; the announcement in *Slater's public gazetteer* described him as “a celebrated portrait painter”. He was mainly a miniaturist, exhibiting in Dublin (from Grafton Street, where he practised after first establishing a studio at Capel Stret) from 1765 to 1779. He is said also to have painted portraits and history subjects. One record of a pastel is known. A rather fine pastel from the following year (although the date is scarcely legible and appears to be 1749) is signed with initials; it has been given both to Reily and to John Russell; neither attribution seems entirely convincing, although there are similarities with the expression in Reily's miniatures. Pasquin's erroneous date for his death, 1780, is corrected by an entry in *Faulkner's Dublin journal* for 27–28.VIII.1778, extravagantly praising him as the “most excellent painter in miniature this country has produced.”

Bibliography

Bénézit; Breeze 1985; Figgis 2014; Foskett 1987; Strickland

Pastels

J.614.101 Gentleman, crayons, Dublin 1768, no. 62

J.614.102 Gentleman in a red coat, pstl, 73x58 ov., sd → “JR pix./17[?]9” (Sotheby's sale, 1980s, details n/k, as by John Russell; PC; Nottingham, Mellors & Kirk, 9.IX.2010, Lot 605 repr., as by Reily, est. £4–6000; Grantham, Golding Young, 3–4.XI.2010, Lot 1046 repr., est. £1500–2000) [attr.] φ

