

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

SMART, John

London 1741–1811

One of the most talented English miniaturists of the eighteenth century. Uncertainties in his origins persist: the long-standing idea that he was born in Norfolk is no doubt a confusion with the East Anglian homonymous landscape painter; while the suggestion in Smart 2014 that he was the John Smart baptised in St Anne's Soho in 1741 seems to have no other support. A more plausible candidate is the John Smart (with a sister of the right age) born in London, 20.I.1741, and baptised four days later at St Luke's, Old Street. His parents were a peruke-maker, also John Smart (–1764), and his wife, née Mary Day. His sister Deborah was born five years before; she appears in his will as Deborah Wright of William Street, Blackfriars, widow of Samuel Wright (whom she married in 1762). In 1763 the miniaturist married a Marian or Mary Anne Howard (Deborah was a witness); she later eloped with William Pars to Rome, where she died in 1778. The circumstances are related in Thomas Jones's memoirs (1803).

Smart was apprenticed to William Shipley for seven years from 23.IX.1755 for a premium of £1. He was awarded prizes by the Society of Arts 1755–58. He exhibited at the Society of Artists between 1762 and 1783, and became successively director (1775) and vice-president (1783). He was in Madras between 1785 and 1795, executing miniatures and portrait drawings. Only one (lost) pastel is recorded, although Smart's "portrait in chalk of William Shipley", which secured him first prize in 1757 at the Society of Arts, might be misdescribed; it is also lost.

Monographic exhibitions

Smart 2014: *John Smart (1741–1811): a genius magnified*, London, Philip Mould, 25.XI.–9.XII.2014. Cat. Emma Rutherford, Lawrence Hendra & al.

Bibliography

Bénézit; Edinburgh 2008; Foskett 1987; Hofstetter 2008; [Jeffares 2014g](#); New Haven 1979; Oxford DNB; Pappe & al. 2008

Pastels

J.6834.101 SELF-PORTRAIT, crayons, Society of Artists 1762, no. 103