

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

STRANGE, Sir Robert

Mainland, Orkney 14.VII.1721 – London
5.VII.1792

Line engraver and draughtsman. The son of David Strange of Kirkwall, Orkneys, he was apprenticed to Richard Cooper, an engraver in Edinburgh, 1736–42. He fought as a Jacobite in the 1745 rebellion. In exile he married Isabella Lumisden, sister of the Pretender's secretary in Rome. He then studied under Descamps in Rouen and Le Bas in Paris 1749–50, returning to London in 1750. Ten years later he set out on a trip to Italy that was to last five years. (A profile by Greuze was made in Paris c.1760.) His work in Naples was mentioned in a letter published in the *London chronicle*, 19.VI.1762, p. 582:

Mr Strange has been at work for above five months; he labours incessantly...his drawings, or rather pictures, afford the highest degree of delight to all men of taste who see them. He has within this twelvemonth been the sole author of an invention, and has brought it to the last degree of perfection; his colouring with crayons, invented by himself, equals the colourings of a Guido or Titian; his Venus and Adonis, his Danae, his heads of Rubens and Vandyke, are absolute wonders, and far beyond any thing that ever was done by a master; besides many other of his subjects in this new way.

Sir Horace Mann also commented on his success in this “new method that he has invented of drawing in colours” (letter to Walpole, 4.XII.1762); however Lumisden seems to suggest that the method was watercolour on animal skin rather than pastel. Strange was knighted by George III in 1787.

Bibliography

Alexander 2021; James Dennistoun, *Memoirs of Sir Robert Strange*, London, 1855; Edinburgh 2008; Ingamells 1997; Oxford DNB