

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

SYKES, Francis Valentine

London 1715 – Yarmouth c.1.VIII.1771

A number of artists called Sykes were active in the eighteenth century. The painter and collector–dealer William Sykes and his son, of the same name, died in 1724 and 1728; the former's sale included some pastels, notably by Greenhill. His grandson Francis Sykes, whom his father wished to be apprenticed to Sir James Thornhill, was trained by Hogarth (after whom he made a couple of prints in the 1730s) and Zincke, and today is known only for a handful of enamels. He claimed to have taught Samuel Cotes.

Sykes settled in The Hague in the early 1740s (where a son was born in 1743/4; Henry Sykes was later known as a retailer of luxury goods and scientific equipment in the *pace du Palais-Royal*, Paris). By 1752 he was in Paris, evading his English creditors. There he was briefly imprisoned in the Bastille in 1755 for failing to deliver an enamelled box for the *maréchal de Richelieu*. On his return to London he continued to work as a miniaturist, and, in 1759, he made several enamels after Liotard's portrait of Princess Elisabeth Caroline. It is possible that he made the anonymous pastel copy that is also in the Royal Collection, substituting a blue dress more suitable for representation in enamel than the shot silk in the original. He is not otherwise known to have used pastel. By 1770 he had moved to Yarmouth where he died in debt.

Francis Sykes is often confused with a George Sykes who exhibited (conversation pieces and portraits, some made with a hot poker) at the Society of Artists in the 1770s; he settled in York where he was still living in the early nineteenth century (he may have been associated with Richard Wilson, as Carey reports an anecdote from this Sykes concerning Wilson's use of a decayed cheese as a model for his landscapes). No connection has been established with a pastellist signing C. Sykes in 1779 (*q.v.*).

Bibliography

[Jeffares 2015h](#); *Diary of Syllas Neville 1767–1788*, Oxford, 1950, p. 84 *et passim*; James Sykes, *Notes et queries*, 1882, p. 392f