

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

WRIGHT, Thomas

fl. London 1688–1737

According to the inscription the Shakespeare pastel was made by Wright in 1688 from a painting in his own collection. Thomas Wright of Covent Garden owned the Soest portrait in 1725 when it was engraved by John Simon. The pastel is evidently inspired by this, but differs both from it and from the engraving. A further inscription informs us that—

Thomas Wright was contemporary with Sir Godfrey Kneller and an artist of no mean ability [xx] by [xxx] these portraits painted of the constitutional judges by whose [integrity?] and knowledge they liberated from the [xxxx...] painting placed by the Corporation of London in their Guild Hall.

Thomas Wright was a painter and picture dealer, based in the Little Piazza, Covent Garden from 1723 until 1735. He attended the sales of the Duke of Portland and the Earl of Radnor in 1722, 1724; the Earl of Derby and Sir William Heathcote were notable clients. Wright was a steward at the Virtuosi of St Luke in 1732. In 1730 he made a competent oil portrait of Joseph Bowles to the Bodleian, of which the sitter was librarian. A portrait of Simon Yorke of Erdig was recorded in 1737. Richard Wilson was apprenticed to him.

He may have been the son of John Michael Wright (*q.v.*) mentioned in his will made in .III.1694 (his collection was left to his nephew, the painter Michael Wright, while the books were to be sold for the benefit of his son Thomas, then abroad). Vertue however says that Wright's son died in Rome.

For Edwards he was “a portrait painter of very slender abilities”; Farington agreed, saying that his reputation was based on his “very indifferent” copies of Van Dyck and other masters.

Bibliography

W. G. Constable, *Richard Wilson*, Oxford, 1953, p. 17; Oxford DNB, *s.v.* John Michael Wright; Waterhouse 1981; artworld.york.ac.uk; accessed 25.IV.2013

Pastels

J.8062.101 William SHAKESPEARE (1564–1616), playwright, pstl/ppr, 32x25, 1688 (Stratford-upon-Avon, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, inv. SBT 1994-19/123. Sir Arthur Hodgson of Clopton House 1904). Lit.: Sir Sidney Lee, *A life of William Shakespeare*, 1899, p. 295, as by John Michael Wright ◊

