BRÉA, Charles-Paul-Jérôme

Rouen 4.VII.1740 – Paris 4.IX.1820

While there is considerable confusion, and it is by no means certain that all the pastels by "Bréa" are by the same hand, it seems likely that one figure, Charles-Paul-Jérôme Bréa or de Bréa, produced prints, miniatures and enamel portraits, as well as some pastels from the 1790s on, while it has been suggested that a small group of pastels from the 1760s (there seem also to be minor variations in the form of the signature), could be by a different hand: if so, the most likely candidate may be Charles-Paul-Jérôme's cousin Pierre-Raphaël Bréa (*q.v.*), from a family of Italian painters based in Chartres (since the late seventeenth century). Research by Nathalie Lemoine-Bouchard in 2013 has clarified the origins and relationships of the various painters in this family, but questions remain.

Of Charles-Paul-Jérôme de Bréa's initial training, nothing is known before his arrival in Paris, documented on his first wife's death certificate (23.I.1770; she was Marie-Jeanne Brierre). Although Raphaël Bréa's death in 1774 makes it impossible for him to have made all the pastels listed below, uncertainty continues to surround the identification of the pastellist, painter and picture dealer responsible for one of the numerous claims to have invented a new process of fixing pastel: according to an announcement in the *Avant-Coureur* (7.I.1771, pp. 7f, followed also in *Annonces, affiches et avis divers*…, 7.I.1771, p. 15):

> Le Sr BREA, Peintre en huile & en pastel, tenant boutique *à Paris, rue Plâtrière, devant la grande Poste*, se flatte d'avoir trouvé le secret de fixer le pastel & le dessin au crayon, & de leur donner un coup-d'œil permanente & beaucoup plus beau. On peut voir chez lui des pastels qu'il a fixés, & s'assurer de la solidité de son secret en passant, dessus, la main ou même une pierre-ponce sans que la couleur en soit altérée. Le Sr Brea enseigne le dessin, tient Collection de Tableaux en huile Italiens, Flamans & Français, & fait des envois en Province.

Again in the *Mercure de France*, .III.1771, pp. 179f (the same text, but printed by Quillau, rue de Fouarre, à l'Annonciation, was used also as a label, found pasted *verso* to one example J.179.1212):

> PEINTURE: *Pastel fixé.* Le Sr Brea, peintre en huile & en pastel, vient de découvrir le secret de fixer le pastel & les dessins; il les rend plus solides & les met à l'abri de l'humidité. Le Sr Brea fera voir au Public la solidité de son secret, en passant la main & même une pierre-ponce sur les pastels ordinaires ou dessins, sans que la couleur en soit altérée; il fera voir que des tableaux qui ne deront fixés qu'à moitié, & l'on se convaincra par-là que la couleur en est toujours la même; sa boutique, où l'on trouvera toujours de quoi satisfaire la curiosité des amateurs en ce genre, est rue Plâtrière, vis-à-vis la grande poste, dans l'allée de la lingerie au N° 96: il a un très-beau cabinet où l'on trouvera des tableaux en huile, en tout genre, des meilleurs maîtres Italiens, Flamands & François; il peint le portrait, montre le dessin & fait des envois en province.

The *Mercure* version, with its concept of the half-fixed pastel, sounds suspiciously close to the Loriot invention. Again in the *Annonces*, 2.V.1771, p. 375, "Le sr Bréa, peintre, ci-devant rue de Grenelle-Saint-Honoré, demeure présentement rue du Dauphin, près de Saint-Roch. Il a toujours un très beau cabinet de tableaux italiens, flamands et français, &c."

This Bréa was included in the *Liste générale des maîtres peintres…de Saint-Luc* of 1771 as a "peintre en huile et au pastel, inventeur du secret de fixer le pastel"; rue de Grenelle-Saint-Honoré, then rue du Dauphin. It is likely that the same Bréa was the purchaser of five lots (paintings by Breughel, Dou, Titian and Velázquez) at the duc de Choiseul's sale on 6.IV.1772, although the reappearance of these items in the prince de Conti sale indicates that he was probably acting as agent for the prince.

Thus, the inventor is known to have been a member of the Académie de Saint-Luc (and may be assumed to have practised in pastel): we know that Pierre-Raphaël Bréa met these qualifications from contemporary documents, while there is no firm evidence that Charles-Paul-Jérôme did so. On the other hand the latter's interest in various media encourages one to think of him as the inventor, while the presence of a printed notice dated 1771 (not seen) reported by the auctioneer as explaining his technique on the back of a galant pastel of the same date points to retaining the miniaturist as the early pastellist. The ambiguity of course is resolved after Pierre-Raphaël's death in 1774. Charles-Paul-Jérôme's address is given as rue Neuve, paroisse Saint-Eustache in 1775, on his first wife's posthumous inventory (apparently conducted five years after her death). On 3.XI.1781, at Saint-Sulpice (contrat 27.X.1771, AN MC/ET/XXVI), he was remarried, to a Françoise-Perpetué Guillaume dit Marange (1761–1838), the daughter of Pierre Guillaume dit Marange, maître d'hôtel chez le marquis de Pange (they were divorced in Paris, 21.III.1794).

What is clear is that Charles-Paul-Jérôme was active as a miniaturist (working in the style of Hall, of whom Schidlof believes he may have been a pupil and whose style he followed closely), producing genre pieces in various media and developing an interest in mezzotint engraving. He was the subject of Hall's earliest enamel (1771; Louvre), and was also portrayed by Fragonard as one of his *figures de fantaisie* (Bréa left the portrait, along with all his other pictures, to the painter Jean-Claude Naigeon, *q.v.*). In 1786–92 he resided at rue Montmartre, vis-à-vis Saint-Joseph, then at the nearby rue du Croissant, an address given on one miniature and several engravings. The subjects of his own engravings included portraits of figures from the theatre (Mlle Renaut, de la Comédie italienne) or politics (Mirabeau, Robespierre or Sieyès, who was a friend) and after Greuze (Franklin) as well as genre or galant pieces (Greuze, Lavreince), using various techniques; there are also miniature versions of some of these. Greuze mentions a miniature copy of his 1791 portrait of Mme Deviette (or de Viette) to be made by "de Bréa, peintre en miniature" for a snuffbox in a letter of 13 prairial an IX (2.VI.1801, cited Vaillat 1912, p. 88). A number of Bréa's portraits of Revolutionary celebrities were engraved by Johann Heinrich Lips for a series published in Leipzig from 1796: they are "well designed and engraved, but the likenesses not always preserved" according to Smollett (*Critical review*, XVII, 1796, p. 562).

Bréa was among the artists and scientists awarded support (2000 livres) by the Convention nationale on 3.I.1795. He signed the petition to have Vigée Le Brun's name removed from the list of émigrés (1799). In 1799, citoyen Bréa reported jointly with Jean-Claude Naigeon on behalf of the Conseil de conservation des objets de sciences et d'art concerning the Lemoyne bust of Trudaine deposited at the Faculté de droit (they thought it was not good enough to join the Louvre's collections). In 1802 Bréa published an engraving after Vigée Le Brun's portrait of Calonne, suggesting that he too may have travelled to London. During the First Empire a Charles Bréa held the position of Messager d'état at the senate, and remained in an honorary capacity at the chambre des Pairs from 1816 until his death.

On the back of the highly finished portrait of the philosopher Laromiguière of 1813 Bréa is described as "ancien peintre du comte d'Artois", but this has not been corroborated. Ratouis de Limay unfairly considered it as "assez médiocre".

Bibliography

Bénézit; Blumenfeld 2013; Chatelus 1991, p. 72f; *Œuvres de M.-J. Chénier*, Paris, 1826, V, p. 187; Fragonard 2017; Furcy-Raynaud, "Le buste de Trudaine", *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de Paris et de l'Île-de-France*, XL, 1913, pp. 217f; *Gazette nationale*, 107, 6.I.1795, p. 2; Goncourt; Guiffrey 1915, p. 205; *L'Intermédiaire des chercheurs et curieux*, 10.VII.1905, LII, col. 6; Lemoine-Bouchard 2008; Lemoine-Bouchard 2014; Michel 2008; New York 1996, pp. 93f; Ratouis de Limay 1946; Salmon 1997a; Sanchez 2004; Saur; Schidlof 1964–65; Thieme & Becker

GENEALOGIES Bréa

Pastels

J.179.101 M. [?Guillaume] BURARD, docteur en médecine [?l'un des fondateurs de la Mère-Loge du Rite philosophique, médecin de Voltaire], pstl, 64x53 ov., sd ↘ "Bréa/1787" (Paris, Hôtel Dassault, Artcurial, 19.VI.2007, Lot 16 n.r., est. €800–1200, €991)

J.179.1015 Mlle Renée CASSELLE (1742–), pstl/ppr, 44x34, sd *verso* "fait par/Monsieur Bréa 1765/Mlle renée casselle agee de 23" (Dijon, Sadde, 19.III.2020, Lot 200 repr., est. €800–900) φδ

J.179.102 Emmanuel-Étienne DUVILLARD de Durand (1755–1832), mathématicien et actuaire, à 59 ans, pstl, 1814 (desc.: Mme veuve [Louis-Adrien] Boutroux, [née Christine-Félicité Duvillard, petite-fille du sujet], Rouen, 1905). Lit.: Albert Quiquet, "Les portraits de Duvillard", *Bulletin trimestrial de l'Institut des actuaires français*, 143, .XII.1930, pp. 277ff

J.179.103 ~cop. Mme Boutroux, en l'habit à palmes vertes des membres de l'Institut., pstl, 57x47

J.179.1035 Le président Charles-Jean-François HÉNAULT (1685–1770), de l'Académie française, pstl, 58x48, sd ↙ "Brea/1771" (Venette, Accord, 26.IX.2026, Lot 203, Éc. fr., ?Baron A. Husson de la Moutière (1715–1789), est. €200–300). A/r Pougin de Saint-Aubin, pstl, J.6.13 [new attr.; new identification] φν

J.179.104 Pierre LAROMIGUIÈRE (1756–1837), pstl/ppr br., 60x49, sd ↘ 1813 (Versailles MV 4828, inv. DESS 1173. M. de Chabrier; Louis-Philippe; dep. Louvre, inv. 25045). Exh.: Versailles 1997, no. 35. Lit.: Salmon 1997a, no. 46 repr.; Salmon 2018, p. 326 φσ

J.179.107 Michel-Philippe dit Théophile MANDAR (1759–1823), écrivain, homme politique, pstl/ppr, 54x44.5 ov., sd "Bréa 1792"; & pendant: J.179.108 épouse, pstl/ppr, 54x44 ov. (Paris, musée Carnavalet, inv. D.9032/9033. Legs Mme Veuve Moreau 1935). Exh.: Paris 1984a. Lit.: Montgolfier 1982, no. 7/8 repr. Φσ

Photos courtesy musée Carnavalet

J.179.112 M. [?Jean-Louis] ROCHEUX DES TOURS [?avocat au parlement, de Lormes, près de Dijon, ou son fils Jean-Louis, reçu docteur en médecine 1762] en habir noir tenant une lettre, pstl/ppr, 74x60, sd ↙"peint par Brea le 31 8bre 1765" (Paris, Drouot, Cornette de Saint-Cyr, 13.XII.2013, Lot 7 repr., est. €800–1200, €1030) [?attr.; cf. Raphaël Bréa] φ

J.179.115 Homme avec une carte, pstl/ppr, 63x53, sd → "peint par Bréa – 1765" (Paris, Drouot, Thierry de Maigret, 7.VI.2002, Lot 1 repr., est. €1500–2000, b/i; Paris, Drouot, Thierry de Maigret, 6.XII.2002, Lot 54, est. €1200–1500, €1200) [?attr.; cf. Raphaël Bréa] Φα

J.179.118 Homme en habit noir, pstl, 62x51, sd ↙ 1766 (Bordeaux, Jean Dit Cazaux-Sahuquet-Royère, 17.IV.2008, Lot 55 repr., est. €1000–1200) [?attr.; cf. Raphaël Bréa] φα

J.179.119 Homme en habit bleu aux brandebourgs, gilet rouge, pstl, 59x49, sd ↙ "Cte [?Cls] de Bréa" (Paris, Drouot, Beaussant Lefèvre, 21.III.2025, Lot 17 repr., est. €800–1200) φ

J.179.1191 Homme en habit bleu foncé, pstl, 65x50, sd ↙ "Cte "de Bréa" (Versailles, De Baecque, 16.VI.2025, Lot 31 repr., est. €800–1000; Versailles, De Baecque, 24.IX.2025, Lot 27 repr., est. €400–600) φ

J.179.12 Jeune fille en robe rose tenant un oiseau, pstl, 59x47 ov., s ← "de Bréa" (Anita Semail; vente p.m., Paris, Drouot, Choppin de Janvry, 30.III.2009, Lot 96 n.r., est. €1200–1500, €4800) φ

J.179.121 Femme en robe blanche tenant une lettre, pstl, s (Paris, Drouot, Crait & Müller, 19.XII.2016, Lot 125 repr., est. €300–400) φ

J.179.1212 Femme en robe blanche décolletée, pstl, 39x31, *verso* étiquette imprimée (Paris, Drouot, Giquello, 10.X.2025, Lot 119 repr., est. €400–600) φ

J.179.122 Venus and a nymph confiscating Cupid's flaming arrows, pstl, 59x47, sd ↘ 1771, printed label *verso*, 1771, explaining Bréa's technique (New Orleans, Neal Auction, 4.III.2006, Lot 523 repr., est. $1200–1800, b/i; New Orleans, Neal Auction, 23.VII.2006, Lot 1062 repr., est. $1000–1500, $686) φ