



The Tollet painting today

Artiste, Jacqueline Tollet-Loeb, writes:

When Tony Tollet died in 1953, people said: "Don't ask for whom the bell tolls, the bell for Tollet tolls."

Previously, referring to his model, they had said: "Don't ask for whom the belle toils, the belle for Tollet toils."

Later, when she died, they said: "Don't ask for whom bell tolls; the bell for the belle who for Tollet toiled tolls."

After his death, where he used to work, a sign read: 'Studio of Tollet, to let.' (that's Tollet *not* Toilet nor Toilette, a subject which, however favoured by many painters, he avoided studiously.)

Other Tollet dates

- 1896: Awarded medal of the show of Lyon with the Death of Arthus
- 1909: His workshop destroyed by a fire in which a large number of works were destroyed. Edouard Herriot, then mayor of Lyons, came to see the extent of the disaster.
- 1925: Made knight of the Legion of Honour and becomes president of the Society of Fine Arts
- 1928-29: President of the Academy of Lyons
- 1930: Knight of the Order of St. Gregory the Great.

Awards

- 1878 médaille d'honneur de l'École des beaux-arts de Lyon.
- 1879 : prix de Paris de l'École des beaux-arts de Lyon.
- 1882 : médaille d'or à l'Exposition de Lyon.
- 1882 : prix Dupasquier par l'Académie de Lyon pour De la coupe aux lèvres.
- 1882 : grande médaille à Tunis.
- 1879 : prix de Paris.
- 1885 : second prix de Rome (hôtel du département du Rhône).
- 1896 : médaille d'honneur du Salon lyonnais des beaux-arts pour La Mort d'Arthur.
- 1909 : 3e médaille au Salon des artistes français.
- 1936 : médaille d'or du Salon lyonnais des beaux-arts.

Tony Tollet....



... and his portrait of
Jean-Claude Colin

Ron Nissen SM, 2018



Tony (Jean Jules Antoine) Tollet was born on Nov 6, 1857 at 19 rue Bourgelat in the district of Ainay of Lyons, France. He was to become one of the most prominent portrait artists of his time in France.

His youth was marked by an illness that immobilised him. It was at this time that he learned drawing; at seven, he gave his father a beautiful *head of Romulus* in black pencil.

In 1873, he entered the School of Fine Arts (École des Beaux-Arts) in Lyons, where he was taught by Jean-Baptiste Danguin in the live model class and Michel Dumas in the painting class.

In 1879, he won the Paris Prize, which allowed him to spend several years at the Paris School of Fine Arts in painters' studios such as Alexandre Cabanel, Luc-Olivier Merson and Albert Maignan. He became a close friend of the Flandrin family.

He was awarded the second Grand Prix of Rome for *Themistocles at the home of Admetus*, to be acquired in 1885 by the Rhone prefecture.

Returning to Lyons with his ailing mother, he settled permanently, and in 1890, married Jeanne Pailleux. They had six children and twenty-eight grandchildren.

Tollet was prolific in his portraiture, painting the personalities and elite of Lyons.

He was a passionate teacher and taught drawing first at the municipal school of Guillotière, then at the small

college where his students included Raoul Servan, Berthola, Renard, Jean Puy, Victorine Bouvier, Madeleine Plantey, Marie-Louise Chabert-Des-Nots.

His large studio on rue Bourgelat became a meeting place for artists where he gave classes twice weekly.

Tollet painted until 1942 when he was 85 years old.

He was honorary director of the Municipal Drawing Courts of Lyons, honorary president of Lyonnaise des Beaux Arts. He had been president of the Academy of Sciences, Belles-Lettres et Arts de Lyon, and was president of the Artists Lyonnais Relief Society and founding president of the Union of the Artistic Societies of Lyons, until his death on Jan 25, 1953.

A street in Lyons bears his name, rue Tony-Tollet.

Tollet's portrait of Jean-Claude Colin

In the mid 1920s, Tollet was asked by the Marists of the Fourvière community in Lyons to produce a portrait of their Founder based on photographs taken during the 1866 general chapter of the Marist Fathers.



The Tollet painting in 2012



Tony Tollet, ca

In the portrait Tollet removed the spectacles of Fr Colin and replaced the crucifix (in one of the original photographs) with a statuette of Our Lady of Victories.

A contemporary commentator observed how Tollet had given *'dignity, height and a certain nobility'* to his subject which perhaps could have been more *'human and paternal'*. *'The technique is excellent'*, he said, *'but leads one to think more of a vicar general of Lyons than the humble Founder of the Marists'*.

A second portrait was also commissioned and sent to the Marist General House, by now in Rome. Fr Ernest Rieu was the Superior-General. However, since his resignation through ill-health in 1947 this painting has never been seen.

The original portrait first hung at the Marist house of Fourvière and was later transferred to La Neylière, the resting place of Fr Colin.

In ca 2010, it was noticed lying, dust-covered, against a wall in a corner of the Colin Museum at La Neylière.

In 2012 the canvas was cleaned and carefully photographed. Images have since been widely circulated throughout the Marist world.

After renovations at La Neylière in 2015, the portrait was hung in the study of Fr Colin.