

Adèle de Romance, née Marie-Jeanne Mercier, was born in Paris on December 7, 1769. She was the natural daughter of Hugues-Étienne, Marquis of Romance-Mesmon, and a married woman, Jeanne-Marie-Bernadine Mercier. She adopted the name of Adèle de Romance when she was legitimated by her father at the age of nine.

De Romance married a miniaturist, François-Antoine Romany (no relation, in spite of the similarity of the surname). It is unclear if they were married before the birth of their daughter Aglaé-Emée on March 29, 1788, or whether the union was legalized two years later. The couple divorced on July 15, 1793. De Romance had two other children, both illegitimate. Louise-Lucie Cosnefroy de St. Ange, born on January 2, 1797, was the natural daughter of Charles-Gabriel-François Cosnefroy de St. Ange. Edmond-Jules Feline Romany, born on March 31, 1806, was the natural son of Ignace-Benjamin Feline. De Romance later took on the care of one of her grandchildren, raising Louise-Lucie's younger daughter, Mélanie Cosnefroy de St. Ange, from the age of 4 years.

De Romance is said to have studied painting with Jean-Baptiste Regnault, who had a studio for women pupils that was supervised by his wife. No further details of her artistic education are known. She participated in the Paris Salons for forty years, from 1793 until 1833. She used several variants of her maiden and married names when she exhibited, including de Romance, Romany, Romany-de-Romance, and De Romance Romany. She was almost exclusively a portraitist, although she did produce a few paintings with mythological or genre themes. She painted many actors and actresses, hence the largest collection of her works is at the Comédie-Française. Between 1800 and the end of the First Empire, she garnered a number of approving comments from journalists. She received a second-class medal, worth 250 francs, at the Salon of 1808. Works that were particularly admired included her 1800 self-portrait with her children, the *Portrait de Mlle A.P.* that she exhibited at the Salon of 1806, and portraits of the actresses Mlle Raucourt (Salon of 1812 and 1814) and Mlle Emilie Leverd (Salons of 1808 and 1814). Her excellent 1818 *Portrait de Talma* was long misattributed to François Gérard. Her later work is more inconsistent in quality. She has received little critical attention since her death.

Besides her activity as an artist, de Romance engaged in various financial speculations during the Revolution, Consulate, and Directory. She purchased a house and used the mortgage as security to obtain loans, apparently using the monies to finance other ventures. Her estate was worth over 8000 francs when she died on June 7, 1846.

OEUVRES

- 1812 (Salon, no 290) : *Daphnis ayant apporté à Philis un oiseau, elle l'en récompense par un baiser*. Non localisé.
- 1812 : *Portrait de Mad. Fleury, artiste du théâtre de S. M. l'Impératrice* (Salon de 1812 no 291). Huile sur toile. Mise en vente à Sotheby's, Monaco, le 21 juin 1986, no 69 -- Oppenheimer, 1997 (voir *infra*), p.40, fig.3.
- v.1812 : *Portrait de Mad. Raucourt, dans le rôle d'Agrippine, au moment où elle dit à Néron: asseyez-vous, Néron* (Salon de 1812 no 292). Huile sur toile. Paris, Comédie-Française.
- 1812 (Salon, no 293) : *Portrait de Mad. Dugazon*. Probablement le *Portrait de Mlle. Dugazon* attribué à Jacques-Louis David reproduit dans *Important Oil Paintings...Fine French Furniture of the Eighteenth Century...Sculptures and Other Objects of Art...The Collection of Countess de la Béraudière* (New York, American Art Association, Anderson Galleries, Inc., 1930), no 68.
- 1812 (Salon, no 294) : *Portrait de Mlle Thibaut*. Non localisé.
- 1812 (Salon, no 295) : *Portrait de M. J.****. Non localisé.
- 1812 (Salon, no 296) : *Portrait de M. le chevalier de Chavanges, aide de camp de S. Ex. le duc de Castiglione*. Non localisé.