

# Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

## HOUDON, Mlle

*fl.* Paris c.1772

The sculptor Jean-Antoine Houdon sent a large consignment of his work to Ernst II. von Sachsen-Gotha around 1772, and added several pastels by one of his sisters, Marie-Anne (Paris 2.IX.1743–6.IV.1801) or Madeleine-Pélagie (Paris 8.VII.1746–6.IV.1795). These included one which had been fixed using the Lorient process and others which had not. Writing dismissively (in an accompanying letter) about the works, “de peu de valeur”, by “une de mes Sœurs”, the sculptor invited the duke see whether Lorient’s method could indeed withstand his passing his hand over the surface. Although lost, the description of [J.4052.101](#) suggests that it may have been a copy after Roslin’s well-known oil portrait.

Houdon’s sisters were entitled to a half share of the annuity of 3000 livres Houdon declared in his 1786 marriage contract (Frick 1947).

In a short note Lesort 1935 mentioned the circumstances in which Marie-Anne died: in a room in a pension at 3 rue d’Orléans-Saint-Marcel, illuminated by a single window with a handful of belongings (not including any evidence of artistic endeavour), her heirs being her three brothers. This suggests the pastellist may have been the younger sister.

After Pélagie’s death, Houdon himself had to leave his workshops in the municipal library. This led to a sale in Paris by Regnault, 8.X.1795 & seq., but did not include any pastel. In his posthumous sale, 15.XII.1828, just one pastel appeared – attributed to La Tour (Maurice de Saxe).

### Bibliography

Helen C. Frick, “Mme Jean Antoine Houdon”, *The art bulletin*, XXIX/3, .IX.1947, pp. 207–12; André Lesort, “Une sœur de Houdon”, *Revue de l’histoire de Versailles...*, XXXVII, 1935, p. 281; Anne L. Poulet, in *Houdon, sculpteur des Lumières*, exh. cat., Versailles, 1.III.–31.V.2004, pp. 36, 377f; Louis Réau, *Houdon: sa vie et son œuvre*, 1964, I, pp. 138, 163

### Pastels

- [J.4052.101](#) Mme BOUCHER [née Marie-Jeanne Buzeau (1716–1796)], tenant une brochure à la main, pstl (?Gotha, Schloß Friedenstein, c.1772) [cf. a/r Roslin]
- [J.4052.102](#) Une vestale, pstl (?Gotha, Schloß Friedenstein, c.1772)
- [J.4052.103](#) Deux naïades, pstl (?Gotha, Schloß Friedenstein, c.1772)