

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

MOLIS de Saint-Laurent, Eléonore-Léger, chevalier de

Paris 1761 – Toulouse 11.X.1837

Also Mollis; Moly, Molly; brother of the Molis aîné (*q.v.*) who exhibited at the same salon. Pupil of Suau from 1782; student at the École des ponts et chaussées in 1783; ingénieur des ponts & chaussées. He exhibited drawings in chalk and ink, miniatures and paintings in the Salons at Toulouse between 1782 and 1790. His final submission was a carte topographique. In 1787–88 he was recorded as a member of the masonic lodge *Uranie*. It appears that he initially adopted Revolutionary principles and took part in the storming of the Bastille, joining the Garde nationale. Disillusioned, he returned to Toulouse and, being talented in music as well as painting, he joined a circle whose lifestyle the Jacobins denounced. He was arrested and imprisoned for seven months notwithstanding his plea that he was the son of a poor man from the Rouergue with 22 children, and had never obtained the proofs of nobility with which he was charged (it is unclear if these claims were accurate: there was a noble family de Moly in Rodez to which it is unclear if he was related). The “ci-devant noble” was also described as “fils d’un homme de lettres” (*v. s.v.* Molis l’aîné).. He was provisionally released the following year (1793), despite being “d’un caractère vif, aristocrate dans toutes les circonstances tenant beaucoup à la cidevant noblesse”, and definitively freed 25.I.1795.

“Léger Moly de Saint-Laurent” established an annuity of 40 francs for the poor of Baziège by royal edict, 13.IV.1828, converted after his death to a legacy of 600 francs. Towards the end of his life he was involved with the Observatoire in the house of François Garipuy in Toulouse, 16 rue des Fleurs, but had frequent quarrels with the director.

Although he appears as an engineer in the membership lists of the Société d’agriculture de Toulouse in 1839, that list must have been compiled some time earlier, as the death is recorded in Toulouse, 11.X.1837, at 16 rue des Fleurs, of “Léger Eléonore Michel chevlaier de Moly St Laurent”, aged 74, born in Paris, “veuf de Marie-Thérèse Moumy-Marnac”

A miniature, signed “Molis f. an 9e”, on the art market in 2024, is presumably by this artist rather than his brother.

Bibliography

Baron R. de Bouglon, *Les Reclus de Toulouse sous la Terreur*, Toulouse, 1893–95, I, p. 88; II, p. 119; Jérôme Lamy, *L’observatoire de Toulouse aux xviii^e et xix^e siècles*, Rennes, 2007; Lemoine-Bouchard 2008; Sanchez 2004

Pastels

J5414.101 Tête de Vierge, pstl a/r Subleyras, Salon de Toulouse 1785, no. 86 (M. Gilede fils 1785)