

Citation

FABRE Gérard and PIERRE Laëtitia, “Marseille’s Academy of Painting and Sculpting”, translated by Adèle Verdier and edited by Alexandra Woolley, *Les papiers d’ACA-RES, Brefs historiques*, put online in March 2020.

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Marseille’s Academy of Painting and Sculpting

When it was announced on the 1st of January 1753, that an Academic School of Drawing in Marseille would be created, the prospect of obtaining patent letters to establish a permanent Academy of Painting galvanised the ambitions of the artists in charge of the operation. Among them was the painter from Aix-en-Provence Michel-François Dandré-Bardon (1700-1783), appointed head of the Academy, who acted from Paris as a strategic link with the secretaries, teachers, amateurs and students in Marseille. Among the painters and sculptors that made a name for themselves were Jean César Fenouil (Marseille, ?-Metz, 1755), Nicolas Zirio (Nice, ?-1776), Jacques-Antoine Beaufort (Paris, 1721-1784), Étienne Moulinneuf (1706-1789), Joseph-Antoine David (1725-1789) known as David de Marseille, Jean-Joseph Kapeller (1706-1790), Jean-Michel Verdiguier (Marseille, 1706-Cordova, 1796), Jean-Baptiste Coste (1746-1819), and the architects Aulagnier (?-1767) and Claude d’Ageville (Marseille, 1721-1794). The *École académique* was placed under the protection of the Duke of Villars and benefited from the moral and financial support of the intendant of Provence, Charles Jean-Baptiste Galois de la Tour (1715-1802).

In 1753, the school gained the approval of the *Directeur des Bâtiments du roi* and the protection from the members of the *Académie royale de Peinture et de Sculpture*, who rewarded it with a dozen of drawings made by its officers. Yet, Marseille’s Drawing School waited almost thirty years for its statutes and rules to be approved (the first version of which were presented on the 15th of June 1756), in order for it to be officially be recognised as an Academic School of Painting, Sculpture and of Civil and Naval Architecture. It wasn’t until the 18th of February 1780 that the School obtained patent letters securing its finances. Despite numerous tribulations, the school managed to keep afloat until 1793, by developing its activities and its patterns, and also thanks to its main supporters’ abnegation. During the same year, the school was closed down because of the laws passed during the French Revolution. Its property was seized, from which an inventory was drawn up on the 4 *pluviose an II* (23rd of February 1794).

Over its three decades of existence, the School trained more than a hundred students. Among the graduates qualified and destined for the craft industry or for institutional and trading professions in Marseille’s harbour, some pursued Academic careers in Paris and even in Italy. This was the case for the painters Joseph II Cellony (1730-1786), Jacques-Antoine Beaufort as well as for the sculptors Jean-Joseph Espercieux (1757-1840), Barthélémy Corneille (1760-1812) and François-Marie Poncet from Lyon (1736-1797).

Archival Sources

Marseille, municipal library, Alcazar

École académique établie à Marseille dans l’arsenal, le 1er janvier 1753, Marseille, D. Sibié, 1754.

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