

Citation

BINEAU Sabrina, “Niort’s Drawing School”, translated by Adèle Verdier and edited by Alexandra Woolley, *Les papiers d’ACA-RES, Brefs historiques*, put online in March 2020.

Sabrina BINEAU

Communauté d’agglomération de Niort

Niort’s Drawing School

The Drawing school of Niort was first mentioned in 1773 by Alexis Jouyneau-Desloges. The Scholar recounted in *Les Affiches du Poitou* of the 22nd of April 1773 that the citizens of Niort discovered Poitiers’s project for a Free School through his paper and subsequently wished to establish their own. The project, most likely carried by private individuals (no record was found in the town’s deliberations) was still not in place thirteen years later. Indeed, in 1786, the director of Poitiers’ *École royale académique de dessin*, François Aujollet-Pagès (1745-1801) expressed concern about the delay and sent multiple missives to the Count of Angiviller and to Jean-Baptiste Pierre (ANF, O1 1933(b)1, Châtelleraut, pièce 1), in vain.

The Drawing School of Niort only came to life in 1798. The Minister of the Interior of the very new French Republic, François-Sébastien Letourneux (1752-1814) suggested the “citizen Valette, talented painter, student of David for fifteen years”, (« *citoyen Valette, peintre de talent, élève de David pendant quinze ans* ») to become the head of the School (Coirault Gaston, *Les écoles centrales du centre ouest*, 1940, p. 107), in a letter of the 29 *ventôse an VI* (19th of March 1798). Despite this proposal, the position was given to the local artist, Augustin Bernard (1756-1829) known as Bernard d’Agesci. Born in Niort, he was a student of the *collège de l’Oratoire*, and then pursued a classical career by attending the *Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture*, which helped secure commissions in Paris and abroad. He also stayed in Rome (but never received the *Grand prix de Rome*). The School then became part of the *École Centrale* (1797-1813) and had over 140 students (*Journal officiel du département des Deux-Sèvres*, 5 *vendémiaire an IX* (27 septembre 1800), p. 4-7), which was an impressive number for a such an average sized town.

The teaching program was diversified. The students who intended to become carpenters, locksmiths or masons drew architectural and ornamental elements. Those with a more artistic profile were to study Augustin Bernard drawings made during his trip to Rome or those that he made after great masterpieces, his studies of Antique sculptures, plaster cast figures and bas-relief models. Those interested in mathematics copied plans to practice wash drawing. Finally, those taking architecture received demonstrations on the « *coupe du trait* » to learn about construction (Coirault Gaston, *Les Écoles centrales dans le centre-ouest*, thesis doctorate, Tours, 1940, p. 249-250).

The Free Drawing School was established, under this name, on the 5th of May 1804 supervised by the *École Secondaire*’s administration which succeeded the *École Centrale* (*Journal officiel*, 5 mai 1804, p. 355). New buildings were erected between 1891 and 1893.

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TROUCHON Sabrina, « Pertinence de la notion de régionalisme dans la peinture du Grand Ouest au XVIII^e siècle », dans *Les cahiers du GERHICO, L’art régional, Entre mythe et réalité*, n° 8, 2005, Université de Poitiers, p. 47-64.