

Citation

BINEAU Sabrina, “The Royal Academic School of Poitiers”, 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

The Royal Academic School of Poitiers

Poitiers’ Drawing School was officially founded in 1771 by the Painter and Architect François Aujollet-Pagès (1745-1801). Originally from Bordeaux and a former student of Carl Van Loo (1705-1765), he claimed that he had been sent by François Boucher (1703-1770). He had a twofold role: to teach Fine Arts to “first class citizens” (« *citoyens de premier ordre* ») (*Affiches du Poitou* from 18 March 1773) and to train “labourers”, as indicated in the school rules (1779). As such, the school seemed to have been inspired from both the *Académie royale de peinture, sculpture et architecture* and Jean-Jacques Bachelier free School of Drawing. Having settled in Poitiers in 1768, the young man first gave a free class opened to all, before receiving support from the city’s aldermen, which helped him develop his teaching project by making it sustainable. From 1768 to 1773, he gradually set up his educational program. The city provided a place for the classes to be held, accommodation and wages for Pagès. The intendant regularly supplied the end of the year awards.

Students attended drawing classes but also geometry, perspective, mathematics and anatomy classes (1772), as well as law and history lectures (1774). Some classes were dedicated to studying live models. These were very highly supervised and lasted two hours. Students could draw a male model (the doorman of the school to be precise) placed in various positions by the different teachers in charge. The school had up to three drawing teachers.

In 1773, wealthy citizens came together as amateurs to support the school. They were the ones who took executive decisions concerning the school. They requested the support of local personalities, such as the intendant Paul Esprit Marie de la Bourdonnaye (1716-1800), Count of Blossac. Each year, they paid a contribution which enabled them to take in ten students who were exempted of tuition fees, and to whom pencils, and paper were given. Hence the name of the school which was “*école gratuite*”. Some of these well-off members of the board also taught classes.

In 1774, the school gained the statute of *École Royale Académique de peinture, architecture, sculpture et arts analogues*. The five *genres* of drawing were taught: figure, landscape, ornament, civil architecture and military architecture (linked to the short-lived class for military men opened from 1779 to 1780, then replaced by a class on flowers). Some of the classes also taught the technique of measuring with a rod (1775 to 1781) and of stone cutting.

Pagès was guided by the principles of Bachelier and Antoine Ferrand de Monthelon (1686-1752). He therefore followed the board of direction’s requests which was to train good craftsmen and workmen, both before their apprenticeship, between 9 and 13 years old, as well as after it, with a class reserved for workmen in 1775. The young men divided their time between the workshop under their master’s supervision and the *École royale*, the oldest one of them being 24 years old. Pagès took part in a larger movement that aimed to give better training to workmen in order to

Citation

BINEAU Sabrina, "The Royal Academic School of Poitiers", translated by Adèle Verdier and edited by Alexandra Woolley, *Les papiers d'ACA-RES, Brefs historiques*, put online in March 2020.

develop French Industry. Locksmiths, carpenters, clockmakers, goldsmiths, silversmiths and cabinetmakers were prime targets. Another interesting point that can be added to Pagès' accomplishments is the opening of a class for young girls in 1788.

Ultimately, during the French Revolution, the head of the *École Royale Académique* played a crucial role in protecting landmarked property and art. He was assigned to make an inventory of Poitiers' collections and trusted to take care of the city's Museum. During the *An III*, the *École royale de dessin* disappeared and was replaced with a small class within the *École centrale* of Vienne. In order to be appointed, Pagès wrote "a program or introduction to a complete drawing class for the students of the *École centrale* of the department of Vienne"(Nantes, Guimar, an VI, in 4°, 11p.). During the *An VII*, nearly 200 students attended this class. The school then won its independence back under the name of *École gratuite communale de dessin, sculpture et architecture*, with a director and an assistant professor.

Selected Bibliography

BENHAMOU Reed, « Art et utilité. Les écoles de dessin de Grenoble et Poitiers », *Dix-huitième siècle*, 1991, n° 23, p.421-434.

BROUILLET Pierre-Amédée, « L'École Municipale des Beaux-arts de Poitiers, son origine - son passé - son présent », *Réunion des Sociétés des Beaux-arts des Départements*, 12^{ème} session, 1888, p. 769-777.

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

VERON Théodore, « Historique de l'École d'architecture, sculpture et dessin de la ville de Poitiers », *Réunion des Sociétés des Beaux-Arts des Départements*, 1879, p. 193.