

Citation

MAËS Gaëtane, “The Academy of Painting and Sculpture of Valenciennes”, translated by Adèle Verdier and edited by Alexandra Woolley, *Les papiers d’ACA-RES, Brefs historiques*, put online in March 2020.

Gaëtane MAËS

Université de Lille, CNRS, UMR 8529-IRHiS

The Academy of Painting and Sculpture of Valenciennes

The decision to establish an Academy of Painting and Sculpture in Valenciennes came from a local public figure, Alexandre-Denis-Joseph Pujol de Mortry (Valenciennes, 1737-Valenciennes, 1816). The Baron de la Grave submitted the idea to the town’s *Conseil particulier* on the 9th of December 1782 and six months later, the Academy was officially announced in the press with a contest opened to hire two teachers (*Gazette de France*, 1st of August 1783). But this initiative was immediately called to order by the Count of Angiviller, who reminded the town that every Academy is a subject of the *Académie royale de peinture et sculpture* and has to seek its approval beforehand. Negotiations to get Valenciennes’ Academy statutes and rules approved were undertaken by Jean-Baptiste-Marie Pierre who did not succeed until February 1785. The Letters of affiliation were written on the 1st of March 1785.

In the meantime, two Professors were hired for the Drawing School — Jacques-François Momal (Lewarde, 1754-Valenciennes, 1832) to teach painting, and Jean-Baptiste Cadet de Beaupré (Besançon, 1758-Lille, 1823) for sculpting —, and a first contest between students was held on the 13th of September 1785.

As for the Academy, it welcomed amateurs and professionals, and the first ones to be accepted on the 5th of December 1785 were the painters Louis Watteau (Valenciennes, 1731-Lille, 1798) and Olivier Lemay (Valenciennes, 1734-Paris, 1797).

Upon their creation, the Academy and the School were established in the old *collège des Jésuites*, which had become a municipal college in 1764, and been restored between 1740 and 1800 (it now houses the town library, in *rue Ferrand*). The Drawing School welcomed 120 students in winter and 80 in summer. Its attendance declined during the French Revolution, and the town council closed the Academy in 1792 for financial reasons. It reopened in 1793 before definitively closing in 1794. In 1810, the Academy of Painting and Sculpture finally opened again, in an altered form.

The history of Valenciennes’ Academy and Drawing School were traced back during an exhibition held in Valenciennes in 1986, where partial reproductions of original documents were presented.

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