

Towards Neo-Classicism in France **Decadence and Reform in the Teaching of Art 1747–1789**

David Karel

Volume 2, numéro 1, 1975

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1077469ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1077469ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

UAAC-AAUC (University Art Association of Canada | Association d'art des universités du Canada)

ISSN

0315-9906 (imprimé)

1918-4778 (numérique)

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Citer cet article

Karel, D. (1975). Towards Neo-Classicism in France: Decadence and Reform in the Teaching of Art 1747–1789. *RACAR : Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review*, 2(1), 5–13. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1077469ar>

Towards Neo-Classicism in France

Decadence and Reform in the Teaching of Art 1747–1789

The French Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture is chiefly remembered today for the artists who belonged to it: Charles Le Brun, François Le Moyne, Antoine Watteau, François Boucher, Joseph-Marie Vien, Jacques-Louis David, among others, who represented the grand styles of art in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: The Louis XIV, the rococo, the neo-classic.¹ But of the Academy itself, the institution which enabled these men and these styles to develop in a continuous fashion, relatively little is known. Virtually every eighteenth century French painter and sculptor whose name is remembered today not only belonged to it but learned his art within the context of the elaborate educational system which it developed and maintained for more than a century. Fully to comprehend this artistic education helps to explain the transmission and modification of the

several styles. Our purpose is to investigate one aspect of this problem, limiting the study to a relatively brief period: the second half of the eighteenth century, when the rococo style gradually gave way to neoclassicism.

The basic outlines of academic education are relatively well known: students began by copying from drawings, then drew from plaster casts and finally from the live model before beginning painting and sculpture. Even so eminent a work as Jean Locquin's would have it that the first three types of drawing were taught within the school of the Academy.² This was not the case, as only live drawing was taught there. The role of the Academy as guardian and transmittor of artistic knowledge merits closer attention, not only in terms of its general aims in the teaching of arts, but of the particular events that intervened to disrupt or alter the educational routine. I shall therefore attempt a description of the school, its administrators, its students, its activities and its shortcomings from 1747 to 1789. This will be followed by a study of several new regulations laid down for the school, in order to show how the Academy sought to reorient its teaching. I hope to demonstrate what part the school alone may have played in the gradual evolution of the rococo style towards neo-classic. This is only a small part of a larger subject as the

1. This article is based on the author's doctoral dissertation entitled: *The Teaching of Drawing at the French Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture from 1760 to 1793* (University of Chicago: March, 1974). The abbreviation employed in these notes, *Corr. Marigny*, refers to: Marc Furcy-Raynaud (ed.), *Correspondance de M. de Marigny avec Coypel, Lépicié et Cochin*. Paris: Jean Schemit, 1904, 1905. Other sources are: Marc Furcy-Raynaud (ed.), *Correspondance de M. d'Angiviller avec Pierre*. Paris: Jean Schemit, 1907; and Anatole de Montaiglon (ed.), *Procès-verbaux de l'Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture (1648–1692) publiés par la Société de l'histoire de l'art français d'après les registres originaux conservés à l'École des beaux-arts*. Paris: 1875–1892. The abbreviation AN refers to the Archives Nationales in Paris. All translations are by the author. Mentions of specific dates not accompanied by citations refer to the *Procès-verbaux* at the date indicated.

2. Jean LOCQUIN, *La peinture d'histoire en France de 1747 à 1785; étude sur l'évolution des idées artistiques dans la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle*. Paris: Henri Laurens, éditeur, 1912, pp. 71–95.

school was but one of many elements comprising an academic education. It is, nonetheless, the first aspect to be considered since it represents the historical framework around which the other factors may be assembled.

THE ADMINISTRATORS OF THE SCHOOL

The administrators who played the leading roles in this history are not well known today, though several of them were artists of considerable reputation in their own time. My point of departure coincides with the formation of an administrative partnership in 1755: two men who were to have decisive influence over the affairs of the Academy during the next fifteen years. The first was the Marquis de Marigny, *Directeur général des Bâtiments du roi*, brother of Madame de Pompadour. He acceded to his position of influence in artistic matters chiefly because of her influence over the King. The other was Charles-Nicolas Cochin, an engraver who had been chosen by Madame de Pompadour to accompany the young Marigny on a tour of Italy during the two years before his accession as *Directeur général*. Marigny, having gained confidence in Cochin as a result of this voyage, chose to accord him responsibility for decisions concerning the Academy, such as promotions, commissions, regulations and even the allocation of apartments to its members. This function, in an earlier day, had belonged to the King's First Painter. But Cochin, being an engraver, was not eligible for that honour. The problem was solved by naming Cochin *Responsable du détail des arts*. During his period of power (he was capable of bringing Marigny round to his point of view on almost any matter) the actual First Painters, Carle Van Loo, and after his death in 1765, François Boucher, had no actual administrative power. Cochin was Perpetual Secretary while the First Painter was, by custom, Director. Louis XV personally approved (by writing the word "bon" at the bottom of the page) all academic projects. But he, too, almost invariably followed Marigny's advice. Thus Cochin stands as the most influential figure in the affairs of the Academy from 1755 to 1770.

Cochin's principal rival, the ambitious Jean-Baptiste-Marie Pierre, succeeded in having him ousted from the *détail des arts* in 1770 at the time when he became First Painter to the King and Director of the Academy. Marigny continued as *Directeur des bâtiments* (a title I descriptively translate Director of the Arts) until 1773, a year

before the death of Louis XV. During this time administrative decisions on matters pertaining to the Academy were effected jointly by Marigny and Pierre. After Marigny's resignation in 1773, Pierre almost single-handedly ruled the Academy for a year pending the accession of Louis XVI. The new King chose as his Director of the Arts the highly conservative and moralistic d'Angiviller, who had formerly been responsible for his education. This administrative arrangement, like the preceding one, lasted fifteen years, ending with the death of Pierre on the eve of the Revolution. D'Angiviller chose Joseph-Marie Vien as successor to Pierre in all functions (Director of the Academy, responsibility for the *détail des arts* and First Painter). This final period, which ended with the suppression of the Academy in 1793, is so unlike the preceding ones, owing to the political situation, that it does not enter into the present investigation.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL

Two contemporary illustrations give a general idea of the school and its students. The first (Fig. 1) in the lower half shows a floor plan of what is not perhaps the actual school but simply an "ideal" school of drawing.³ But it closely corresponds to what we know about the school of the Academy: the room had several windows and benches in tiers around three sides to form an amphitheatre. At the front is the platform where the nude model held his pose for two hours each afternoon from Monday to Saturday. In the winter months, when the afternoons became too dark to draw by natural light, the model was illuminated by a multiple-wick lamp suspended from the ceiling (indicated by a circle in front of the platform). The room where the model posed was the school; the words *salle* and *école* were used interchangeably. Only life-drawing was taught here. For previous instruction the student had to study with an artist-teacher who, though usually an Academician, taught the fundamentals of drawing and modelling in his own studio.

3. These two plates originally appeared in Charles-Antoine JOMBERT, *Méthode pour apprendre le dessin où l'on donne les règles générales de ce grand art, et les préceptes pour en acquérir la connaissance et s'y perfectionner en peu de temps*. Paris: de l'imprimerie de l'auteur, 1755. They reappeared fifty years later in Claude-Henri WATELET and LEVESQUE, *Recueil de planches du dictionnaire des beaux-arts, faisant partie de l'Encyclopédie méthodique par ordre de matières*. Paris: Chez H. Agasse, 1805. We have photographed them in the later edition.

The upper part shows what may have been one of these private studios, such as that of Joseph-Marie Vien. Students in their early stages are seen working. A group at the right is drawing from the live model by lamplight, as a student would do at the school of the Academy. Students of sculpture,

like one at extreme right, could work in clay rather than on paper, producing a low-relief model. Several students at centre draw from the cast (*ronde bosse*); and casts of the parts of the body, which were studied before casts of the whole body, hang on the wall at left. The youngest students, also

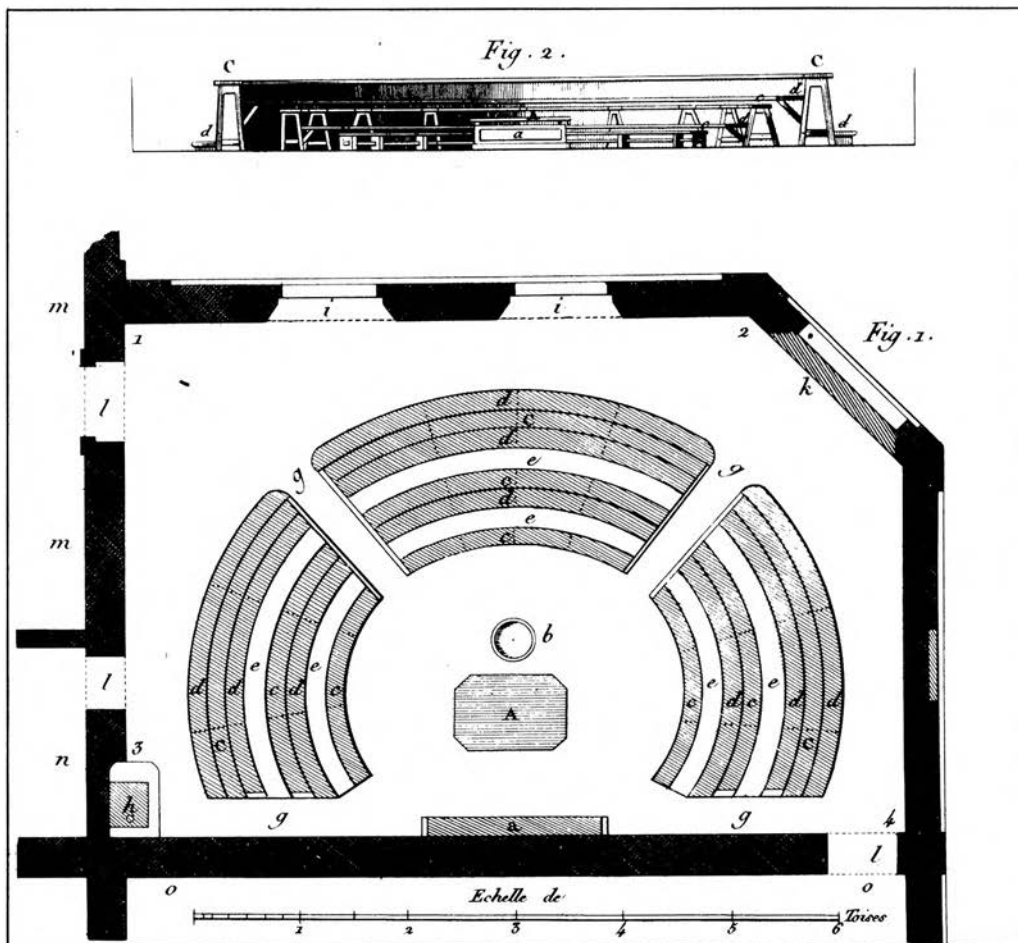


FIGURE 1. Above: Private School of Drawing. Below: Public School of Drawing (floor plan and elevation).

(This illustration first appeared in Jombert, *Méthode pour apprendre le dessin* . . . , 1755. It reappeared in Watelet and Levesque, *Recueil des planches* . . . , 1805.)

at left, copy from drawings. Thus we see here the three basic levels in the formation of every student draughtsman and sculptor. Figure 2 shows eighteenth-century draughtsman's tools, including a chalk-holder (*porte-crayon*), a penknife for sharpening chalk, a piece of chalk, and an *estompe* for smearing the lines to produce shading.

COMPETITIONS AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING

Activity in the school was mainly directed toward the medal competitions which took place at the end of each month. Three medals, a first, second and third, were accorded at the end of each quarter. Judgments were rendered by the officers of the Academy (including the Professors) without their knowing the names of the contestants. But no student could be awarded a first or a second medal without first having won a third. Thus a drawing which merited the lowest prize could actually be better than the other two. If no drawing was deemed worthy of a prize, one or all of the medals could be reserved until a later competition. The actual medals, cast in silver and of different monetary values, were distributed at the end of the year by the Director General at an annual awards assembly. A medal was considered a great honour, and it entitled the bearer to participate in other competitions such as the expression contest founded by Caylus and the painted torso competition founded by de la Tour. The most important of all, for the *Grand Prix de Rome*, was independent of the school, as anyone could enter, but incompetents were forced out in two elimination rounds.

The Academy did almost no teaching in today's sense. Instead it based learning on competition, which was called *émulation* (meaning at the same time the desire to imitate).⁴ Rather than telling students what to do, professors merely set an example. Rewards went to those who most nearly approached it, whether in technical skill or style. To become a professor, candidates submitted drawings from the nude for judgment by the Academy. These drawings, called *académies dessinées*, were posted in the school for the benefit of students. The criterion of excellence most frequently encountered in the various academic writings which concern

drawing was called *correction* (formal precision). Thus the principal effect of the school on French eighteenth-century painting and sculpture was technical excellence and the development of a style largely based on it.

Besides life-drawing the Academy offered courses of instruction in the principles of anatomy and perspective. Other skills deemed necessary to the painter and the sculptor were encouraged by means of other competitions (the painted torso, expression and the *Grand Prix*). For advanced instruction in painting and sculpture the student returned to the studio of his artist-teacher.

DECADENCE IN THE SCHOOL

Much has been made of the reform of history-painting in the Academy beginning in 1747. The initiatives manifested at this date led the French school inexorably toward neo-classicism, chiefly through the influence of Joseph-Marie Vien and his best student Jacques-Louis David. The school was also the object of many reforms, as it too had shown a marked decadence before 1747. A precise idea of the problems besetting it may be gained from a document composed by students outraged at the misconduct of their elders. In making their complaints they hoped to provoke reforms on the part of the new administration of the arts, recently established under Lenormant de Tournehem, uncle of Madame de Pompadour and of the future Marquis de Marigny. The document bears the date 22 June 1747.⁵

Various intrigues intended "to defraud the students of medals which are distributed to those who merit them" were attributed to a small group of men consisting of the late (*sic*) Coustou, of the concierge and a relative of his, of the Secretary of the Academy (Bernard Lépicié) and several others. Going along with this *cabale* and even altering the judgments of places, were the Academicians Cazes, Le Moyne, Christophe and Galloche. Staying away in order to avoid dispute was the First Painter, Coypel. Restout, when it was a little cold outside, sent the model home, "something which was never done." The concierge profited from the unused lamp oil and coal. When Restout did pose the model for the students, the poses were those he needed for his own paintings.

4. The word emulation, in modern English, stresses imitation more than it does the attempt to equal or excel. In the English nearer the historical period in question, however, its signification seems to have more closely approached the past and present meaning of the French *émulation*. For example, one finds this usage in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, published in 1814.

5. AN: O¹ 1927, n° 10. Another version is cited in Lazare DUVAUX, *Livre-journal de Lazare Duvaux, marchand-bijoutier ordinaire du roi 1748-1758, précédé d'une étude sur le goût et sur le commerce des objets d'art au milieu du XVIII^e siècle...* (n.d.), pp. XLV, CLVI.

Dumont le Romain tried to correct at least some of the abuses (for example, by consulting his own watch to determine the length of class periods when students pushed the hands of the clock ahead). But being senior Professor and fearing to jeopardize his imminent promotion by dispute with the others, he also cooperated with the intriguers and “suffered” that the medals of the last quarter were awarded to students “well removed from meriting them.” The concierge, paid off with presents of coal and oil, permitted and this to happen by signing drawings without bothering to read the name on the other side.

ed medals unjustly for students of sculpture; and Pigalle during his month of service as Associate Professor in the school allowed students, model and concierge to dance puppets. Louis de Boullogne and other Professors “take it upon themselves to annihilate the order which is always observed.” This refers to favouritism in places and medal competitions; these Professors actually assisted favourite students with their drawings so that they could earn a high place or a medal. This practice had the effect of depriving worthy but less favoured students of their rightful rank among the *appelés*, or of their awards.

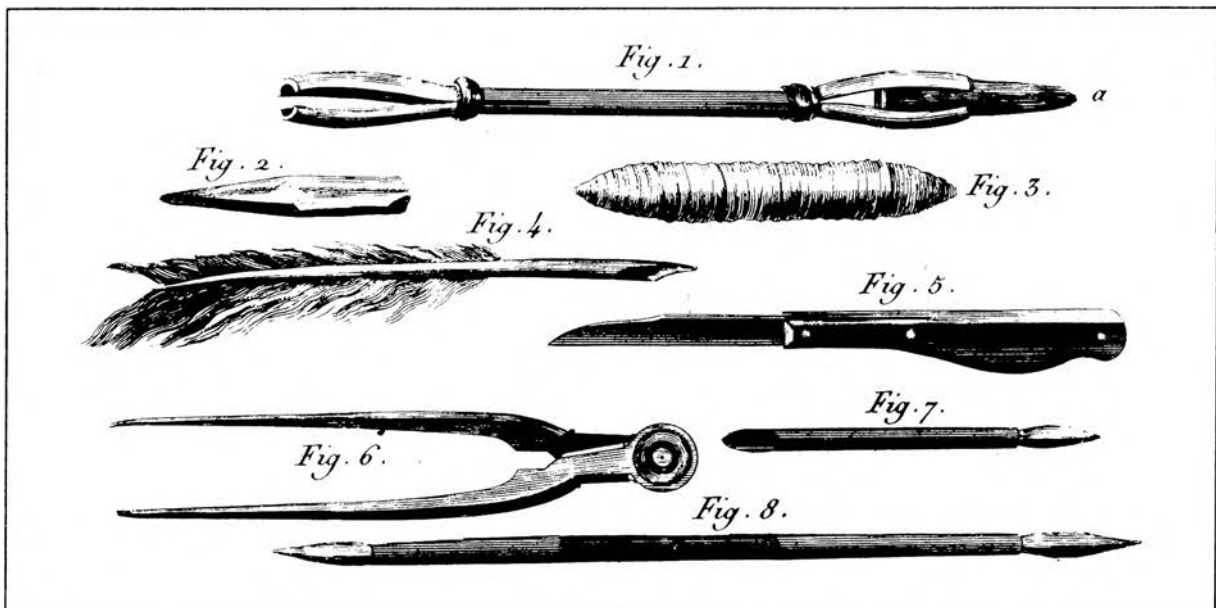


FIGURE 2. Instruments of Drawing Used during the Eighteenth Century in France. Fig. 1: *porte-crayon* or chalk-holder; Fig. 2: chalk; Fig. 3: *estompe* for smearing the chalk; Fig. 5: penknife for sharpening the chalk; Fig. 6: pair of compasses for determining proportions.

(This illustration first appeared in Jombert, *Méthode pour apprendre le dessin*..., 1755. It reappeared in Watelet and Levesque, *Recueil des planches*..., 1805.)

Other Professors had other failings: Carl Van Loo “declared that he did not want any students,” and others followed his lead even though it was “the intention of the King” that they should teach privately. Private teaching must have been at a minimum for, the memorandum continues, only Pierre and Natoire taught privately; and while Pierre “did wrong by his students,” Natoire was already by 1751 designated director of the School of Rome and was henceforth perennially absent.

The charges continue. Colin de Vermont and Jeaurat assisted in obtaining medals for those who had not merited them; Oudry would not teach and never participated in the judgement of medals; Adam, Le Moyne, Bouchardon and Couston secur-

The immediate result of this extended complaint seems to have been nothing more than its suppression by the Academy and disavowal by those who must have written it. Some hundred twelve students signed the disavowal. On 24 September 1757 a concierge, Guérin, was discharged on the basis of unspecified complaints against his “conduct,” and one wonders whether reform was a full ten years in coming. If the accusations were accurate, corrupt practices were condoned and abetted by those of highest rank within the Academy. Moreover those named in the document — Jeaurat, Adam, Le Moyne, Bouchardon, Pigalle — continued to play an active part in the affairs of the Academy for decades to come. This is not to say that these unfair

practices continued throughout the lives of the men in question, for the two imputed ringleaders of the *cabale*, Guillaume I Coustou and Bernard Lépicié, died in 1746 and 1753 respectively. Yet it cannot be verified that abuses had ceased until the earlier part of the administration of Marigny, when a new set of regulations for the school was adopted.

ELIMINATION OF FAVOURITISM IN THE SCHOOL

The regulations which had governed the school since its establishment in the seventeenth century were still in force at the middle of the eighteenth century. By then however only the fundamental aspects of the functioning of the school such as the system of rotating professorial duties could be said to depend on them. For the rest the school was governed by a patchwork of measures adopted over the years as dictated by immediate need. The school reflected the aims of the Academy because it assured the future of the institution. Changes in the school are therefore of great interest as indications of the Academy's new orientations.

Two periods may be defined during the interval from 1747 to 1789. During the first regulations were adopted which aimed to rid the school of the abuses which we have just reviewed, and to require of students private study with Academicians. The second period begins in 1776 when d'Angiviller regrouped all the rulings of the school into a new code of regulations. The following years saw few changes. In light of this chronology, we may attribute to Cochin most of the initiatives which affected the school until the Revolution.

In order to eliminate favouritism the apparently banal question of seating order was to be taken up again and again. The best student was supposed to choose his place first, the weakest last. Many students however enjoyed special protection and had fixed places bearing their names. Ambassadors and ministers, for example, were not above asking the King or a member of the royal family to grant such a favour to their protégés. And the King was not above complying.⁶ Also exempt from seating rules were the sons of Academy members. All others earned their order of choice in the various competitions ranging from the grand-prize winners who chose their places first, to the holders of first, second and third medals, down to holders of no

prize who were obliged one or twice a year to compete for places. Prize-holders, protected students and sons of Academicians entered by one door; the others were called by name, one by one, to enter by the other door and choose their seats. It is for this reason that the latter were commonly referred to as *appelés*. About a hundred and twenty seats were available in the school-room. A second room of about the same size was opened in 1776. One Professor was on hand in each of the schools for posing the model, counselling students and maintaining order. Each of the twelve Professors served a month a year in each school.

Three major reforms were laid down to eliminate favouritism in seating. The first, of 21 August 1756 ended preference for sculptors who chose their seats ahead of the draughtsmen (future painters). Talent alone would now dictate the order of places. The numerical list, determined by the officers who judged the annual competition, could be changed only by the officers. Students were thus guaranteed a certain stability and freedom from arbitrary decisions of the Professors.

A second reform, often reiterated over the years, aimed to restrict special privileges. Before the opening of the second school in 1776 the privileged group sometimes became large enough to take up nearly all the seats. Cochin reported this situation to Marigny in 1759.⁷ Thus the students who were

7. *Ibid.* The average number of new students each year between 1758 and 1777 was about sixty-eight, though it may be assumed that there were fewer in earlier years and more in later years. From the lists of *appelés* drawn up every six months beginning in April 1778 we gain more detailed information. The first half of 1778 saw the highest enrolment of the period and doubtless of the entire history of the school. The total was 409. This number included 14 sons of members, four holders of second grand prizes, 24 first medallists, 17 second medallists, 24 third medallists, 12 protected students and 241 *simples appelés*. Though the various classes of privileged students are not indicated in the Register after 1780, about ninety of them were shared by the two schools during each half-year period, indicating that the first *appelé* could never expect a very good place in the school-room.

From 1778 until the suppression of the Academy attendance declined except perhaps in 1781. Assuming that the new undifferentiated lists of *appelés* which begin in that year include privileged students as well, the 409 shrank to 139 in 1792, at which time the two schools of the live model were consolidated and a school of the cast was opened in the vacated classroom. In 1792 there were 54 students of the live model and 49 of the cast, for a total of 103 in the two schools. In 1793, just before the suppression of the Academy, there were 81 life-drawing and 31 cast students for a total of 112. The extreme range in age of students was from about twelve to mid-forties, but more commonly it was from sixteen to twenty-six.

This information is taken from Manuscripts n° 45, 93 and 95 in the Library of the École Nationale Supérieure des beaux-arts at Paris.

6. *Corr. Marigny*, n° 202, Cochin to Marigny, 19 February 1759. Various protectors are enumerated, including Marigny himself, "le roy Stanislas, Mme. la Dauphine, Mme. Infante, ou par les ministres étrangers."

left to advance only by their *émulation* were not only disadvantaged by poor places but perhaps could get no seat at all. Cochin noted that this problem was particularly marked since the beginning of Marigny's administration, thus pointedly reminding the Director General of his penchant for dispensing favours to students. Cochin proposed at this time that favours in seating should be only temporary. If the recipient could not earn a medal during the allotted time, he had evidently not been worthy of his privilege in the first place. This became a ruling in the first quarter of 1759, though reiterations suggest that it was not always enforced. In spite of the new restrictive measure some students simply could not be refused unearned places and the number remained considerable. The usual recipients of such favours were foreign students with ambassadorial protection (especially Russian) and those recommended to the Academy by other academies French or foreign.

The third reform came on 28 March 1772. There would be two annual competitions for places instead of one. A student's rank reflected his ability. Now that he could evolve more rapidly upward or downward in the order his willingness to work and his talent would lead him more rapidly to his rightful place vis-à-vis the others. He would be motivated or perhaps discouraged by the spirit of competition and the Professors could watch for those who gravitated towards the head of the list.

Students and Professors continued to find ways to alter the supposedly inviolable order of seating, such that the academic assemblies often returned to this subject. What could be done with students who came only to talk with their friends (7 March 1761); could the Professors inspect the drawings to assure their authenticity (1770); could a student enter late and still take his place (27 October 1770); how many students could a Professor bring with him to help prepare the classroom (31 December 1771); for how long could a protected student retain his special place (7 September 1776); where should one place a new student who was obviously talented (18 March 1780); could students save seats for their friends or yield their own places to others when they did not wish to stay for the class (1 April 1780); When should the places competition occur (3 March 1781).

SPONSORSHIP, PRIVATE STUDY AND COMPETENCE

The other subject of reform to preoccupy the Academy during the sixties and seventies concerned

what were called certificates of protection (*billets de protection*). As explained by Cochin on 26 April 1760 they served to link each student to a sponsor within the Academy "who answers for [his] conduct, and by means of [whose certificate] he has permission to draw."⁸ From this it appears that the certificate served to guarantee a student's behaviour as well as his readiness to study. These were, however, probably not the real motives behind the Academy's action, because "permission to draw" in the school had to be renewed at regular intervals. Only when a student had won a medal did he acquire the right to attend the school; all others — the large majority — had to obtain permission from a member of the Academy. This Academician, the student's protector, was expected to keep him from signing up at the school before he was ready to begin drawing from the live model. Thus the student took lessons from him for a certain time, perhaps several years, before he could enter the school. After he arrived he had to keep up his lessons or he would lose the right to continue. It is unlikely that any *appelé*, unless protected by someone with enough influence to obtain continuing certificates of protection from an Academician, could study at the school without at the same time studying privately. There were almost no students who did not take lessons outside; the Registers confirm this. In this way the Academy arranged it so that those who profited from its "free" education would have to pay members for the right to attend the school. It set up a monopoly over private teaching.

The remunerative implications of this requirement are not to be dismissed lightly when we seek a motive for its reiteration. Owing to exhaustion of the national treasury by the Seven Years War, Professors' salaries had not been paid since 1758.⁹ Thus for lost salaries they were able to substitute private fees. The ruling concerning certificates of protection must have stimulated attendance in the private teaching studios, though this is impossible to verify before the reorganization of the Register in 1765. We do know, however, that overcrowding in the school was first announced in 1758, the same year in which salaries were discontinued. Cochin asked Marigny for a "supplement" to the Academy school as early as 1763. By this he seems to have meant an expansion of classroom facilities. A larger school would have meant more pocket money for private teachers. He frequently remind-

8. *Corr. Marigny*, n° 618, Cochin to Marigny, 5 September 1768; AN: O¹ 1927.

9. *Ibid.*, n° 191; AN: O¹ 1105 f° 466; n° 223.

ed Marigny that large numbers were turned away each day for lack of space.

The new relationship between private and public teaching lasted until the Revolution. The Academy frequently considered this requirement in their deliberations, partly because, like the order of seating, it was sometimes difficult to enforce, but also because the new situation caused new problems. One of these, overcrowding, resulted from the need to attract as many students as possible. Not being able to accommodate all who came, the Academy attempted to keep out all but the best. The certificates of protection thus acquired a second purpose. This is suggested by Article 1 of the regulations of 7 March 1761:

No person shall be admitted for study unless he has shown his drawings or modelled studies to the officers on duty so that they can judge if he is capable of profiting from the study of the live model, and unless he has a certificate signed by one of the aforementioned officers.

Although the certificate and the test of competence are mentioned in the same article, they appear to be separate requirements. The third article, in any case, specifies that the "drawings or modelled studies" shall be done in the Academy. Thus it concerns a veritable proof of competence to be judged by the Academy and not by the student's teacher. Standards could be established.

The Academy, in their long quest for a monopoly over private teaching, finally obtained the suppression of the Academy of St. Luke and its school in 1777. This brought to the school such a vast number of students that all of them could not be seated at the same time even though a new classroom had been opened in 1776. Now the need for standards of admission was even greater. Thus when the new aspects of the school were definitively consecrated by d'Angiviller's regulations of 1776 the relationship between protection and competence was made explicit:

Art. 18: No student will acquire certificates of protection who has not, following established usage, shown some of his works to the Director of the Academy and to the Rector in Quarter.

The form and purpose of the certificates, although they seem finally clear in 1776, were reexamined in the same year so that the certificates could be put "back into their original form." The *procès-verbaux* do not say what this meant, but we know that the Professors accepted a double teaching assignment in the school beginning on 28 June, and we know that the Academy was solvent at this period. Thus salaries were paid and members no longer depended on private income. The

test of competence guaranteed that students were qualified, so it is likely that private study was no longer required. The modification of the certificates, in any case, had no visible effect on private teaching; the tradition was well enough established to survive.

Further major changes in the school did not occur until the Revolution. D'Angiviller and Pierre, once they had established the new regulations, were content to direct their energies towards enforcing them so that the school should function in an orderly way. Perhaps because of their disproportionate emphasis on discipline and good behaviour, students came each year in smaller numbers than before. This tendency became so marked during the Revolution that in 1792 the Academy was forced to replace one of the life-drawing schools with a school of cast-drawing. So for the first time it accepted students who were not yet ready to draw from the live model. The history of the school in these years (1789-93) is quite different, with political motivations behind the actions of the students. The revolutionary years, which lie outside our period, marked the end of an old tradition in the teaching of the visual arts. There would no longer be one centralized authority controlling the propagation of a single style. The nineteenth century in France was to witness the profusion of styles and multiplicity of approaches which have continued until the present day.

CONCLUSION

The existence of the Academy was threatened by the impoverished condition of the national treasury in 1758. In taking the initiative to insure its own survival, it unwittingly created the conditions for a profound stylistic transformation. These can be identified as crowding and competition in the school. We have seen that the school, little more than a farce in 1747, became highly organized by the beginning of the fourth quarter of the century. This rigid structure was designed to allow only the best to succeed. At the same time the Academy was able to attract large numbers of students. Since they were ranked by order of excellence, their increasing numbers had the effect of raising technical competence as each tried to outdo the other. This process may be confirmed by a study of the many students life-drawings which survive today.¹⁰

10. We have studied the question of stylistic evolution in the medallist drawings, grouping them by private teaching studio. Cf. Part IV of the dissertation cited in note n° 1. The drawings survive in the collection of the Library of the École Nationale Supérieure des beaux-arts in Paris.

Thus, in so far as technical competence affects style, the great popularity of this exercise, coupled with the competitive basis of its motivation, had their effect on the visual arts.

The same factors — crowding and competition — played similar roles in a simultaneous transformation of private teaching. The dire financial situation of 1758, which prompted the Academicians to require of their students paid study as a condition for attending the school, brought together for the first time large numbers under the direction of a single painter or sculptor. Heretofore private teaching studios had been populated with only a few apprentices who literally imbibed the style of their master. Now their number were often too large to permit extensive individual counselling, and in this way students were liberated from the stylistic constraints imposed upon their predecessors.

It was Joseph-Marie Vien who first elaborated the new system of private teaching, which he practiced from 1751 until 1775. Feeling that a too close dependence on “art” as a model of learning led students away from their true master, which was nature, he hired a model for his very large classes and the students learned henceforth directly

from “nature.” For their motivation Vien, like the Academy, relied on *émulation*. The Academy, seconding the new approach, installed his teaching studio near their own in the Louvre. Thus his preparatory school was integrated into the educational plan of the Academy. Vien’s influence was enormous; he claimed to have taught more students than the other Academicians together. (This, strictly speaking, is an exaggeration. He should have said: more than any other Academician.) Pierre’s contention of 1789 that Vien was the teacher of most of the academicians of that day, if one takes into account his years as Director of the School of Rome, is true.

One of his most important lessons was teaching itself. Vien’s type of instruction (characterized, like the Academy school, by large numbers and the live model) was adopted by several later private teachers, notably Brenet then David. In my opinion this constitutes one of most important factors in the development of a highly finished, precise yet truthful style of drawing and painting which, when applied to antique subjects, would be called neo-classicism.

David KAREL
Université Laval