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HUGO TARDY

PhD STUDENT IN HISTORY OF EARLY MODERN ART

DOCTORANT EN HISTOIRE DE L'ART MODERNE

UNIVERSITÉ TOULOUSE 2 JEAN JAURÈS

FRAMESPA (UMR CNRS 5136)

hugo.tardy@univ-tlse2.fr

The Involvement of French Sculptors in Russian Education and Artistic Training in the Age of Enlightenment

L'implication des sculpteurs français dans l'éducation et la pratique artistique à l'époque des Lumières

Résumé : Pour les artistes russes, le XVIII^e siècle fut une période d'apprentissage où les Européens jouèrent le rôle des enseignants. En grande partie dirigées par des Français, l'éducation et la formation des Russes à l'art de la sculpture n'ont pour l'heure jamais été explorées de manière systématique. Pourtant, cette question est centrale pour comprendre la circulation et l'appropriation des modèles occidentaux dans les régions à la périphérie de l'Europe. La nouvelle capitale, Saint-Petersbourg s'imposait comme un véritable laboratoire des formes et des idées où se côtoyaient des sculpteurs issus des meilleurs foyers artistiques européens. Dans cet article, la réflexion s'articule d'une part sur les personnalités qui furent les promoteurs de cet art, notamment les tsars, l'élite aristocratique et les sculpteurs étrangers, et d'autre part autour du système académique russe naissant.

Abstract: For Russian artists, the 18th century was a period of learning with Europeans in the role of teachers. Largely provided by the French, the education and training of Russians in the art of sculpture has never been systematically explored up until now. Yet, it is a central issue to understand the circulation and appropriation of Western models in the peripheral regions of Europe. The new capital, St. Petersburg, stood as a thriving laboratory of forms

and ideas where sculptors from the best European artistic centers worked together. This article focuses on the personalities who promoted this art form – i.e. mostly the tsars, the aristocratic elite and foreign sculptors – as well as the nascent Russian academic system.

Mots-clés : Sculpture, Sculpteur, Saint-Pétersbourg, Académie, Pierre le Grand, Nicolas Pineau, Nicolas-François Gillet, Ivan Chouvalov, dessin, imitation, circulation, modèle.

Keywords: Sculpture, Sculptor, Saint Petersburg, Academy, Peter the Great, Nicolas Pineau, Nicolas-François Gillet, Ivan Shuvalov, drawing, imitation, circulation, model.

Before the 18th century and the reforms of Peter the Great (1662-1725), Russia stood as a barbaric nation in the eyes of the rest of Europe;¹ a nation rooted in ancient traditions that was still very strongly influenced by the Orthodox religion, the predominant religion in Moscow at the time. The Orthodox Church had limited the development of some art forms, particularly sculpture.² In fact, it fought against the idolatry that sculptural creations could encourage due to their anthropomorphic dimension.³ Consequently, at the dawn of the 18th century, some forms of sculpture,

¹ The idea of “Russian barbarism” before the reign of Peter the Great was still present in 18th century publications. Famous examples include Voltaire’s *Histoire de Charles XII* (1731) and the *Lettres chinoises* (1739-1740) by Marquis Boyer d’Argens. For the philosopher Condillac: “We know enough about the history of the barbaric centuries, when we know that they were barbaric. In such ignorance, profound, and full of absurd prejudices which led to gross superstitions; without arts, without police, without morals [...]: that is what the Russians were like until the seventeenth century.” The original reads: “On sait suffisamment l’histoire des siècles barbares, quand on sait qu’ils ont été barbares. Dans une ignorance profonde, remplie de préjugés absurdes, livrés à des superstitions grossières; sans arts, sans police, sans mœurs [...]: voilà ce qu’ont été les Russes jusqu’au dix-septième siècle.” Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, *Œuvres complètes de Condillac: Histoire moderne* (Paris: Dufart, 1803), 32; Rolando Minuti, “‘Barbarie’ moscovite et idée de civilisation dans les *Lettres chinoises* de Boyer d’Argens” in Sergueï Karp and Larry Wolff (eds.), *Le Mirage russe au XVIII^e siècle* (Ferney-Voltaire: Centre international d’étude du XVIII^e siècle, 2001), 135-148.

² “About the art of sculpture and chiseling in Russia before the reign of Peter the Great, there is little or [nothing] to show.” The original reads: “De l’art de la sculpture et de la ciselure en Russie avant le règne de Pierre le Grand, il y a peu ou [rien] à montrer.” Jacob von Stählin, *Записки Якоба Штеллина об изящных искусствах в России* (Notes by Jacob von Stählin on Fine Art in Russia) (Moscow: Искусство, 1990), 161.

³ Alexander Tseylyaev, *and al.*, *Конная скульптура Санкт-Петербурга: Гипнопластика* (St. Petersburg Equestrian Sculpture: Hypoplasty) (St. Petersburg: Росток, 2011), 8.

such as busts or other sculptures in the round, were totally unknown to the Russians.⁴

The Tsar Peter the Great wanted to break with the traditional image of Russia. He wanted to move away from Moscow, as the city was in the hands of both the Church and the old noble families, the boyars. These groups were attached to strict Russian traditions and restricted the import of technical or cultural innovations, especially from Europe. Aware of the backwardness of his nation, young Peter I decided to continue the expansionist policy his predecessors had begun. During the Great Northern War (1700-1721), the Tsar took over a part of the Swedish territory where he decided to lay the foundations for a new city: Saint Petersburg. As a result, the Russians gained the access to the Baltic Sea they had so longed for.

This city, which became the capital of the Empire in 1712, provided the means for Peter I to achieve two great feats: getting geographically, economically, and intellectually closer to Europe on the one hand, and on the other setting himself apart from his most conservative and dissident subjects, who thus remained in Moscow.⁵ Saint Petersburg was built with the idea of being a “window to Europe.”⁶ The actual “window” was to reflect the positive image of a country wishing to be part of the “civilized” nations. To this end, the city acquired the codes and values of these States, so that travelers and distinguished guests could acknowledge the greatness of Russia through the magnificence of its capital.

It is in this context – i.e. Russia being more accessible from Europe thanks to its access to the Baltic Sea – that sculpture emerged, then took a central place in the artistic and ideological development of the country in the 18th century. Western sculpture developed particularly well in the new city of Saint Petersburg where the traditions of old Moscow did not prevail. As memorialist Jacob von Stählin (1709-1785) reported, foreign masters were then called to Russia to carry out ambitious projects, as local artists did not yet have sufficient skills and knowledge to be fully independent in the creation of their works.⁷

⁴ Before the 18th century, unless rare exception, sculpture could only develop in the field of bas-relief.

⁵ Francine-Dominique Liechtenhan, *Pierre le Grand: le premier empereur de toutes les Russies* (Paris: Tallandier, 2015), 269.

⁶ These famous words attributed to Count Algarotti are taken from Wladimir Berelowitch and Olga Medevdkova, *Histoire de Saint-Petersbourg* (Paris: Fayard, 1996), 40.

⁷ K. V. Malinovsky, “Записки Якоба Штелина о скульптуре в России в XVIII в.” (Notes by Jacob von Stählin on 18th-Century Sculpture in Russia), in T. V. Alekseeva (ed.), *Русское искусство второй половины XVIII- первой половины XIX в. Материалы и исследования* (Russian Art of the Second Half of the 18th-First Half of the 19th Centuries. Materials and Research) (Moscow: Издательство “наука”, 1979), 109.

At the time of Peter the Great, Russian artists who were then capable of sculpting as skillfully as their Western counterparts were rare, if not non-existent.⁸ Thus, for gardens, busts or the facade decoration of the city's new houses, tsars had to turn to European artists. It also fell to these artists to be the first to teach this art in Russia. Although they were few in number, the French occupied a prominent place among the foreign communities.

However, it is also important to reconsider the involvement of other groups of sculptors in the education and training of 18th-century Russia. These communities have not enjoyed the same attention and historiographical success as the French artists: the consequence of a vision of art in Russia that was still partly influenced by the works of Louis Réau and his famous theory of the "expansion of French art."⁹ According to the model advocated by Réau: "[A] central position is imagined, from which art supposedly radiates in the direction of less favored regions that take up the light coming from this source, without this reception implying any modification of substance."¹⁰ Still according to Réau, and his French-centered or "patriotic" approach (*approche "gallocentriste"*),¹¹ the case of Russia really echoed this theory. Thus, the art historian wrote in 1924: "Of all the European countries that were dependent on French genius in the 18th century, none accepted its hegemony more compliantly than Russia. [...] Just as old Russia had been a province of Byzantine art for many centuries, new Russia naturally became a province of French art, and Paris was to Saint Petersburg what Byzantium had been for Kiev and Moscow."¹²

Louis Réau's contribution to the history of Russian art remains considerable. He directed the French Institute of Saint Petersburg from 1911 to 1913, and was one of the first to provide a history of Russian art in France at the beginning of the

⁸ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁹ Olga Medvedkova, "'Scientifique' OU 'intellectuel'? Louis Réau et la création de l'Institut français de Saint-Petersbourg", *Cahiers du monde russe* [Online], 43/2-3, (2002). Also see Louis Réau, *Histoire de l'expansion de l'art français moderne*, vol. 4 ("Le monde slave et l'Orient") (Paris: H. Laurens, 1924).

¹⁰ Michel Espagne, "Cultural Transfers in Art History", in Catherine Dossin, Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel and Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann (eds.), *Circulations in the Global History of Art* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 105.

¹¹ Medvedkova, "'Scientifique' OU 'intellectuel'?", 20.

¹² The original reads: "Parmi tous les pays d'Europe qui ont été au XVIII^e siècle tributaires du génie français, aucun n'a accepté son hégémonie plus docilement que la Russie. [...] De même que la Russie ancienne avait été pendant de longs siècles une province de l'art byzantin, la Russie nouvelle est devenue, tout naturellement, une province de l'art français, Paris a été pour Saint-Petersbourg ce que Byzance avait été pour Kiev et Moscou." Louis Réau, "Les relations artistiques entre la France et la Russie", in Antoine Meillet *et al.*, *Mélanges publiés en l'honneur de M. Paul Boyer* (Paris: Champion, 1925), 118.

20th century. He approached this subject from various angles: through thematic works – on literature, the arts, and morals in Russia¹³ – but also monographs retracing the careers of personalities who had stayed in Saint Petersburg.¹⁴ Criticism of Louis Réau’s works is not linked to the colossal mass of data he was able to provide, but to his “expansionist” approach towards the diffusion of French art. Moreover, Louis Réau fitted into the “anti-Germanic context of the pre-war period”¹⁵ – i.e. when it was essential for these authors to show the hegemony of French art to the detriment of that of other national centers, Germany in particular. Réau, like many of the French authors who later took up his work, did not show how the different communities were entwined, but rather imposed a form of French supremacy and ignoring any idea of cosmopolitanism.

It is now essential to understand the involvement of French sculptors in Russian artistic education and training in the 18th century and discard all the ideological and political considerations that were introduced at the beginning of the 20th century. Indeed, although the French benefitted from the reputation of the French School and its *Académie royale de Peinture et de Sculpture* in Paris under the *Ancien Régime*, the most recent works tend to show that Russia first sought out European artists in general without really favoring any school in particular.¹⁶

The Arrival of French Sculptors in the First Half of the 18th Century

During the reign of Peter the Great, sculptors played a key role in giving Saint Petersburg the appearance of a European city. The French community was present beginning shortly after the city was founded.¹⁷ However, the recruitment of French artists only began in 1715, following the death of Louis XIV, because the general atmosphere in Paris led artists to leave their country. As summed up by Émile Biais in his book about the Pineau family: “Versailles was finished; the

¹³ Louis Réau, *Saint-Pétersbourg* (Paris: H. Laurens, 1913); Louis Réau, *L’art Russe* (Paris: H. Laurens, 1921-1922); Louis Réau, *L’Art russe, de Pierre le Grand à nos jours... Lexique artistique russo-français* (Paris: H. Laurens, 1922).

¹⁴ Louis Réau, “L’Exotisme russe dans l’œuvre de Jean Baptiste Leprince”, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, t. I, 1921, p. 147-165; Louis Réau, *Étienne-Maurice Falconet* (Paris: Demotte, 1922).

¹⁵ Medvedkova, “‘Scientifique’ OU ‘intellectuel?’”, 417.

¹⁶ See for instance Rosalind Polly Blakesley, *The Russian Canvas, Painting in Imperial Russian, 1757-1881*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 365 p., and Olga Medvedkova (ed.), *Pierre le Grand et ses livres: Les arts et les sciences de l’Europe dans la bibliothèque du Tsar* (Paris: CNRS, Alain Baudry et Cie “Respublica Literaria”, 2016), 749 p.

¹⁷ Anne Mézin, Vladislav S. Ržeuckij (eds.), *Les Français en Russie au siècle des Lumières: Dictionnaire des Français, Suisses, Wallons et autres francophones en Russie de Pierre le Grand à Paul I^{er}*, vol. 1 (Ferney-Voltaire: Centre international d’étude du XVIII^e siècle, 2011), 10-12.

finances of the State were exhausted; the excesses of the Regency had aggravated the weight of the inheritance of the last years of Louis XIV's reign; [...] work was almost missing."¹⁸ This was enough to convince a large number of people to turn to other courts to find work. For French artists, going abroad had become an opportunity to achieve fame and fortune, or at least to be able to make a living from their art. The tsar, who was aware of the situation in Paris, sent emissaries—or diplomatic agents—abroad to hire labor, such as craftsmen and artists, to work in his new capital.¹⁹

The contracts from that period which have been preserved to this day showed the privileges the Tsar granted to the foreigners who chose to move to Russia: a substantial salary that was at least three times higher than that of the Russians, reimbursement of travel expenses by the Imperial Treasury²⁰, and free access to land on which to build a house in Saint Petersburg. These benefits led to considerable social and economic disparities between foreigners and locals. For example, the sculptor Nicholas Pineau received 1,200 rubles a year (6,000 French pounds), while the best-paid Russian carpenters would only receive 24 rubles a year.²¹ For the first twenty-five years, most of the artists who were recruited were Catholics. In order to facilitate their integration into Russian life, Peter the Great passed advantageous *ukases*, particularly regarding freedom of religion, and allowed them to build a Catholic church in Saint Petersburg.²² The city became one of the most

¹⁸ The original reads: “Versailles était terminé; les finances de l’État à sec; les débordements de la Régence aggravant le poids de l’héritage des dernières années de Louis XIV; [...] le travail manquant presque.” Émile Biais, *Les Pineau sculpteurs dessinateurs des bâtiments du Roy, graveurs, architectes, 1652-1886* (Paris: Morgand, 1892), 18.

¹⁹ In November 1715, Peter I wrote to his agent, Konon Zotov, who was in Paris: “As the King of France is dead and his heir is much too young, I believe that craftsmen will seek their fortunes in other countries: for this reason, find out about them and write to me so as not to let those who can serve escape.” The original reads: “Comme le roi de France est mort et que son héritier est beaucoup trop jeune, je crois que les artisans vont aller chercher fortune dans d’autres pays: pour cette raison, renseigne-toi sur eux et écris-moi pour ne pas laisser échapper ceux qui peuvent servir.” See Olga Medvedkova, *Jean-Baptiste Alexandre Le Blond, architecte 1679-1719* (Paris: A. Baudry, 2007), 149.

²⁰ Ekaterina Aleksandrovna Andreeva, “Французский ‘десант’ Ж.-Б. А. Леблона” (The French ‘Landing’ of J. B. A. Le Blond), in Dmitry Yuryevich Guzevich *et al.*, *Россия и Франция: Культурный диалог в панораме веков* (Russia and France: Cultural Dialogue in the Panorama of the Centuries) (St. Petersburg, Европейский Дом, 2018), 232-233.

²¹ Nicolas Pineau’s contract is now kept at the Archives nationales: *Minutes et répertoires du notaire Michel Ange de SAINT-GEORGES (étude IV)*, MC/ET/IV/392, April, 9 1716. For more information about the salary of craftsmen in St. Petersburg, see Berelowitch and Medvedkova, *Histoire de Saint-Petersbourg*, 48.

²² Alexander Nikolaevich Andreev, “Римские католики в Петербурге при Петре Великом и их участие в общественной жизни России” (Roman Catholics in St. Petersburg under Peter the Great and their

cosmopolitan places in Europe. Artists flocked to it from all nations and all the religious bodies of Christianity were represented.

When they arrived in Saint Petersburg, foreign sculptors first had to report to the Chancellery of Construction, the administration that managed the city's buildings. It had set up nineteen workshops, including a woodcarving workshop-cum-school.²³ The latter was undoubtedly the most remarkable, as a place of both production and training, which was quite unique in Russia at the time. It was indeed the first training place for sculptors in Saint Petersburg. The French master Nicolas Pineau was at the head of the workshop. He had been hired in Paris in February 1716 and arrived in Russia in August of the same year.²⁴

As “the first sculptor of Her Majesty Czarina” and “the head of all sculptors in Saint Petersburg,” Nicolas Pineau worked extensively in the Russian capital, although few sculpted artifacts showing his artistic craftsmanship have been preserved.²⁵ Indeed, in Saint Petersburg, all through the first half of the 18th century, sculptures were often made of fragile materials—wood, plaster or even lead²⁶—which could hardly stand the rigors of the local climate. However, Pineau left a large number of drawings that prove his style and creativity. Introducing the Rocaille style, his drawings achieved great success in Russia, even long after the sculptor left in 1728.²⁷ As was the case for many of his compatriots, a paragraph in the contract he signed with the Tsar's agent stipulated that he had to train apprentices in his art,²⁸ which shows how important the promotion of local masters and the support of the technical independence of sculpture were to Peter the Great.

Participation in the Public Life of Russia), *Вестник Южно-Уральского государственного университета. Серия: Социально-гуманитарные науки* (Bulletin of the South Urals State University. Series: Social Sciences), vol. 13, n°2 (2013), 77-78.

²³ Gwenola Firmin, Francine-Dominique Liechtenhan and Thierry Sarmant (eds.), *Pierre le Grand : un tsar en France, 1717*, cat. exp., Versailles, Grand Trianon, 30 mai- 24 septembre 2017 (Paris: Lienart, 2017), 200.

²⁴ *Minutes et répertoires du notaire Michel Ange de SAINT-GEORGES (étude IV)*.

²⁵ Anne Mézin and Vladislav S. Ržeuckij, vol. 2 (2011), 664 ; V. V. Antonov, “Б. Симон — помощник Пино” (B. Simon—Pineau's assistant), in T. V. Alekseeva, *От Средневековья к Новому времени: материалы и исследования по русскому искусству XVIII - первой половины XIX века* (From the Middle Ages to the New Ages: Materials and Research on Russian Art from the 18th to the First Half of the 19th Centuries) (Moscow: Наука, 1984), 124.

²⁶ O. A. Kholodnova, “Деятельность Никола Пино в Петергофе” (Nicolas Pinault's Activities in Peterhof), in E. Ya. Kalnitskaya, *300 лет Петергофской дороге – Ораниенбауму История, Реставрация Музеефикация* (300 Years of the Way from Peterhof - Oranienbaum. History, Restoration, Museumization) (St. Petersburg, ГМЗ “Петергоф”, 2011), 9.

²⁷ Katie Scott, “Persuasion: Nicolas Pineau's Designs on the Social,” *RHIA Journal*, vol. 84 (2014).

²⁸ *Minutes et répertoires du notaire Michel Ange de SAINT-GEORGES (étude IV)*.

Although documentation on what artistic training was like at the time is scarce, it is still possible to get a general outline. At the Chancellery, between ten and thirty Russian apprentices would attend each workshop. The master submitted them drawings they had to imitate or transpose into relief.²⁹ The practice of learning by imitation was not new in Russia. Moreover, it was part of a traditional artistic expression in which the Church imposed the canons to be reproduced, particularly as far as the painting of icons or iconostatic reliefs were concerned. What was new in Saint Petersburg's artistic production was the innovation of the models the Europeans brought. Pineau's drawings "bear witness to a very rich imagination and a rare flexibility,"³⁰ and a taste for seduction that was in opposition with what the Russian Church had imposed for several centuries. In the workshop, the apprentices began with the assimilation of the first gestures, such as whittling down material. Pineau would then come and carve the ornaments with great meticulousness. The next stages of the training are still unknown to this day. After some time, the apprentices were probably able to put the final touches themselves. However, this lack of information highlights the limits of this type of artistic training, which indeed remained incomplete in Saint Petersburg in the first decades of the 18th century.

Skilled foreign and native carvers were particularly rare, and Pineau complained that he was constantly overwhelmed.³¹ Such a heavy workload reduced the amount of time he could devote to the training of his apprentices. In addition, he reported many technical problems that limited the learning process, such as a lack of materials and a language barrier³²: the apprentices often spoke only Russian whereas Pineau only spoke French.³³ Above all, as art historian Olga Medvedkova shows: "as soon as he started training a group of Russians, even just a little bit, that said group would be taken away from him and replaced by new novices" in sculpture.³⁴ These apprentices were then sent to other sites, without having completely assimilated their

²⁹ Other sculptors are mentioned in the archives – such as Fordant, Rust, Saint-Laurant or Torcannet – but they have never been specifically studied.

³⁰ Biais, *Les Pineau*, 20.

³¹ Medvedkova, *Jean-Baptiste Alexandre Le Blond*, 186.

³² S. P. Luppov, *История строительства Петербурга в первой четверти XVIII века* (The History of the Construction of St. Petersburg in the First Quarter of the 18th Century) (Moscow-Leningrad: Издательство Академии Наук СССР, 1957), 68-70.

³³ Between 1724 and 1727, the Chancellery of Construction had only one translator for all the workshops. In 1716, on behalf of all the French artists, the architect Alexandre Le Blond, who arrived in Russia at the same time as Pineau, submitted a request for more interpreters to the Tsar because his compatriots "not knowing the Russian language will not be able to express themselves and to make the Russian workers who will work under their guidance heard." See: S. P. Luppov, *История строительства Петербурга*, 63 and Medvedkova, *Jean-Baptiste Alexandre Le Blond*, 179.

³⁴ Medvedkova, *Jean-Baptiste Alexandre Le Blond*, 184.

master's teachings, and as a consequence were still unable to pass on what they had learned.

The first half of the 18th century was a period when sculptors finally failed to train real apprentices, i.e. apprentices who would then have been capable of producing works comparable to those of the foreigners present on site. As for the foreigners, they enjoyed real prosperity in a city where demand was constantly increasing and local competition was non-existent. Although there were a few exceptions,³⁵ the teaching of sculpture in Russia was not really structured in the same way as in the art schools and academies of the West before the Imperial Academy of Arts was founded in Saint Petersburg in 1757.

The Age of the Academy

In the middle of the 18th century, the enlightened elite of the Russian nobility was aware of the problem affecting the country's artistic education; the latter then stood as a real "cultural backwardness that was painfully felt".³⁶ In this context, Count Ivan Shuvalov (1727-1797), a great defender of Enlightenment thought in Russia and a favorite of Empress Elisabeth Petrovna's (1709-1761), the daughter of Peter the Great, was the first to come up with the idea of an Academy of Arts. So, this "promoter" of the arts presented his project to the Senate in November 1757. For him, one of the reasons for Russia's "cultural backwardness" was that the country was too permissive towards foreigners, who just came there to make their fortune: "[N]ow foreigners receive huge sums of money for their mediocre achievements and, as soon as they have become rich, they return to their own country, while there is not a single Russian who can achieve anything in any kind of art."³⁷

Foreign artists received bad press at the time. They were present in all strata of Saint Petersburg's artistic production, leaving few opportunities for local artists who were often too poorly qualified to work on the capital's construction sites. Shuvalov continued his report and put forward more mercantile ambitions: "[T]o found an academy of arts, the fruits of which would not only increase the glory of

³⁵ For three decades, there was a sculpture class at the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences, the history of which is documented by Stählin. See Stählin, *Записки Якоба Штелина*, 169.

³⁶ Elena Borisovna Mozgovaya, Konstantin Lappo-Danilevsky, "Идеи И. И. Винкельмана и Петербургская академия художеств в XVIII столетии" (The Ideas of J. J. Winckelmann and the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts in the 18th Century) (St. Petersburg: Hayka, 2002), 155.

³⁷ *Полное Собрание Законов Российской Империи : Собрание первое : С 1649 по 12 декабря 1825 года* (The Complete Collection of the Laws of the Russian Empire: First Collection: from 1649 to December 12, 1825), vol. 14 (from 1754 to 1757, from No 10,169 to 10,787) (St. Petersburg: Законодательство Российской империи, 1830), 806-807.

our Tsar, but also greatly serve the needs of the Treasury [...].”³⁸ Moreover, Ivan Shuvalov evoked the absence of Russian artistic identity. For him, only a structure that would be able to supervise the training of local sculptors could help building this identity:

Here, we have no arts in particular, because there are no skilled national artists. The reason for this is that the young people who start their studies have no basic knowledge neither in foreign languages nor in some of the sciences that are necessary for the arts. So they are just wasting their time, because practice is all they have to guide them. They cannot learn anything by themselves, or improve themselves, because they have nothing to develop their natural gifts.³⁹

Shuvalov insisted on the potential advantage of training students somewhere they could learn and practice their art while being exposed to other sciences. Rosalind Polly Blakesley, an expert in Russian painting, writes: “The new Academy marked the beginning of Russia’s first coherent program to professionalize painting, sculpture and architecture, and to promote native artists.”⁴⁰ In his work on the origin and development of art academies, Nikolaus Pevsner confirmed the importance of this institution’s educational value: “from the very first sessions on, academic teaching was much more scholastic than anywhere else [in Europe].”⁴¹

Ivan Shuvalov had already created an educational institution in Russia. In 1755, he inaugurated Moscow University with academician Mikhail Lomonosov (1711-1765). The Academy of Arts depended on the University, which provided it with students and managed its budget until 1764. However, although the Academy was closely linked to the University, Shuvalov did not choose Moscow as a location for his new institution, but Saint Petersburg. He justified his choice as follows:

The Academy should be founded here in Saint Petersburg, since the best professors do not want to go to Moscow, hoping to get work from the Court and, theoretically, to earn a better living. That is why it would be up to the present chamberlain and curator of Moscow University [i.e. Ivan Shuvalov himself] to sign an agreement with

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 806.

³⁹ Sergueï Jaremic, “Основание Академии художеств. Президентство И. И. Шувалова” (The Foundation of the Academy of Arts. Presidency of I. I. Shuvalov), in *Русская академическая художественная школа в XVIII веке (Russian Academic Art School in the 18th Century)* (Moscow-Leningrad: Огиз-Соцэжиз, 1934), 62, in Olga Medvedkova, *L’architecture française en Russie au XVIII^e siècle* (Lille: Atelier national, 2001, 304).

⁴⁰ Blakesley, *The Russian Canvas*, 11.

⁴¹ Nikolaus Pevsner, *Les académies d’art: passé et présent* (Paris: Klincksieck, 2018 [1940]), 288.

the painter Claireau and the engraver and sculptor Gillet (both from the Royal Academy).⁴²

The last sentence betrays the Russians' dependence on foreign models, and a duality was then fully perceptible: the Academy had to train native artists so that it would not have to commission foreigners, although foreign artists were still required to train local artists. Thus, the chamberlain thought of his institution as a way to promote national art, but it nevertheless remained an international matter given that the first artists to join the faculty were almost all foreigners. At the same time, it accounted for Shuvalov's decision to locate the new Academy in the most cosmopolitan city in Russia.

In his report to the Senate, Ivan Shuvalov mentioned two French artists: a painter called "Claireau," and a famous sculptor, Nicolas-François Gillet. The chamberlain favored the nation he thought was the most reliable to provide the pedagogical standards that would best serve Russian arts. The French predominance in some artistic disciplines – such as painting with Louis Joseph Le Lorrain, Jean-Louis de Velly, Louis Jean François Lagrenée, and sculpture with Nicolas-François Gillet and Louis Rolland – reflected how friendly to France, its language and culture the court of Saint Petersburg had been since the beginning of Elisabeth Petrovna's reign.⁴³ More often than not, the artists in charge of teaching the three "noble" arts – i.e. architecture, painting, and sculpture – had been trained in Paris and were members of the *Académie Royale*, as was the case with Le Lorrain, Lagrenée and Gillet.⁴⁴

For Shuvalov, hiring Nicolas-François Gillet (1709-1791) to teach sculpture was the ideal choice. The artist had received the kind of training the chamberlain dreamed of transposing to Russia. In Paris, Gillet was the apprentice of Lambert-Sigisbert Adam (1700-1759), a great 18th century master who taught sculpture at the

⁴² *Полное Собрание Законов Российской Империи...*, vol. 14, 806-807.

⁴³ See for instance Paul Keenan, *St. Petersburg and the Russian Court, 1703-1761* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 232 p.; Francine-Dominique Liechtenhan, *Élisabeth I^{re} de Russie, l'autre impératrice* (Paris: Fayard, 2007), 526 p.; Alexei Evstatov, *Les spectacles francophones à la cour de Russie* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2016), 374 p.

⁴⁴ In the early years of the Academy, only one Berliner, George Frederick Schmidt, a professor of engraving (from 1757 to 1762), was a member of the faculty and taught alongside the French. Niele Kazimirovna Masulions, *Георг Фридрих Шмидт (1712-1775). Гравёр короля* (Georg Friedrich Schmidt (1712-1775). King's Engraver) (St. Petersburg: Изд-во Государственного Эрмитажа, 2017), 199 p.

Académie Royale de Peinture et Sculpture.⁴⁵ Gillet won the *Prix de Rome* in 1745⁴⁶ along with a grant from the Crown, which gave him the opportunity to continue his training in the Eternal City where he became acquainted with the works of the greatest old and new masters. He returned to Paris in 1753, and was admitted into the *Académie Royale* the following year.⁴⁷ On April 30, 1757, as an acknowledgment for his talent, the *Académie Royale* appointed Gillet as Academician, which represented the highest form of recognition after an artist's long and rigorous apprenticeship.⁴⁸ As a result, the fact that his name was mentioned in Shuvalov's report to the Senate was not purely coincidental. The chamberlain was looking for the best professors for his institution, and he found out which artists were the most likely to accept a position in Saint Petersburg thanks to his Parisian connections. In the time since he returned from Rome, Nicolas Gillet had mainly worked on his potential admittance at the *Académie Royale* and, in the end, he was unable to set up as an artist with a solid client base. Moreover, in the French capital, the competition among many highly respected sculptors – the Adam brothers, Lemoigne, Bouchardon, Pigalle, Falconet, to name but a few – was fierce and renown came at a premium.⁴⁹ Thus, the artist did not have to hesitate for long when Shuvalov bestowed a professorship at the Academy on him. The position came with a generous annual salary and other advantages, including the guarantee to receive imperial commissions.⁵⁰ Moreover, he was following in the steps of a former companion he had met in Rome: the sculptor Jacques François Joseph Saly, who had

⁴⁵ Lambert-Sigisbert Adam was appointed as Assistant Professor on July 2, 1740, and Professor on January 31, 1744. Anatole de Montaiglon, *Procès-verbaux de l'Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture, 1648-1793*, vol. 5 (Paris: J. Baur, 1883), 275 and 360.

⁴⁶ For more information about his training and career in Rome, see Anne-Lise Desmas, *Le ciseau et la tiare: les sculpteurs dans la Rome des papes 1724-1758* (Rome: École française de Rome, 2012), 114 and Denis Lavalley "Une décoration à Rome, au milieu du XVIII^e siècle: le chœur de l'église Saint-Louis-des-Français", in *Les fondations nationales dans la Rome pontificale*, Actes du colloque de Rome du 16-19 mai 1978 (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1981), 290.

⁴⁷ Montaiglon, *Procès-verbaux*, vol. 6, 373.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 7, 36.

⁴⁹ Christian Michel, "Stratégies de carrière de Pajou", in Guilhem Scherf (ed.), *Augustin Pajou et ses contemporains: actes du colloque organisé au Musée du Louvre par le Service culturel les 7 et 8 novembre 1997* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 2000), 95-111.

⁵⁰ Nicolas-François Gillet's salary of 1,200 rubles a year was one of the highest in the Academy. In comparison, as a professor of architecture, Alexander Kokorinov, the Russian with the highest salary, only earned 700 rubles a year. Nikolai Nikolaievitch Petrov, *Сборник материалов для истории Императорской С.-Петербургской Академии художеств за сто лет ее существования* (A Collection of Materials for the History of the Imperial Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg Over a Hundred Years of Existence), vol. 1 (St. Petersburg: Рипол Классик, 1864), 16.

been heading the Royal Danish Academy of Arts in Copenhagen since 1754.⁵¹ Hiring Nicolas-François Gillet was one of the Academy's greatest achievements. The artist was in charge of the sculpture course from 1758 to 1777. He would devote virtually all his time to teaching his apprentices, which left him few opportunities to accept commissions. As stated in his letter of resignation: "Since then, his zeal has not allowed him to disregard the trust he had been honored with, and he reaped the rewards of his effort and diligence through the success of many of his Students."⁵² Gillet was the instructor of the most brilliant Russian sculptors of the second half of the 18th century. The works of Fedot Shubin, Fyodor Gordeyev, Theodosius Shchedrin, Mikhail Kozlovsky, Ivan Prokofiev and Ivan Martos are indeed now considered as real national treasures.

Gillet arrived in Saint Petersburg in March 1758, and the painter Louis-Joseph Le Lorrain joined him at the end of the summer.⁵³ They both laid the foundation for the Academy's art education. They took what they had known at the *Académie Royale* in Paris as a model, thus placing drawing at the core of the learning process. In the 18th century, mastering the art of drawing was essential for all artists, whether they were painters, architects, or even sculptors. In 1763, Shuvalov declared that "to bring art to its flourishing state [...] the beginning and basis of a piece has to be a substantially exploitable drawing without which the practitioner of these noble arts cannot reach the desired perfection."⁵⁴ In Europe, technical proficiency in drawing then accounted for an artist's high professionalism. In the first years of their training, apprentices were judged on their drawings, a way for the Academy to check the students' progress. Moreover, the institution regularly organized art contests to stimulate their will to emulate their masters and give the best of themselves.

Imitation was the basis for teaching students to draw. As Claude-Henri Watelet wrote in Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*: "[Drawing] means the art to

⁵¹ V. Thorlacius-Ussing, "Études sur l'Activité de Saly avant son voyage en Danemark", in *From the Collections of the Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek*, vol. 3 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1942), 281-312.

⁵² The original reads: "Son zèle ne lui a pas permis depuis ce temps de négliger aucun soin pour répondre à la confiance dont il se trouvait honoré et il a recueilli des fruits de ses peines et de son assiduité par les succès qu'ont eu les études de plusieurs de ses Élèves." A folder in the archives of the Academy of Fine Arts contains a large number of documents dealing with Gillet's work as a professor at the Academy. See Russian State Historical Archives (RGIA), Fonds 789, opis 1, 1, dos. No 746, fol. 2.

⁵³ On Louis Joseph Le Lorrain's career, see Pierre Rosenberg, "Louis-Joseph Le Lorrain: (1715-1859)", *Revue de l'art*, No 40/41 (1978), 173-202.

⁵⁴ Olga Borisovna Dubova, *Становление академической школы в западно-европейской культуре* (The Formation of an Academic School in Western European Culture) (Moscow, Памятники исторической мысли, 2009), 173.

form strokes which imitate the shapes of objects as seen by our eyes.”⁵⁵ In 1793, Ivan Urvanov published *A Brief Guide to the Knowledge of Historical Drawing and Painting: Based on Speculation and Experience*.⁵⁶ He minutely described the various stages through which he acquired the technique of drawing as a student at the Imperial Academy. The way drawing was taught there was quite similar to how it was taught at the *Académie Royale*. During the very first sessions, the masters showed their students how to draw straight lines and how to shade. This first lesson helped familiarize them with the various tools by “freeing [their] hands.”⁵⁷ That was just an introduction before the actual first step came and increased difficulty: copying from original paintings, engravings and drawings.⁵⁸

After having acquired the basics of drawing, students would continue with a second step that consisted in copying from sculptures in the round. This class started in 1759 – i.e. one year after the beginning of the courses at the Imperial Academy. The institution soon built up a large collection of casts, most of which were acquired by Ivan Shuvalov himself.⁵⁹ Over two hundred and fifty works were mentioned in the 1777 registers and most of these pieces had been executed in Italy. The collection included copies of large ancient and modern models as well as original works made of various materials such as marble, terracotta, and plaster. The Academy always received important donations and its most memorable benefactor was undoubtedly Etienne-Maurice Falconet. The sculptor, who came to Russia to execute the *Bronze Horseman* (1782), offered a large part of his collection to the Imperial Academy in 1767. He thus gave the institution fifty-two works by various artists – many of them

⁵⁵ Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert (eds.), *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc.*, vol. 4 (Paris, chez Eriasson, David, Le Breton et Durand, 1751), 889.

⁵⁶ Ivan Urvanov, *Краткое руководство к познанию рисования и живописи исторического рода: основанное на умозрении и опытах / Сочинено для учащихся художником И.У. (A Brief Guide to the Knowledge of Historical Drawing and Painting: Based on Speculation and Experience / Composed for Students by the Artist I. U.)* (St. Petersburg: печатано в Типографии Морского шляхетного кадетского корпуса, 1793), 133 p.

⁵⁷ Urvanov, *Краткое руководство*, 67; Elena Mozgovaya, *Скульптурный класс академии художеств в 18 веке* (The Sculpture Class of the Academy of Arts in the 18th Century) (St. Petersburg: Издательство Zero-design, 1999), 39.

⁵⁸ Even though some of the models students were to copy had been acquired at Gillet’s request, most of them came from Ivan Shuvalov’s collection. See RGIA, Fonds 789, opis 1, 1, dos. No 570, fol. 1-5.

⁵⁹ Ekaterina Andreeva, *Музей “антиков” Императорской Академии художеств. История собрания и его роль в развитии системы художественного образования в России во второй половине XVIII - первой половине XIX веков* (The Museum of “Antiquities” of the Imperial Academy of Arts. The History of the Meeting and Its Role in the Development of the Art Education System in Russia from the Second Half of the 18th to the First Half of the 19th Century) (St. Petersburg: Repine Institute thesis, Институт живописи, скульптуры и архитектуры им. И. Е. Репина, 2004), 372 p.

were French, such as Edme Bouchardon, Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne and Pierre Puget, to name but a few.⁶⁰ The donation was in all likelihood made as a way for Falconet to thank the Academy for having granted him the title of honorary member on January 10, 1767.⁶¹ In the second half of the century, the Saint Petersburg Academy of Arts probably had the biggest collection of sculptures in Russia, thus providing art students with a large body of works. If weather permitted, Gillet took his apprentices to copy the sculptures in the Summer Garden as well as the ones kept in the Hermitage.

Once they were proficient in the copy of sculptures, students moved on to figure drawing. As a rule, the sessions were held in one of the Academy's lecture halls. The nude model would stand on a dais in the center of the room and was usually asked to assume a sophisticated posture so that the view remained as complex as possible from whatever angle said model was seen. Elena Mozgovaya noticed that, among the drawings preserved, those made by "sculptors reflected greater sensibility and special care in the reproduction of shapes and forms."⁶² The charter of the Academy defined the professor's role during the sessions as follows: "at the end of the exercise [...] he would correct the sketches and show them [i.e. his students] the quickest and easiest ways to approach the perfection of the human body."⁶³ Around the age of fifteen, students could specialize either in architecture, sculpture, painting or engraving. Here again, they would learn the various techniques mostly thanks to the imitation and repetition of the works kept at the Academy or from live models.

From 1765 onwards, the Academy became a boarding school that students entered at the age of seven and would only leave around the age of twenty-one. This was unique to the Russian institution, which was the only one in Europe to offer boarding for all its students.⁶⁴ In Paris, students worked in the studio of a renowned artist – thus called a "master" – in the morning, and in the afternoon, they practiced drawing at the *Académie Royale*. In Saint Petersburg, there was no such thing as an artist's studio before the Imperial Academy was created. As a result, the Academy decided to fill students' spare time with more theoretical courses. With thirty-one hours of class per week, the boarders received one of the most advanced forms

⁶⁰ RGIA, Fonds 789, opis 1, 1, dos. No 570, fol. 15-16.

⁶¹ Petrov, *Сборник материалов*, 118.

⁶² Mozgovaya, *Скульптурный класс академии*, 85.

⁶³ Ivan Ivanovich Betskoi, *Privilèges et réglemens de l'Académie Impériale des beaux-arts, peinture, sculpture et architecture, établie à St. Pétersbourg, avec le Collège d'Education qui en dépend* (1765), 34.

⁶⁴ The only instances of a similar form of community life were the *École royale des élèves protégés* (Royal School for Protected Pupils) created by Madame de Pompadour and the Marquis de Marigny, and the *Académie de France* in Rome. See Pevsner, *Les académies d'art*, 147-148.

of education in Europe, virtually as good as that provided in *Realschulen*.⁶⁵ In particular, Russian artists were taught history to become familiar with Greco-Roman mythology, the common roots of European civilization. Learning foreign languages, such as French, German, and Italian, was also compulsory so that they would be able to communicate with their teachers and, potentially, their future foreign art commissioners.⁶⁶ In addition, learning a foreign language was vital if they were to stay in Europe.

Students could vie for a scholarship that would allow them to travel and round out their education in France and Italy. The scholarship was awarded to those who won the *Grand Prix*. It was comparable to the *Prix de Rome* offered at the *Académie royale de Peinture et de Sculpture* in Paris, which granted a bursary to study at the *Académie de France* in Rome. The *Grand Prix* of the Imperial Academy was held once a year, and if a student was not satisfied with the final result, he was allowed to compete again each year until he was twenty-one. For his sculpture class, Nicolas Gillet chose the topic students were to address for the competition, and contrary to other artistic disciplines, sculptors could choose from two media: sculpture in the round or bas-relief. More often than not, Gillet would choose scenes from Russian history. For example, the competitors had to work on *The Victory of Azov Won by Peter the Great in 1696*⁶⁷ in 1763, and in 1766 on the *Peace Agreements between Oleg and the Emperors in Constantinople*.⁶⁸ The teacher clearly showed interest in Russia's national history; a subject that was barely dealt with at the *Académie Royale*, for the French institution often preferred mythological themes.⁶⁹

The rules at the Academy stated that students had to go abroad “to improve their art; they will benefit from the protection of Our Ministers [there], & the Academy will ensure they are recommended & addressed to people who are able to help them reach the goal that was set for them.”⁷⁰ The period students would spend abroad was in keeping with the training they had begun in Saint Petersburg, and they agreed upon proving their assiduousness: “When their period abroad comes to an

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 289.

⁶⁶ The Academy recruited governors from French-speaking countries who had to speak French as much as possible in their interactions with students. Their contracts are kept at RGIA, Fonds 789, opis 1, 1, dos. No 462.

⁶⁷ Petrov, *Сборник материалов*, 83.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁶⁹ Christian Michel, *L'Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture, 1648-1793: la naissance de l'École française* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 2012), 222-227.

⁷⁰ Betskoi, *Privilèges et réglemens*, 42.

end, Students will have to send the Academy a sample of their work, or at least one copy of the most beautiful Paintings, Statues, Designs &c.”⁷¹

In Paris, the apprentices were sent to the studios of the most popular sculptors of the time, as was the case for the first Russian students who were sent to France. Fedot Shubin was thus entrusted to Jean-Baptiste Pigalle, and Fyodor Gordeyev to Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne.⁷² They met renowned masters and studied contemporary works. Studying alongside their French peers encouraged a form of emulation that was essential for perfecting their learning. The Russians would work in their masters’ studios in the morning and spend the afternoon studying at the *Académie Royale*.⁷³ They took part in art contests and some of them even won sometimes, which accounted for their great skills.⁷⁴ In the 1760s, Russian students were under the protection of Dmitri Gallitzin, a Russian ambassador in Paris and a true art lover. He was their advisor and recommended them throughout their stay. He introduced them to his friend Denis Diderot, who also provided great support during their training.⁷⁵ Diderot took his role as a protector very much to heart. For instance, in a letter to the Imperial Academy, he insisted upon the fact that Russian students should be allowed to stay longer in France before going to Italy: “I hereby address the teachers and students’ solicitations to you. The students request that their stay in the Parisian studios be extended. Their instructors assured me that their request is legitimate. You surely agree that the more skilled they are upon their arrival in Italy, the easier for them to benefit from this second trip.”⁷⁶

The works the students executed at that time were rather rare, but they nonetheless accounted for the success of the training offered at the Academy. To this day, Fyodor Gordeyev’s *Prometheus*, which he executed when he was in Paris, undoubtedly remains the oldest student work that has been preserved.⁷⁷ It equally belongs to the Russian and French artistic productions because of the theme, the

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Vladimir Mikhailovich Rogachevsky, *Федор Гордеевич Гордеев. 1744-1810* (Fyodor Gordeyevich Gordeyev. 1744-1810) (Leningrad-Moscow: Государственное издательство “искусство”, 1960), 16-20.

⁷³ RGIA, Fonds 789, inv. 1, d. 333, fol. 2.

⁷⁴ Denis Roche, “Перечень русских и польских художников имена которых значатся в списках парижской академии живописи и скульптуры” (List of Russian and Polish Artists whose Names Appear on the Registers of the *Académie de Peinture et de Sculpture*), *Старые годы*, June 1909.

⁷⁵ RGIA, Fonds 789, inv. 1, d. 305, f. 1 back.

⁷⁶ The original reads: “Je vous adresse les sollicitations des maitres et des élèves. Les élèves demandent que leur séjour dans les ateliers de Paris soit prolongé. Les maitres m’assurent que leur demande est juste. Vous concevez vous même que plus ils seront forts en arrivant en Italie, plus il leur sera facile de profiter de ce second voyage.” RGIA, Fonds 789, opis 1, 1, dos. No 308, fol. 60 front and back.

⁷⁷ Rogachevsky, *Федор Гордеевич Гордеев*, 16.

technique, the great mastery of the proportions of the human body, and the vividness of the expressions represented that compared to what the Parisian sculptors of the period did. Moreover, the work has often been compared to contemporaneous works such as Étienne-Maurice Falconet's *Milo of Croton* (1754) and Nicolas-Sébastien Adam's *Prometheus Bound* (1762).⁷⁸ Gordeyev's *Prometheus* was just as lauded in Saint Petersburg, and 18th-century Russian theorists considered it was one of the best examples of anatomical rendition.⁷⁹ Shortly after his return to Saint Petersburg in 1772, Fyodor Gordeyev became Nicolas-François Gillet's teaching assistant.⁸⁰ In 1777, Gillet was still in charge of the sculpture class, so that sculpture was then taught by a Frenchman who was assisted by a Russian. "Now that, under the most favorable auspices, this Institution has reached its full consistency and that, in its midst, skilled masters have been trained, which now makes the help of strangers useless, Mr. Gillet desires nothing more than to savor the rest that his arduous work has made necessary for him."⁸¹

Gillet gradually gave his former student more and more responsibility until he finally left Russia in 1777. Gordeyev took over his former teacher's duties and was granted tenure in 1782. It was the first time a Russian had been fully in charge of the sculpture class at the Imperial Academy of Arts in Saint Petersburg: from then on, the institution would no longer need foreign masters to train national artists.

Russia had always been involved in the artistic education of the nation whether thanks to the first art promoters – Peter the Great and Ivan Shuvalov, for instance – or the watchful eye of ministers and ambassadors, such as Ivan Betskoi and Dmitri Gallitzin. Institutions like the Academy had to spearhead the promotion of the State's power. State control reflected Russia's ambition to be fully part of "Western civilization," intellectually as well as artistically, and the emergence of a true artistic school would have been impossible without such an ambition.

⁷⁸ Louis Réau, "Les artistes russes à Paris au XVIII^e siècle", *Revue des Études Slaves*, No 3 (1923), 292.

⁷⁹ Especially Ivan Vien, one of the very first Russian art theorists, who invited students to use the work as an example when it came to study the beauty of anatomy. Ivan Ivanovich Vien, *Краткое историческое обозрение скульптуры и живописи с полным показанием сильного влияния анатомии в сих два свободных художества* (A Brief Historical Review of Sculpture and Painting with the Full Indication of the Strong Influence of Anatomy in these Two Free Arts) (St. Petersburg: Типография Государственной Медицинской коллегии, 1803), 51-52.

⁸⁰ Rogachevsky, *Федор Гордеевич Гордеев*, 36.

⁸¹ The original reads: "À présent que sous les plus heureux auspices cet Établissement a pris toute sa consistance et que de son propre sein sont sortis des maitres habiles, qui rendent inutiles le secours des étrangers, le Sr. Gillet ne désire plus que de goûter le repos que ses longs travaux lui ont rendu nécessaire." RGIA, Fonds 789, opis 1, 1, dos. No 746; for the quote itself, see fol. 2.

The French did not impose the training model they had known in Paris, but rather adapted it to the situation in Saint Petersburg. The Russians made it their own and devised what they considered the most suitable training program within an educational structure that drew on the French model, but also the German, Italian and Danish models. The aim was to generate a body of local sculptors that would be able to meet the ever-increasing demand for artists in Saint Petersburg. Unlike ordinary craftsmen in previous centuries, late 18th century artists demanded a new social status that their proficiency would secure.⁸² The concept of a sculptor who could fully master his art and be aware of his social position gave rise to a new form of elite. While nobility remained hereditary, sculptors relied on their mastery and creativity, the value of which the general public also acknowledged and which resulted in their names being carried forward in history.

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⁸² Dubova, *Становление академической*, 181-182.

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