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Académie Royale d'Architecture and current architectural studio culture

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The architectural teaching studio today looks very much like it did when it was first invented at the Académie Royale d'Architecture in 1671. Today, as it was then, students are required to demonstrate their worthiness before enrolling, they work for credits, and they tailor their designs to impress a *Patron*. Many students work over and above conventional hours so as to amass the material required for a critique, only for it to be judged in minutes. The basic pedagogical system continues to involve a *Patron* enjoying a position over those who offer up their work for judgement, although most cohorts are not without a rebel. Also continuing is the strong studio camaraderie, teamwork, raucous celebrations, and disappointments.

The Académie Royale d'Architecture was the first institution to be devoted solely to the study of architecture and its school was the first to be dedicated to the teaching of student architects. It was inaugurated by royal consent, abolished during the French Revolution in 1793 and remained the only architectural institution of its kind in Europe for 72 years. Although the school was officially closed during the French Revolution, a remnant of the architectural academic tradition was sustained by a small group of devoted academics and later fully revived to form part of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. It is this institution that is often cited as being the crucial precedent for almost every contemporary architectural school.

When style is disentangled from the educational system it is evident that the values and methods of the Académie remain in schools throughout the world today. Architectural education has seen its fair share of riots, closures, exploitation, bad management and down-right annoying tutors over the years; however, its core teaching values and methods have been largely appreciated and served many students well. Therefore, on the matter of conducting architectural education, the question may not be 'what should change?' but 'what should be remembered?'



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