

AGREGATION EXTERNE 2004

La Fondation de la Royal Academy of Arts, 1768-1836

Jalons bibliographiques

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« An Academy, in which the Polite Arts may be regularly cultivated, is at last opened among us by Royal Munificence. This must appear an event in the highest degree interesting, not only to the Artists, but to the whole nation.”

Joshua Reynolds, *Discourse I*, January 2, 1769

- **Texte officiel du programme (BOEN)**
- **Bibliographie :**
 1. ROYAL ACADEMY : a) prehistory b) history
 2. HISTOIRE DE L'ART ANGLAIS
 3. HISTOIRE CULTURELLE
 4. ESTHETIQUE, HISTOIRE DES STYLES
 5. ART ET LITTERATURE
 6. ARTISTES INDIVIDUELS

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Agrégation externe d'anglais
Option B - Civilisation

Art et Nation : la fondation de la Royal Academy of Arts, 1768 -1836.

La fondation de la Royal Academy of Arts à Londres en 1768 représenta un moment décisif dans l'histoire de la peinture en Grande-Bretagne. Institution de prestige, elle visait à donner aux meilleurs artistes nationaux un lieu de formation et de reconnaissance, inspiré des modèles continentaux. Il s'agissait d'une part de permettre aux peintres britanniques d'acquérir un véritable statut d'artiste professionnel, d'autre part de promouvoir les qualités intellectuelles et édifiantes de l'art, essentielles à toute grande nation. L'exposition annuelle de la Royal Academy, qui, de 1780 à 1836, eut lieu dans les salles spécialement créées à Somerset House, fut un rendez-vous annuel décisif dans la vie intellectuelle et culturelle de la Grande-Bretagne, donnant lieu à des débats passionnés.

Car la fondation de la Royal Academy ne fit jamais l'unanimité. Sa volonté d'imposer un programme éducatif traditionnel au service de hiérarchies artistiques importées des académies continentales rencontra l'opposition notamment de tous ceux qui défendaient la "liberté" anglaise, et tant les élections des membres de l'Academy que les choix des œuvres exposées annuellement divisèrent artistes et intellectuels.

On s'intéressera d'une part aux conditions de la fondation de cette institution en 1768, aux débats et aux enjeux qui accompagnèrent sa création, aux critiques dont elle fut immédiatement l'objet. Il s'agira de bien cerner l'importance tant idéologique qu'artistique d'une institution "indépendante" vouée à la promotion d'un grand art national. On s'intéressera d'autre part à son fonctionnement, à la nature des enseignements qu'elle dispensait, à ses choix méthodologiques et artistiques, notamment tels qu'ils ont pu être exprimés par son premier Président, Sir Joshua Reynolds, dans la série des *Discours* qu'il y prononça entre 1768 et 1790. On étudiera le rôle des expositions annuelles de l'Academy jusqu'à leur départ de Somerset House en 1836, à la fois comme événement culturel et comme entreprise de régulation de la production artistique nationale, notamment face à l'émergence d'un véritable marché de l'art. On s'interrogera en particulier sur le rôle ambigu qu'a pu jouer cette institution dans l'émergence d'une "école anglaise de peinture" (Reynolds, Gainsborough, Constable, Turner). On prêtera ainsi attention aux grands genres de peinture (peinture d'histoire, portrait, paysage) qui caractérisent celle-ci, tant dans leur relation aux prescriptions de l'Academy que dans leur contribution à la création d'un art "national", ainsi qu'aux pratiques et discours dissidents qui s'y opposèrent.

Outre les *Discours* de Reynolds, les candidats pourront être appelés à commenter des textes extraits de sources primaires ou secondaires portant directement sur les différents enjeux de la question décrits ci-dessus. Ces extraits pourront le cas échéant être accompagnés de documents iconographiques (caricatures, reproductions de tableaux).

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