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A Joint Message from Paris College of Art and Parsons The New School for Design

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Dear Colleagues,

Over the past several years, our respective institutions have received questions about the relationship between Parsons The New School for Design, Parsons Paris, and Paris College of Art. We therefore thought it might be useful to send this joint letter to the Cumulus, AICAD, and NASAD communities to describe our respective institutions' histories in Paris, and provide some information about our past relationship to avoid further confusion.

To begin, let us be clear: Parsons The New School for Design and Paris College of Art are fully independent of each other.

Parsons The New School for Design re-established a Paris branch campus in Fall 2013, which is directly operated by The New School and teaches the Parsons curriculum. This branch campus is called Parsons Paris.

Paris College of Art is independent and based in Paris and teaches the Paris College of Art curriculum.

The Parsons Parisian Heritage

In 1921 Frank Alvah Parsons established the first American education program abroad, The Paris Ateliers, situated at the Place des Vosges in Paris, with 22 students. The Paris Ateliers provided study abroad for students of the New York School of Fine and Applied Art (1896), where Mr. Parsons was President. The New York School of Fine and Applied Art was later renamed "Parsons School of Design" in honour of its former President and his influence on art and design education in America. Due to the outbreak of World War II, The Paris Ateliers closed its doors in 1939.

Institutional Histories

The Paris Ateliers was revived in 1981 with the establishment, by Parsons School of Design (which became a division of The New School University in 1970), of a full-time art and design program at 10 bis rue Letellier run in association with the American University of Paris (then American College of Paris).

In 1986, an independent association was legally established in France by board members of The New School under the name École Parsons à Paris, making reference to the school's origins in The Paris Ateliers and its founder. École Parsons à Paris was established as an independent non-profit association with academic programs delivered as a branch campus of The New School.

In 1995, while continuing to operate the school under the name Parsons Paris / École Parsons à Paris, the name of the French association was changed to “Association Franco-Américaine de Design” [AFAD].

AFAD was led by New School Trustees and senior university administrators until 2006 when, in order to strengthen the school’s infrastructure as well as its European identity the AFAD board appointed a French President, Serge Guarino, along with an independent management team led by Reginald de Guillebon to operate Parsons Paris / École Parsons à Paris.

Separation and differentiation

From 2006 to 2009, The New School and AFAD were in discussion over whether they would continue to work in partnership during which time a licensing agreement was in effect between the two. With these reflections made, our respective institutions determined that the schools should separate definitively so each could pursue its own direction and support the diversity of educational perspectives that our two schools represent.

In order that AFAD could be completely autonomous, Reginald de Guillebon established Paris College of Art (PCA), which received degree-granting authority from the state of Delaware in 2010.

To transition degree-granting responsibility from The New School to Paris College of Art with the students’ best interests in mind, students who matriculated to PCA before fall 2011 receive their diplomas from The New School as the degree-granting authority upon the recommendation of the faculty of Parsons The New School for Design. As a last step in the transition, The New School has agreed to allow the PCA diploma for those students who entered in 2011/12 and 2012/13, and who complete their studies by May 2016 to be issued upon the recommendation of the faculty of the “École Parsons à Paris.”

The Future

Parsons The New School for Design and Paris College of Art are two separate and independent institutions of higher education, pursuing their respective missions and educational goals. We both believe that there has never been a more important time for the study of art and design and that Paris is well served by many schools each offering distinct programs and perspectives.



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