



## Jean BERQUE

### Painter (1896-1954)

Painter, book illustrator as early as 1925, decorator, poster designer, Jean Berque, originating from Reims, was a pupil of Félix VALLOTTON, Paul SERUSIER and Maurice DENIS of the Nabis school at the RANSON Academy. He learned to know the landscapes of Morocco, Spain and Italy. In Southern France, he became acquainted with many artists, such as DUNOYER de SEGONZAC and Aristide MAILLOL.

In his works, he established his taste for still lifes, landscapes and nudes in simple and stylised drawing, which drew him praise from the Inter-War period critics. He became one of the first members of the Reims Union for Decorative Arts, established by E. KALAS in 1922.

He took part in many exhibitions: Autumn salons (1924-1928), Tuileries exhibitions (1927-1934), exhibitions in different galleries.

As an illustrator, he executed works for books by André GIDE, Pierre LOUYS, COLETTE, TAGORE, André MAUROIS, Paul CLAUDEL, mainly for the GONIN publisher (Paris, Lausanne).

In Saint-Nicaise, Jean BERQUE painted the Madonna and child, a marouflaged canvas for the provisional wooden chapel, erected when construction work started. This tondo was then placed on the reverse side of the main entrance to Saint-Nicaise church. Behind the central figures of the Virgin and the infant Jesus with a red cruciform halo, in the background circle, the Adoration of the Magi, the flight to Egypt, Christ teaching his disciples, the garden of Gethsemane, the Crucifixion and Saint Joseph's face graced with a red beard, to the likeness of SERUSIER, his teacher of painting. In the same manner as Maurice DENIS, he put common people in his works.



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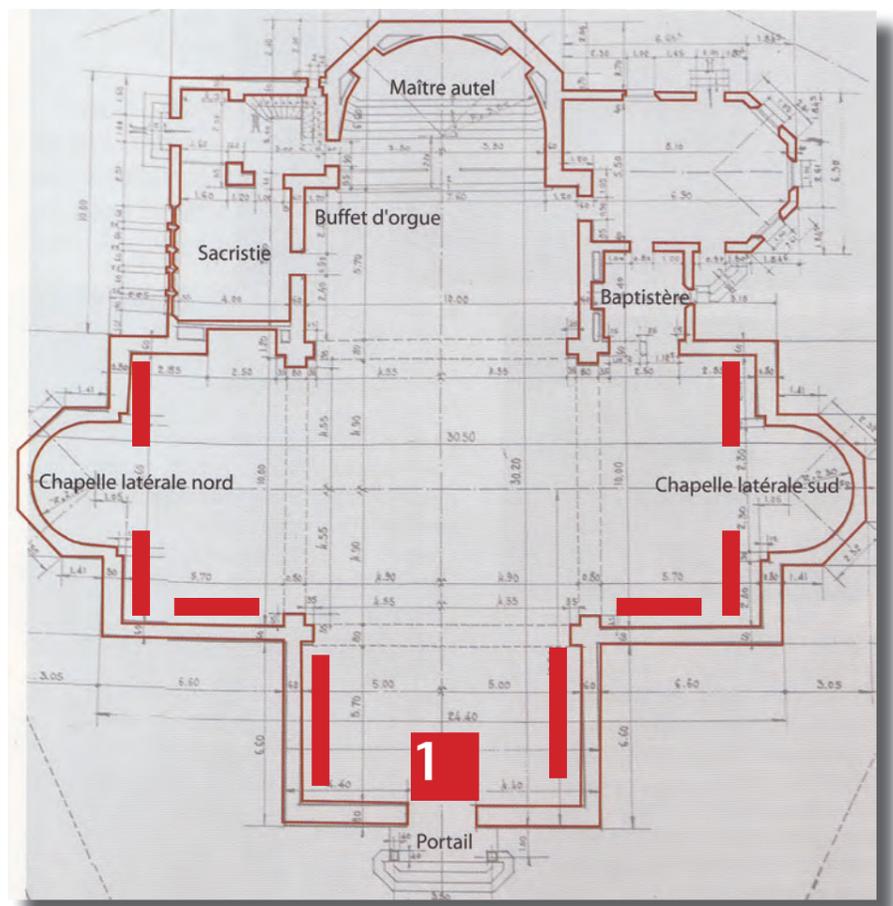
### The Stations of the Cross:

When he was 27, Jean Berque designed the 14 Stations of the Cross by using oil painting on fibre cement panels. To do so, he went to Italy to be imbued with masters like Fra Angelico. Starting work on June 3 1924, the artist finished the lot in three months for the 1925 inauguration.

Here, he accomplished a very harmonious work full of humanity and directly opposite to aesthetic dictates of some traditions. A simplified stroke and large tint areas exemplified the spirit of the moment influenced by the Art Deco movement. This work displays an unusual approach for a classic subject, which was uncommon in his work. Criticized by the Church which, initially, rejected it, the French and foreign press warmly welcomed it.

Jean BERQUE was particularly helped, encouraged and supported by Georges CHARBONNEAUX who had put his trust in him for the completion of this work. Choosing this young artist was clearly not architect Auburtin's selection.

A wide strip circumscribing the church supports the 14 Stations of the Cross. Between two brown bands, a stylised plant pattern on a stem, dotted with small Greek crosses, runs around. To the right of each station, a heading is inscribed in big letters. G.JAULMES and H.MENU designed the frieze, which was not entirely to Jean BERQUE's liking.



Place of Jean BERQUE's work



3rd Station



6th Station



8th Station



12th Station



13th Station



14th Station