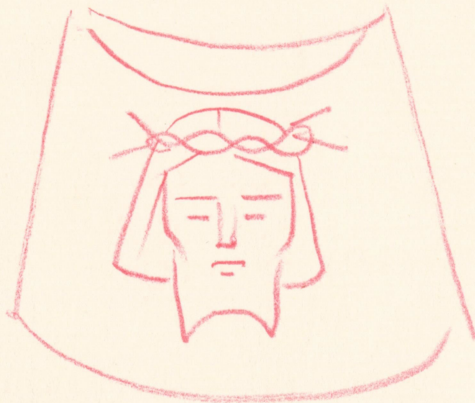


JEAN CHARLOT

1941

DECEMBER 19

JANUARY 11, 1941



RELIGIOUS PAINTINGS

INCLUDING THE WAY OF THE CROSS

BONESTELL GALLERY

106 EAST FIFTY-SEVENTH STREET • NEW YORK

Christian art today has little to gather from the masterpieces of romanesque, gothic or baroque art, no more than their magnificent lesson in bravery and freedom—specifically the independence that each showed towards older styles. What the romanesque artisan creates by distorting heads to enormous or miniscule size, formalizing folds to match fluted columns, what the gothic suggests with spirited elongations and emendations, what the man of the Renaissance creates through balanced proportions and classical eloquence, these must perforce be matched by the artist of today in a modern language enriched with the apports of Cezanne and Douanier Rousseau, of Picasso and Braque, reshaped by the topical knowledge that pervades the very air he breathes. To build gothic churches today, to paint in the Siense manner or in the style of Raphael, is either puerility or senility. Nothing alive will come of it, for only the living beget life.

It is exactly this and this only that is implied by the ancient Aristotelian adage: "Art imitates Nature..." Young priests in seminaries understand it to mean a docile rendering, a faithful copying of natural sights; how wrong! for the philosopher wisely concludes "...imitates Nature in its operation." Art then parallels Nature's activities and mode of production; the artist then produces his pictures as an apple tree its apples.

This is art's only secret.

No more complex modes or laws than this one govern religious art. It cannot be labeled with a formula or pinned to a style, but Faith does imbue it with a certain tone, a given music. No one style should then be called specifically religious, perhaps rather ten thousand styles. The essential of true religious art is a simpler and deeper thing, a thing also more exacting, a given spiritual sensitiveness concerned with beings, objects and life.

If one gets acquainted with Jean Charlot, one finds that, with a plastic akin to that of Breton calvaries or of Mayan sculptures, he simply states what he is, what he loves and what he believes. Each station of his Way of the Cross composes with shape and color a song whose notes remain pure and faithful. People may feel disconcerted by the contrasts, the harshness of its impacted or broken volumes, the levity of its saturated colors, this mingling of violence and buffoonery. But lest you be mistaken, the apple-cheeks and chubby curves of his heroic bambinos illustrate with tenderness all that, in the eyes of God, remains childlike even in the most cruel of our human dramas—or again, all that is hidden of pity and tears behind the joy and laughter of average Christian life.

FR. M.A. COUTURIER O.P.

1 to 14	WAY OF THE CROSS
15	FLIGHT INTO EGYPT (with River Nile)
16	FLIGHT INTO EGYPT (night effect)
17	FLIGHT INTO EGYPT (LENT BY JACQUES MARITAIN)
18	REST ON THE FLIGHT (with arch)
19	REST ON THE FLIGHT (with ruins)
20	DEPOSITION
21	ST. ANN
22	ST. VERONICA
23	FR. M. A. COUTURIER, O. P.