

## Other French Engravers

To recap: We are nearing the end of our time with the designers and engravers who produced France's remarkable landscapes, a group I submit includes one of the world's most beautiful stamps: a view of Lourdes. (see last month's blog essay. Here's the link: <https://mancrymf.files.wordpress.com/2023/04/other-french-engravers-3.pdf> ) The team of engravers recruited by French postal authorities in the 1930s trained at prestigious institutions like the Ecole des Beaux Arts and Ecole Estienne, and became part of a network that mentored others and became a philatelic institution. These busy artists and illustrators took time to produce some of France's most beautiful stamps — along with hundreds more for other francophone nations. We have just a couple more artists to consider before we complete this expedition on our continuing

quest for The World's Prettiest Stamp. PLEASE NOTE: There's a shocking postscript about the stamps these same engravers produced for Vichy France, the Nazi puppet regime, during World War II.



### Jacques Combet 1920-1993

He looks like a friendly guy. And Jacques Combet seems to have had friends and mentors in the right places. He received his training as an engraver in Paris, attending both the Ecole des Beaux Arts and Ecole Estienne, where his teachers included stamp engraver Raoul Serres. He may not have won the Prix de Rome, but he won the Grand Prix de L'Art Philatelique in 1963, for his engraved rendering of the stained glass window of the church of St. Foyes de Conches. He said his favorite subject was nature, and he created beautiful stamps featuring marine life and other fauna for French Southern and Antarctic Territories. Perhaps we'll get a chance to review some beautiful



Roman gates of Lodi, Medea Algeria 1961



Bagnoles de l'Orne 1961



Dunkirk 1962

examples of his art on stamps, and animals on stamps, later on.

Combet first embarked on a career as a book illustrator, and expanded into stamps in 1950, after Albert Decaris asked him to engrave the frame around an airmail stamp he was creating. Combet had an assured technique and produced beautiful landscape stamps, several of which are illustrated here. He also demonstrated originality in his approaches — for example in the stylized depiction of Bagnoles de l'Orne, a former commune and spa in Normandy (see above). For his stamp marking the 300th anniversary of the coastal city of Dunkirk (left), Combet combined three city views into a vertical “stack.” The contrasting colors of bistre, red lilac and green are pleasing to the eye, though I find the design less successful.

Combet's tribute to the chapel of Notre Dame du Haut in the hills of Ronchamp (below left), immediately captured my imagination. Designed by Le Corbusier, the chapel with its

soaring lines and earthy forms took my breath away when we visited in 1965, soon after it was built and Combet's stamp was issued. Ever since, the stamp has been one of my favorites — whether or not we end up assigning it a coveted position among the world's most beautiful stamps.

**CONTINUED NEXT WEEK**



Chapel of Notre Dame du Haut Ronchamp 1964

