

Albert Decaris

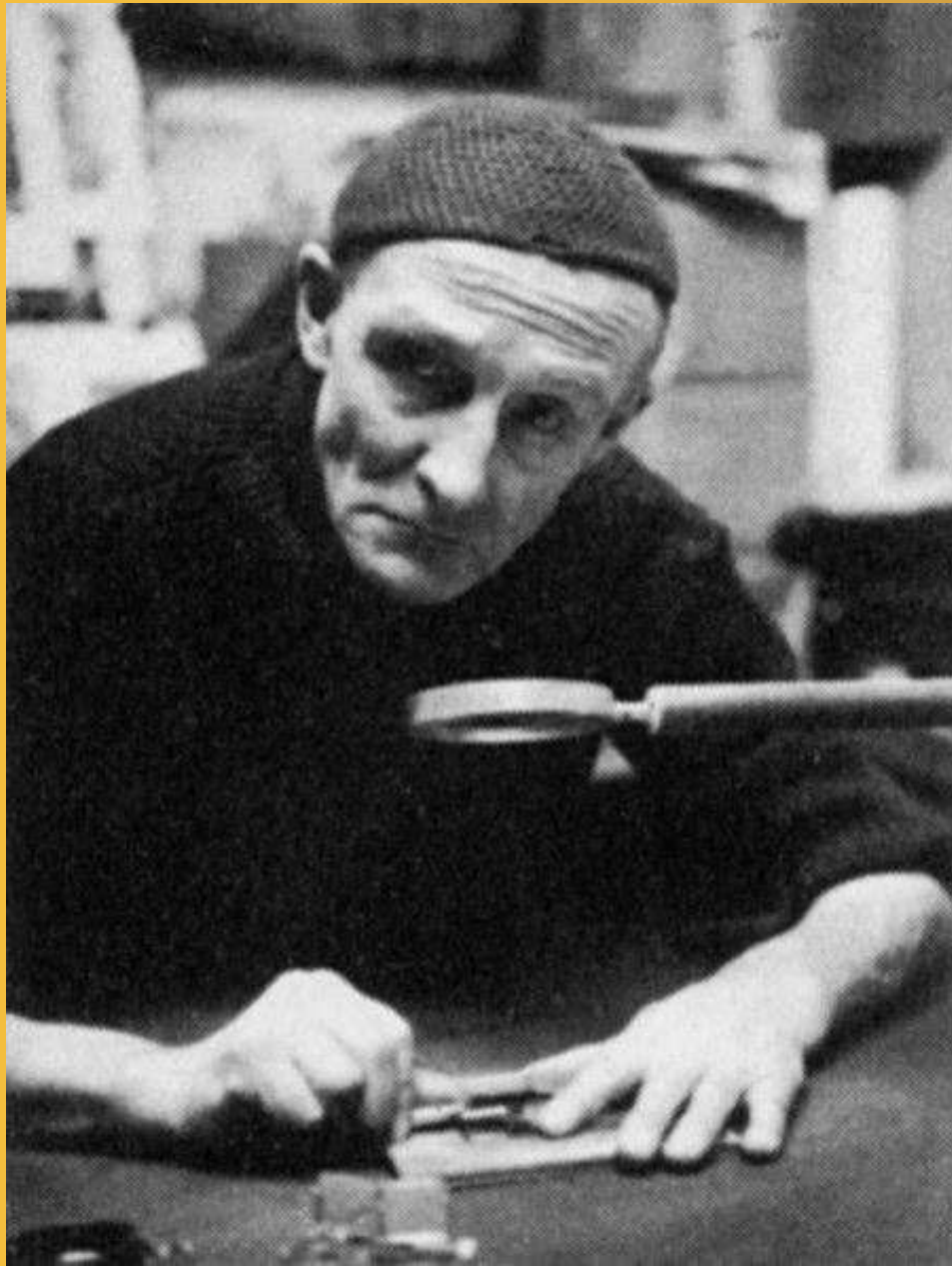
May 6 1901 – January 1 1988



My Favourite French Engraver

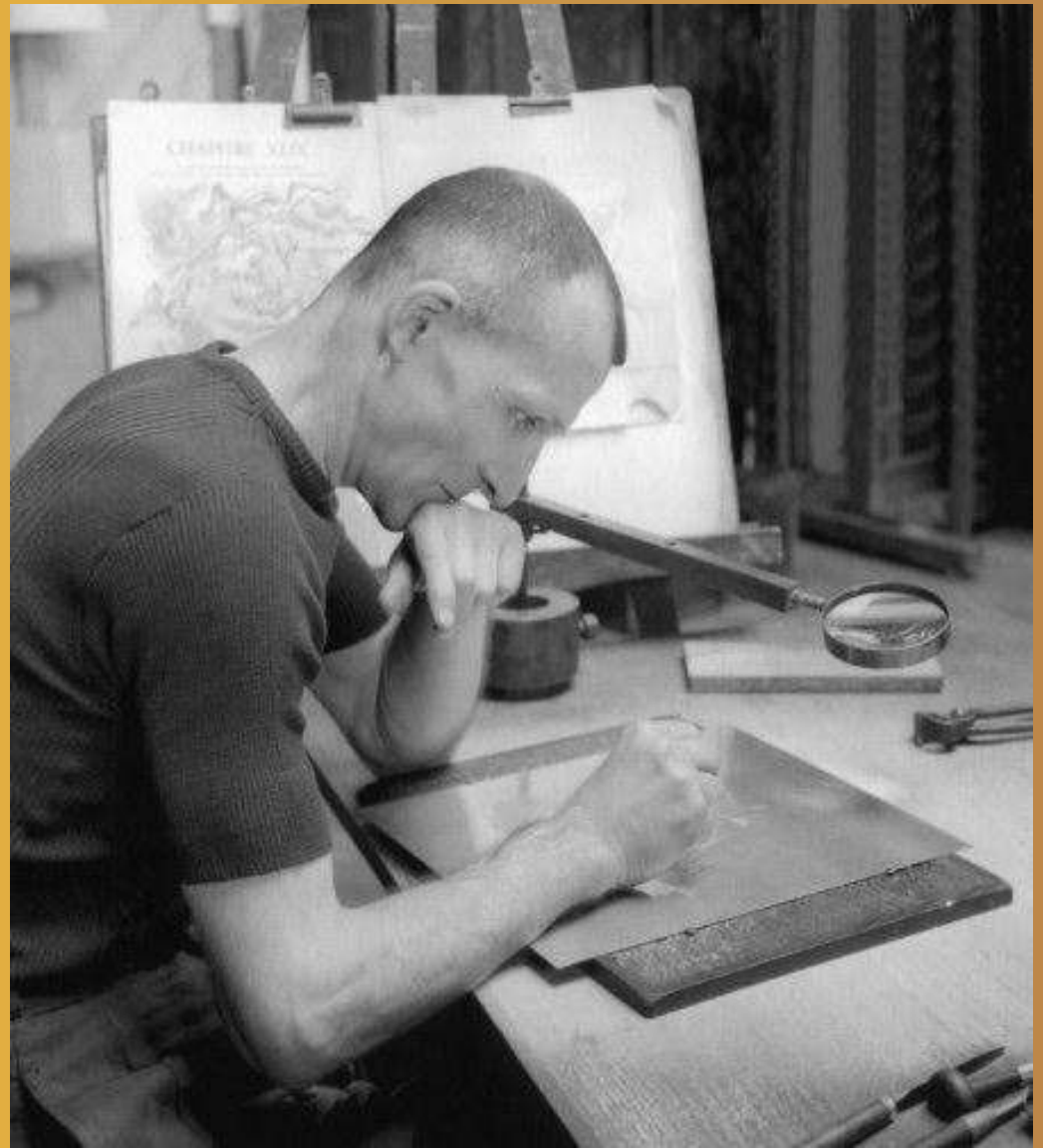
Of all the many talented French engravers, Decaris' work stands out as being the most recognisable.





Everyone's idea of what a French man should look like.

At work on a large
format engraving



Decaris showed promise very early in life and was accepted at the Ecole Estienne where he studied print making. He then learned steel engraving from Antoine Dezarrios who also engraved stamps. From then on, he made steel engraving his life's work.



In 1919, at the age of 18, Decaris became the youngest artist ever to win the prestigious Prix de Rome, with an engraving titled “Eve before the Fall”. This won him the opportunity to study in Italy where he became known as “the Monk Engraver” due to his habit of practicing his engraving for up to sixteen hours a day. Back in Paris, saw him become the first ever winner of the Medaille d'Argent for a first exhibition.

Throughout the 1920s, Decaris was in demand as an illustrator for high quality books. Some of these were printed on hand-made paper in editions of as few as 50 copies. Decaris loved the sharpness of line that could be achieved with steel. Because steel plates are much more durable than copper, they were also sometimes used to produce folios of the book's illustrations. Signed copies often come onto the market but cost between \$300 – 1000 per sheet.



In 1928, the French Government made a decision that was to have a marked effect on Decaris' career. All French stamps up to this time had been produced by typography or letterpress. Now, most stamps would be produced by recess printing from engraved steel plates.

Decaris was recruited into a small team and learned the techniques required for stamp engraving from Gaston Gandon, father of his contemporary, Pierre. His first stamp was the 1935 the St Trophime d'Arles issue then the S.S.Normandie, issued within ten days of each other.

They are recognisably his work and were followed by nearly six hundred stamps for France and her colonies.





S. S. Normandie

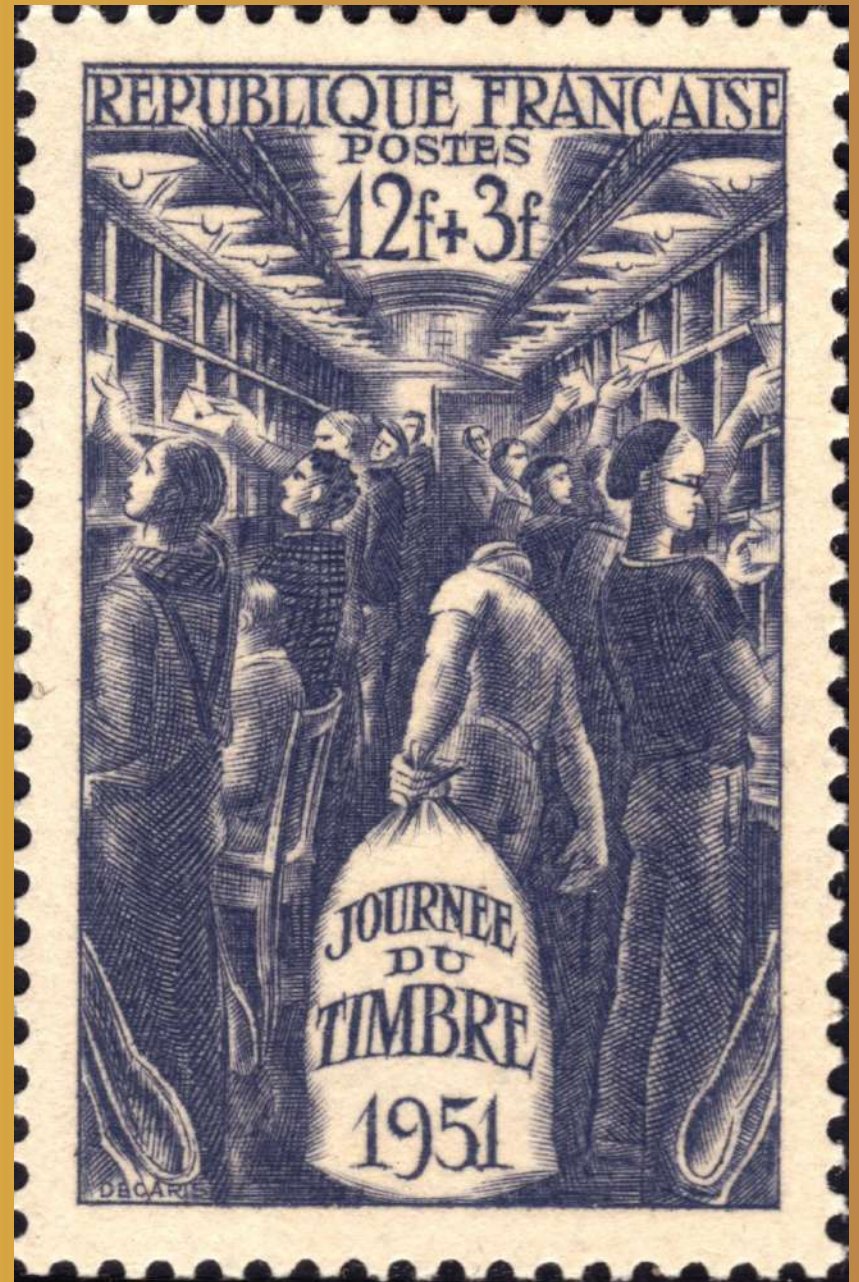
The catalogues show this stamp as being engraved by “Das” but it was engraved by Decaris, Das being the first, middle and last letters of his surname. This was possibly a nickname but as yet, I have been unable to confirm this.



Decaris was part of the Art Deco movement. His figures are usually elongated, almost caricature. Their necks are long and thin and they have long legs. The lines on his buildings are slightly curved and everything has a feeling of action.

People look on Art Deco as something from the past yet it has a surprising influence on how we see the world today and what we consider beautiful.

Can you see where this is leading?



For fifty years, young girls have been given the Barbie Doll as an example of beauty. Yet like Decaris' figures their dimensions are impossible. If Barbie was life-size, her neck would not be able to support her head. Her child size feet and tiny ankles could not support her body and she would have to crawl.



If her head was normal size, she would be seven feet tall. Perhaps Decaris and his contemporaries are partly to blame for a generation of anorexics



2f

POSTES

+1f



REPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

1431 FRANÇOIS 1489

VILLON

FRANCE - CANADA

REPUBLIQUE

FRANCOISE



POSTES 1855 LA CAPRICIEUSE 1955

30 F

POSTES
RF

17^F



BOULLAIRE

DECARIS

POLYNESIE FRANCAISE

FRANCE

POSTES

12f



PALAIS DU LUXEMBOURG - PARIS

Decaris images burst with life, movement and humour, such as in this 1978 Monaco set for the Fifth International Circus Festival



V^e FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL
DU CIRQUE

MONACO



0,80

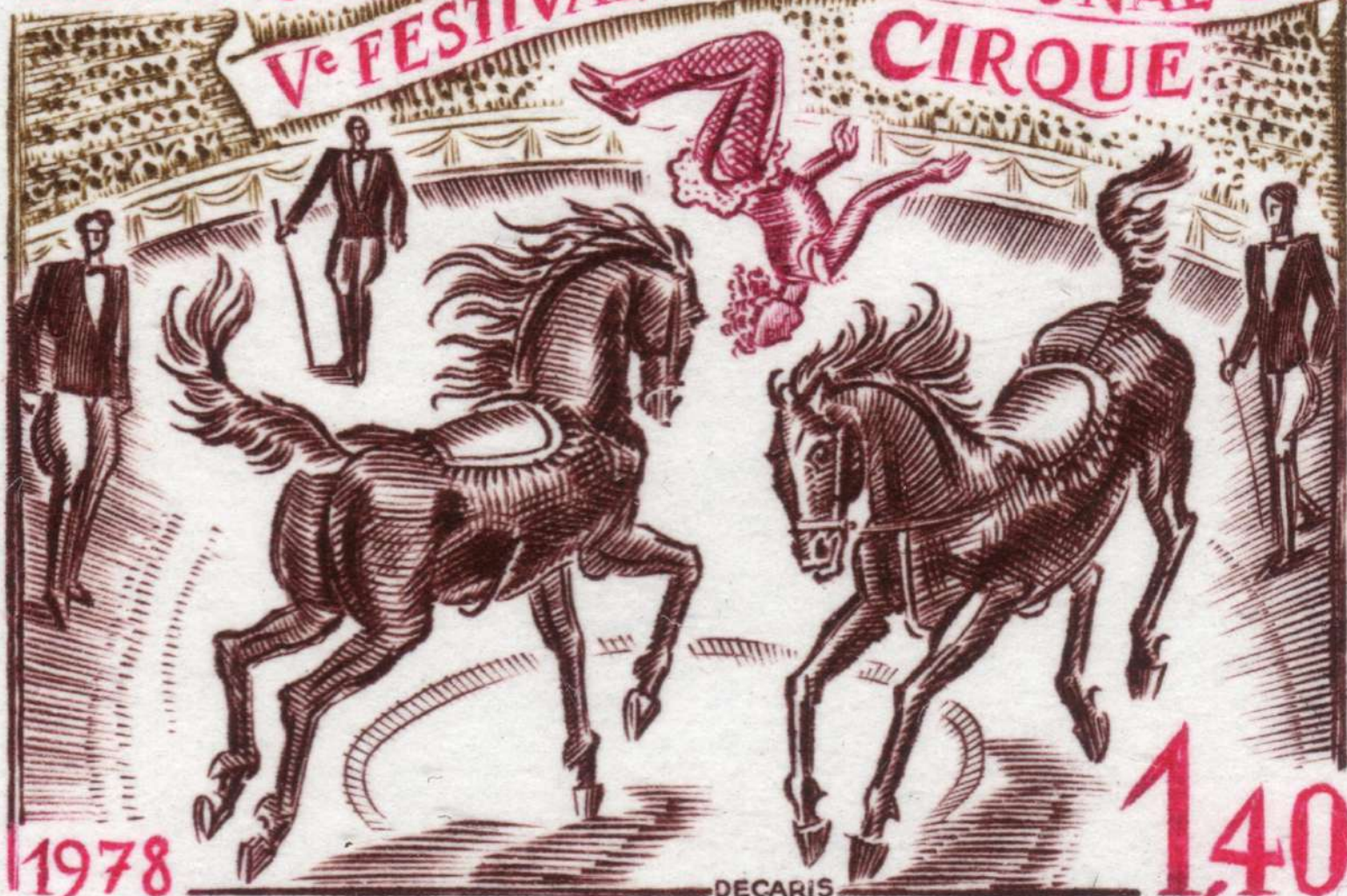
1978



DECARIS

MONACO

V^e FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DU
CIRQUE



1978

DECARIS

1.40

190 MONACO 1978



V^e FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL
DU CIRQUE

DECARIS

V^e FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DU CIRQUE
1978



MONACO

EDECARIS

2,40

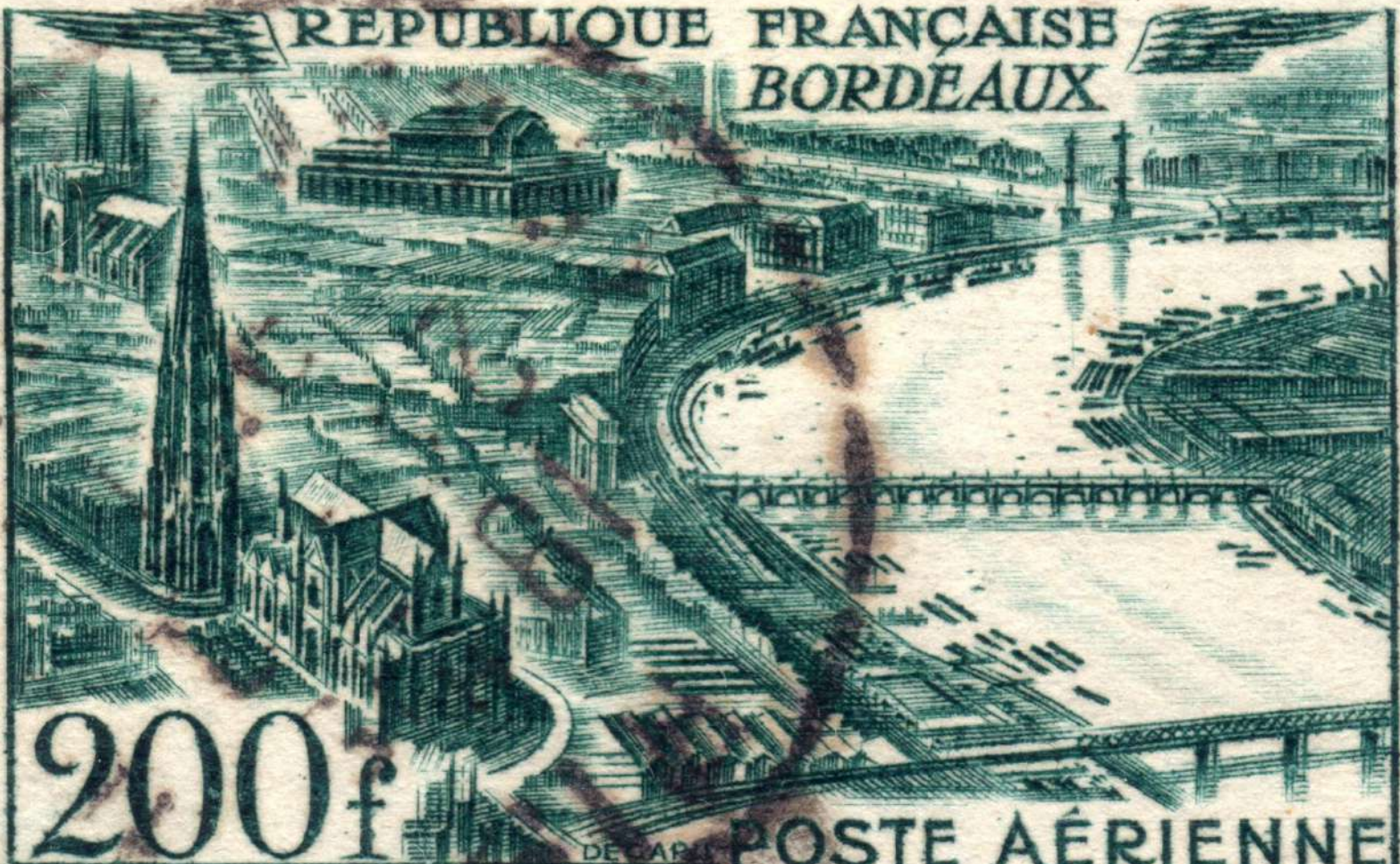


Commissioned to design and engrave a set of airmail stamps in 1949, Decaris chose to show how various French cities would appear from the air. In those days, only the rich or the air force flew so for many people this was a new view of their cities.

REPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE
BORDEAUX

200 f

DE CAPS POSTE AÉRIENNE



REPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

LYON



POSTE AÉRIENNE

DÉCARIS

300f

REPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE
MARSEILLE

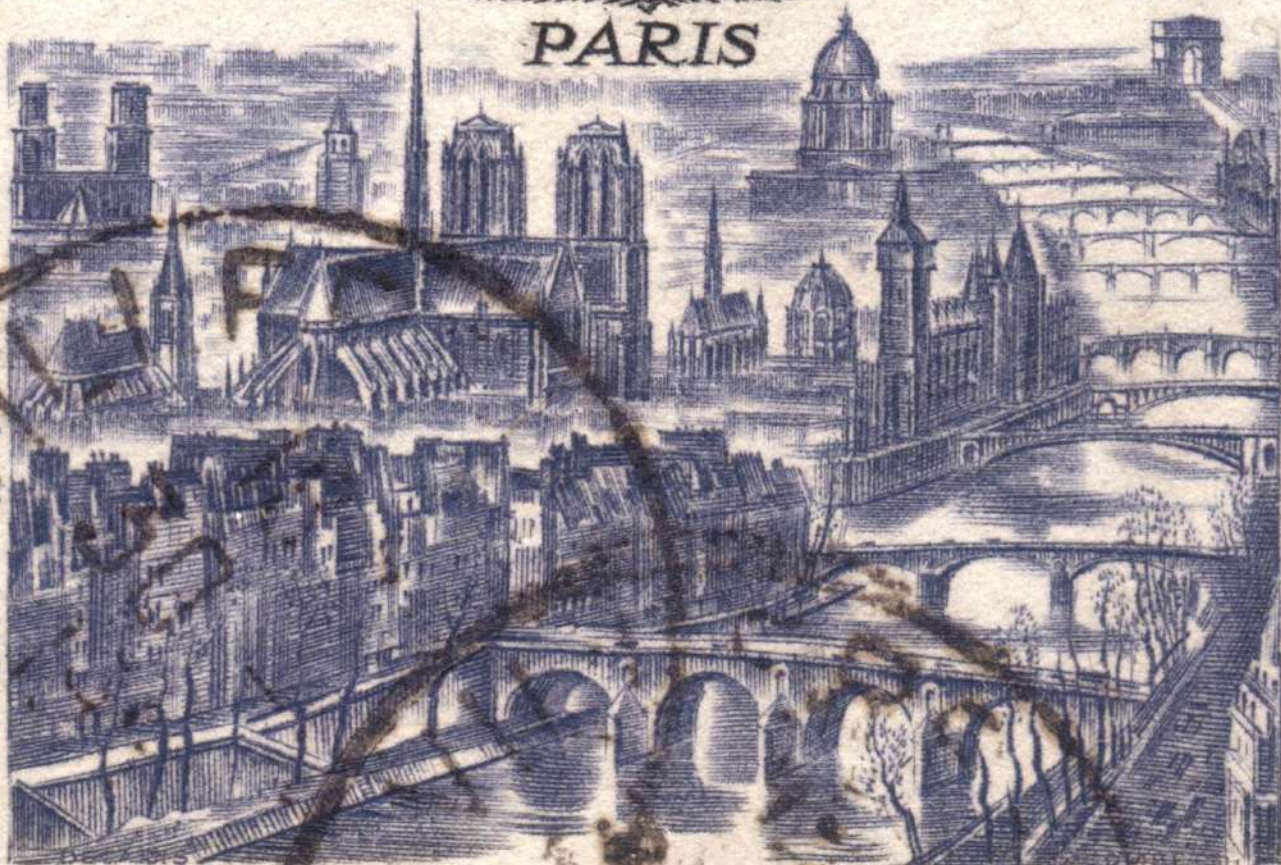


POSTE AÉRIENNE

500f

REPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE
POSTE AÉRIENNE

PARIS



FLVCTVAT

NEC

MERGITVR

1.000f

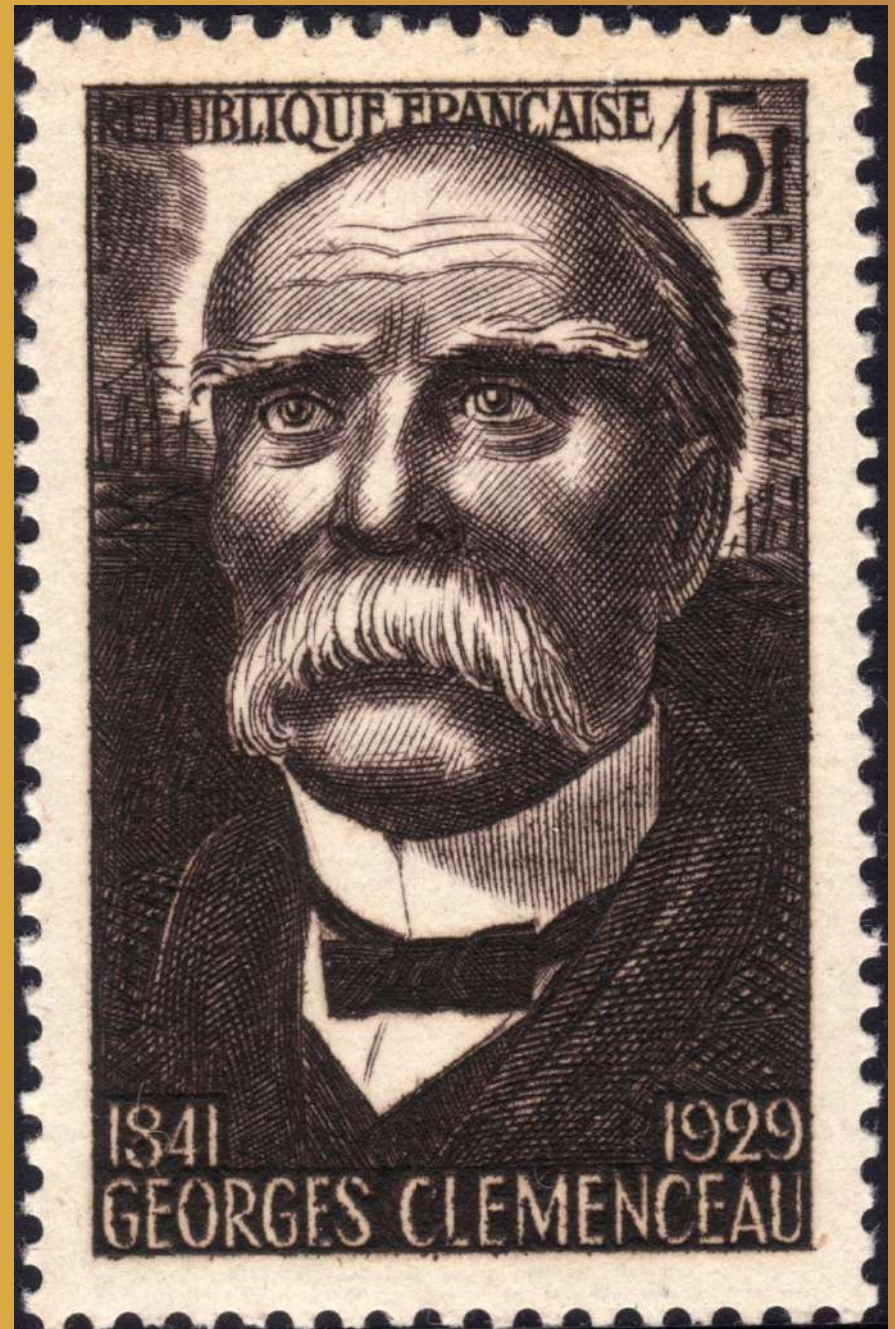
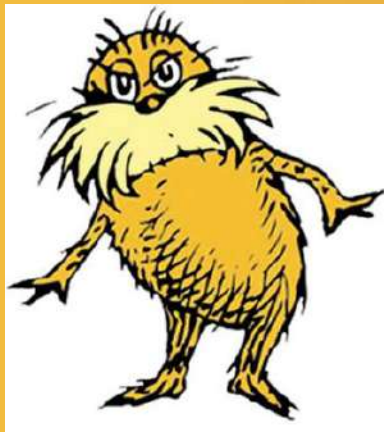
FLVCTVAT

NEC

MERGITVR

Even when producing a serious portrait, Decaris' subjects have a slightly "alien" look about them.

This portrait of Clemenceau reminds me of The Lorax in Dr. Seuss





From 1966 until 1973, Decaris was commissioned to produce three stamps per year in an ongoing series depicting the history of France. It begins with Vercingétorix who led the Gauls in a revolt against the Romans in 52BC and ends with Napoleon's coronation in 1804.

REPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE



0,60 CHARLEMAGNE POSTES

REPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE



1969
BAYARD
SC DECARIS
0,80

REPUBLIQUE

FRANCAISE



18 000
PHILIPPE LE BEL

ETATS GENERAUX 1302

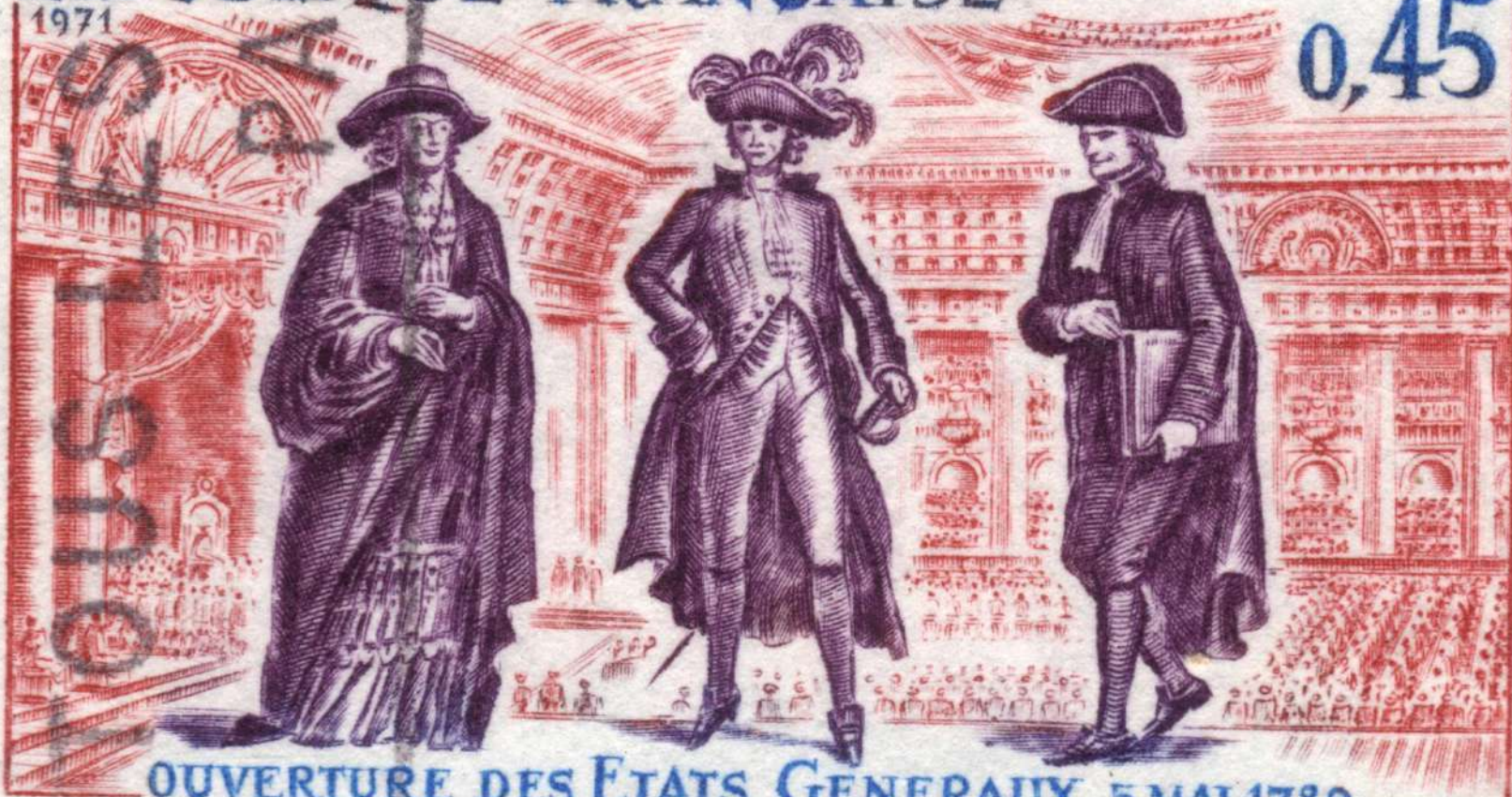
0,40

DECARIS 1968

REPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE POSTES

1971

0,45

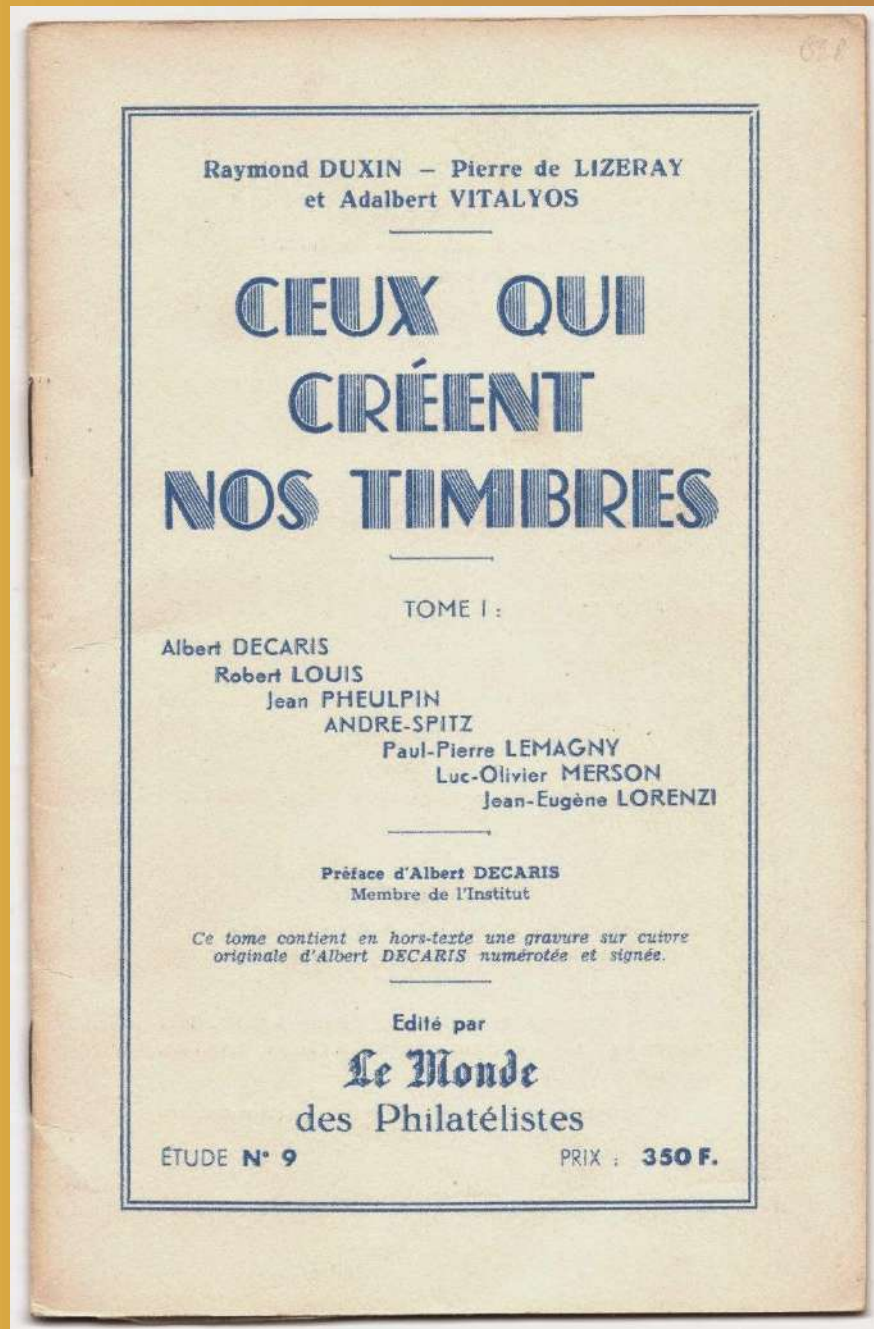


OUVERTURE DES ETATS GENERAUX 5 MAI 1789

DECARIS

In 1955, a magazine called “Le Monde des Philatelistes” began publishing a booklet of interviews with France’s stamp engravers. Decaris was very much involved in this and wrote the preface for the first edition as well as an interview about his work.

As well as this, he donated an engraving that was only available to the subscribers, starting a tradition that was followed by other engravers in subsequent editions.



Decaris' engraving of Ceres
was included in the first
edition of *Ceux qui créent
nos timbres*



246/500

Decaris engraved his last stamp in 1985. He was then 84 years old and had engraved nearly six hundred stamps over fifty years.

The stamp was for Memorial Day, forty years after the end of World War Two and shows a grieving Marianne, the symbol of France, looking at the Flame of Remembrance.

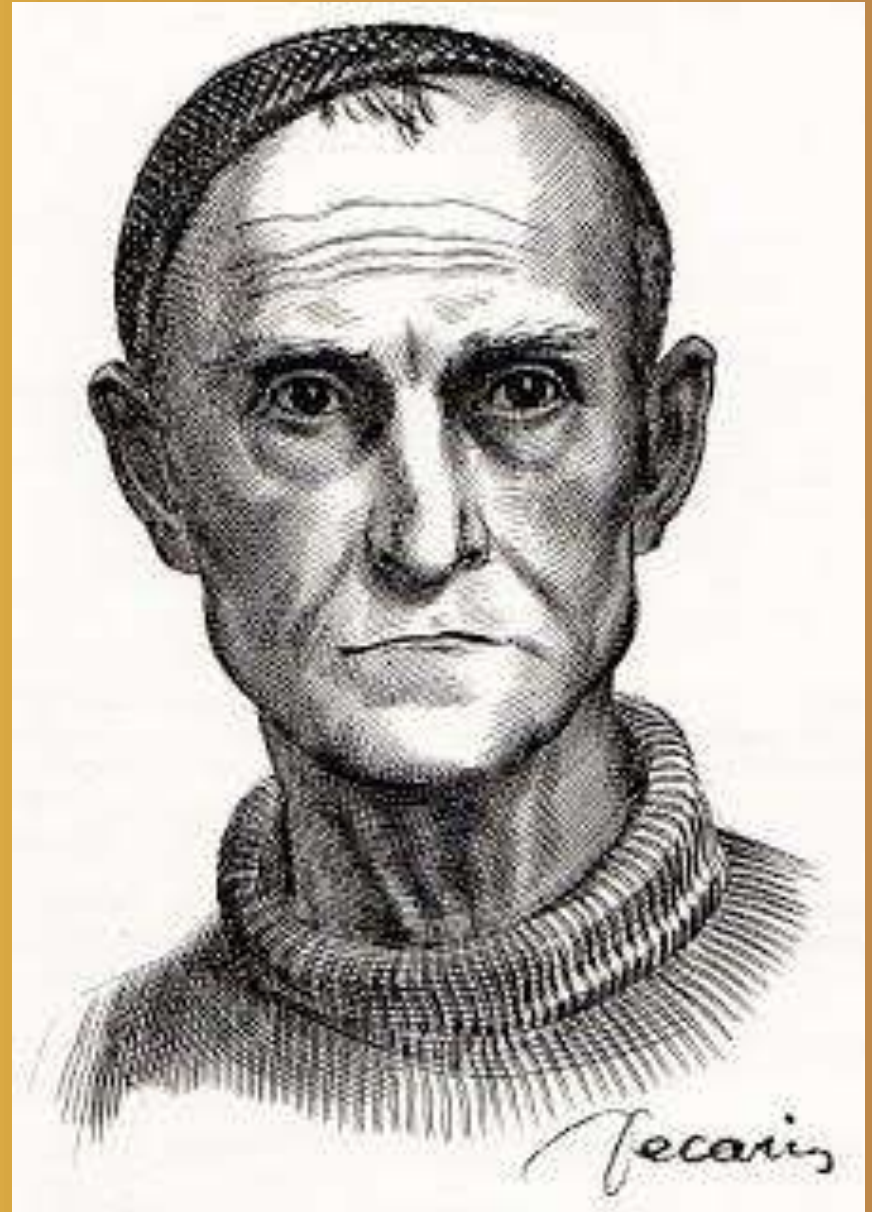


Albert Decaris died in Paris on the First of January 1988.

During his long career, he received many awards including the Legion d'Honneur, France's highest award.

In 1943 he was elected a fellow of the Académie des Beaux-Arts, and later became its president.

In 1962, he became the official painter to the French Navy.



In 2001, for the centenary of his birth, France commissioned Claude Jumelet to design and engrave a stamp in his honour.

It alludes to Decaris' sense of humour and shows the Eiffel Tower dancing with the Arc de Triomphe.



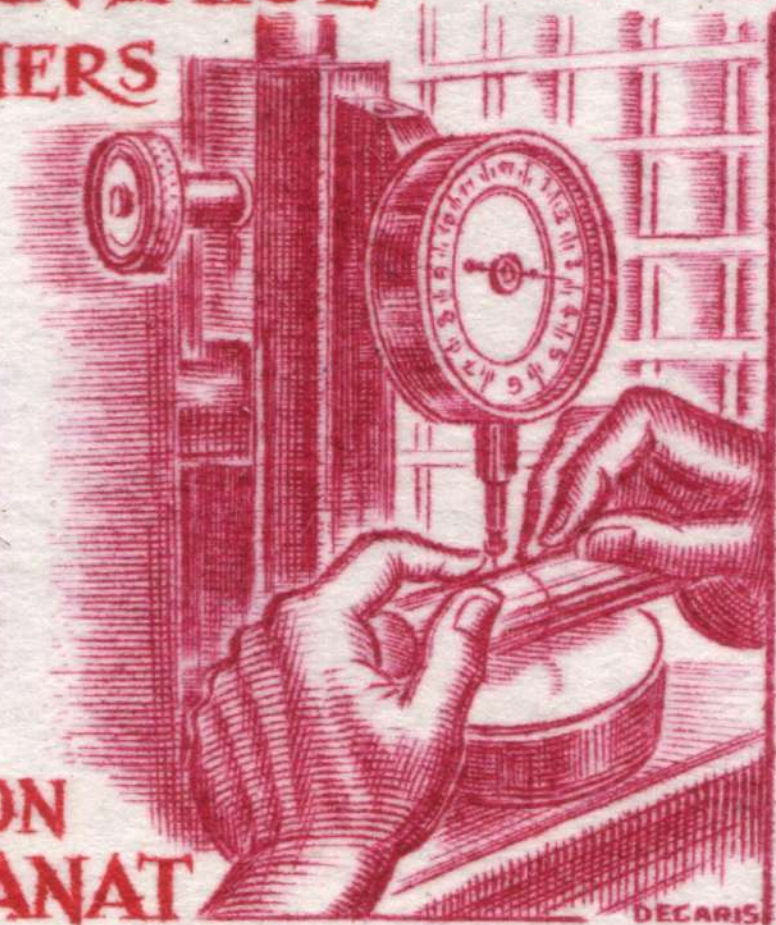
REPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE POSTES

CHAMBRES DE METIERS

1931
1971

0,90

PROMOTION
DE L'ARTISANAT



DECARIS

EXPOSITION INTERNATIONALE NEW-YORK
1939

2.25

POSTES F

N^{LE} CALÉDONIE

INSTITUT DE GRAVURE - PARIS

ECARIS



REPUBLIQUE FRANCAISE

POSTES

15 F



1855
COLONEL DRIANT 1916

REPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

POSTES



TOUR DE FRANCE
1903
1953
CYCLISTE



12F

DÉGARIS

AFRIQUE EQUATORIALE FRANÇAISE



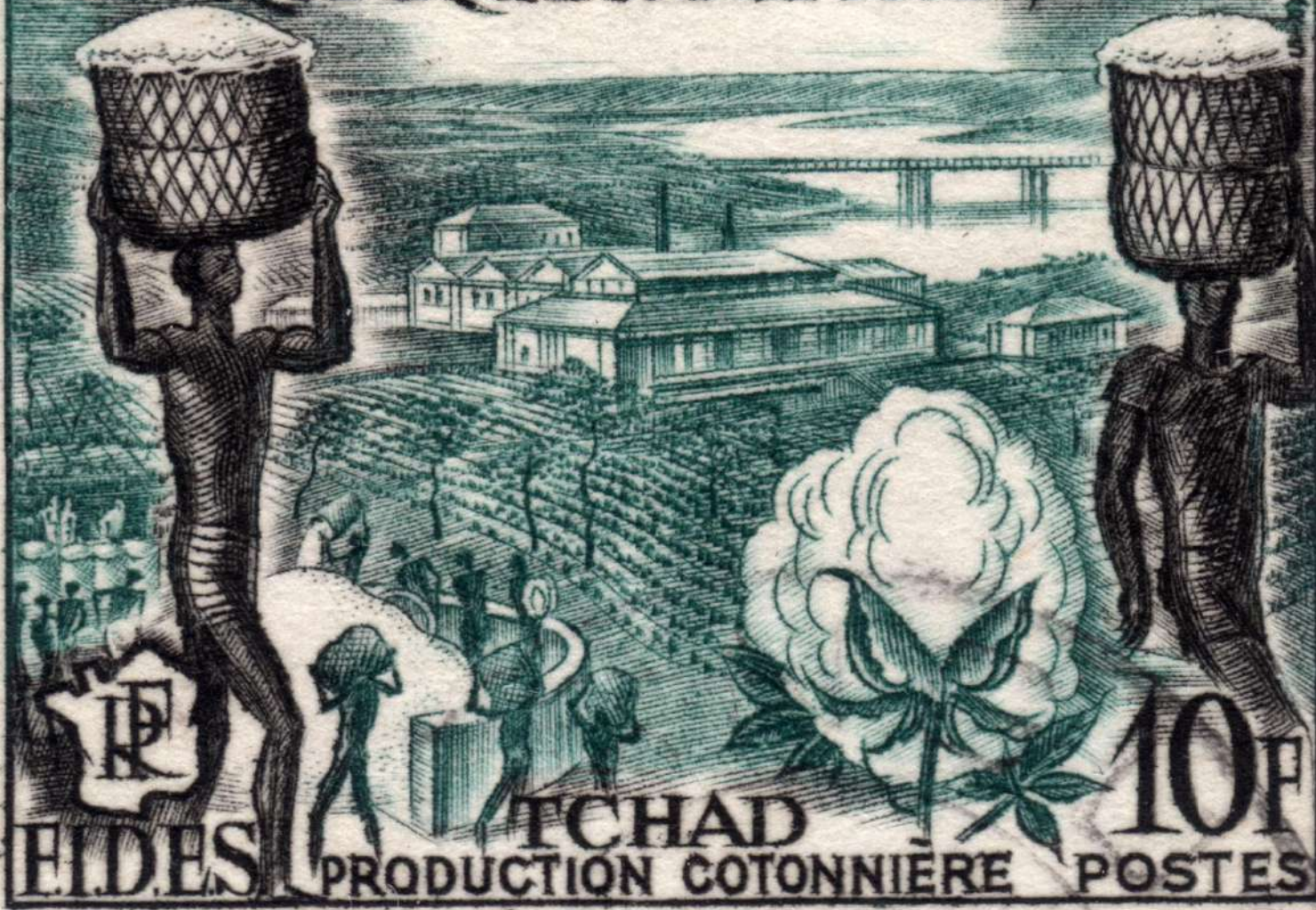

E.P.S.

OUBANGUI-CHARI

LES CHUTES ET L'USINE DE BOALI

5 F POSTES

AFRIQUE EQUATORIALE FRANÇAISE



E.I.D.E.S.

TCHAD
PRODUCTION COTONNIÈRE

10F
POSTES

REPUBLIQUE DU SENEGAL



1f

POSTES

COURSE DE PIROGUES

DECARIS

REPUBLIQUE FRANCAISE



100

Lurcat

POSTES TAPISSERIE DE LURCAT DÉPARIS 1966

POSTES

DECARIS

FOIRE DE PARIS

1904

1954



REPUBLIQUE FRANCAISE

15F

PHILATEC PARIS 1964



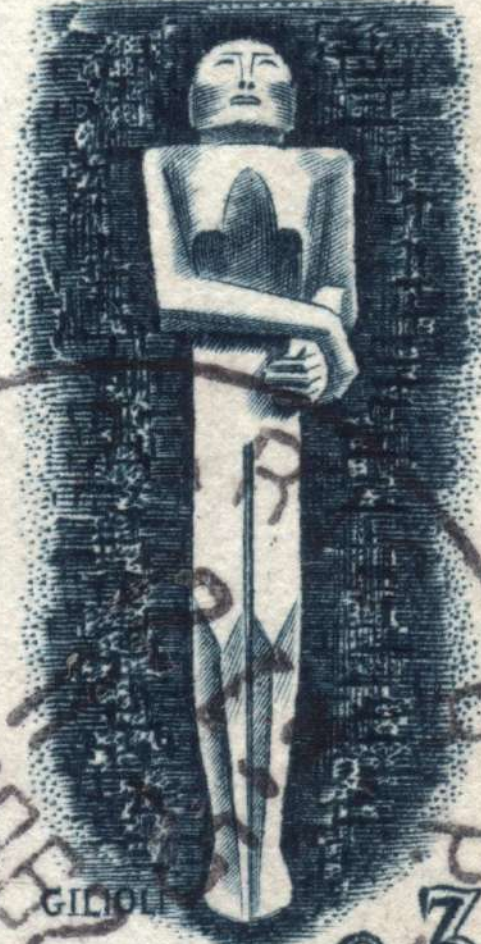
REPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE 1,00 DÉCARIS POSTES



À LA MÉMOIRE DES RÉSISTANTS

DU VERCORS

REPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE



GILLOI

POSTES

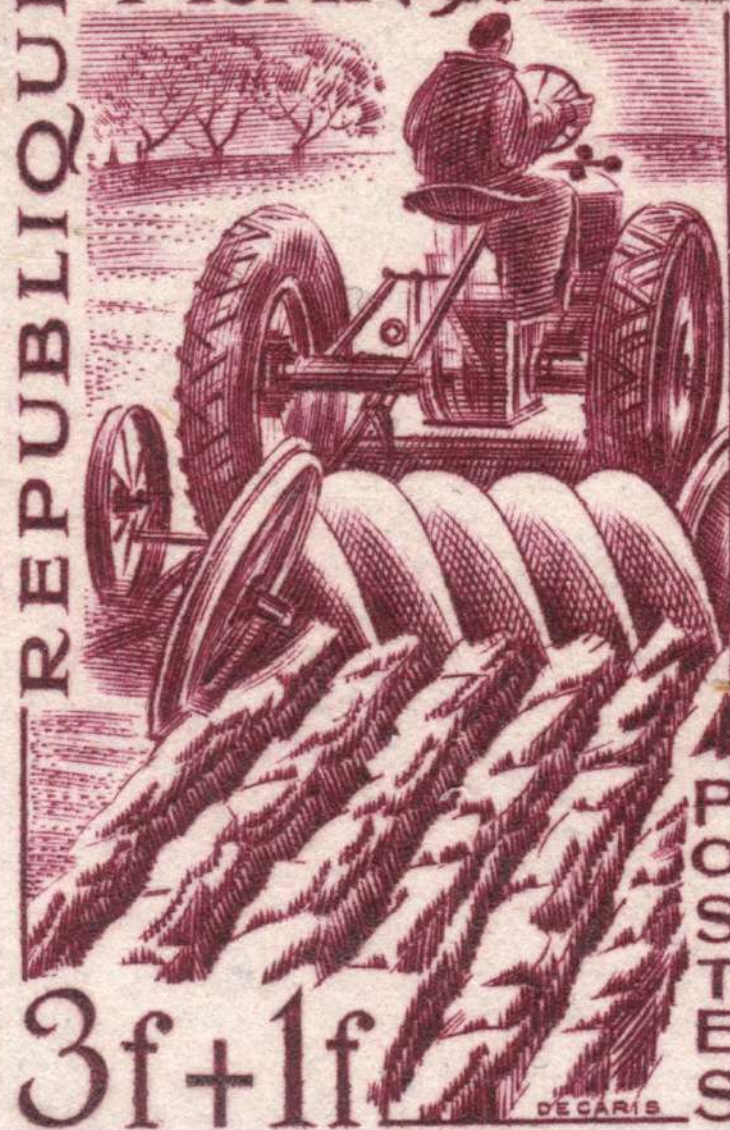
DECARIS

0.30

VERCORS
REPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE
LIBERTÉ

REPUBLIQUE

FRANÇAISE



3f+1f

POSTES

DECARIS

LEONARD DE VINCI

1452
1519



REPUBLICQUE
FRANCAISE

30f
POSTES

DECARIS

REPUBLIQUE FRANCAISE

POSTES

LOUIS XI ET CHARLES LE TEMERAIRE

0,80



DECARIS

1969