

## Biography

### René Letourneur - Sculptor

1898 – 1990

**1898** ▶ René Letourneur is born on 26 November in Paris.

**1916** ▶ Admitted to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts where he studies under Antonin Mercié.

**1917** ▶ Enlists in the army.

**1918** ▶ Wounded and gassed, mentioned in dispatches, awarded the Military Cross.

**1921** ▶ Definitively admitted to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in May, he studies under Jean Boucher whom he comes to admire as a teacher. He meets Jacques Zwobada. During this same period he becomes a regular participant at meetings of the Esprit group. Wins the Premier Prix Chenavard.

**1922** ▶ Bronze medal at the Salon des Artistes Français.

**1925** ▶ Gold medal at the Exhibition des Art Décoratifs Industriels et de la Vie Moderne.

**1926** ▶ In July, wins the Premier Grand Prix de Rome for sculpture at his first "montée en loge" (detailed sketch under exam conditions). He leaves for Rome in November where he resides at the Villa Médicis until 1930.

**1929** ▶ State commission for a copy of the large bust of Pope Paul III in polychrome marble, still conserved at the Palais Farnèse in Rome. In December, a jury chaired by Maillol awards Letourneur and his friend, Zwobada, first prize for a monument to Simon Bolivar in Quito (Ecuador). This project would take three years to complete, during which time they build a large studio in Fonteny-aux-Roses.

**1933 à 1934** ▶ Once the monument is erected in Quito, René Letourneur goes back to working on commissions from architects such as Horn, Hourlier, Laborie, Leconte, and Maistrasse, etc.

**1935** ▶ Low-relief "Le Tabac" (the Tobacconist), on the corner of Quai d'Orsay and Rue Nicot in Paris, architect: Leconte and two major low-reliefs and three stone masks, direct carving, for the façade of the théâtre de Suresnes (now the théâtre Jean Vilar), architect: Maistrasse.

**1937** ▶ Works on the Paris International Exhibition.

**1938** ▶ Decoration for the Place de la Concorde to mark the official visit of the British sovereigns, architect: Eugène Beaudoin.

**1939** ▶ Order for a monument to Jean Jaurès for the Salles des Etats in Albi (Tarn), architect: Laborie. Called up to serve as captain in the French army.

**1940** ▶ Becomes an active member of the French resistance.

**1937 à 1943** ▶ exhibits regularly at the Salon des Arts Décoratifs, les Jardins des Tuileries, and the Salon d'Automne through to 1963. Writes for the Panorama review before becoming editor.

**1944** ▶ René Letourneur publishes "la sculpture française contemporaine" (French contemporary sculpture), les documents d'art, Monaco, April 1944.

**1950** ▶ Appointed Secretary General of the Syndicat National des Sculpteurs Statuaires Professionnels Créateurs founded by the sculptor Risal. He works tirelessly for the organisation in order to obtain application of the recently passed "1% law" (requiring 1% of expenditure on renovation, extension or

construction of public buildings to be set aside for a specially created work of art) and defend social security coverage for artists.

**1953** ▶ From this year through to 1971, René Letourneur works regularly for the "1% law" and Public Works. He produces drawings, stone and marble figures, and polychrome engraved stone pieces for his own pleasure.

**1954** ▶ Alençon war memorial.

**1955** ▶ Statue of Notre Dame de Victoire on the façade of the Saint-Louis church in Lorient. Rebuilt and renamed Notre Dame de Victoire.

**1955 à 1971** ▶ he produces numerous works for public orders, in stone, direct carving, bronze, cement-stone, in Amiens, Saint-Germain en Laye, Alençon, Arras, Lille, Le Pecq, Fontenay-aux-Roses, Livry-Gargan, Poissy, etc.

**1958 à 1961** ▶ Exhibits at the biennial Salon de la Jeune Sculpture in Asnières.

**1962** ▶ He takes over from Jacques Zwobada teaching drawing at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure de l'Enseignement Technique (ENSET), where he continues to work until 1982.

**1962 -1964** ▶ Produces two monumental figures in marble travertine "la Seine et l'Oise" to decorate the new pont du Pecq (pont Georges Pompidou), architect: Hourlier. **1969** ▶ Participates in the Dessins de Sculpteurs exhibition, Nice.

**1970 -1971** ▶ Finishes a composition by Jacques Zwobada: "The Wrestlers", in marble, which was unfinished at his death.

**1975** ▶ Bronze medal for la Jeunesse et des Sports.

**1976** ▶ Exhibits at the Fondation de Coubertin (Saint-Rémy lès Chevreuse).

**1977** ▶ Becomes a Chevalier des Palmes Académiques.

**1978** ▶ Exhibits at the Cultural Centre in Sceaux.

**1980** ▶ Participates in the "Sport and Youth" exhibition in Tokyo.

**1987** ▶ Retrospective in Le Mée-sur-Seine (Seine et Marne).

**1988** ▶ Isabelle Dillmann devotes an article to him in the Décoration Internationale review: "René Letourneur, le don d'affection". René Letourneur stops working.

**1990** ▶ **René Letourneur dies on 16 November. He is buried in the cemetery of Fontenay-aux-Roses.**

**1999** ▶ "René Letourneur" Monograph by Pierre Restany, Cercle d'Art

**2004** ▶ **Private exhibition, Martel-Greiner gallery, Paris. (12 bronzes, 7 terracottas, drawings).**