

Jared French

Artist Biography

Jared French (1905–1988) is known for his psychologically charged compositions, painted in the time-intensive medium of egg tempera. Born in New Jersey, French graduated from Amherst College in 1925, where he studied with the poet Robert Frost. After his relocation to New York, he began working as a clerk at a Wall Street firm while taking classes at the Art Students League, where he met the young artist Paul Cadmus, who would become his lover. In 1931, French and Cadmus embarked on a two-year trip through Europe in search of artistic and sexual freedom, settling in Mallorca, where they began to develop their signature artistic styles.

Returning from Europe, French and Cadmus shared an apartment and a studio in Greenwich Village. French found employment in the Mural and Easel Painting Section of the Public Works of Art Project creating works that demonstrated his interest in the idealized human form—a preoccupation he shared with Cadmus. In 1937, French married artist Margaret Hoening, fifteen years his senior, but maintained his relationship with Cadmus (unlike many of the artists in his circle, French identified as bisexual). That same year, the Frenches rented a summer cottage in Saltaire, Fire Island, where the three of them formed the photography collective PaJaMa (an mash-up of their first names). Using Hoening's Leica, they captured themselves, their friends, and members of the gay community artfully posing in the landscape on the beaches of Fire Island, Nantucket, and Provincetown. These images capture their expanding social circle, which included the British author E.M. Forster, photographer George Platt Lynes (for whom French modeled), Cadmus's sister and artist Fidelma, artist Bernard Perlin, and Monroe Wheeler, a curator at the Museum of Modern Art, among others. French, who had a practice of working from photographs, occasionally used those created by PaJaMa as direct sources of inspiration for his paintings.

Around 1939, French completed his first painting using the classical technique of egg tempera, a medium Cadmus adopted around the same time, and in 1939, he received his first solo exhibition at the esteemed Julien Levey Gallery. French's style evolved significantly in the forties. The muscular bodies in his murals gave way to highly stylized, rigid figures evocative of ancient Greek and Egyptian statues. Inspired by psychologist Carl Jung's theories of the collective unconscious and early Renaissance Italian artists such as Andrea Mantegna and Piero della Francesca, French imbued his paintings with a sense of timelessness through the use of archetypal forms and symbolic, improbable juxtapositions. In addition to painting and drawing, he created a number of sculptures, many of them recognizable portraits of friends and others of anonymous Etruscan-style figures. In 1942, French was included in the exhibition *American Realists and Magic Realists* at the Museum of Modern Art.

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the Frenches traveled extensively across Europe with Cadmus nearly always accompanying them. French's forms became increasingly biomorphic as the years progressed. Eventually, the Frenches moved permanently to Rome, primarily so French could pursue a relationship with Roberto Giannotta, where he remained until his death, in 1988.