**Charles François Béglia, 1887–1963 [Draft 2]**

French graphic artist who was born in on 15 January 1887, son of François Béglia, an apparently illiterate shoemaker from Dolcedo, in the hills north of Porto Maurizio, Italy, and his wife Françoise Gazzano, a domestic servant: he was a late child, his parents being 41 and 40 at the time. He himself married in Menton on 2 May 1923 to Assomption Marie Jeanne Rambaldi and he died there on 17 November 1963.

Readily found information on Béglia is fragmentary, the only dedicated article on him apparently being a short piece in a Mentonnais magazine not yet sighted (Yves Bosio, ‘Charles Béglia, peintre mentonnais’, *Ou Païs Mentounasc*, March 1987, pp. 18–19). His primary occupation appears to have been teaching at the Menton art college (Ecole Municipal du Dessin) but with a main period of parallel local eminence in the 1920s and 1930s in two other areas.

The first (from about 1922 to 1930 on current evidence) was as an imaginative designer of floats for the annual Menton carnival, and occasionally elsewhere on the coast, a role in which he appears to have often devised the principal one for the Menton ‘carnival king’ and served as president of the ‘comité des fêtes’. The second – in the 1930s and for which he is now most widely known – was for his striking colour-lithographic posters, mainly promoting Menton and other southern French tourist and holiday destinations. Probably beginning a little earlier than both, he also designed painted architectural friezes (a characteristic local feature) and similar external and internal building decoration for the family firm of decorative painters founded by Carlo Cerutti Maori (1828–92). This continued in his later years since he was initially involved with Jean Cocteau in the 1950s decoration of the Salle de Mariages at Menton but left the project in 1957 after artistic disagreements with him. He is also reported to have been a theatre set designer. The Archives Municipales de Menton list published sources that mention Beglia and hold other material related to him, including a few photographs in which he figures.

The only example of Béglia’s work listed on Art UK is a watercolour view looking roughly west-south-west towards Menton from west of the Villa Hanbury just outside Ventimiglia: this entered the Royal Watercolour Society collection in 1979 as part of a bequest. Nicholas Barfield, who identified the view added: ‘The strange vertical structure clinging to the cliff was a tower lift (long gone) connecting the Hotel Miramar buildings on the Grimaldi clifftop to Balzi Rossi below. The galleried structure to the far right above the artist's signature [lower right] is the masonry railway gallery, with the railway disappearing into a tunnel towards France. Sadly, road construction and almost continuous urbanisation along this coast mean the view is almost unrecognisable today.’

The drawing may be a graphic design, since it leaves large areas suitable to add lettering. If so, it is probably for something smaller than a poster since the (landscape format) rectangular image is on a sheet of only 20 x 20 cm.

*Summarised from Art UK discussion on Béglia’s drawing in the Royal Watercolour Society. The discussion includes a number of French publication references from the Menton archives.*

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