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**Between the Romantic Vision of Joris-Karl Huysmans
and Scholarly Scrutiny of Émile Mâle
Christian Iconography According to Jan Henryk Rosen (1891–1982)**

The painter Jan Henryk Rosen (1891–1982) was a keen student of Medieval Christian iconography at the Sorbonne under Émile Mâle (1912–1913) and also an avid reader of Joris-Karl Huysmans, especially his *À Rebours* (1884) and *La Cathédrale* (1898). The mural decoration of the Armenian Cathedral in Lvov (1925–1929), Rosen's first monumental work, exemplifies the most important features of his style both as far as their content and form are concerned. Despite the high esteem in which he held university education, Rosen was not slavishly obedient to the scholarly established truths. He respected the knowledge acquired at Mâle's lectures, yet at the same time he reserved the right to artistic liberty and using his own judgement and imagination, fuelled by the Romantic vision of the "soul" of medieval architecture, as imagined by Huysmans in his *Cathedral*. Rosen's art was an attempt at reconciling the academic accuracy with the impulsive and poetically charged writings of Huysmans. Conservative as he was, Rosen boasted about his erudite knowledge in iconography, as he assumed that a truly religious art must be informed by the tradition and dogma of the Catholic Church. For him, resorting to long-established models and repeating "canonical" schemes was a proof of an artist's iconographic erudition. He had held onto this attitude throughout his career regardless of the new approaches to church art that originated, mostly in France, starting in the 1940s and 1950s.