

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF YVES BRAYER

Complete English translation package - four separate source files

Prepared from the French source material supplied by the mairie. British English is used throughout. Repeated text is retained under each source file so that each translation can be matched directly to the original layout file.

FILE 1 - 2026 JUIN 3 - Dans les pas de Brayer V2 2

Full translation of the longer master text. The numbering below follows this file, not the finished panel numbering.

In the Footsteps of Yves Brayer

Yves Brayer (1907-1990) was one of the leading figurative painters of the 20th century. In 1940, after being demobilised in Montauban, he settled in Cordes for several months with a group of artist friends - writers, painters and sculptors. Together they founded the 'Académie de Cordes'. Brayer bought a house near the Porte des Ormeaux and, until the end of his life, returned regularly to Cordes to paint the town and its surroundings. In 1976, he donated around twenty works representative of his art to the town of Cordes, including still lifes, landscapes and tapestries.

1 - The Cordes Band - 1968

French source heading: 1 - La fanfare cordaise - 1968

Location: not specified in the source ("SITUATION : ?")

On 29 May 1886, a 33-member musical society, the 'Chorale Cordaise', was founded in Cordes. A grant made it possible to purchase a ceremonial banner, which cost 600 francs (around €2,000). For more than a century, the banner was carried at every outing of the society, both in Cordes and elsewhere. After the Chorale Cordaise ceased its activities, the banner was entrusted in 1963 to the daughter of the society's former director, who later gave it to the Musée Charles Portal. The original banner, which served as Yves Brayer's model in 1968, can now be seen at the Musée Charles Portal in Cordes, near the Porte des Ormeaux.

2 - The Courtyard in the Snow - Hostellerie du Vieux Cordes - 1941

French source heading: 2 - La cour sous la neige - Hostellerie du Vieux Cordes - 1941

Location: in front of the Hostellerie du Vieux Cordes

The property was bought in 1923 by Henri Salingardes (1872-1947), a native of Aveyron who had 'made it in Paris'. After the First World War he became an antiques dealer and turned the Hostellerie du Vieux Cordes into an inn renowned both for its generous cooking and for the objects he hunted down throughout the region. He also created unusual works that were later associated with Art Brut - works of the kind Jean Dubuffet would describe as 'barbaric'. During the exceptionally cold winter of 1940-1941, Yves Brayer painted the inn's courtyard and its famous two-hundred-year-old wisteria covered in snow.

3 - A Funeral in Cordes - 1941

French source heading: 3 - L'enterrement à Cordes - 1941

The Church of Saint-Michel in Cordes, built in the 13th and 14th centuries, forms the backdrop to a traditional funeral procession, with a horse and hearse draped in black. The bright colours of the chimney, shutters and church doors contrast sharply with the black clothing of the people accompanying the deceased. This painting echoes other funeral scenes painted by Yves Brayer in front of Albi Cathedral at around the same time. Here, as in those works, the figures appear dwarfed by the power of the church, like human beings subject to an inescapable fate.

4 - Festival in Cordes - 1972

French source heading: 4 - Fête à Cordes - 1972

In July 1972, to mark the 750th anniversary of the founding of Cordes, a group of local residents set about organising medieval festivities. The first edition of the Fêtes du Grand Fauconnier was a great success. Yves Brayer and his friends, like much of the population of Cordes, joined in the celebrations and dressed in period

costume. The tradition continues today: each year, horses in caparisons, noblewomen in long brocade gowns and colourful headdresses, and wealthy townsmen in surcoats and long pointed shoes parade through the decorated streets of Cordes. Here, Brayer offers a lively and colourful record of the earliest Fêtes du Grand Fauconnier.

5 - The Porte des Ormeaux

French source heading: 5 - La porte des Ormeaux

The Porte des Ormeaux, together with the Portail Peint, is one of the gateways that survive from the first defensive enclosure protecting the town founded by Raymond VII, Count of Toulouse, in 1222. The gate was altered in the 14th century and flanked by two large round towers, one of which is solid up to first-floor level. The passage through the gate was fitted with portcullises and heavy timber doors. Although the building was modified over the centuries, the overall appearance of the gate still gives a very good idea of the original construction, whose powerful presence inspired Yves Brayer. In 1940, the artist bought the house facing the gate. A window lintel bears the inscription 'Académie de Cordes 1941'.

6 - View of Cordes - 1956

French source heading: 6 - Vue de Cordes - 1956

In this painting, Yves Brayer gives Cordes the appearance of a Provençal village, evoking the region he loved and where he would eventually spend the final years of his life. The slopes of the town seem softened; cypresses, pointing skywards like the bell tower of Saint-Michel, frame the old cemetery and the tower of the former Porte Sainte-Catherine. A dry-stone wall borders a sun-scorched field, where a dead almond tree forms a long, spindly silhouette - perhaps a reminder of the fragility of human life as well as that of the natural world.

7 - The Cérou in the Snow

French source heading: 7 - Le Cérou sous la neige

From the Middle Ages until the 19th century, the village of Les Cabannes was an important centre for processing hides and leather. The finished goods were then sold in Cordes and, together with cloth woven from hemp and linen, contributed to the prosperity of the town's inhabitants. Brayer chose to place the imposing wheat mills and tan mills - where oak bark was ground for use in tanning leather - prominently in the foreground. They line the Cérou, although their activity gradually disappeared with mechanisation and the rural exodus of the period between the two World Wars.

8 - Cordes Seen from Les Cabannes - 1941

French source heading: 8 - Cordes vue de Cabannes - 1941

Here Yves Brayer presents a view of Cordes from the west, looking towards Les Cabannes. The former Capuchin convent of Gaillac and its garden can be seen in the foreground. Dating from 1660, the convent stands on Chemin des Capucins, Rue de la Peyrade. In 1826 it was placed at the disposal of the community of the Sisters of Saint-Joseph d'Oulias. In 1975 it became the principal residence of the Community of the Beatitudes, formerly the Community of the Lion of Judah and the Slain Lamb. The former Capuchin convent is now privately owned. Brayer painted this work during his first stay in Cordes, during the Occupation.

9 - The Saint-Jean Chapel

French source heading: 9 - La chapelle Saint-Jean

Known in the municipal archives as Saint-Jean de Mordagne, this charming chapel is certainly one of the oldest buildings in the Cordes area. Its rounded apse and the horseshoe-shaped arch of the choir place it among the chapels of the late 11th century. The bucolic valley in which it stands carries a sombre memory: it was the final

resting place of many plague victims who were sent outside the town walls by the consuls of Cordes during recurrent epidemics from the Middle Ages into the modern period. Yves Brayer, like many people from Cordes, loved coming here for the beauty and serenity of the setting, enhanced by the proud silhouette of the hilltop town.

10 - Cordes Seen from the Pied Haut - lithograph

French source heading: 10 - Cordes vu du Pied Haut - lithographie

Also known as the 'Grain de Sel', this limestone plateau rises above the Cérou valley and offers a fine view of the eastern side of Cordes. Two unusual concrete trees still stand on the plateau, remnants of a 1970s art project that imagined a mineral forest gradually being reclaimed by vegetation. On the slope down towards Cordes, an old spring once supplied the large cistern beneath Place de la Bouteillerie. It is possible that willows growing near the spring gave the hill its name: Saules → Sal → Sel.

11 - The Bouteillerie Decorated with Flags, Cordes, August 1944

French source heading: 11 - La Bouteillerie pavoisée, Cordes août 1944

Cordes is decorated with French tricolour flags: Paris has been liberated. The people of Cordes celebrate the event at the Café Montplaisir on Place de la Bouteillerie, overlooked by the hill known as the Grain de Sel. Brayer hints, through the silhouettes of men in uniform, that the war is not yet over. In 1945 he would paint the end of the conflict and the popular celebrations in Cordes, where he married on 23 June 1945.

12 - The Tournament at Cordes - 1940 - gouache on mounted paper

French source heading: 12 - Le tournoi à Cordes - 1940 - gouache sur papier marouflé

A tournament between noble or royal protagonists - perhaps imaginary - is staged by Yves Brayer at the foot of a town that could be Cordes in the 14th century. The painting's very large format (180 x 240 cm in the source text) suggests that the artist was playfully borrowing the conventions of grand history painting. This gouache, made in Cordes during the war, was exhibited in January 1941 at the Préfecture in Cahors alongside works by other members of the 'Académie de Cordes'.

13 - The Saint-Jacques Chapel, known as La Capelette

French source heading: 13 - La chapelle Saint-Jacques dite la Capelette

The chapel is said to have been built in 1511 thanks to the generosity of a local man named Facou de Montjozieu. Above the door, six scallop shells and interlaced pilgrim staffs stand out in relief, forming a kind of sign for pilgrims. The building was restored in the 20th century. From 1968 onwards, Yves Brayer created the interior decoration. He painted frescoes in shades of beige and ochre, in a cameo-like style, on the theme of the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. He also designed a restrained altar inspired by the one at the Abbey of Conques, using stones recovered from the ruined chapel of Saint-Jean de Mordagne. The Albi stained-glass artist Clerc-Roques and the sculptor Paul Belmondo also contributed to the chapel's decoration.

14 - The Barbican, Cordes, 1944

French source heading: 14 - La Barbacane, Cordes, 1944

The largest structure in the town's third defensive enclosure is the barbican: an enormous round tower with a long sloping base, encountered when climbing from Place de la Bouteillerie towards the upper town. It protected a gateway that has since disappeared. At the foot of the structure is a tiny spring that never runs dry, gently releasing water from the limestone rock. Yves Brayer loved to paint and draw this emblematic fortress of Cordes, which he called 'the Toledo of the Tarn'.

15 - The Ramparts of Cordes, 1974 - watercolour

French source heading: 15 - Les remparts de Cordes 1974 - Aquarelle

Deeply influenced by the landscapes of Provence, Yves Brayer gives this view down Rue du Planol and its medieval tower a distinctly Mediterranean character. The blue sky and cypresses reinforce his tendency to blend together the landscapes he loved. Although the tower, also known as the 'pigeon loft', makes the location recognisable, Brayer removes a house that obstructed the view towards the hills and adds other buildings. The result is a work that is figurative, yet also reveals the artist's freedom to reshape reality.

FILE 2 - dépliant A4 parcours.pdf

Translation of the separate two-page A4 visitor leaflet/map.

Page 1 - Visitor leaflet

In the Footsteps of Yves Brayer

This route invites you to follow in the footsteps of a painter whose curiosity knew no bounds, a lover of landscapes and bright, clear light. Follow the numbered panels, where you will find reproductions of paintings by Yves Brayer together with anecdotes and information about each location. Two routes are possible: one through the town and another through the countryside around Cordes. The original works can be seen at the Musée d'Art Moderne - Yves Brayer, Maison du Grand Fauconnier, 39 Grand Rue Raimond VII. The museum also displays other works by the artist: landscapes of Auvergne, Provence, the Camargue, Spain, Italy and more.

Yves Brayer (1907-1990)

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Page 2 - Works along the route

Below are works by Yves Brayer to discover along the route.

The original paintings and lithographs (Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15) can be seen at the Musée d'Art Moderne - Yves Brayer, Maison du Grand Fauconnier, Cordes-sur-Ciel. No. 9 is located in the chapel known as La Capelette.

Route within the town

- No. 1 - The Porte des Ormeaux
- No. 2 - Cordes in Celebration
- No. 3 - The Cordes Band
- No. 4 - A Funeral in Cordes
- No. 5 - The Courtyard in the Snow
- No. 6 - The Tournament at Cordes
- No. 7 - The Ramparts of Cordes
- No. 8 - The Barbican
- No. 9 - The Saint-Jacques Chapel / La Capelette
- No. 10 - The Bouteillerie Decorated with Flags

Route outside the town

- No. 11 - Cordes Seen from the Pied Haut
- No. 12 - The Saint-Jean Chapel

No. 13 - Cordes Seen from Les Cabannes

No. 14 - The Cérou in the Snow

No. 15 - View of Cordes