

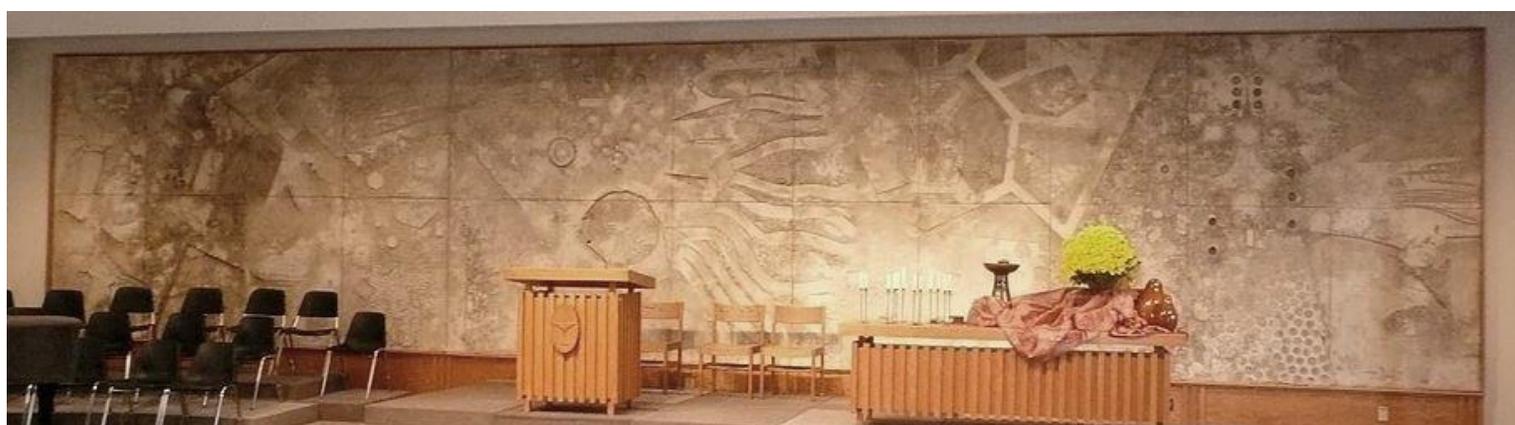


## Unitarian Universalist Church West Sanctuary Wall Sculpture “The Kings” by Jordi Bonet

Our beautiful sanctuary wall sculpture, “The Kings” is the work of Canadian artist Jordi Bonet. It was acquired through a combination of good fortune, vision and hard work led by church members Ken Kurtz, Julia Collins and Ron Zdroik.

Jordi Bonet was born in Barcelona, Spain on May 7, 1932. He was greatly influenced by his father, a physician and art lover. When he was seven he fell, either from a tree or a wall (reports vary), and broke his arm. Gangrene set in and his right arm was amputated at the shoulder. This event and the ensuing disability haunted him throughout his life. At age 17 he dropped out of school and began frequenting the "red light" district of Barcelona. He drew the subjects he saw there, and at age 19 had his first exhibit. He later became dissatisfied with his work, and destroyed almost all of it before taking a trip to Canada to visit a family friend. He remained in Quebec for the rest of his life, except for visits and retreats to Spain and France, to refocus and find inspiration.

Bonet worked in a variety of media; drawing, painting, ceramics and sculpture, and created many large works, which were commissioned for public spaces and buildings. He created a huge cement sculpture for the exterior of the Grand Theatre in Quebec, as well as assorted massive concrete, bronze, and aluminum wall sculptures for both public and private buildings in the United States and Canada. In spite of his many public Works he has remained largely unknown outside of Canada. A small art museum in the village of Mont. St. Hilaire, about 20 miles from Montreal, houses books about him and an outside sculpture, as well as exhibits of his Smaller works. At least five books about his life and work are available, most readily from the museum of art in St. Hilaire. Jordi Bonet was married and had three children; tragically, his second son was killed at the age of 11 in a bicycle accident. Bonet was diagnosed with leukemia in 1974 and died in Mont. St. Hilaire on Christmas Eve, 1979.



### How UUCW Came to Own “The Kings”

By Lilo Sewel

In about 1971, Ken Kurtz, a UUCW charter member and architect of our church building was involved in the remodeling of the First Federal Savings Bank in downtown Milwaukee. He became aware of the artist, Jordi Bonet, and suggested that he be commissioned to do a wall sculpture for the renovated space. That artwork, titled, “The Kings,” was created in 24 sections, in cement and paint, and was installed in the bank in 1972.

Subsequently, when the bank was sold, “The Kings” was stored in crates in a warehouse in Stevens Point, and Ken Kurtz retired to Santa Fe. When the bank was sold again, the new owners decided to sell the sculpture, and Ken Kurtz was asked for pictures of it. While visiting UUCW one Sunday morning it occurred to Ken that the wall sculpture might be ideal for our sanctuary. He thought that the bank might be willing to donate it to us, since it would be difficult for them to sell it as it was: disassembled and in storage.

He consulted with the UUCW Aesthetics Committee of the church, which sought and gained approval from the Board of Trustees to pursue the possibility. Julia Collins, Aesthetics Chair, spoke with bank officials, who eventually agreed to the donation. Ron Zdroik designed the installation, and UUCW's Endowment Committee paid the costs of moving the sculpture and installing it, which was done by a group of volunteers, directed by Julia Collins and Ron Zdroik on July 24, 1999.

We are most appreciative to Associated Bank for this wonderful gift, and to Mr. John Wolfe, of Associated Bank, for his efforts on our behalf.



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