

JEAN COCTEAU (1889-1963)

Compiled by curator Tony Clark, Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres

- 1889 Jean Maurice Clement Cocteau is born to a wealthy family July 5, in Maisons Laffite, on the outskirts of Paris and the Eiffel Tower is completed.
- 1899 His father commits suicide □
- 1900 - 1902 Enters private school. Creates his first watercolor and signs it "Japh"
- 1904 Expelled from school and runs away to live in the Red Light district of Marsailles.
- 1905 - 1908 Returns to Paris and lives with his uncle where he writes and draws constantly. □
- 1907 Proclaims his love for Madeleine Carlier who was 30 years old and turned out to be a famous lesbian. □
- 1908 Published with text and portraits of Sarah Bernhardt in LE TEMOIN. Edouard de Max arranges for the publishing of Cocteau's first book of poetry ALLADIN'S LAMP.
- 1909 - 1910 Diaghalev commissions the young Cocteau to create two lithographic posters for the first season of LES BALLETS RUSSES. Cocteau creates illustrations and text published in SCHEHERAZADE and he becomes close friends with Vaslav Nijinsky, Leon Bakst and Igor Stravinsky.
- 1911 - 1912 Cocteau is commissioned to do the lithographs announcing the second season of LES BALLETS RUSSES. At this point Diaghalev challenges Cocteau with the statement "Etonnez-Moi" - Sock Me. Cocteau created his first ballet libretti for Nijinsky called DAVID. The ballet turned in the production LE DIEU BLU.
- 1913 - 1915 Writes LE POTOMAK the first "Surrealist" novel. Continues his war journal series call LE MOT or THE WORD. It was to warn the French not to let the Germans take away their liberty or spirit. He goes behind the Belgium front and is arrested for being an imposter. He starts an ambulance service to bring wounded by to Paris.
- 1915 Cocteau, Picasso, Leon Bakst and Leon Massine traveled together to Rome. They all collaborate on Cocteau's Surreal ballet PARADE for LES BALLETS RUSSES. □
- 1917 PARADE premiers with the Ballet Swedois in Paris. □
- 1918 Forms an intimate friendship with a 15 year old novelist, Raymond Radiguet. Radiguet strongly influenced Cocteau's art and life and vice versa. □
- 1919 Produces ADIEU AU POTOMAK. It was a good bye to WWI. □
- 1919 – 1922 Cocteau brings other renowned artists to the theatre. He founds the publishing house Editions de la Sirene producing LE COQ ET L'HARLEQUIN. He creates his mime- ballets Le Boeuf sur le Toit and Les Maries de la Tour Eiffel. He becomes a spokesman for LES SIX which included George Auric, Jean Dury, Arthur Honnegeur, Francis Poulenc, Darius Milhaud and Germaine Tailleferre. □
- 1923 Radiguet dies from typhoid fever in 1923. The death is a severe blow to Cocteau which drives him to smoke opium. However, it did open another artistic window that changed his poetry and drawings. ANTIGONE premieres.
- 1924 Cocteau illustrates books: DESSINS, LES BICHES and LES FACHEUX. Illustrates JEAN OISEAULEUR – Jean the Birdman a folio of self-portraits that were created

while looking in a mirror under the influence of opium.□

- 1925 Completes his first film. FAIT DU CINEMA – “Making of Films” Stays in Villefranche sur Mer (Welcome Hotel). He meets Christian Bérard realizes décor and costumes for many of Cocteau’s plays and films. Publishes his great poem "L'Ange Heurtebise" - Man Ray illustrates it.□
- 1926 - 1927 Exhibitions at Galerie Quatre Chemins of collages, paintings and drawings. His book OPIUM is published with numerous bizarre illustrations. LE LIVRE BLANC is published.□
- 1928 - 1929 Oratorio of the Cocteau/Stravinsky OEDIUS ROI premiered. Designing and filming LE SANG DU POET – Blood of a Poet. □
- 1930 Blood of a Poet is released. The film is a commentary on his private mythology. Cocteau designs a work concerning the adventures of a young poet condemned to walk the halls of the "Hotel of Dramatic Follies" for his crime of having brought a statue to life.
- 1931 Undergoes detoxification.
- 1932 - 1935 LA MACHINE INFERNALE is published. LA MACHINE INFERNALE opens to great success. LES CHEVALIERS DE LA TABLE ROUND – Knights of the Round Table is finished. Profiled in Le Figaro, and releases PORTRAITS-SOUVENIR□
- 1936 Travels around the world accompanied by Marcel Khill. On the way, he becomes friends with Charlie Chaplin. Coaches jazz musician and ex world boxing champion Al Brown to regain his title.□
- 1937 Premiere of the play LES CHEVALIERS DE LA TABLE ROUND featuring is his new love and protégé Jean Marais.
- 1938 Writes screenplay for LES PARENT TERRIBLES and exhibits drawings at the Guggenheim Jeune Gallery, London.
- 1939 - 1940 In Piquey he writes: LA FIN DU POTOMAK and LES MONSTRES SACRES. Finishes in Perpignan LA MACHINE A ECRIRE" – The Typewriter. Returns to Paris.□
- 1941 Settles in his apartment in the "Palais Royal".□
- 1942 LE BARON FANTOME is released. Cocteau testifies a Court of justice for Jean Genet.
- 1943 L'Eternel Retour is released and RENAUD ET ARMIDE premieres. □
- 1944 Creates the ballet Orphée with Roland Petit, and Orphée the book is published. The great mixed media portrait of Colette is finished. Photographed with Colette at the Palais Royal by Serge Lido. Offered the Norton Chair at Harvard University. □
- 1945 La Belle et La Bête - Beauty and the Beast. The film marked a triumph for Cocteau. Jean Marais starred in the film as the Beast.□
- 1946 L'Aigle a Deux Tetes is released as are his books LA DIFFICULTE D'ETRE –The Difficulty of Being and one of his greatest poems LA CRUCIFIXION. Creates the ballet Le Jeune Homme et La Mort for Jean Babilee with Roland Petit as choreographer.□
- 1947 He settles down in Milly la Forêt with Jean Marais. Begins the movie Orphée . Meets Edouard Dermit who will become his adoptive son and heir. Releases film

version of La Voix Humaine and Ruy Blas. Finishes his LES LICORNES – Unicorn Series.

- 1948 Aubusson's tapestries. ("Judith et Holopherne"). □
- 1949 Les Parents Terribles is released. Trip to Hollywood and NYC – writes during the flight LETTER TO AMERICANS. □
- 1950 Meets his last patron Francine Weisweiler and decorates the "Santo Sospir" villa (Saint Jean Cap-Ferat). Produces his ballet PHEDRE starring Tamara Toumanova and Serge Lifar. Begins working with other artists to realize their works in glass sculpture at the "Furnace of the Angels" Venice, Italy. Cocteau directs the film Orphée which again starred Marais. □
- 1951 –1953 Finishes "Bacchus" – The play causes a scandal. Finishes JOURNAL D'UN INCONNU - Journal of an Unknown. Premieres his last ballet LA DAME et LA LECORNE Exhibitions of drawings, paintings and tapestries, Nice Musee (Galerie des Ponchettes) □
- 1954 Upon the death of his friend Colette, the novelist, Cocteau took her place in the Belgian Academy. □
- 1955 Elected to the French Academy as a Commandeur de la Legion d'Honneur □
- 1956 - 1957 Appointed Dr Honoris Causa by the Oxford University. Undertakes the frescoes for "Salle de Marriage of the city hall of Menton and makes the frescoes of the Chapel Saint Pierre in Villefranche sur Mer. In the studio of Madeline Jolly Cocteau masters the art of ceramics. □
- 1958 Finishes of the frescoes of the Salle de Marriage in Menton. First exhibition of ceramics in the fishing Court in Villefranche sur Mer. Inauguration of an exhibition of ceramics in the Lucy Weill gallery, Paris.
- 1959 Writes "Le Requiem", considered as his poetic will. Creates murals of Notre Dame de France in London; the mosaics for Cap d'Ail theatre and the Chapel Saint Blaise in Milly la Forêt.
- 1960 Release of Le Testament d' Orphée – The Testament of Orpheus considered the first filmed "Last Will and Testament" □
- 1961 Completes amphitheater and artists' studios at Cap d'Ail. □
- 1962 Publication of "Requiem". □
- 1963 While listening to his eulogy for Edith Piaf on the radio, Jean Cocteau dies in his Chateau Bailly on 11th of October in Milly la Forêt.

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