Jean Cocteau:
An Inventory of His Papers in the Carlton Lake Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Cocteau, Jean, 1889-1963
Title: Carlton Lake Collection of Jean Cocteau Papers
Inclusive Dates: 1905-1959
Bulk Dates: (bulk 1910-1928)
Quantity: 11 boxes (4.62 linear feet), 6 oversize folders (osf), 1 bound volume (bv), and 1 galley folder (gf)
Abstract: The early personal and professional life of the French poet, novelist, artist, playwright, and filmmaker Jean Cocteau is documented in this collection of manuscripts, correspondence, personal papers, notebooks, drawings, financial and legal documents, and third-party papers, drawn largely from his personal archives.
Call Number: Manuscript Collection MS-04960
Language: All materials are in French.
Note: We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, which provided funds for the processing and cataloging of this collection.
Access: Open for research. Permission from copyright holder must accompany photoduplication requests for Jean Cocteau materials.

Administrative Information

Processed by: Monique Daviau, Catherine Stollar, Richard Workman, 2004
Repository: The University of Texas at Austin, Harry Ransom Center
Biographical Sketch

Jean Cocteau, one of the most versatile creative artists of the twentieth century, achieved celebrity as poet, playwright, journalist, novelist, artist, and filmmaker. At the time of his death he was perhaps the best-known French literary figure outside of France.

Born Jean Maurice Eugène Clément Cocteau on July 5, 1889, he was a child of affluence, particularly through the Lecomtes on the maternal side of his family. He began writing poetry as a boy and gained entrance into the literary world through his mother's social contacts. At age eighteen his work was the subject of a public reading that brought him his first notoriety, leading to the publication of his first book of poems, *La lampe d'Aladin* (1909).

In the next few years he met and was influenced by members of the avant-garde, resulting in less traditional works such as the ballet *Parade* (1917) in collaboration with Erik Satie, Léonide Massine, Sergei Diaghilev, and Pablo Picasso, *Le Potomak* (1919), a collection of drawings, poetry, and prose, and the poems of *Le Cap de Bonne-Espérance* (1919).

Cocteau's art received further stimulation from his intense love for the gifted young poet Raymond Radiguet. Their affair ended with Radiguet's death from typhoid at age twenty, but not before the younger poet had guided Cocteau away from modernism and toward a more classical formality.

In the years between the two world wars, Cocteau wrote his first novel (*Le grand écart*, 1923), his first nonmusical play (*Antigone*, 1922), and his first film (*Le sang d'un poète*, 1932). For the rest of his life, in spite of his struggles with opium addiction, he continued to produce an enormous quantity of work and maintained his public prominence.

In 1949 Cocteau was made Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur. In 1955 he was elected to the Académie Royale de Langue et de Littérature Françaises of Belgium and also to the Académie Française.

He died October 11, 1963, and is buried in the chapel of Saint-Blaise-des-Simples in Milly-la-Forêt, France.

Sources:


Scope and Contents

The personal and professional life of French poet, novelist, artist, playwright, and filmmaker Jean Cocteau is reflected in the Carlton Lake collection of Cocteau's manuscripts, correspondence, personal papers, notebooks, drawings, financial and legal documents, and third-party papers. The collection is arranged in four series: I. Works, 1910-1929 (6.5 boxes); II. Correspondence, 1913-1959 (2.5 boxes); III. Personal, 1908-1950 (1 box); and IV. Third-Party Works and Correspondence, 1905-1925 (1 box).

The bulk of the collection is a large portion of Cocteau's personal archives that was sold without his permission to a French dealer in 1935. (For a detailed history of the papers, see chapter nine of Lake's *Confessions of a Literary Archaeologist*.) Because the papers went to the dealer in several small lots, it has not been possible to be certain of Cocteau's original arrangement. Therefore, works have been arranged alphabetically by title and correspondence alphabetically by correspondent.

Within the Works series are manuscripts or proofs of most of Cocteau's writings until about 1928, a period that encompassed some of his best work, including *Le Cap de Bonne-Espérance*, *Le coq et l'arlequin*, *Les enfants terribles*, *Le grand écart*, *Le livre blanc*, *Les mariés de la tour Eiffel*, *La noce massacrée*, *Le Potomak*, and *Thomas l'imposteur*. Many of the manuscripts and notebooks also contain drawings. Because the bulk of the archives predates Cocteau's involvement with the cinema, that aspect of his work is largely not documented.

Within the Correspondence series, the folder of Cocteau's letters to Henri Lefebvre is actually the dossier of Lefebvre's dealings with Cocteau and the sellers of Cocteau's papers (this is the file referred to in Lake's *Confessions* by the title "Affaire Cocteau"). Cocteau's letters which frequently concern his writing, his philosophy, and his personal life are, like his works, sprinkled with drawings. Prominent among his correspondents are Jean and Valentine Hugo, Max Jacob, Marie Laurencin, and Francis Poulenc.

The Personal series includes inscriptions from other authors to Cocteau on tear-sheets, address books, an autograph book from the beginning of his career, and various documents such as his birth certificate, plans for the decoration of his apartment, and a menu from a dinner at Le Bœuf sur le Toit.

Among the Third-Party Works and Correspondence are letters from Cocteau's mother to Valentine Hugo, and works by Raymond Radiguet as well as letters to him from various correspondents.

Related Material

Elsewhere in the Ransom Center, the Lake Art Collection contains a large number of works by Cocteau.
Index Terms

Correspondents
   Cocteau, Eugénie, b. 1855.
   Hugo, Jean, 1894- .
   Hugo, Valentine, 1887-1968.
   Jacob, Max, 1876-1944.
   Laurencin, Marie, 1883-1956.
   Poulenc, Francis, 1899-1963.
   Radiguet, Raymond, 1903-1923.

Subjects
   Novelists, French.
   Poets, French.

Document Types
   Address books.
   Autograph albums.
   Birth certificates.
   Galley proofs.
   Page proofs.
Series I. Works, 1910-1929, nd

A-B

Art poétique (Version définitive), handwritten signed manuscript in notebook, 1916

Box-Folder 39.3

C

Le Cap de Bonne-Espérance (1919)

Handwritten manuscripts with revisions 1915-1917, nd

Box-Folder 39.6-7

"Dédicace," handwritten manuscript, three versions, 1916, nd

Box-Folder 39.8

Typed manuscript and carbon copy, 1917

Box-Folder 39.9

Typed carbon copy, nd

Box-Folder 39.10

First page proofs with handwritten manuscript page and correspondence with printer laid in, 1918, nd

Box-Folder 40.1

Galley and page proofs with handwritten corrections, 1919

Box-Folder 40.2

Page proofs with handwritten final page and sample cover, 1919

Box-Folder 40.3

Carte blanche (1920)

Two handwritten manuscripts and photocopy of published article from Paris-Midi, 1919, nd

Box-Folder 40.4

Two handwritten signed manuscripts, nd

Box-Folder 40.5

Typescript with handwritten title page, 1919

Box-Folder 40.6

Galley proofs, nd

Box-Folder 40.7

La chanson des anémones, handwritten and typed carbon copy manuscripts, nd

Box-Folder 40.8

Les chansons du prince frivole (published as Le prince frivole, 1910), proofs with extensive handwritten corrections and additions, 1910

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Le coq et l'arlequin (1918)
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| Printed copy with pencil margin markings, 1918 | Box-Folder 40.11 |

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| *Dessins* (1923), proofs, 1924 | Box-Folder 41.3-4 |
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| Une education sentimentale, signed handwritten manuscript, nd | Box-Folder osf 19 |
| En écoutant un rossignol à Blidah, handwritten manuscript with typed carbon copies, nd | Box-Folder 41.6 |
| *Les enfants terribles* (1929), typed carbon copy manuscript with handwritten revisions, and incomplete page proofs, 1929, nd | Box-Folder 41.7 |

| *Escales*, proofs, nd | Box-Folder osf 20 |

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| Un genre nouveau, handwritten manuscript, nd | Box-Folder 41.8 |

| *Le grand écart* (1923) |

| Typed carbon copy manuscript, two copies, 1923 | Box-Folder 41.10-11 |
| Page proofs with handwritten additions, bound, 1923 | Box-Folder 42.1 |

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| *Le livre blanc* (1928) |

| Typed carbon copy manuscript, nd | Box-Folder 42.3 |
| Typed carbon copy manuscript with extensive handwritten revisions, 1927 | Box-Folder 42.4 |
Page proofs with handwritten corrections, 1928

Les livres, handwritten manuscript with carbon copies, nd

Les mariés de la tour Eiffel (1921)

Handwritten manuscript, titled "La noce massacrée," nd

Typescript, titled "La noce massacrée ou Les mariés de la tour Eiffel," nd

Le mystère laïc: Chirico'un essai de critique, handwritten and typed manuscript, with typed carbon copy fragments of a later version, 1928

N

Ne plus voir que ce port, manuscript and typed carbon copy, nd

La noce massacré (1921)

Le rire de Goya, handwritten manuscript (unpublished), 1916

Handwritten draft with drawings in sketchbook, 1917

Printer's copy, 1917, 1920

Proofs with handwritten revisions and inserts, 1920

Proofs, nd

Notebook, nd

Notebook on art, music, poetry, nd

O

Opéra, 1927

Handwritten manuscript, 1927

Typescript and carbon copy, 1927

Page proofs, 1927
Les parents terribles (1938), handwritten draft, nd

Picasso (1923/1926), typed carbon copy manuscript, 1924

Poème autour d'une fleur de Datura, handwritten manuscript with typed carbon copies, 1913

Poèmes, handwritten manuscripts, 1915-1920s

Poésies (1920)

Handwritten manuscript with revisions and printed page, 1915-1919

Proofs, incomplete, nd

Le Potomak (1919)

Page proofs

Mercure de France edition (unpublished)

Few handwritten corrections and emendations, 330 pp., nd

Incomplete, 312 pp., nd [formerly 45.3]

Société Littéraire de France edition (1919)

Handwritten corrections and revisions, 390 pp., nd

Handwritten insert and few corrections, 422 pp., 1919

Q-S

Le rappel à l'ordre

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Thomas l'imposteur (1923)

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Reines de la France (dossier), 1949-1950  Box-Folder 49.5

Miscellaneous  Box-Folder 49.6
Series IV. Third-Party Works and Correspondence, 1905-1925, nd

Works

A-Z

Cafagna, Maria Pia

Crosland, Margaret, nd

Mathis, Edmund

Tailhade, Laurent, 1908

Unidentified, 1905, nd

Correspondence

A-C

Cocteau, Eugénie, 1918-1925

D-Q

Doucet, Jacques, 1919-1920

R-Z

Unidentified, nd