

JEAN COCTEAU

b. July 5, 1889, Maisons-Laffitte, France

d. October 11, 1963, Milly-la-Forêt, France

WRITER

“What the public criticizes in you, cultivate. It is you.”

Celebrated as “The Frivolous Prince,” Cocteau is one of the most influential figures in the 20th century French art world.

For Jean Cocteau, life was art. This writer, illustrator, poet and filmmaker knew no boundaries in his creative endeavors. A prolific catalog of genre-spanning work makes Cocteau one of the most influential figures of the 20th century French art world.

Cocteau was born to a well-to-do family in a small French town. His father committed suicide when Cocteau was 10. A troubled child, he was expelled from a host of private schools. Seeking an escape, he took off to the red-light district in Marseilles. At age 19, he published his first book of poetry, “Aladdin’s Lamp.”

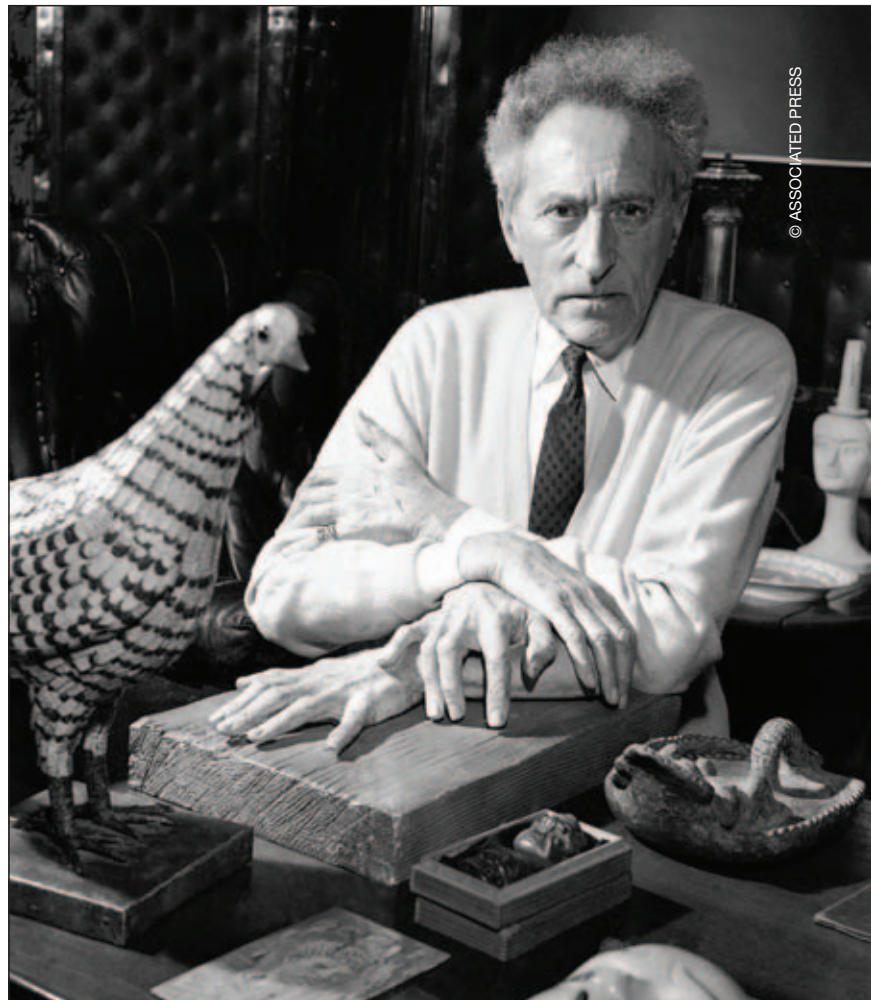
Celebrated in Paris’s bohemian circles as “The Frivolous Prince,” Cocteau secured a spot at the epicenter of French culture, collaborating with celebrities of the era like Pablo Picasso, Marcel Proust and Edith Piaf. Looking to advance his career, he

arranged a meeting with Russian impresario Sergei Diaghilev, which resulted in their collaboration on the ballet “Parade.” He also wrote librettos, plays, novels, poems, and film scripts, and dabbled in art and illustration.

In his personal life, Cocteau mostly sought the companionship of men, although he did sporadically pursue women, including Princess Natalie Paley, a member of the Romanov family. His most notable relationship was with fellow poet Raymond Radiguet. Although Cocteau denied that the relationship was romantic, he developed an opium addiction when Radiguet died suddenly.

Cocteau was a key player in France’s emerging avant-garde movement. He found a new muse and lover in actor Jean Marais, who he cast in films such as “Beauty and the Beast” and “Orpheus.” Their 20-year relationship continued until Cocteau’s death.

Cocteau was a multidisciplinary artist with ceaseless creativity. By blurring the line between the reality of his life and the fiction of his work, his existence itself became a work of art.



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