

Surrealist master's works wind up in Irvine

by Hunter Drohojowska

Would Jean Cocteau approve? The surrealist poet, dramatist, artist and filmmaker, the man who loved to *epater le bourgeoisie*, has wound up with the bulk of his life's work housed in Irvine, at a foundation funded by the profits from the sale of Gucci watches.

It must be true: The more things change, the more they become the same.

Cocteau himself maintained that

the avant-garde was always out of date, and embraced such popular arts as the circus, vaudeville and graphics over the so-called fine arts.

So Cocteau probably would approve, amused by the residents of conservative Orange County coming in tour groups to be shocked by his drawings of lovers touching tongues.

This, said to be the largest private collection of Cocteau's drawings, paintings, prints and book illustrations, is lodged in a white modern building labeled Sev-

erin Montres Ltd., corporate headquarters for Severin Wunderman.

Wunderman, 45, was born in France, but has lived in the U.S. for 20 years. His marketing firm sells Gucci and Fila watches and other products, and did \$50 million in 1985 sales.

Wunderman, a slim, impeccably dressed gentleman wearing one of the Gucci watches in gold, is a multimillionaire. He recently bought the Charlie Chaplin estate — three acres of beachfront property called "Camel Point" — in Laguna Beach. Once he wanted to be an artist. Today, he designs the watches he markets.

While still a student at the Sorbonne in Paris, Wunderman

offered on Tuesdays and Thursdays by appointment at (714) 472-0900.

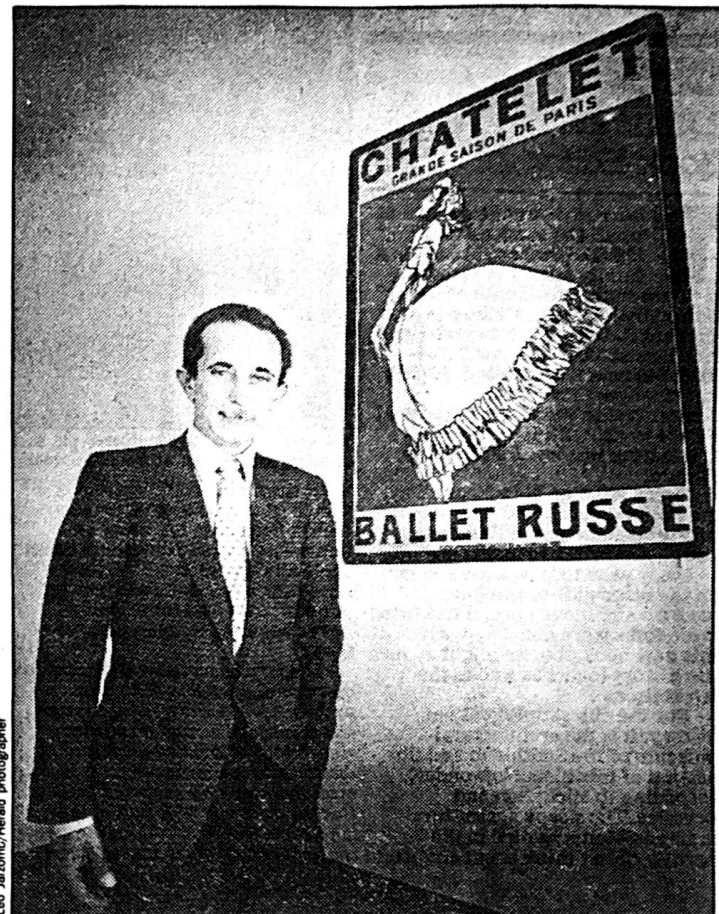
The art is arranged by subject rather than chronologically. The first section is dedicated to his self-portraits, from the dramatic, linear profiles to the colorful, complex compositions. They range from 1913 to the artist's death in 1963, at the age of 72.

"You can see why they called him 'the bird,'" says Clark, indicating one drawing of Cocteau's own long thin hand, and another of his beakish profile.

Another wall is arranged with Cocteau's portraits of his extraordinary friends: Chaplin, Picasso, Apollinaire, Leon Bakst, Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas. The works are

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Leo Jaromir/Herald Photographer



Severin Wunderman's marketing firm sells Gucci and Fila watches, but his passion, ever since his days at the Sorbonne, has been the art of Jean Cocteau.

Cocteau took up smoking opium in 1923 after the death of his lover and protege, Raymond Radiguet. His first seven years of addiction and "cures" produced fascinating drawings. In these, his entire figure is made up of opium pipes, with smoke floating from orifices. He also published a notebook called "Opium," chronicling the drug's effects.

"When his drawings came to this conclusion, he would detoxify himself," Clark says. "He smoked opium all his life. Instead of making him lethargic, he got more creative."

Due to the difficulty of translating his poetry, Cocteau is largely remembered today for his films: "The Blood of the Poet" in 1930, which launched the career of his

lover, Jean Marais; and, 10 years later, "Beauty and the Beast," "The Eagle With Two Heads" and "Orpheus." Film posters from these films and more drawings are included in the galleries.

The Wunderman Foundation is discussing a Cocteau festival for 1987 with UC Irvine. The festival would include the Cocteau films, as well as stagings of plays and ballets, poetry readings and the publication of catalogs documenting not only the foundation's holdings, but the festival itself.

Cocteau, who never shunned publicity, celebrity or honors, would have approved.

Hunter Drohojowska writes regularly about art for the Herald.