

Edmund Dulac:

An Inventory of His Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Dulac, Edmund, 1882-1953
Title:	Edmund Dulac Collection
Dates:	1818, 1889-1948, undated
Extent:	1 box (.42 linear feet)
Abstract:	This collection contains items documenting Dulac's roles as artist, composer, and writer as well as some correspondence, family papers, and school records. Musical compositions include his work for W. B. Yeats's radio broadcast <i>My Own Poetry</i> .
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-01239
Language:	English and French.
Access:	Open for research

Administrative Information

URL:	http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/research/fa/dulac.html
Acquisition:	Purchases, 1970 (R5331)
Processed by:	Stephanie Hays, 2002; Richard Workman, 2003
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Born in Toulouse, France, on 22 October 1882, Edmond Dulac was the only child of Pierre Henri Aristide Dulac and Marie Catherine Pauline Rieu. The boy grew up in a comfortable petit bourgeois home. Educated at the Lycée de Toulouse, Dulac showed an early introversion and talent for drawing. By age sixteen he was able to render professional art nouveau work. After studying law at the University of Toulouse for two years, Dulac enrolled full time at the École des Beaux Arts in 1900. There he roomed with close friend and fellow student Émile Rixens. In 1903 Dulac won a scholarship to the Académie Julien in Paris. His December 1903 marriage to Alice May de Marini, an American thirteen years his senior, quickly dissolved and by 1904 he had left for England to start his artistic career. Enamored of British culture, he changed the spelling of his first name to "Edmund."

Dulac was an immediate success in England. He joined the London Sketch Club soon after his arrival and later St. John's Art Club. His first commission was the illustration of *Jane Eyre*, a quintessentially British project with which he was entrusted at the age of twenty-two. In April 1911 he married Elsa Arnalice Bignardi, a shy, graceful girl of Italian and German descent.

Dulac is best known as an illustrator of gift books and children's books. His favorite medium was watercolor. From 1890 to 1920, British book illustration was preeminent and Dulac's career flourished. He also collaborated with his friends W. B. Yeats and Sir Thomas Beecham on various theater projects. In 1920 he composed music for a production of Yeats's *At the Hawk's Well*. Yeats, Dulac, and Ezra Pound staged Japanese Nō plays, with Dulac designing costumes, sets, and makeup and composing music.

The hardships of World War I were still keenly felt by 1920, a year which signaled the death of the gift book and the start of Dulac's financial insecurity. In the same year *The Outlook* stopped running Dulac's cartoon drawings, which had been his only steady source of income. Though he managed on income from portraits and frequent commissions for *American Weekly* covers and postage stamps, money was always to be a concern. In August 1923 Dulac and Elsa separated, Dulac complaining that she was unable to challenge him intellectually. Close friend Helen de Vere Beauclerk apparently was his equal in this respect, however, and she moved in within the year. She was to be Dulac's companion until his death.

Yeats dedicated *The Winding Stair* to Dulac in 1933. In 1937 Dulac collaborated with Yeats on the BBC radio program, *My Own Poetry*. Yeats selected seven of his own poems, five to be spoken and two to be sung, with Dulac composing music for the songs, accompaniment for the spoken poems, and interludes between. Partly owing to the intervention of the producer in the choice of performers, the performance did not come up to either man's expectations, with Yeats feeling that the singing style and accompaniment were not true to his vision and Dulac feeling that the two sung pieces were the only bright spots in a performance that Yeats had sabotaged in rehearsal. Hostilities flared briefly but were soon smoothed over. Yeats died on 28 January 1939 and was buried in France; when his body was reinterred in his native Ireland after the

war, Dulac designed the memorial for his friend's former resting place in Roquebrune.

By World War II, Dulac had become the leading authority on postage stamp design. When occupied France wanted to unify its colonies against Germany by issuing stamps with the Cross of Lorraine, this project naturally fell to an enthusiastic Dulac. The project was commissioned by Charles de Gaulle, who travelled to Britain to discuss the matter. Dulac's wartime work culminated in the Victory stamp for France, using Léa Rixens, Émile Rixens's widow, as the model for Marianne de Londres. For once he used the French spelling of his name in his signature: "Edmond Dulac."

At the close of his career, Dulac returned to illustrating children's books with the same perfectionism that had characterized the rest of his work. He was in the middle of one such project when he had his third heart attack and died 25 May 1953, at the age of seventy.

Sources:

White, Colin. *Edmund Dulac*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976.

Scope and Contents

The Edmund Dulac Collection consists mainly of items documenting Dulac's roles as artist, composer, and writer, supplemented with small amounts of correspondence, family papers, and school records. The collection is arranged in two series: I. Works, 1899-1948, and II. Personal, 1818, 1889-1926. Much of the material is undated.

Dulac's works include a few artworks, some musical compositions, and a number of articles, lectures, notes, and reviews. Among the small drawings and watercolors (the largest 4-1/4 x 6-3/4 inches) are menu cards, portraits, depictions of animals, and a theater program from 1899. The musical compositions are mainly the work he did for W. B. Yeats's radio broadcast, *My Own Poetry*, in 1937. There are also a few pieces for piano or voice, mostly incomplete, an arrangement for piano of "The Twelve Days of Christmas," a large number of sketches, and jottings of musical themes, not all of them composed by Dulac. The writings include articles, a book review, lectures, and notes, covering such varied topics as art and artists, Japanese Nō theater, philosophy, religion, symbolism, the question of diffusion of culture (a favorite topic), and W. B. Yeats. An index of writings is included in this finding aid.

Among Dulac's personal papers is a small amount of correspondence: two outgoing letters by Dulac (one regarding Hesketh Pearson's biography of George Bernard Shaw, n.d., the other to the editor of the *British Music Bulletin*, 1921) and one incoming letter (from Sibyl Sheringham, 1926). This series also includes a French passport issued to a young man named Bataille in 1818, presumably a relative, and a handmade birthday card from a young Edmund to his father. Also present are Dulac's school records, including identification cards, notebooks containing certificates and exercises, progress

reports, physical reports, and awards. Schools represented are the Lycée de Toulouse (1893-1899), the Grand Gymnase Vallée (1894-1895), and l'École des Beaux Arts (n.d.).

Dulac's manuscripts for the music to Yeats's *At the Hawk's Well* and correspondence between Yeats and Dulac, including letters regarding the 1937 broadcast, can be found in the W. B. Yeats Collection at the Ransom Center, and a small collection of drawings and watercolors is located in the Art Collection.

Index Terms

People

Sheringham, Sibyl.

Subjects

Sheringham, Sibyl.

Commercial art.

Culture diffusion.

Illustration of books.

Nō plays.

Piano music.

Document Types

Drawings.

Watercolors.

Scores.

Series I. Works, 1899-1948, n.d.

Art, 1899, 1903, n.d.

Box 1 Folder 1

Aimée De Burgh (actress), pencil, n.d.

"The Donkey," watercolor, 1903

Menu card, ink and watercolor, n.d. (2 items)

"The Owl," watercolor, 1903

Priest, ink, n.d.

Theatre program, printed, 1899

Thistle, watercolor, n.d.

Women and child in park, watercolor, n.d.

Music manuscripts, 1905, 1937, n.d.

Box 1 Folder 2

Au Trot en Sol Maj (incomplete), 1905

Étude en Sol Mineur, 1905

Hitotsu Toya, n.d.

My Own Poetry broadcast (poems by Yeats), 1937

Production notes

Complete score and sketches

"Curse of Cromwell"

"He and She"

"Mad as the Mist and Snow"

"Running to Paradise"

Round about the Fire, n.d.

"The Three Bushes" (poem by Yeats), n.d.

Vocale Seulement (includes "The Twelve Days of Christmas" and another untitled piece), n.d.

Untitled, fragments, n.d.

Writings, 1924, 1948, n.d.

A-M

Box 1 Folder 3

Methods of Expression in Art

Folder 4

N-Z, unidentified

Folder 5

Series II. Personal, 1818, 1889-1926, n.d.

Correspondence, 1921, 1926, n.d.

Box 1 Folder 6

Family papers, 1818, n.d.

Folder 7

School records

1889-1903

Box 1 Folder 8

1890, 1903, n.d.

Folder 9

Miscellaneous, clippings, n.d.

Folder 10

Index of Writings

- Art and Industry (review of Herbert Read's *Art in Industry*)--1.3
- Commercial Art--1.3
- Difference between Spirit and Matter--1.3
- Diffusions, Infusions, & Illusions--1.3
- Foreword (brochure on Maurice Lambert)--1.3
- Instability in Artists--1.3
- Lecture on art and magic, 1924--1.3
- Methods of Expression in Art (with illustrations)--1.4
- Notes on Diffusion--1.5
- Notes on Existence--1.5
- Notes on Japanese Noh Theatre--1.5
- On Diffusion for George's Benefit--1.5
- On Religion--1.5
- On Symbolism Good and Bad--1.5
- Personality and Art--1.5
- Story about cultural diffusion (set in Egypt)--1.5
- Symbolism--1.5
- Why I Shall Not Mind Old Age--1.5
- Yeats as I Knew Him, 1948--1.5