



Jean Le Mée

June 28, 2020

Jean Le Mée will be remembered as a beloved teacher with far-ranging knowledge and a desire, always, to share the fruits of all his studies with his students and colleagues. His interests ranged from Engineering Research, Education and Design, to Sacred Architecture and Geometry, to Sanskrit and the study of Grammar. He was Emeritus Professor of Engineering at the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in New York City and was retired from his work as Cooper Union's Chair of the Department of Mechanical Engineering and Director of Curriculum Development and Innovation. In retirement he spent time in continued research and occasional lecturing.

Jean's studies began in France at the Ecole Nationale de la Marine Marchande. He graduated and was commissioned in the French navy as Enseigne de Vaisseau de Première Classe. He continued his education in the United States and received the degrees of Master of Science and Doctor of Philosophy at Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh, PA.

During his career at the Cooper Union Jean served as Project Director of the SHAPE Project (Synthesis of a Holistic Approach to Professional Education), a twenty-month study of a new approach to the education of engineers, as Project Coordinator of "Professional Competence Development in the Undergraduate Engineering Curriculum," a three-year project supported by the NSF, and as Governing Board Member and Institutional Activities Leader of the ten-year project of the NSF-the Gateway Engineering Education Coalition.

In 1993 Jean was invited by the State Technical University of Leningrad to deliver a series of lectures on Engineering Education in the United States and Europe.

Jean was Curator in 1991 of "A Better Mousetrap-Patents and the Process of Invention" an exhibition presented at the Cooper Union as a 200th birthday tribute to its founder, the inventor, Peter Cooper. This exhibition was sponsored by the General Motors Corporation and the American Heritage of Invention and Technology Magazine. In 1997 he curated another exhibition, "On the Motive Power of Fire," held at the Electrokinetics Gallery in

New York and sponsored by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers and French Embassy in Washington, DC to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Sadi Carnot, the founder of thermodynamics and the 300th of Thomas Newcomen's experiments that led to the operation of the first industrial steam engine. Jean was also Co-Organizer of "Art and Mathematics 2000," an exhibition at the Cooper Union in collaboration with the International Society of Art, Mathematics and Architecture (ISAMA) and Organizer of "Fictional Engineering," an exhibition of drawings and sculptures by Stephen Talasnik at the Brooks Design Center at the Cooper Union in 2001.

Jean first studied Sanskrit at Columbia University. Subsequently he was a Visiting Senior Fellow (1978-79) at the South-East Asia Regional Studies Center of the University of Pennsylvania; a Fellow (1983-84) of the American Institute of Indian Studies in the Sanskrit Department of the University of Delhi; and a Faculty Fellow (1989-90) in the Institute for the Humanities of New York University. In 1994 he was invited to participate in the Academy of Consciousness at Princeton University (Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research Laboratory-PEAR).

Jean's interest in Sanskrit resulted in his translation into English of twelve Hymns from the Rig-Veda, a volume first published by Alfred A. Knopf in 1975 that included original photographs by Ingbert Grüttner. In 2005 this book was transformed into a quadrilingual edition with a French translation by Jean himself, a German translation by Volker Stutzer, and a Spanish translation by Gerardo del Cerro. It is available as a paperback with pictures by Indian artist Prem Raval through the Jain Publishing Company.

In 1999 Jean, in collaboration with Professor M. Báez and students at the Cooper Union, was invited to participate in the New York Time Magazine's Time Capsule Competition. Their entry, entitled "The Millennium Sphere or Ariadne's Clew," was a finalist and the project exhibited at the Museum of Natural History in New York City. A model of the "Millennium Sphere" was subsequently displayed in the nave of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York.

In retirement Jean's principal research centered on the religious architecture of medieval Europe. At the time of his passing, he was preparing a definitive text on the various geometries that unite in the Cathedral of Chartres. Greatly inspired in his work and personal life by the tradition of Christian monasticism and, in particular, the Rule of St. Benedict, in recent years he and his wife became Benedictine oblates associated with Transfiguration Monastery in Windsor, NY.

Jean is survived by his wife, Katharine Wilbur Le Mée, his daughter, Hannah Le Mée

O'Connor, and his son-in-law, Thomas J. O'Connor, all residing in New Jersey. His family members living in France include Jean's nephews Jean-Claude Le Mée, of Fougères, Serge

Le Mée of Plérin, and Jacques Le Mée of Sainte Affrique, their wives and children.

Memorial services are planned, to take place as soon as the difficult situation caused by the covid virus has been corrected enough to allow public assembly. Details will be given on this website as soon as they are available. In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be offered to Transfiguration Monastery, 701 NY Route 79, Windsor, NY 13865.

Jean and Katharine's web site: lemeestudies.com

Comments



“ It was Jean, in his role as Director of Curriculum Development and Innovation, who first approached me to join the Cooper family.

Jean was an amazingly brilliant man, with a very creative mind. His kindness and empathy were tempered with his strong dedication to the Cooper Union vision and its students. After his retirement we would meet at various Cooper events. I certainly benefited from his mentoring, insights, and support.

I will always remember Jean for his compassion, and his firm belief in humanity. I believe that he saw all of the disciplines as part of the same beautiful song. Our lives were enriched and ennobled by his presence.

Robert Dell

Robert Dell - July 07 at 01:59 AM



“ The Artisan's Prayer

Teach me, O Lord, to make good use of the time which you give me for work and to spend it well without wasting any of it. Teach me to benefit from past mistakes, without being prey to a gnawing conscience. Teach me to visualize the design without anxiety; to picture the work without being distressed if it takes shape differently. Teach me to unite haste and slowness, serenity and fervor, zeal and peace.

Help me at the outset of the work, there where I am the most weak. Help me in the heart of the task to hold taut the thread of attention. And above all, may you, yourself, make good the deficiencies of my work; Lord, let there be in all the work of my hands, some of your grace to speak to others and some of my imperfections to speak to myself. Keep me in the hope of perfection, without which I should lose heart. Keep it beyond my power to achieve perfection, without which I should fall victim to pride.

Purify my looking; for when I work badly, it is not certain that it is bad; and when I work well, it is not certain that it is good. Lord, let me never forget that all knowledge is vain save when there is work. And that all work is empty, save when there is love. And that all love is barren which does not bind me to myself, and to others and to you.

Lord, teach me to pray with my hands, my arms and all my strength. Remind me that the work of my hands belongs to you and that it behooves me to surrender it to you when parting with it. That if I work for a desire for gain, I shall decay in the autumn like an ungathered fruit. That if I work to please others, I shall fade in the evening like the flower of the grass. But if I work for the love of the good, I shall remain in the good. And the time to work well, and to your glory is now. Amen.

This prayer summarizes what Jean was about. It comes from Lanza del Vasto's Community of the Ark in France. Toinette Lippe gave it to us years ago and, to this

day, the French version is pinned on the wall of Jean's study. Katharine

Katharine Le Mee - July 05 at 12:05 PM