



# EXPOSITION

# CORTO MALTESE

UNE VIE  
ROMANESQUE

PRESS PACK



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Bibliothèque publique d'information /  
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#### Visuels

[www.bpi.fr/presse-cortomaltese](http://www.bpi.fr/presse-cortomaltese)  
(mot de passe sur demande)

- [www.bpi.fr](http://www.bpi.fr)
- [pro.bpi.fr](http://pro.bpi.fr) - site pro
- [balises.bpi.fr](http://balises.bpi.fr) - webmagazine



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# Corto Maltese

## Une vie romanesque

### EXPOSITION

Part of the programm « La BD à tous les étages »

29 mai - 4 novembre 2024

Bibliothèque publique d'information • Level 2

The Bibliothèque publique d'information (Bpi) presents a new exhibition starting this spring, dedicated to Italian author Hugo Pratt: **Corto Maltese, une vie romanesque**. The exhibition is part of the program “[La BD à tous les étages](#)” at the Centre Pompidou.

Created by Hugo Pratt in 1967, **Corto Maltese** became one of the most iconic characters in European comics. A makeshift gentleman, anarchist and romantic adventurer, the solitary sailor travels the world, and experiences the political and historical upheavals of the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The story of his peregrinations, rich in intrigue, twists and turns, is also peppered with literary references and quotations. They add a sensitive dimension to his odyssey, and create a singular poetics, where fiction is nourished and disturbed by “real-life effects” that contribute to the hero’s ambiguity.

Based on a selection of original documents (photographs, notes, storyboard, sketches, studies, plates and watercolors), the Bpi exhibition particularly explores this “literary” dimension of the series’ albums.

It therefore looks at the character’s genesis: his appearance in the landscape of comics, the “imaginary” biography of Corto Maltese defining a hero who exists between fact and fiction, as well as his complex relationship with the major events of his lifetime – while increasingly involved in them, he keeps them at a distance through irony and false indifference. It also highlights his interactions with other characters, both female and male, who allow him to reveal and assert his personality through contact with equally endearing figures, such as Pandora, Gold Mouth, Shanghai Lil, Steiner or the warrior Cush.

To build his character and place him in line with a literary tradition, Hugo Pratt draws some of his inspiration from the great tales that have shaped our literary history: the Celtic legends and their Shakespearean counterparts, the poetry of Coleridge and Rimbaud, Stevenson’s adventure novels.

Constantly present in the plot, this inspiration is also found in many of the series’ reading scenes: the image of Corto with a book in his hand is recurrent, and his readings often mingle with his dreams, giving the stories a strong dreamlike texture. Corto Maltese encounters illustrious characters on his journeys: writers such as Jack London, Hermann Hesse, Gabriele D’Annunzio, as well as historical figures who add an unsettling veracity to the stories and give the fictional framework a unique space-time dimension, completely original compared with the traditional codes of comic books.

At the junction and in the background of these threads, the imposing tutelary figure of Hugo Pratt, a great reader and lover of literature, is omnipresent.

### Information and programm

[www.bpi.fr/expo-cortomaltese](http://www.bpi.fr/expo-cortomaltese)

[www.bpi.fr/programmation-cortomaltese](http://www.bpi.fr/programmation-cortomaltese)

### Visuals for the press

[www.bpi.fr/presse-cortomaltese](http://www.bpi.fr/presse-cortomaltese)

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### Access to the Library

Via place Georges-Pompidou  
75004 Paris

### Free entrance

Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays  
12-10 PM

Saturdays, Sundays and Public holidays

10AM-10PM

Closed on Tuesdays

## Main axes of the exhibition

In 1967, artist Hugo Pratt, born in 1927 in Rimini (Italy), is 40 when he creates the character of Corto Maltese, after an eventful and cosmopolitan life of international travels, adventures and commitments. In a kind of palimpsest of his own existence, he takes is “drawn double” on a journey through the places, readings and cinematic worlds that shaped him, and relives the encounters that left a lasting impression on him. Playing with de mirror effect, the *Corto Maltese* series demonstrates Hugo Pratt’s storytelling and drawing talents, as well as his sense of black and white contrast and his watercoloring mastery, thus contributing to the development of the graphic novel.

First appearing in the youth press, then in (*À suivre*) magazine, Corto Maltese quickly became one of the most iconic characters in comics. A makeshift gentleman, anarchist and romantic sailor, the big-hearted adventurer and his lanky, nonchalant figure traverses the first half of the twentieth-century history, and continents in the throes of upheaval, wars and territorial imbalances. His love of travel takes him to many countries, and his thirty-odd tales have made him a timeless hero, all the while embodying the essential values of freedom and curiosity, without ever departing from his sense of irony.

Corto Maltese’s journey unfolds in a world populated by literary and historical references, and punctuated by encounters with personalities who left their mark on the history of the 20th century, which casts a doubt on the very identity of the character. Did he only lead a life of paper, or did he really exist? Where does the boundary between the real and the imagination lie?

### Part 1: BUILDING UP THE CHARACTER

#### • Birth of a character

The character of Corto Maltese first appeared in 1967, in the pages of Italian magazine *Sgt. Kirk*, in a story entitled *Una ballata del mare salato* (*The Ballad of the Salty Sea*). At the time, he is just one of many protagonists, whose silhouette appears drifting on the maritime horizon, his outspread arms tied to a cross made of two planks. Set in the Pacific Ocean between 1913 and 1915, the story takes place at the outbreak of the First World War, and features the island-hopping wanderings of Rasputin, Corto Maltese, and cousins Pandora and Cain Groovesnore. The literary and historical references that would set Corto Maltese’s adventures apart were already at work in this first occurrence. Hugo Pratt was then asked to take part in the French children’s magazine *Pif Gadget*, and chose to reuse this secondary character to make him, from 1970 to 1973, the main hero of a series of short stories that would make him famous. These stories were then published in episodes in several French and Belgian newspapers, before being collected and published by Casterman from 1975 onwards. The adventures of Corto Maltese, published in the new comics magazine (*À suivre*), were an immediate success, acclaimed for the quality of their scripts and dialogue. A character was born.

#### • A hero of ambiguous charac

Corto Maltese has all the facets of a comic-book hero. Confronted with events and intrigues he is drawn into, he proves courageous, viscerally independent, and dominates the narrative, including his interactions with the other characters. His often ambiguous attitude allows him to display both deep commitment and great detachment in the face of history’s convulsions and betrayals. At times, his actions also resemble those of an anti-hero, with a troubled, opaque personality. Part of the character’s richness lies in this ambivalence, since he doesn’t hesitate to assert his personal interests, testifying to his individualism, and sometimes even a certain cynicism in the face of events. His artful use of irony and evasion accentuates this duality.

In the course of his adventures, he reveals snippets of his past in a laconic and deeply romantic way, distilling clues to hidden parts of his existence. But Hugo Pratt also knows how to play with ellipsis and silence, accentuating the enigmatic character of the protagonist. It is up to the reader to contribute to the building up of the story, by developing hypotheses, cross-referencing the various albums and using his or her own subjectivity.

In the adventures of Corto Maltese, the wind of freedom always blows.



## Key axes of the exhibition

### Part 2 : A TALE OF LITERARY REFERENCES



- Adventure novel and sea novel

If Corto Maltese's life is a romance, it is also because it comes within the scope of the adventure novel narrative tradition, and in particular of one of its distinctive genres, the sea novel. The opening of *The Ballad of the Salty Sea* is emblematic: the Pacific Ocean is the first narrator of Corto's adventures, which subsequently unfold on many other seas, in primeval forests, on the Siberian plain and the steppes of Central Asia, as well as in the labyrinthine alleys of Venice. Corto traverses all these spaces with a mission to accomplish, in search of hidden treasures, a lost civilization, or simply another jaunt.

Hugo Pratt's readings are an obvious source for his stories: Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, Joseph Conrad's *The Shadow Line*, Herman Melville's novels, of course, but also B. Traven's *The Death Ship*, with its metaphysical wanderings, and the romantic marine world of *Blue Lagoon*, by Henry de Vere Stacpoole. Corto Maltese's exploits are imbued with all these references, in constant dialogue with iconic texts of the classical literature. Hugo Pratt has thus established himself as a master of "drawn literature", as he liked to call the French "bande dessinée".

- Poetic, oneiric and legendary stories

Initiated into the Kabbalah in his youth, and very open to a magical explanation of the world, Corto the adventurer is also a dreamer: dreams often are the starting point for his travels. He also dreams with his eyes open, dialogues with the moon in *Tango*, and debates philosophy with fish from the very first pages of *Mū, the Lost Continent*, thus evolving in two parallel universes, one historical and the other dreamlike. Mythological and legendary characters populate this chimerical universe: Merlin, Morgan le Fay, Puck, Oberon... All these references contribute to the constant intertextuality in Corto Maltese's adventures, whether he goes in search of a lost manuscript by Lord Byron, quotes a poem by Persian poet Omar Khayyam, or disguises Rasputin as a djinn from *The Thousand and One Nights*.

Hugo Pratt's drawing, with its sinuous evolution, is perfectly in tune with his poetic, mythical and dreamlike tales: Indian ink resolutely marks shapes and moods, but, by resorting to voids, it leaves room for other narrative possibilities. Abstract signs lead us through a maze of mirrors, to unknown worlds and ancient times.



### Part 3 : CORTO MALTESE, BETWEEN FACT AND FICTION

- One of many characters

For the *Corto Maltese* series, Hugo Pratt created hundreds of characters who made up an extremely diverse human palette. These figures were often born of real-life encounters, occurring in the course of a lifetime spent in regions and environments that constantly enriched the author's imagination.

Pandora and Cain Groovesnore, Rasputin, the « Monk », Cush, Cranio, Jeremiah Steiner, Tarao, Tristan Bantam, Soledad Lokäarth, Shanghai Li, Gold Mouth, Morgana, Moira Banshee O'Danann, Rowena, Hipazia, Esmeralda, Mou Lou Sung, Maria Semenova... these names form a singular poetics and geography, which Corto must decipher and tame. In the course of the various stories, he encounters independence fighters, revolutionaries, magicians, aristocrats and villains, heirs and officers, in a whirlwind of friendship, seduction, fierce antagonism and betrayal.

Far from being bland characters, they all are driven by their own quest, and cross paths with the sometimes powerless Corto Maltese, sometimes recurrently throughout the series. Whether they confront him, accompany him or fall in love with him, they force him to reveal himself and reveal part of his secret, thus contributing to the narrative dynamic, unity, and evolution of the storyline. Female figures are central to many adventures, but rarely do they penetrate the heart of a hero who has undoubtedly once been in love. Some characters are inspired by real-life personalities: fiction and reality mingle, blurring the narrative line.

## Key axes of the exhibition



- Writers drawn and evoked

Several writers also appear in the world of Corto Maltese: Jack London is a war correspondent sent to Manchuria during the Russo-Japanese conflict in *The Early Years*; Gabriele D'Annunzio appears in Venice, as the city is in the grip of the nascent Fascism he supported, and Hermann Hesse in Switzerland, at the Villa Camuzzi... They all play a role in the action that was actually theirs at a given moment in history.

Corto Maltese is in constant contact with writers, even when he doesn't meet them in person. In Ethiopia or Siberia, the poetry of Arthur Rimbaud, beautifully brought to life by Hugo Pratt, accompanies his thoughts. Major literary texts also visit his dreams: the leopard men quote Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*.

Writers from all over the world, who played a founding role in Hugo Pratt's literary culture, inhabit the adventures of his hero: Americans John Dos Passos and Ernest Hemingway, Argentinians Jorge Luis Borges and Leopoldo Lugones, Irish authors like William Butler Yeats, and British like Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Rudyard Kipling, or Frederick Rolfe, known as Baron Corvo, whose letters are the starting point of several plots.

- A character set in History

In the course of his adventures, Corto Maltese becomes the vector and conduit for whole swathes of twentieth-century history. He witnesses the outbreak of the First World War from the Pacific Islands, the clash of colonial empires and the struggle for independence in East Africa, epitomized by the rebellious spirit of Cush, close to that of the *cangaçeiros* of the Brazilian Sertão and the Irish independence movement. In *Corto Maltese : in Siberia*, he takes us on a journey from Venice to the Siberian tundra and China, through the civil war born of the 1917 revolution.

These precise references, which lend consistency and credibility to the story, are reinforced by the presence of numerous historical figures: Corto Maltese calls Stalin on the phone, meets Enver Pacha, the Turkish general responsible for the Armenian genocide, witnesses the prowess of Manfred von Richthofen, the ace of German aviation during the 1914-18 war, and crosses paths with several warlords in Siberia. This interplay of references, typical of Hugo Pratt's work, confuses and blurs the reader's bearings: « *I tell the truth as if it were a lie. Unlike many others who tell lies and try to pass them off as true. In this way, the reading becomes double, triple, and the reader finds that some of the things I've said were true, so he's seized with a great desire to go and find them* ».



## EPILOGUE

When he is not plying the South Seas, or losing himself in the underwater depths in search of the lost kingdom of Mū, Corto Maltese can sometimes be spotted reading. In *The Ballad of the Salty Sea*, we see him disserting on existence, book in hand. In *Celtic Tales*, he is fascinated by English literature and Celtic myths. And reading Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* takes him into a world of fantasy and esotericism in *The Secret Rose*. Books are a means of establishing transitions between reality and fiction, and for Hugo Pratt, a way of paying tribute to the authors who nurtured his imagination and literary culture.

Hugo Pratt was an avid reader. In his home in Granvaux, Switzerland, where he lived out his final years, he surrounded himself with over 17,000 books, assembled in an encyclopedic, labyrinthine library that testified to his taste for literature, but also for travel, geography and history, and to his scrupulous documentation work for his albums. Every room, every corrido, every nook and cranny was filled with books. Not precious, rare or first-edition volumes, but the texts that would offer him a special way into the stories he wanted to tell.



## The imaginary biography of Corto Maltese

**July, 10, 1887**

Corto Maltese is born in Malta, to a British sailor father and a Gypsy mother from Gibraltar.

**1904 - 1905**

Witness to the Russo-Japanese war in Manchuria (*The Early Years*), he embarks for Africa with Rasputin, in search of King Solomon's gold mines (*Under the Midnight Sun*).

**1910 - 1913**

An officer on board the *Bostonian* between Boston and Liverpool, he then travels Brazil, India and China.

**1911**

He bats around in Africa, from Alexandria, in Egypt, to the equatorial jungles around Lake Victoria, and the Zanzibar archipelago, in search of a mysterious object brought back from the Crusades (*Equatoria*).

**1913 - 1915**

Corto Maltese roams the Pacific Ocean in the service of the "Monk", around the hidden island of Escondida (*The Ballad of the Salty Sea*).

**1915**

On request from Jack London, he travels Alaska and the Canadian Far North. He has a tumultuous encounter with a Japanese organized crime syndicate and Irish revolutionaries (*Under the Midnight Sun*).

**1917 - 1918**

Back to Europe. In Venice, to unearth a map to the hidden gold of the Incas; in Dublin, to supply weapons to the Republicans; in Stonehenge, to help Merlin and Morgan le Fay; in Somme and on the French beaches of the North Sea, devastated by World War I (*Celtic Tales*).

**1918**

He faces ancient shamans, leopard men, and peoples fighting against colonization in Yemen and East Africa (*The Ethiopian*).

**1918 - 1920**

He embarks on a journey across Asia, in the service of a Chinese secret society, to track down a train carrying the gold of the Russian counter-revolution (*Corto Maltese : in Siberia*).

**1921**

He returns to Venice, on the trail of "Solomon's clavicle", an emerald that opens doors to the occult (*Fable of Venice*).

**1921 - 1922**

Corto Maltese travels in Asia, along the ancient Silk Route, in search of Alexander the Great's treasure... and of Rasputin, whom he must set free (*The Golden House of Samarkand*).

**1923**

After 15 years, he returns to Argentina, and confronts mafiosi in Buenos Aires to seek justice for the murder of his friend Louise Brokshowyc (*Tango*).

**1924**

He retires in Switzerland, the land of mysteries, to discover the source of eternal life: the Holy Grail (*The Secret Rose*).

**1925**

He sails the Caribbean in search of a lost continent (*Mū, the Lost Continent*).

**1926 - 1936**

We lose track of him, but in January 1929 he is in Harar, in Ethiopia, where he meets Henry de Monfreid.

**1936**

Corto joins the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War. Hugo Pratt denies his death, but remains vague about his fate and future.



## Related program: tours and mediations

### Information & reservation

[visites@bpi.fr](mailto:visites@bpi.fr)

- **Open-to-all guided tours**

Without reservation • 5.00-5.30PM

Every day (except Tuesdays, week-ends and public holidays)

By reservation • 2.30-3.15PM

Thursday, June 20 | Wednesday, July 3 | Thursday, August 22 | Wednesday, September 4 | Thursday, September 19 | Wednesday, October 2 | Thursday, October 17

- **Guided tours in English**



By reservation • 6.00-6.15PM

Fridays, June 21 | July 19 | August 23 | September 20 | October 18

- **Guided tours in Spanish**



By reservation • 6.00-6.15PM

Mondays, June 10 | July 8 | August 12 | September 9 | October 14

- **Workshops**

By reservation

### Information & reservation

[lecture-handicap@bpi.fr](mailto:lecture-handicap@bpi.fr)

- **Tours adapted for people using the French sign language** 🙋🙋

Sunday, June 23 • 3PM

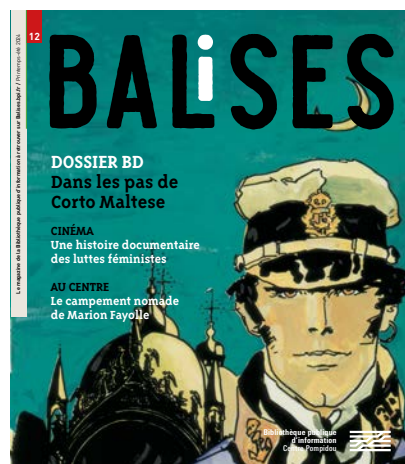
Wednesday, July 10

Wednesday, September 25 • 6PM

Wednesday, October 16 • 6PM

- A video tour of the exhibition commented by the curators will be available.

- Discover the new issue of *Balises*, the Bpi magazine, dedicated to Corto Maltese in the spaces of the Centre Pompidou and the Bpi, and online: [balises.bpi.fr/corto-maltese](http://balises.bpi.fr/corto-maltese)



## Related program: conferences

### • Les « lundis Corto »

#### Conferences on Hugo Pratt's work

7PM • Centre Pompidou • Petite salle • Admission free, subject to availability

#### Monday June 3 | Hugo Pratt, forbidden seas and barbarian coasts

Meeting with Michel Pierre, historian and author of numerous books on Hugo Pratt

#### Monday June 10 | In search of Hugo Pratt

Carte blanche to Vincent Petit, editor of Hugo Pratt at Casterman, around the INA audiovisual archives on Corto Maltese (as part of the Lundis de l'INA-Bpi cycle).

#### Monday June 17 | Adventures in one go

Wide-ranging interview with Thierry Thomas, documentary maker and laureate of the 2020 Goncourt for best biography with his book *Hugo Pratt, trait pour trait*. He will talk about his friendship with Corto Maltese's "father".

#### Monday October 14 | Corto Maltese and fashion

The muse of a perfume by a leading brand, Corto Maltese is one of the few comic-book characters to have been the subject of an advertising campaign for the luxury goods industry. The glamorous sailor and his recognizable silhouette still is a source of inspiration for fashion designers today.

Jeu  
de la BD

### • The Comics Thursdays

"Les jeudis de la BD", organized by the New Generation department, put young creators at the heart of the program. These regular gatherings, hosted by specialist journalist and collection director Sonia Déchamps, are an opportunity for young comic book authors (who published no more than three albums) to discuss their album, their work, and then share their experience with the public during a "carte-blanche" creative workshop.

7PM • Centre Pompidou • Forum • Level -1

#### Thursday June 30 | Jean Cremers

*Le grand large* (Glénat)



#### Thursday June 6 | Maëlle Reat

*Comme une grande* (Virages Graphiques)



#### Thursday June 13 | Zéphyr

*La Mécanique des vides* (Futuropolis)



#### Thursday June 20 | Rosalie Stroesser

*Shiki - 4 saisons au Japon* (Virages Graphiques)



#### Thursday June 27 | Nina Six

*La Mousse* (Sarbacane)

#### Thursday July 4 | Diane Ranville and The NEB Studio

## Casterman publication in relation with the exhibition

Corto Maltese is one of the most emblematic characters in comics. The story of his adventures is sprinkled with literary references which add depth to the narrative and build up a singular poetics, imbued with quotations, reader characters and apparitions of writer characters which create an "effect of reality" as much as they enrich the narrative with their own aesthetic universe. Based on a selection of original documents (plates, watercolors, storyboard, sketches, studies, photographs, notes), the exhibition at the Bibliothèque publique d'information (Bpi) particularly explores this literary dimension of the Hugo Pratt's series.

144 pages

170 illustrations + 5 photographs of Pratt

Format: 240 x 320 cm

ISBN: 978-2-203-28436-4

Public selling price: 25 €



## Biographical references

15 juin 1927

Hugo Pratt naît à Rimini (Italie). Il grandit à Venise dans une famille cosmopolite.

1936

Il suit son père, militaire de carrière, en Abyssinie occupée par l'Italie fasciste. Il découvre la littérature anglo-saxonne et les bandes dessinées américaines, notamment de Milton Caniff qui est à l'origine de sa vocation.

1943

Après la mort de son père, Hugo Pratt est rapatrié avec sa mère à Venise par la Croix-Rouge.

1945

La création de l'*Asso di Picche*, une revue de bandes dessinées, signe les débuts de sa carrière de dessinateur.

1950

Départ en Argentine où il publie plusieurs récits dans de nombreuses revues de bandes dessinées (notamment *Salgari*, *Frontera*, *Hora Cero*). Il découvre des auteurs latino-américains : Octavio Paz, Leopoldo Lugones, Jorge Luis Borges et Roberto Arlt.

1953

Il dessine le personnage de Sgt Kirk, d'après un scénario d'Hector Oesterheld pour l'hebdomadaire *Misterix*.

1962

La crise économique en Argentine l'oblige à retourner en Italie.

1967

Après la création du mensuel *Sgt Kirk* par Florenzo Ivaldi, Hugo Pratt y publie *La Ballade de la mer salée*, où apparaît pour la première fois le personnage de Corto Maltese.

1969

Hugo Pratt commence à réaliser une série avec Corto Maltese comme héros principal pour le magazine *Pif Gadget* : une vingtaine d'épisodes seront publiés jusqu'en 1973. Il s'installe à Paris mais il continue à voyager à travers le monde.

1975

Les éditions Casterman éditent *La Ballade de la mer salée* présentée comme l'œuvre majeure d'un romancier en images. L'année suivante, Hugo Pratt reçoit le Grand Prix du festival international de la bande dessinée d'Angoulême. Il inspire nombre de nouveaux créateurs et séduit un public adulte avec les revues (*À Suivre*), lancée en 1978, puis *Corto* en 1985.

1976 - 1980

En parallèle des deux nouveaux albums *Corto Maltese : En Sibérie* et *Fable de Venise*, Hugo Pratt réalise une série intitulée *Un homme, une aventure*. Les premières pages de *La Maison dorée de Samarkand* paraissent dans le magazine italien *Linus*.

1980

Hugo Pratt devient lui-même un personnage de fiction pour le romancier Alberto Ongaro et le dessinateur Milo Manara qui en font le héros de *HP et Giuseppe Bergman*.

1981

Le quotidien français *Le Matin de Paris* publie *Corto Maltese, La Jeunesse*.

1983

Il devient scénariste pour Milo Manara qui dessine *Un été indien* puis *El Gaucho* (1991).

1984

Hugo Pratt s'installe en Suisse, à Grandvaux près de Lausanne. Il publie *Jesuit Joe* et *Cato Zoulou*.

1985

Après un retour à Buenos Aires et un voyage en Patagonie, il publie *Tango*. De plus en plus aquarelliste, Hugo Pratt illustre aussi des poèmes de Rudyard Kipling, des sonnets érotiques de Giorgio Baffo et les *Lettres d'Afrique* d'Arthur Rimbaud.

1987

Nouvelle aventure de Corto Maltese, *Les Helvétiques*, en hommage à la Suisse des rêves et des légendes.

1988

Hugo Pratt se rend sur l'Île de Pâques, au Guatemala, au Mexique. Publication de *Mû, la cité perdue*, ultime aventure de Corto Maltese. Le personnage sera ensuite repris par Juan Diaz Canales et Ruben Pellejero (*Sous le Soleil de Minuit*, 2015 ; *Equatoria*, 2017 ; *Le jour de Tarowean*, 2019 ; *Nocturnes berlinois*, 2022), et par Martin Quenehen et Bastien Vivès (*Océan noir*, 2021 ; *La Reine de Babylone*, 2023).

1992

Retour sur l'Île de Pâques suivi d'un grand périple dans le Pacifique. De ce voyage naît *J'avais un rendez-vous* (Vertige Graphic, 1995) illustré d'aquarelles. En novembre, publication de *Brise de mer*, cinquième et ultime épisode de la série *Les Scorpions du désert* créée en 1969.

1993

L'aviation militaire italienne commande, pour célébrer le soixante-dixième anniversaire de sa création, une bande dessinée qui devient *Dans un ciel lointain*, récit mélancolique opposant pilotes italiens et britanniques lors de la guerre d'Éthiopie et souvenirs de l'adolescence d'Hugo Pratt.

1994

Publication de *Saint-Exupéry, le dernier vol* (Casterman, 1995). Avec sa collaboratrice Patrizia Zanotti, Hugo Pratt fonde en Italie la maison d'édition Lizard qui édite toute son œuvre.

1995

En juin, Hugo Pratt termine *Morgan*, son dernier récit. Il meurt le 20 août, et est inhumé dans le cimetière de Grandvaux en Suisse.

## Bibliographical references

### BANDES DESSINÉES

- Corto Maltese* - Casterman, publication de 12 albums entre 1970 et 1992  
*Sgt. Kirk* - Sagéditions, publication de 7 albums entre 1975 et 1978  
*Sven, L'Homme des Caraïbes*, Éditions du Kangourou, 1976  
*Fort Wheeling*, Casterman, 1976,  
*Fort Wheeling, 2e époque*, Les Humanoïdes Associés, juin 1981  
*Les Scorpions du désert*, Casterman, publication de 4 albums entre 1977 et 1994  
*Capitaine Cormorant*, Publicness, 1977  
*La Macumba du gringo*, Dargaud, 1978  
*Ann de la jungle*, Casterman, 1978  
*À l'ouest de l'Eden*, Dargaud, 1979  
*Ernie Pike, Chroniques de guerre* - Glénat, publication de 3 albums entre 1979 et 1981  
*Junglemen*, Glénat, 1979 (scénario : Alberto Ongaro - Dessin : Dino Battaglia, Hugo Pratt)  
*L'Île au trésor*, Les Humanoïdes Associés, 1980 (d'après Robert Louis Stevenson)  
*Les Jouets du général*, Les Humanoïdes Associés, 1980 (scénario : Alberto Ongaro)  
*Jésuite Joe*, Dargaud, 1980  
*Billy James*, Les Humanoïdes Associés, 1980  
*Fanfulla*, Les Humanoïdes Associés, 1981 (scénario : Selva)  
*L'As de pique*, Les Humanoïdes Associés, 1982 (scénario : Alberto Ongaro - Dessin : Hugo Pratt, Mario Faustinelli)  
*Ticonderoga*, Les Humanoïdes Associés, 1982 (scénario : Hector Oesterheld)  
*Simbad le marin*, Bédésup, 1982 (scénario : Mario Faustinelli, Mino Milani, Hector Oesterheld, Hugo Pratt)  
*Récits de guerre, Du sable, rien que du sable*, Dargaud, 1983  
*Un été indien*, Casterman, 1987 (scénario : Hugo Pratt - dessin et couleurs : Milo Manara)  
*Luckstar O'Hara*, Kesselring, 1988 (scénario et dessin : Hugo Pratt - Couleurs : Pajak & Pajak)  
*Cato Zoulou*, Casterman, 1990  
*Koïnsky raconte... Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'eux*, Casterman, 1993  
*El Gaucho*, Casterman, 1995, (scénario : Hugo Pratt - dessin : Milo Manara)  
*Saint-Exupéry, Le Dernier vol*, Casterman, 1995  
*Dans un ciel lointain*, Casterman, 1996  
*Morgan*, Casterman, 1999  
*L'Assaut du Fort*, Les Bons Enfants réunis, 2003 (scénario : Alberto Ongaro)  
*WWII, Histoires de guerre*, Casterman, 2009  
*Sandokan, Le Tigre de Malaisie*, Casterman, août 2009 (scénario : Mino Milani)

### LIVRES ILLUSTRÉS

- Corto Maltese - Mémoires*, Casterman, 1988  
*Le désir d'être inutile*, Éditions Robert Laffont, 1991  
*Arthur Rimbaud, Lettres d'Afrique*, Nuage, 1991 - Tripode, 2023  
*Sonnets érotiques*, Vertige Graphic, 1994 - Tripode, 2018 (textes : Giorgio Baffo - dessin et couleurs : Hugo Pratt)  
*Les Femmes de Corto Maltese*, Casterman, 1994 (republié sous le titre *Aventureuses*, Casterman, 2020)  
*J'avais un rendez-vous*, Vertige Graphic, 1997 - Tripode, 2020  
*Rudyard Kipling - Poésies*, Vertige Graphic, 2005 - Tripode, 2018

## The Bibliothèque publique d'information



Bpi © Sergio Grazia



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Unveiled in 1977, at the same time as the Centre Pompidou it is a component of, the Bpi is a national library reporting to the Ministry of Culture and Communication.

Its three-level 107,640-square-foot space is open to all, without formalities, 6 days and 62 hours a week – more than 4,000 daily visitors for a total of nearly 1.3 million visitors in 2015.

Its mission is to gather and give free access to a regularly updated multidisciplinary documentary offer, both digital and physical.

Particularly oriented towards current affairs, it strives to mobilize rich and diverse documentary resources so as to allow a good understanding of and a relevant perspective on the world we live in.

Very well supplied with individual reading and work places (more than 2000), it also hosts many cultural events (exhibitions, meetings), as well as mediation activities using different forms of learning, whether individual or collective.

With a strong presence on the Internet, it strives to produce and promote attractant and effective course guidance.

Recognized nationally and internationally as an influential and innovative player in the world of libraries, it carries out cooperation programs in areas as diverse as the access to digital resources, the social and civic dimension of public libraries, access for visitors with disabilities, documentary cinema, the observation of the audiences and cultural uses of digital technology.

A stakeholder in the cultural dynamics of the Centre Pompidou, it makes an essential contribution to it from the angle of its own areas of expertise: literary creation, debate of ideas, international social issues, digital culture, “Young Adults” cultural practices, etc.

## casterman

## Partners of the exhibition

## Casterman

**Corto Maltese, an icon in the Casterman catalogue**

Hugo Pratt admitted it: his ambition had always been to create a myth. By inventing the character of Corto Maltese, the artist succeeded in imposing on the collective imagination a silhouette, a face and a gaze with a charisma as unforgettable as that of male icons such as Burt Lancaster, Alain Delon, or David Bowie. Above and beyond the charms of appearance, Hugo Pratt designed a new archetypal adventurer, nourished by counter-culture and protest, long before the era of globalization.

Curious about other civilizations, Corto is a citizen of the world, free of prejudice, unfettered by religion or ideology. Although he prefers to side with the oppressed rather than the powerful, he takes part in combat to serve the cause of his friends, or... his own interests!

Far from any form of do-gooder approach, this modern, libertarian Odysseus vigorously refuses to be called a "hero". His remarks are witty, ironic, both laconic and profound, worthy of the best aphorisms. More often seduced than seducer, Corto is never misogynistic. Allies or adversaries, the women he meets are his equals. His tragic and eventful adventures take their inspiration from the great founding tales, as much as from adventure literature, or poetry.

For Casterman, Corto Maltese is of exceptional importance. It was thanks to *The Ballad of the salty sea* that the publisher changed the direction of its comics catalog in the 1970s – without this "novel in comics", the very principle of (*À suivre*) magazine could not have been considered, and masterpieces such as *You Are There* by Tardi and Forest, Comès' *Silence*, or Rochette and Lob's *Snowpiercer* would probably never have been published... Hugo Pratt was not averse to the idea of his creations being extended by other authors. The artist was well aware of the extent to which reinterpretations of mythical works sometimes give rise to great artistic and literary successes. La Fontaine perpetuated Aesop and Racine, and was inspired by Euripides.

Moliere, Goldoni, Byron, Mozart and many other artists took up Tirso de Molina's Don Juan character. And Picasso multiplied variations on *Las Meninas* by Velasquez. In the comics realm, Batman, Astro Boy, or Spirou were reinvented after the passing of their creators.

Since 2015, Juan Díaz Canales and Rubén Pellejero have imagined new adventures for Corto Maltese, faithfully extending the universe set up by Hugo Pratt. Bastien Vivès and Martin Quenehen have offered us a different perspective since 2020: their revival shifts the action to the very beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, around the historic date of September 11, 2011. Once the surprise of this leap forward in time has passed, we rediscover the characteristics of Corto Maltese as Hugo Pratt imagined him. More than ever, the young adventurer frees himself from constraints... Whether under the pencil of Pratt, Pellejero or Vivès, adventure seems to have kept the same face – the face of Corto Maltese.

**Benoît Mouchart – Editorial Director of the Comics Department at Casterman**

## Cong SA

In 1983, Hugo Pratt assigned past and future ownership of his copyrights to Cong SA. Pratt passed away in 1995, and the company's activity consists of supporting initiatives aimed at disseminating the very high artistic value of Hugo Pratt's body of work.



## Media partners

### LE FIGARO

Founded in 1826, *Le Figaro* is the oldest daily newspaper and leading press website in France with 26 million monthly readers. Divided in 3 sections (News, Economy and Lifestyle), the daily offers its readers a complete range of information thanks to its many themed supplements (Culture, Literature, Health, Entrepreneurs) and weekend magazines (*Le Figaro Magazine*, *Madame Figaro* and *TV Magazine*).

Literature is a hallmark of the Figaro group: the daily *Figaro*, *Le Figaro Magazine* and *Le Figaro littéraire*, published every Thursday, ardently promote literary creation to their readers. The history and current events of our language are also regularly featured.

### *Lire* magazine, a passion for books and writers

*Lire* magazine is a monthly literature magazine founded in 1975 by Bernard Pivot and Jean-Louis Servan-Schreiber. It is the reference magazine that deciphers the latest news on books and writers every month: interviews, reviews, life of ideas, reports, surveys... *Lire Magazine* also features monthly previews of excerpts and cult features, such as the "world of a writer". An eclectic monthly, it covers all types of literature, appealing to a loyal and committed readership. The editorial team shares its favorites and guides readers through the new releases each month: novels, essays, biographies, children's books, documents, coffee-table books, paperbacks, comics... No genre is left out!

### LES ARTS DESSINÉS, first magazine devoted exclusively to all forms of drawing

Editorial cartoonists, illustrators, comic strip authors, painters, decorators, architects, designers, graphic artists, fashion designers, video-game creators, art directors... All those who contribute or have contributed with their pencil or brush to giving shape to what surrounds us are featured in *Les Arts dessinés*, which will let their voice be heard, offer them cartes blanches, features, and interview the people who are best able to talk about them if they are no longer here to do so.

### CANAL BD, welcome to another bookstore!

Founded 17 years ago, the Groupement des Libraires de Bande Dessinée now brings together more than 170 independent bookstores in France, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany and Quebec, who share their passion, know-how and favorites on a daily basis. Our business: comics, manga, graphic novels... An increasingly creative universe open to all audiences: women, men, young and old... from at least 7 to 77 years old! With its sights firmly set on the future, CANAL BD is clearly demonstrating its ambitions, by positioning itself as a local bookshop: geographically close, thanks to its downtown location, but also close to people, thanks to the knowledge and personalized advice of its booksellers. As a partner of numerous festivals and book fairs (Angoulême International Comics Festival, Quai des Bulles in Saint-Malo, BD Boum in Blois, Japan Expo, etc.), Canal BD is also actively involved in promoting the world of comics, and the authors who bring it to life.

### Institut national de l'audiovisuel

The Institut national de l'audiovisuel (INA), a unique model of public enterprise, is a medium rich in decades of television, radio and web memory. With over one and a half billion video views a year, INA archives, preserves, digitizes and distributes to all audiences on the world's largest audiovisual libraries. Against a backdrop of rapid change, INA is playing its part in reinventing the audiovisual and digital ecosystem by deploying its unique expertise, making it a heritage medium, a distinctive medium rooted in time and memory, and a medium committed to passing on the knowledge and know-how of which it is the custodian.






EXPOSITION

CORTO MALTESE

UNE VIE ROMANESQUE

Visuels pour la presse

Consultez l'ensemble des visuels disponibles pour la presse sur [www.bpi.fr/presse-cortomaltese](http://www.bpi.fr/presse-cortomaltese)

Présentation du 1<sup>er</sup> numéro de la revue italienne *Corto Maltese*, 1983  
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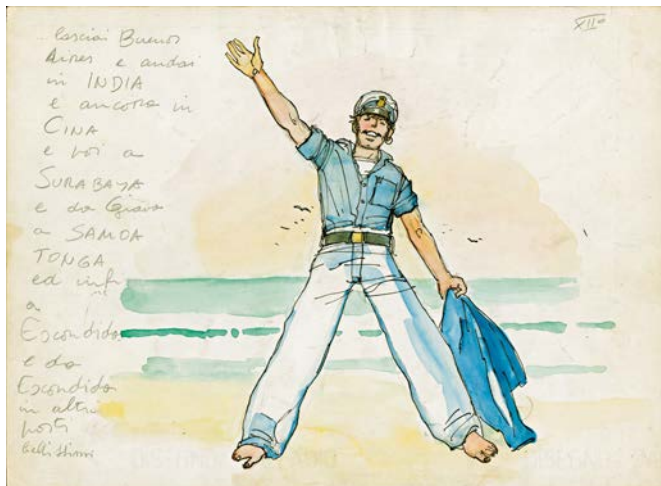
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EXPOSITION

# CORTO MALTESE

UNE VIE ROMANESQUE

Les femmes de Corto Maltese  
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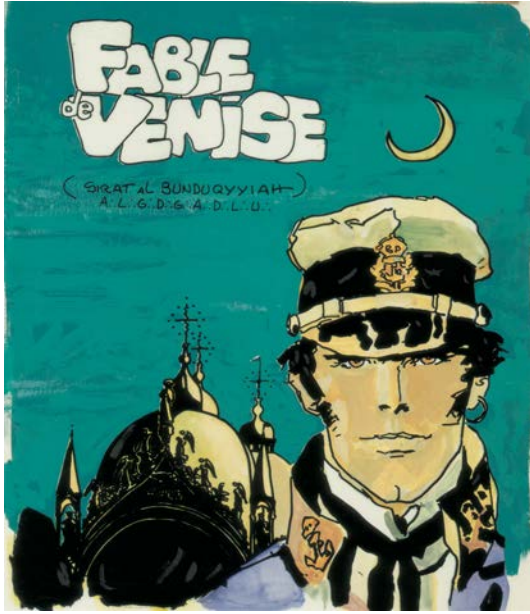
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EXPOSITION

CORTO MALTESE

UNE VIE ROMANESQUE

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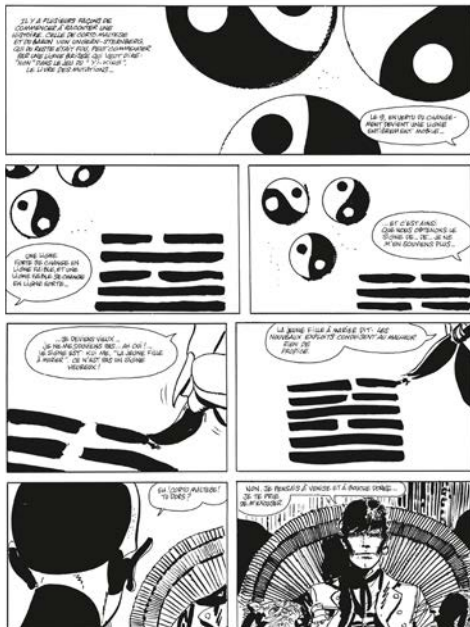
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### En partenariat avec

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