

**Henri
de
Toulouse-Lautrec
and the
Belle Époque**





Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Jane Avril, colour lithography, 1899

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A total of 150 works offer a fascinating insight into the variety of art and design during Belle Époque, an era of upheaval and radical new beginnings.

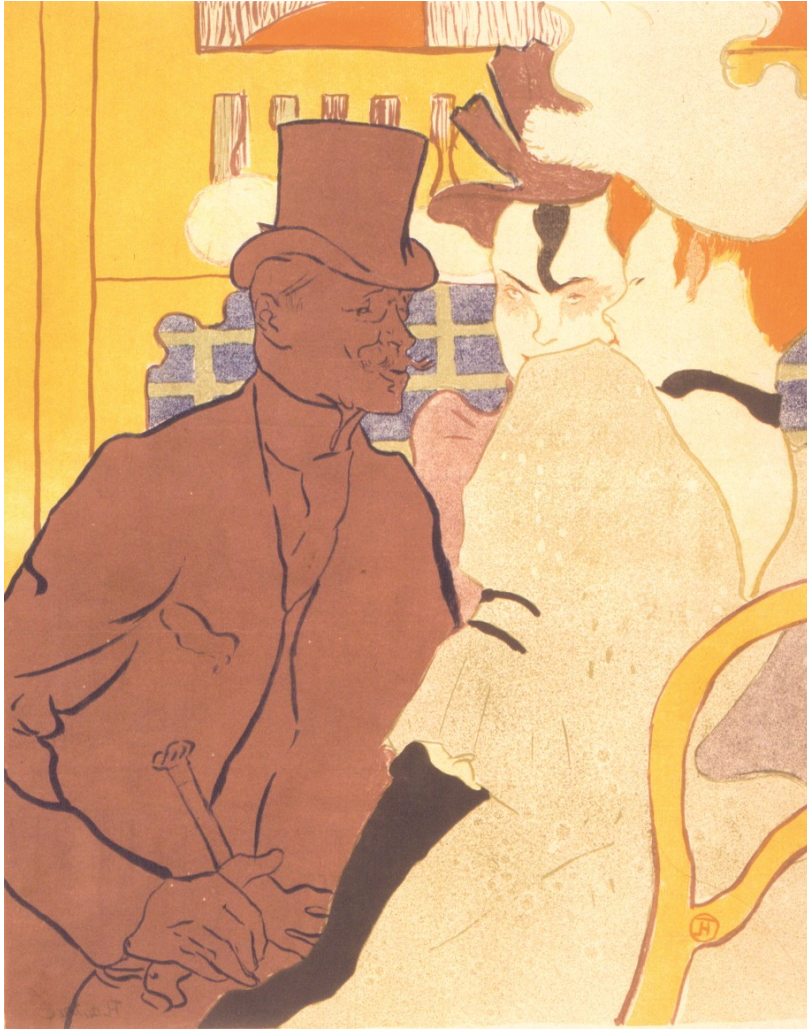
Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec was born in Albi in the south of France in 1864. Over the course of his short artistic life, he developed into a captivating personality in the Paris of the Belle Époque and a favorite documentarian of Parisian nightlife. His iconic posters and sensitive portraits reveal the atmosphere, glamor and scandal of late 19th century Parisian bohemia in an incomparable way.

However, Toulouse-Lautrec was merely attracted by the decadence of late 19th century in Paris. Glamour, velvet, satin and exuberent entertainment only had marginal interest for him. His compassion was for the people, their bodies, gestures and presence, which he captured with remarkable sensitivity in his pictorial spaces. With an elegant stroke, he exposed the human decay in a superficial culture and society dominated by escapism.

Toulouse-Lautrec held his first exhibitions in the cafés and restaurants of Montmartre and there he received his first major commissions. He produced lithographs for posters of artists and celebrities, most of whom he knew personally. Having long been frowned upon as purely commercial, the poster suddenly spread to all areas of everyday life and art. Never before and never again had this genre played such an artistically significant role as it did at this time. Collectors and the public were both fascinated and shocked by the immediacy and directness of its visual language.



Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, L'Estampe Originale, colour lithography, 1893



Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Les Anglais au Moulin Rouge, colour lithography, 1892

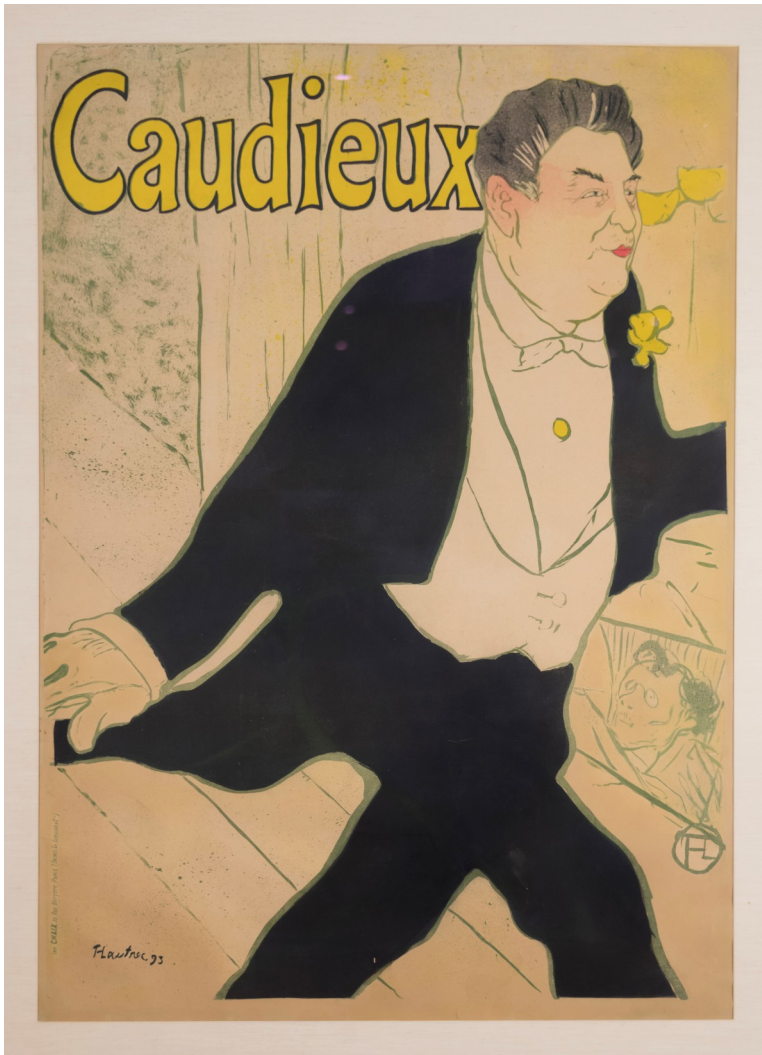
However, Toulouse-Lautrec was not a caricaturist, but a keen observer of society, who despised the decadent establishment and the vain bourgeoisie, but always spoke with compassion about the dignity and misery of the so-called little people, the street people, the night owls, the actors, musicians, creatives and prostitutes. With uncompromising accuracy, he captured their beauty, their faults and weaknesses without embarrassing them.

The artist always maintained the greatest respect and unsentimental distance from his subjects, which enabled him to show reality neither romantically glorified nor socially critical, but unadulterated and naked.

At the same time, Toulouse-Lautrec himself took an excessive part in the hustle of Montmartre in order to gain maximum intensity and excitement from life. Self-destructive excess and alcoholism accelerated his physical and mental decline, and he died in 1901 at the age of just 36.



Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, La clownesse assise, colour lithography, 1896

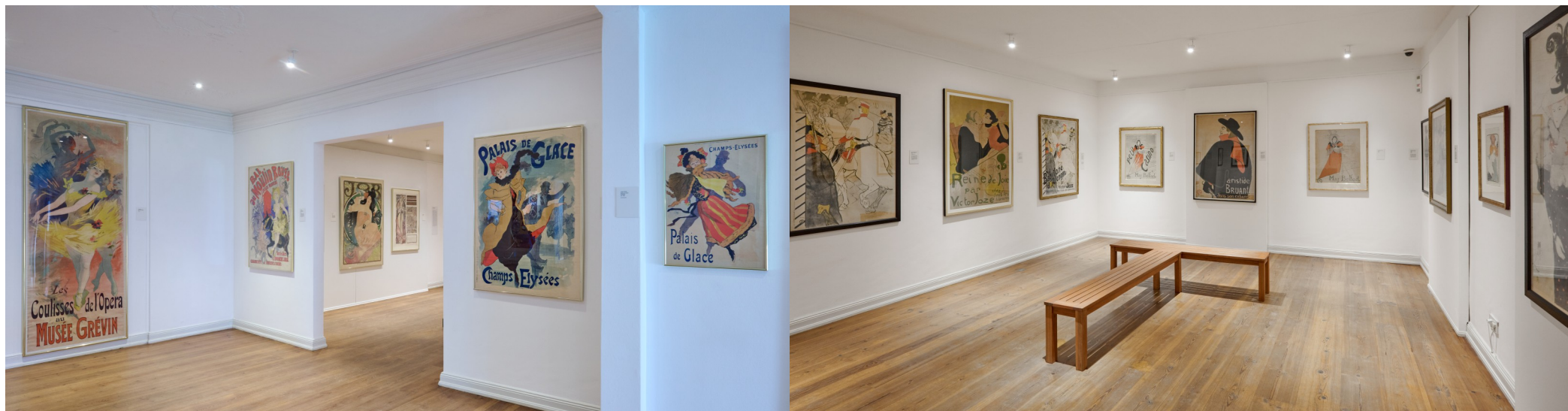


Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Caudieux, colour lithography, 1893

The extent of scientific, social and economic changes and innovations in these decades is historically unprecedented. At the same time, the Belle Époque was a time of constant experimentation and the search for new forms of expression. A multitude of new styles and overarching trends emerged, which were to profoundly change dance, music, literature, theater and the visual arts.

The exhibition brings together the most famous posters, single sheets and series by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and individual works by Jules Chéret, Alfons Mucha, Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen, Pierre Bonnard and others, as well as furniture from the Belle Époque, lamps by Tiffany and glass objects by Emile Gallé.

These works offer a fascinating insight into the diversity of artistic forms of expression and invite visitors to trace them, compare them with one another and breathe in their atmosphere.



Exhibition views Barlach Art Museum Hamburg-Wedel, 2024



Exhibition views My Art Museum Seoul, Korea 2024/25

Kontakt

Ernst Barlach Gesellschaft Hamburg
Office:
Mühlenstraße 1
22880 Wedel

Dr. Jürgen Doppelstein
+49 (0)171 4779770
kontakt@ernst-barlach.de

Heike Stockhaus
+49 (0)170 52 500 13
heike.stockhaus@ernst-barlach.de



Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Aristide Bruant dans son cabaret, colour lithography, 1893