

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

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PRESS PREVIEW:

Tuesday, March 20, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

TOULOUSE-LAUTREC EXHIBITION AT MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Coinciding with the opening of TOULOUSE-LAUTREC, the Museum will open and close one hour earlier during the week. New hours are 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays, and 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Sundays. Film showings will continue at 3 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.

Toulouse-Lautrec's famous paintings, posters and lithographs of circuses and actors, of dancers and singers who entertained in the Montmartre in Paris in the 1890s are on view at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, in a major retrospective exhibition of work by the popular French artist from March 21 through May 6. Forty-four paintings, 40 drawings, 76 color lithographs including song sheets, advertisements, book illustrations and magazine covers and 22 of the most brilliant posters are in the exhibition assembled by Andrew Carnduff Ritchie, Director of the Museum's Department of Painting and Sculpture.

Posters portraying the singer May Belfort, Jane Avril, the dancing troupe of Mlle. Eglantine, the photographer Paul Sescou, the café owner and singer Aristide Bruant and other friends of Lautrec will be mounted on 14-foot-high kiosks specially constructed in the gallery for the exhibition. Book illustrations, song sheets and magazine covers are shown on tilted display stands, while the paintings, drawings and other lithographs are hung on the gallery walls, in an unusual installation designed by Daniel Brenner, Chicago architect. William S. Lieberman, Museum of Modern Art Curator of Prints, has selected the lithographs and posters, mainly from the collection of Ludwig Charell, the largest Lautrec print collection in the world.

Mr. Ritchie, in his introduction to the catalogue says:

Toulouse-Lautrec cast an aristocratic eye upon Paris low life in the 90's. The record of what this eye selected to see will always remain one of the most piquant and arresting in the history of art. A dwarf himself, and latterly an alcoholic, Lautrec looked unsentimentally at the moral and physical deformities of his fellow beings. He accepted with a kind of detached sympathy the sordid life of the prostitute. He enjoyed the garish vulgarity of the music hall and delighted in the dash and humor of the circus.

We may romanticize his personal life and the life he depicted. The point is, he never romanticized himself or the world about him. This is what gives his astonishing hand and eye their power and penetration and gives to his art a significance and a value above and beyond its popular documentary appeal.

Henri, son of the eccentric Count Alphonse de Toulouse-Lautrec, was born in 1864 in Albi, a small town in Toulouse. When he was fourteen he slipped on the

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the floor of the drawing room and broke one of his thighs. A little more than a year later, while walking in the country with his mother during his convalescence, he broke the other thigh bone. Neither healed properly and, while his body developed normally, his legs remained those of a child. At full growth he was only four feet six inches tall.

The long convalescence from these double accidents, however, served to strengthen Lautrec's early interest in drawing, and when he was 17 he began to study painting in Paris. During his first years there he was influenced by Japanese prints, by the Impressionists and by Goya, Velasquez, Ingres and above all, by Degas. He began to meet artists and was initiated into the life of Montmartre. In 1888 at the age of 24 he painted At the Circus Fernando: The Ringmaster which marks the maturity of the tense and lively style which became his trademark in his portraits of his friends, of café figures and of life in the Paris brothels. Between 1892 and 1900 he also made some 350 lithographs, which alone would establish him as one of the great graphic artists of the 19th Century. He brought the art of lithography to new heights and revolutionized the art of the poster.

In 1899 his health broke, due to a combination of drinking and hard work, and he was confined to the St. James Clinic, Neuilly, for two months. To convince doctors of his cure, he painted the At the Circus series from memory, 10 of which are in the exhibition. He was released and continued painting, but his health continued to decline and he began to drink heavily again. He died at the Château de Malromé on September 9, 1901, aged 37, surrounded by his mother, father and close friends and cousins, Louis Pascal and Gabriel Tapié de Céleyran, and Paul Viaud.

In addition to the famous At the Circus Fernando: The Ringmaster, paintings in the exhibition, lent from private and public collections here and abroad, include Portrait of M. Fourcade and The Sofa, both from the Museu de Arte, Sao Paulo and Private Room at the "Rat Mort" from the Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London. Several scenes from the Moulin Rouge, peopled by Lautrec's friends and sometimes including a self portrait, are included as well as a portrait of Monsieur Boileau at the café, an obese journalist of the day who specialized in scandalous gossip; the Clowness Cha-U-Ka-O, an entertainer at the Moulin Rouge and the female clown of Nouveau Cirque; Marcelle Lender dancing in the operetta "Chilpéric"; Yvette Guilbert, the most celebrated diseuse of her time, whose long black gloves were famous; and Henry Nocq, jeweler and designer of medals.

The sketchbook kept by the 16-year-old Lautrec in which he drew many sketches of horses, dogs and people is shown as well as later studies for lithographs and
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53

portraits. Lithographs in the exhibition include portraits of Loie Fuller, Illinois-born dancer who invented the "Serpentine" and other dances in which her floating draperies were shot through with colored lights; Elsa, a young and beautiful Viennese of the maison close, in the rue des Moulins; Yvette Guilbert singing "Linger, Longer, Loo"; as well as covers from L'Estampe Originale and Les Vieilles Histoires, music sheets and a program for L'Oeuvre showing Oscar Wilde and Romain Coolus.

As Mr. Ritchie points out in the catalogue, the exhibition is derived in large part from the one recently organized by the Philadelphia Museum of Art in collaboration with the Art Institute of Chicago. Some paintings and drawings in the latter show were not available for the Museum of Modern Art exhibition. On the other hand, certain important paintings, drawings and lithographs in the present exhibition were not shown in Philadelphia or Chicago.

Additional Material:

TOULOUSE-LAUTREC. Edited by Andrew Carnduff Ritchie. 48 pages. 52 plates. Paper. \$1.00.

"Cast of Characters" from catalogue of Philadelphia-Chicago show.

Photographs

Available on request from Elizabeth Shaw, Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, Circle 5-8900.