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Richard Thomson, *Toulouse-Lautrec and Montmartre*. Washington: National Gallery of Art and Princeton University Press, 2005. xiv + 294 pp. 370 color plates, 17 halftones. Artists' Biographies, Checklist of Exhibition, Index, Bibliography. \$60.00 U.S. (hb) ISBN 0-691-12337-3; \$37.80 U.S. (pb) 0-89468-320-9.

Review by Elizabeth K. Mix, Purdue University.

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The life and work of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec continues to be of interest to the museum-going public, as demonstrated by the "blockbuster" status of the exhibition this catalogue accompanied at the Art Institute of Chicago and the National Gallery of Art, Washington. Toulouse-Lautrec's lasting appeal is due in part to his decision to live and work in the seedy outskirts of Paris amidst performers and prostitutes. The artist's personal wealth was trumped by physical deformity, facts romanticized and mythologized in written accounts of the period and, later, Hollywood movies, which, like the present catalogue, focus more on the nature of Montmartre than Toulouse-Lautrec himself. As Richard Thomson, who is Watson Gordon Professor of Fine Art at the University of Edinburgh, explains, the goal is to "explore the contemporary society with which Lautrec's work interacted, examine the visual culture of Montmartre, and assess Lautrec's images alongside those of others" (p. 3).

Thomson provides a survey of the social and historical context of the region in his essay entitled "Toulouse-Lautrec and Montmartre: Depicting Decadence in Fin-de-Siècle Paris." The relatively conservative nature of the Third Republic, Montmartre's position as the center of the 1871 bloody Commune during which some 25,000 Parisians lost their lives and the rise of subsequent anarchist activity shaped Toulouse-Lautrec's investigation of social types.[1] Thompson discusses the artist's modification of prevalent naturalistic modes of representation, resulting in a modernist approach, simplified and with a harder edge, positioned against social critiques of the period's decadence mounted by various parties, including the Catholic Church. Traditional and contemporary aspects of French visual culture contributed to Lautrec's development. These included a long history of political caricature and the use of stereotypical representations of social groups. A more contemporary phenomenon exerting specifically stylistic influence on Lautrec's development were shadow plays performed at the Chat Noir cabaret, which promoted use of dramatic silhouettes. Thomson relates a number of scientific and quasi-scientific studies to Lautrec's vision of modernity, including Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species*, Max Nordau's *Degeneration*, Richard Kraft-Ebbing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* and the work of Drs. Jean-Martin Charcot and Pierre Janet. Noticeably absent from Thomson's discussion of Lautrec's stylistic development, however, is the specific influence of Japanese prints.[2]

Phillip Dennis Cate, director emeritus of The Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, contributes an essay entitled "The Social Menagerie of Toulouse-Lautrec's Montmartre," which focuses on the formation of various collectives dedicated to modernity. The Hydropathes, headed by poet Émile Goudeau, moved from the Latin Quarter to Montmartre in 1881. This group including writers Alphonse Allais and Félicien Champsaur and illustrators Emile Cohl, André Gill fostered modernity by withdrawing from academic themes and stylistic approaches. At Rodolphe Salis' Chat Noir cabaret, the remnants of collective combined with like-minded artists such as Caran D'Ache, Henri Pille, Henry Somm, Henri Rivière, Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen, Adolphe Willette and performers Aristide Bruant, Jules Jouy and Maurice Mac-Nab. The resulting Incohérents participated in exhibitions and costume balls that continued an assault on the bourgeoisie and the academy. Toulouse-Lautrec was one of a group of artists who collaborated to create a parody of a giant

academic painting by Puvis de Chavannes. Cate explains the significance of the appearance of Lautrec in the parody alongside Louis Anquetin, Edouard Dujardin and Maurice Barrès, all of whom made significant contributions to modernity. The shifting attitude towards Salis when financial success began to compromise earlier anti-establishment values associated with the Chat Noir cabaret is linked by Cate to anti-Semitic tendencies in the work of Goudeau and Willette which, while certainly of interest, pulls the focus away from Toulouse-Lautrec. More relevant is the subsequent elucidation of the importance of theater in Montmartre—in the form of Chat Noir shadow plays and symbolist productions of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre. Lautrec, with many other artists, participated in the visual culture associated with both the expanded Chat Noir theater space and Alfred Jarry's 1896 production of *Ubu Roi*. Cate's subsequent discussion of the *fumiste* strategies that merge facts and fictions of Montmartre's spaces and personalities are certainly relevant to Lautrec's work, but these connections are not developed to their fullest advantage in this essay.

The final essay, by Mary Weaver Chapin, Andrew W. Mellon Curatorial Fellow at the Art Institute of Chicago, examines "Toulouse-Lautrec and the Culture of Celebrity." The effects of urbanization and rural depopulation, including a dramatic increase in the capital's population and the construction of the large boulevards in Paris by Baron Haussmann marked important physical changes. In addition, the rise of the department store and fashion industry quite literally set the stage for the spectacle of modern life and the rise of celebrity culture. The stars of café-concerts and dance halls used available publicity tools, most notably photography, which generated small collectible images and posters, which addressed a public on a much larger scale. Chapin explains how Toulouse-Lautrec became aware of visual strategies for depicting celebrities through illustrated journals such as *Le Courrier français* and *Le Mirliton*, and made significant innovations in his poster designs by encapsulating the essence of the individual or performance and communicating it quickly in a type of visual shorthand. Lautrec's construction of celebrity in individual prints and print series is contrasted to his relatively rare work on canvas. Among the specific performers discussed are La Goulue, Aristide Bruant, May Milton and Jane Avril. Chapin contrasts Lautrec's conception of these celebrities with how they, in turn, viewed the artist, whose appearance and behavior at the very least gave him notoriety and could even be considered performative.

There are no individual entries for individual works illustrated in the catalogue, but rather thematic sections are introduced by brief essays that create a narrative thread for most of the works. Thomson has written the sections entitled Introducing Montmartre, "Dance Halls," "Maisons Closes" (houses of prostitution), and "the Circus." Chapin is responsible for the sections "The Chat Noir and the Cabarets" and "Starts of the Café-Concert." Within these introductions specific sections are devoted to specific Montmartre individuals such as Aristide Bruant, Jane Avril, Yvette Guilbert, May Belfort, May Milton, Loïe Fuller and Marcelle Lender.

Throughout the volume, a wide range of paintings and drawings by Toulouse-Lautrec are complemented by photographs, posters, illustrations from popular journals, caricatures and maps. Other artists whose works are featured and for whom biographies are provided in the checklist for the exhibition include Léon Bonnat, Ramon Cases, Adolphe Léon Willette, Georges Seurat, Louis Morin, Louis Anquetin, Pablo Picasso, Jean-François Raffaëlli, Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen, Pierre Vidal, Henri Paul Royer, Eero Järnefelt, Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, Jules Chéret, Henri Rivière, Henri Gray, Eugène Bataille (known as Sapeck), Pierre Bonnard, Alfred Jarry, Charles-Lucien Léandre, Maximilien Luce, Vincent van Gogh, Jean-Louis Forain, Edgar Degas, Eduoard Manet, Eduoard Vuillard, Louis Valtat, Santiago Rusiñol, Auguste Roedel, Georges Meunier, Henry Somm, Henri-Gabriel Ibels, Ferdinand Bac, Jean Veber, Leonetto Cappiello, François Rupert Carabin, Charles Maurin, Jean de Paléologue (known as Pal), Georges de Feure, Manuel Orazi and Emile Bernard.

This offering is not nearly as extensive in scope or as closely focused upon the work of Toulouse-Lautrec as the 1992 exhibition at the Hayward Gallery in London and the Galeries nationales du Grand Palais in Paris. [3] Readers interested in a more thorough examination of the artist's biography should consult Julia Frey's *Toulouse-Lautrec: a life*. (New York: Viking, 1994). *Toulouse-Lautrec and Montmartre* and its accompanying catalogue nevertheless brings together an impressive array of works by Toulouse-Lautrec and his contemporaries from more than sixty private and public collections worldwide and makes a significant contribution to an understanding of the complicated milieu in which this artist lived and worked.

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## NOTES

[1] For further information on Toulouse-Lautrec's use of social types see Gale B. Murray, *Toulouse-Lautrec the formative years 1878-1891* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

[2] On the influence of Japanese prints in the work of Toulouse-Lautrec see Gabriel P. Weisberg, *Japonisme: Japanese influence on French art, 1854-1910* (Cleveland Museum of Art, 1975); Siegfried Wichmann, *Japonisme: the Japanese influence on western art in the 19th and 20th centuries* (New York: Harmony Books, 1981); Klaus Berger, *Japonisme in Western painting from Whistler to Matisse* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), Chisaburo Yamada and Tatsuji Omori, eds., *Japonisme in art: an international symposium* (Tokyo: Committee for the Year 2001, 1980) and *Le Japonisme: Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, Paris, 17 mai-15 août 1988; Musée national d'art occidental, Tokyo, 23 septembre-11 décembre 1988* (Paris: Ministère de la culture et de la communication, Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1988).

[3] *Toulouse-Lautrec*, (London: South Bank Centre; Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux), 1992.

Elizabeth K. Mix  
Purdue University  
snappyprof@yahoo.com

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