

## Artist Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec Lecture

Written by Katy Doherty

Monday, 03 October 2011 11:02

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The public is invited to join the Muscatine Art Center in welcoming Carol Ehlers, art history speaker, as she presents a lecture on the art of French painter Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Ehlers talk will include background information on the Muscatine Art Center's lithograph by Lautrec, of cabaret performer Marcelle Lender.

The art of Post-Impressionist artist Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec cannot be separated from the bohemian nightlife of Montmartre in Paris, France. Set high up on a hill and removed from the city, Montmartre was filled with cafes, cabarets, and dance halls. Frequented by artists, writers and philosophers alike, it was the artistic center of Paris in the late nineteenth century.

Lautrec was born in 1864 to an aristocratic family and grew up a physically fragile child with a painful spine disorder. Having broken both of his legs in childhood, he never regained his normal growth. As an adult, his physical appearance most likely caused him to choose the underworld of the Parisian nightlife as his social and artistic environment, becoming an uncanny observer of life as well as a brilliant draftsman.

As a young artist, Toulouse-Lautrec worked in a soft Impressionist manner, but unlike Monet, Degas, and other Impressionists, he always focused on the human figure. When the nearby Moulin Rouge cabaret opened its doors Toulouse-Lautrec was commissioned to produce a series of posters. His first, Moulin Rouge -- La Goulue, was completed in 1891. Toulouse-Lautrec had a regular income from his family, so making posters offered him a way to make a living on his own. His contemporaries looked down on this work, but Lautrec did not care. After his Moulin Rouge series the cabaret reserved a seat for him and displayed his paintings.

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Among the well-known works that he painted for the Moulin Rouge and other Parisian nightclubs are depictions of the singer Yvette Guilbert, the dancer Louise Weber who created the Can-Can, and the much more subtle dancer Jane Avril. In 1892 Lautrec turned to lithography to mass produce his posters.

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec is a master at capturing crowd scenes where the figures are highly individualized and sometimes bizarre, perhaps as a reflection of his own outward appearance.

In 1992 the Muscatine Art Center's collections were significantly enriched by a gift of twenty-seven works of art by Toulouse-Lautrec, Matisse, Degas, Boudin, Chagall, Renoir, and other European artists. The collection was a gift from the estate of Mary Musser Gilmore in honor of her parents, Richard Drew Musser and Sarah Walker Musser. The paintings are on permanent display in the Laura Musser Mansion.

The Lautrec presentation also provides an introduction to the exhibition, Turn of the Century Posters from the Krannert Art Museum Collection, now showing at the Figge Art Museum located at 225 West Second Street, Davenport, Iowa. For information about the exhibition call the Figge Art Museum at (563) 326-7804.

### **EVENT DETAILS:**

Lecture: "Toulouse-Lautrec: Montmartre and Scenes of the Night"

Who: Carol Ehlers

When: Sunday, November 6, 2011

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Time: 2:00 PM

Where: The Muscatine Art Center's Music Room

Admission to this program is FREE.

Please contact Katy Doherty, Program Coordinator, with any questions or concerns at 563-263-8282 or by email at [kdoherly@muscatineiowa.gov](mailto:kdoherly@muscatineiowa.gov) .

The Muscatine Art Center is open to the public Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday from

10 AM to 5 PM, Thursday from 10 AM to 7 PM and Saturday and Sunday from 1 to 5 PM  
Admission is FREE.