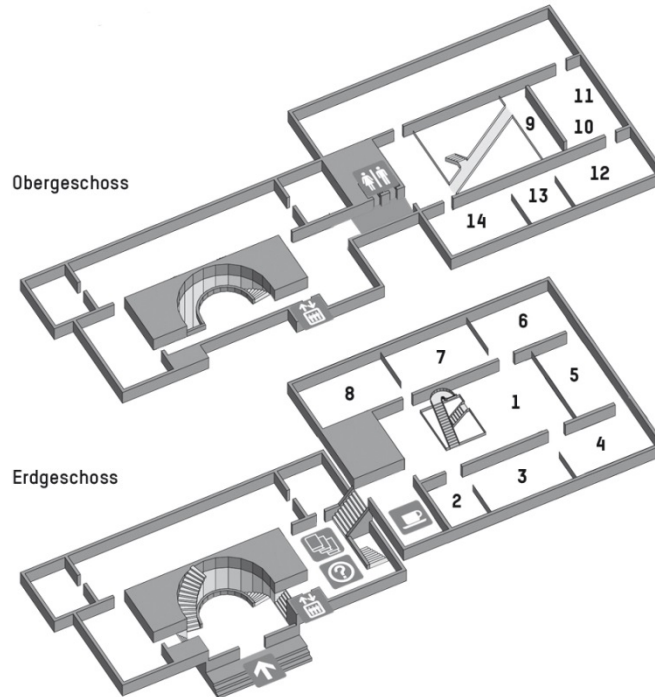


Exhibition



Introduction

- 1 Toulouse-Lautrec's photographer friends
- 2 Lautrec's family and its aristocratic homes
- 3 Lautrec's education in Paris
- 4 Lautrec as a master of disguise
- 5 Lautrec's studio and his favorite models
- 6 The theater curtain rises
- 7 Beautiful Misia's illustrious circle
- 8 Fin de siècle "sporting life"
- 9 The veil dancer Loïe Fuller
- 10 The new box camera and snapshot aesthetics
- 11 New inventions in printmaking
- 12 Nightlife in Montmartre's red-light-district haunts
- 13 The circus ring free for performers
- 14 Intimate life in the brothels

Addenda: Biographys, guided tours, catalogue, opening times

Introduction

In art history we remember Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec on account of his portrayals of Parisian nightlife. No artist captured the vibrant fin de siècle ambience as he did: the singers and dancers at the entertainment venue Moulin Rouge, life in the brothels, scenes of Parisian theaters, the daring feats of circus performers, the jockeys on their noble racehorses, the alcoholics haunting the bars at night, the exhausted prostitutes after work.

He was born into one of the oldest aristocratic families with deep roots in south-western

KUNSTMUSEUM BERN
MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS DE BERNE
MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS BERNE

HODLERSTRASSE 8–12 CH-3000 BERN 7
T +41 31 328 09 44 F +41 31 328 09 55
INFO@KUNSTMUSEUMBERN.CH WWW.KUNSTMUSEUMBERN.CH

MEDIEN-SERVICE
SERVICE DE PRESSE / PRESS OFFICE
T +41 31 328 09 19/44
PRESS@KUNSTMUSEUMBERN.CH

France. This background allowed him to pursue a life and work free from the yoke of conventions. Today Lautrec enjoys a mythical status in art. This image is closely linked to the options opened up by contemporary photography, and the same is true for the radicalism of his oeuvre. Lautrec appropriated the technology of capturing subjective frames of vibrant reality with all its contingencies and sordid details to orchestrate his own identity and to find a visual language that was uniquely his own. The image segments he chose, his brutally cropped figures, his spontaneous and sketchy style of painting, as well as his matter-of-fact style of representation all correlated directly with a world as seen through the imagery of the new technology of photography. This is equally true for the motifs he chose for his pictures: photographs enabled Lautrec to work without models, and sometimes he copied straightforwardly from them in his paintings. The focus of this exhibition is on the overall impact of Lautrec's use of photography and his "photographic eye" on both his life and his art.

The intensity with which Toulouse-Lautrec lived his life was unbroken, as was his productivity as an artist. In 30 years he executed all of his drawings; in 15 years his numerous paintings, some of them large; in 10 years practically all of his prints; and in 5 years the great majority of his posters. Normally an artist would have to have a strong constitution and work in the seclusion of his studio to be able to produce such a comprehensive and influential oeuvre in such a short time. But Lautrec lived largely with acquaintances or for weeks at a time in brothels. He hated being alone and enjoyed being surrounded by his friends. His legs, which never grew longer than those of a child, made it impossible for him to walk longer distances. Therefore he had to foster bustling life around him, which he held on tight to. He cultivated the role of the unconventional outsider leading a dissipated life, drinking too much alcohol, and having affairs with ladies of the Parisian demimonde. Additionally, since his early youth he was interested in animals and sport. He was fascinated by chanteuses, clowns, and circus performers. He sought life primarily in human encounters. They were the key source of inspiration for his art. His thematic focus was capturing the human psyche in an art that is characterized by its directness.

The exhibition is taking place on the occasion of Lautrec's 150th birthday. We are able to present Toulouse-Lautrec's multifarious oeuvre with all its various genres thanks to the loans from international museums and collections, among them the Musée Toulouse-Lautrec in Albi, the Brooklyn Museum in New York, the Musée d'Orsay, the Petit Palais, and the Musée du Montmartre in Paris, the Tate Gallery in London, the Kunsthaus Zürich, the Fondation Auer Ory pour la photographie in Hermance, and many others. In addition we have many contemporary documents and, above all, a large number of photographs, many of which are original prints from the period.

The subject of "Toulouse-Lautrec and photography" has never been addressed in an exhibition to date, and the Kunstmuseum Bern is breaking new ground with this show. It is not by chance that the exhibition is being mounted in Bern. The Kunstmuseum's collection boasts, besides numerous prints by the artist, the enchanting painting *Misia Natanson am Flügel* (*Misia Natanson Playing the Grand Piano*, 1897), which will be on show for the first time in the context of the entire oeuvre of the artist. The exhibition will be accompanied by a comprehensive and richly illustrated catalogue replete with the latest research on the artist.

1 Toulouse-Lautrec's photographer friends

Lautrec was born in 1864, 25 years after the invention of photography, and was among the first artists to be interested in the new technology, often using it as an inspiration for his pictures and prints. Even more extraordinary is the fact that he recorded his whole life, public and private, in photographs. No other artist has left behind such a wealth of photographs of himself and his friends, of the times they spent together taking pleasure in wearing costumes and staging veritable performances. However, Lautrec never owned a camera and never took pictures himself. If he required photographs for his art or if he wanted pictures to be taken of himself alone or with friends, he had one of his photographer friends come by. Of the three photographers who often did this work for him, only one was a professional photographer and his name was Paul Sescou. The second was François Gauzi. He was actually a painter and, together with Lautrec in the 1880s, a student of Fernand Cormond in Paris. The last of the trio was Maurice Guibert, a young *bon viveur* who earned his living as a sales representative for the champagne makers Moët & Chandon, but was first and foremost an enthusiastic amateur photographer. Many of the best photographic portraits of Lautrec were taken by this long-standing friend; however, they were all first made after 1890. Prior to this date, the artist engaged especially François Gauzi to do photography commissions for him. Shortly before Gauzi

KUNSTMUSEUM BERN
MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS DE BERNE
MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS BERNE

HODLERSTRASSE 8-12 CH-3000 BERN 7
T +41 31 328 09 44 F +41 31 328 09 55
INFO@KUNSTMUSEUMBERN.CH WWW.KUNSTMUSEUMBERN.CH

MEDIEN-SERVICE
SERVICE DE PRESSE / PRESS OFFICE
T +41 31 328 09 19/44
PRESS@KUNSTMUSEUMBERN.CH

died, he preserved the memories of his friend in a small book illustrated by photographs. Of the three photographer friends, Paul Sescou also loved wearing costumes and taking pictures of himself in these getups, often posing with a musical instrument his hands. Sescou must have been a very talented musician too. Lautrec designed a color poster for him when he opened up his new photographer's studio at Place Pigalle in 1896/1897.

2 Lautrec's family and its aristocratic homes

Henri-Raymond de Toulouse-Lautrec-Monfa was the artist's full name. In 1864, in the town of Albi in France's south west, he was born into a wealthy and distinguished aristocratic family, which owned numerous palaces and extensive land holdings. His parents were cousins once removed, which possibly explains their son's genetic defect. Due to this hereditary disease, two femoral fractures he suffered from at the ages of thirteen and fourteen did not heal properly. Whereas his legs stopped growing, his torso developed normally, and as a grownup Lautrec was only 152 tall. Because of this he saw himself his lifelong as an "ugly and dwarf-like cripple."

Lautrec's eccentric father left his mother after the untimely death of their second son. When he was not out pursuing his great passion of hunting, he predominantly stayed in Paris. So Henri grew up under the protection of his pious and protective mother. After receiving private tuition in Albi and beginning to draw and paint on the side, in 1872 he moved with his mother to Paris, where he attended the prestigious Lycée Fontane (later Lycée Condorcet). Due to his ailing health, which constantly demanded treatment and convalescent leave, he first graduated from school on his second attempt. He then decided to become an artist against the wishes of his mother.

The sickly and pampered Henri spent the first years of his life in protected circles among his cousins, looked after by his grandmothers, governesses, and private tutors. He spent most of his time on the large family estate, where he passed the days hunting and riding as long as his health would allow him to do so.

3 Lautrec's education in Paris

In 1882, Lautrec left the family palace in Albi at the age of 18 and studied art under Léon Bonnat and Fernand Cormon in Paris. Among his fellow students were Louis Anquetin, Emile Bernard, and Vincent van Gogh, who were soon to become his friends. All of them were fascinated by the art of Degas, Renoir, and Manet. Photographs from this period show Cormon surrounded by his students. Lautrec was constantly among them and always in the foreground. [oder war es Cormon, der immer im Vordergrund war??] Lautrec valued the technical proficiency that this teacher had to offer, who specialized in history and biblical themes and, in contrast to the dogmatic, academic painter Bonnat, brought fresh impetus to his pupils and encouraged them to paint outdoors. Lautrec spent five years studying in Cormon's studio despite the fact that he increasingly pursued a path leading away from his teacher's realism. During this period, Edgar Degas was his shining example, whose thematic range—women at their toilette, café concerts, brothels, washerwomen, and female dancers—motivated him, like this artist, to depict modern life.

For the time being, Lautrec had no residence of his own. Instead he stayed with friends, such as Albert Grenier and Henri Rachou, in the Montmartre quarter, which attracted many artists because of the low cost of living there. Lautrec fell in love the seventeen-year-old Suzanne Valadon, who likewise wanted to become a painter and, for the moment, earned her living as a model for the leading artists of the day. She also posed for an album of nude studies ("Album de poses"), which artists used as model studies for paintings. In 1883, Lautrec dared, for the first time, to participate at the official Paris Salon. However, the jury rejected his unconventional portrayal of fellow art student Dennery.

4 Lautrec as a master of disguise

Like his father before him, Lautrec loved to dress up in costumes. Playing roles was sometimes just for his private amusement, but it could also be related to masquerade balls, which were all the mode at the time in costume-crazy Paris. In these humoristic performances, Toulouse-Lautrec slipped alternately into the role of an altar boy, a Samurai soldier, a mosque crier, or a chansonnier. Often he had himself photographed in these costumes, either alone or in the company of artists and actors. Initially the majority of these pictures were taken by his friend Gauzi, later especially by Maurice Guibert.

The round two dozen photographs of choreographed scenes such as these that we know of go back to the French tradition of role-playing (costumes in keeping with characters of a novel or drama) as well as that of tableaux vivants or living pictures (imitating a painting composition with live figures). However, these photographs had neither artistic nor commercial value. They were only meant to remember moments of fun that Lautrec experienced in circles of his friends. These remarkable pictures document an important aspect of Lautrec's life and influence that has wrongly been largely neglected to date. They are photographs that shaped our idea of Lautrec as an eccentric—an image that is still very much alive today.

5 Lautrec's studio and his favorite models

Around 1886, Lautrec moved into his own apartment in Montmartre besides also getting his first own studio the quarter. The studio space was light with high ceilings and on the upper floor of a new building at 27 rue Tourlaque, on the corner of rue Caulaincourt. Numerous photographs depicting the interior of this room have survived. One of the most important among them was made by Lautrec's friend Maurice Guibert and shows the artist in 1894 working on the large-format picture *La Danse au Moulin Rouge*. In another exceptional photograph, the dancer with the nickname "Môme Formage" poses playfully in the nude with the brushes and palette in the artist's studio.

The photographs of Lautrec's studio likewise recorded that it contained a large number of picturesque props and collectors' items besides a lot of material and equipment for producing art. As decorative elements they crop up in several of his pictures. Additionally they were utilized for costume scenes.

Montmartre evolved into Lautrec's source of inspiration for motifs. He would ask young women whom he passed on the streets of the quarter if they would sit as models for him. The first of these was Suzanne Valadon, with whom he had a love affair until 1888. Another was the washerwoman Carmen Gaudin, whose red-blond hair so fascinated Lautrec that he painted several portraits of her. These intimate portrayals of the young woman, whom he mostly painted after photographs, reveal Lautrec's desire to capture the play of light and color in her hair in brief moments of self-absorption. Finally, the third model was the pretty Hélène Vary. Because Lautrec insisted on having a photograph of her as model for a portrait, he asked his friend François Gauzi to come by with a camera. He wrote to his friend: "Her Greek profile knows no equal."

6 The theater curtain rises

In 1893 Lautrec began his intensive study of the theater world. He designed posters and playbills for the various Paris theaters and portrayed famous contemporary actors and actresses, often with the aid of photographs. Author and veritable theater lover Romain Coolus very probably instilled an enthusiasm for classical theater in Lautrec. With this friend, Lautrec would visit the Comédie Française and the Opéra, or the small Parisian avant-garde theaters, such as the Théâtre Libre and the Théâtre de l'Œuvre.

On returning to his studio afterwards, he frequently recorded the visual impressions retained in his memory in lithographs and drawings. On the other hand, he drew on photographs for the sheet depicting the famous actress Sarah Bernhardt in 1893 in Racine's tragedy *Phèdre*. Likewise in 1900, when he went into raptures over a performance of the opera *Messaline* in Bordeaux, he asked a friend for access to his photographs so he could paint pictures of the brilliant rendition. Lautrec devoted whole groups of works to other actors too, as for example to Marcelle Lender, who was highly successful in comedies and vaudeville at the Théâtre des Variétés.

KUNSTMUSEUM BERN
MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS DE BERNE
MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS BERNE

HODLERSTRASSE 8–12 CH-3000 BERN 7
T +41 31 328 09 44 F +41 31 328 09 55
INFO@KUNSTMUSEUMBERN.CH WWW.KUNSTMUSEUMBERN.CH

MEDIEN-SERVICE
SERVICE DE PRESSE / PRESS OFFICE
T +41 31 328 09 19/44
PRESS@KUNSTMUSEUMBERN.CH

He was always greatly concerned about capturing the expression of movement and the attitudes of the actors and actresses. With infinite precision he studied the feelings they articulated in their faces, the effort they put into their work, their gestures, and mimicry, and characteristically portrayed them in the alternating glare of spotlights and dark shadows. By often visiting performances of the same play, Lautrec was able to observe the actresses at the most pithy or distinctive moment of their role interpretations. He would, however, first put all of this to paper or canvas in his studio, working from memory or using small sketches that he executed on site as aids.

7 Beautiful Misia's illustrious circle

Maria Sophie Godebska, called Misia, was born on March 30, 1872, in Saint Petersburg. She was born with a talent for the arts as the daughter of a Polish sculptor and the grandchild of a Belgian cellist. In 1893, the talented pianist married Thadée Natanson, the publisher of the journal *Revue blanche*. He introduced her to the artistic circles of Paris. From this moment onwards, Misia was patron and muse for many young artists, among them were Lautrec, Edouard Vuillard, and Félix Vallotton. Her stately home on rue Saint-Florentin was always open to artist friends. The couple even invited some of them to join them on their summer vacations at their rural residence in Villeneuve-sur-Yonne. Misia was a key figure in Parisian fashionable society. She knew how to inspire artistic talent and promote it like no other woman of her generation: this was true in regard to Mallarmé, Verlaine, Proust, Debussy, and Ravel, to name just a few imposing names.

In 1895, Lautrec depicted Misia in his poster for the *Revue blanche* and on the front cover of the portfolio of prints *L'Estampe originale*. Another important portrait of Misia is the enchanting oil painting that is part of the Kunstmuseum Bern Collection. It depicts the charismatic woman sitting at the grand piano in her Paris apartment. In her memoirs she mentions that Lautrec kept wanting to hear Beethoven's *Ruins of Athens*: "I had to play it to him continually because he claimed that it was his source of inspiration."

This painting conspicuously resembles a photograph by Vuillard, which shows Misia in the same pose playing the piano with the same art-nouveau wallpaper as a backdrop. Vuillard, who was in love with the beautiful Misia, made her immortal in numerous pictures and photographs. We can not definitely determine whether Lautrec's painting inspired Vuillard to take the photograph or whether it was the other way round. Other artists, such as Bonnard or Vallotton, portrayed Misia absorbed in her play and in this way made her, metaphorically speaking, into one of the most colorful personalities among the women of her time.

8 Fin de siècle "sporting life"

The late 19th century was marked by increased mobility. Traffic in the rail network and along the boat routes was getting increasingly heavier, and on the streets it was growing at an alarming rate. Besides the horse and coach and other horse-drawn vehicles, the automobile was becoming more and more prevalent, and bicycles grew ever more popular after Dunlop invented rubber tires in 1889.

New outdoor activities reflected the fascination for speed. Suddenly there were not only horse races, which had already been extremely popular in France for quite a while, but also car and bicycle racing. Racecourses were especially built for the new sports on the perimeters of the city. Lautrec loved to visit such events. A contemporary photograph illustrates that Lautrec, too, had the opportunity every now and again of enjoying a ride at breakneck speed thanks to the infatuation of many of his relations for automobiles. It was certainly not just a chance thing that, in 1896, someone convinced him to design a poster for a new kind of bicycle chain. [ist hier einfach eine neue Kette fürs Rad oder eine neue Art Kette fürs rad gemeint?]

Because he was physically challenged, he was unable to do most sport himself, which upset him greatly. Allegedly he once said to a friend that he would have become a sprinter instead of an artist if he had grown up with a healthy body. Thus the only sport he could still practice with ease was swimming, which he did enthusiastically throughout his life.

KUNSTMUSEUM BERN
MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS DE BERNE
MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS BERNE

HODLERSTRASSE 8 – 12 CH-3000 BERN 7
T +41 31 328 09 44 F +41 31 328 09 55
INFO@KUNSTMUSEUMBERN.CH WWW.KUNSTMUSEUMBERN.CH

MEDIEN-SERVICE
SERVICE DE PRESSE / PRESS OFFICE
T +41 31 328 09 19/44
PRESS@KUNSTMUSEUMBERN.CH

9 The veil dancer Loïe Fuller

One of the most exceptional dancers at the close of the 19th century was the American Loïe Fuller, who was incredibly successful at the Paris music hall, Folies Bergère. The focus of her “spéctacle optique” (optical spectacle), which she choreographed herself, was the so-called Fire Dance. In a performance, she tossed the tulle that veiled her with poles into the air, where she made it undulate while it was illuminated by spotlights that constantly changed color.

Lautrec, too, was an admirer of these unusual performances, which motivated him to make a whole series of works on them in 1893. All of them are based on the same drawing design, but they were printed in highly diverse color combinations. Additionally he worked the prints with watercolors, sometimes even using silver and gold dust. The print on show in the exhibition is one of the most elaborate impressions of the whole series.

10 The new box camera and snapshot aesthetics

George Eastman founded the Kodak Company in New York and produced cameras from 1888 onwards that could be easily used by amateurs. Kodak’s advertising slogan was: “You press the button—we do the rest.” Taking snapshot photographs evolved into a popular pastime due to these easy-to-use box cameras, thanks to the fact that they necessitated only a brief exposure time and that they used the novel invention of light-sensitive roll film using paper. It was no longer necessary to pose for a long period in a studio. The new camera allowed persons behind the camera to capture the world around them as it presented itself to them in ephemeral seconds.

It became possible to record one’s environment with all its constantly arbitrary particulars and imperfections—a source of fascination for many young artists. It inspired them to discover new ways of articulating themselves artistically, some of the criteria being steep perspectives and truncated figures. Many of them, such as Edouard Vuillard, Pierre Bonnard, or Félix Vallotton, owned box cameras themselves.

11 New inventions in printmaking

Staggering advances in technology and hitherto unknown methods of image dissemination led, at the close of the 19th century, to entirely novel means of artistic expression. In 1882, a new method of printing called chromotypography was discovered in France. This process made it possible, for the very first time, to publish high-quality color illustrations and prints in unlimited numbers. Simultaneously, there was a stark increase in the production of posters and other forms of advertising, with ever-more artists being commissioned to do the designs. Mostly this advertising material was still made using traditional lithography, which experienced an unforeseen upsurge as an autonomous form of artistic expression.

Toulouse-Lautrec was among the artists who avidly explored the options provided by the new means of graphic expression. He developed into a true master of the print medium, even more so than Theophile Steinlen or the members of the Nabis group of artists. As the exhibits in this room demonstrate, he often used photographs as models for producing prints, and, even in the cases where he did not, the prints testify to his ingenious “photographic eye,” which captured the lively hubbub of the streets and Paris’s nightclubs with extraordinary vivacity.

12 Nightlife in Montmartre’s red-light-district haunts

At the end of the 19th century, the Montmartre quarter morphed into the most trendy nightclub district in Paris. Until only shortly before it had still been to a great extent rural, comprising largely gardens, wooden houses, and a few windmills. One venue after the other opened its doors, be it a bar or a restaurant, a vaudeville or dance hall, and the public came in masses.

KUNSTMUSEUM BERN
MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS DE BERNE
MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS BERNE

HODLERSTRASSE 8–12 CH-3000 BERN 7
T +41 31 328 09 44 F +41 31 328 09 55
INFO@KUNSTMUSEUMBERN.CH WWW.KUNSTMUSEUMBERN.CH

MEDIEN-SERVICE
SERVICE DE PRESSE / PRESS OFFICE
T +41 31 328 09 19/44
PRESS@KUNSTMUSEUMBERN.CH

The most famous of the numerous new venues was the Moulin Rouge, which opened its doors in 1889 on boulevard de Clichy. It soon outdid all other entertainment venues, already on account of its size and luxurious fittings. The side facing the street featured a fake red windmill, and a gigantic wooden elephant in the garden could be transformed into a stage. From its very beginnings, Lautrec had his favorite table at the Moulin Rouge, where one could find him in the company of different people night after night. At the entrance hung his large-format poster, which he made for the establishment in 1891. It features two of the especially popular stage stars there: the dancer La Goulue (the ravenous lady), who had the habit of emptying the glasses of the guests; and her partner Valentin le desossé (the boneless one), whose thin body and extraordinary flexibility made him a legendary figure in the dance hall.

Since 1890, Lautrec turned into a chronicler of the colorful life of the night haunts and brothels. Numerous pictures and lithographs testify to the extent to which this flashy world fascinated Lautrec and they are among the best and most important works that he executed in his career as an artist.

13 The circus ring free for performers

Since his childhood the circus held a special attraction for Lautrec. When he moved to Montmartre, he was a regular among the audience of the Cirque Fernando (since 1897 Cirque Medrano), which was permanently stationed there. Not only the fast horses fascinated him when they galloped around the ring with women artistes balancing on their backs, but the clowns, too, especially the dark-skinned Rafael Padilla, whose stage name was "Chocolat," and his colleague George Footit.

In 1899, while inpatient at a psychiatric clinic where he should have been recuperating from alcohol abuse, Lautrec drew in color and lead pencils numerous circus scenes. The pictures are all astoundingly lifelike, despite the fact they were all made after memory. Again and again, he illustrated horses in a diversity of animal shows, alongside clowns, acrobats, and female dancers. These drawings were first published by Joyant, Manzi & Cie after the artist's decease under the title of Toulouse-Lautrec au cirque: Vingt-deux dessins aux crayons de couleur. In 1932, Librairie de France published a second edition with 17 reproductions.

14 Intimate life in the brothels

Several brothels were among the many amusement venues in the quarter of Montmartre where Lautrec was often a guest, sometimes for days on end. In this way, occasionally a mutual feeling of closeness developed between him and the prostitutes working there. This had a very positive effect on Lautrec's art. He was not only commissioned to paint 18th-century style medallions featuring the heads of the inmates of one of these richly decorated houses. He likewise felt inspired to paint the striking scenes of a brothel's reception room complete with the clients waiting for the ladies.

He portrayed the intimate life of the prostitutes too, from "levee" when the ladies got up late in the mornings, their breakfast and their toilette, through to when they received their clients again, the rituals of undressing and the exhaustion of arduous work. The 1896 series of lithographs bearing the title Elles demonstrates this most poignantly. In it Lautrec describes the daily routine of these women in the style of a modern photojournalist. Thanks to his familiarity with the prostitutes, his artistic eye was able to penetrate deep behind the scenes. Thus he dared in several pictures to unveil the forbidden love affairs that many of the women had with one another. But he always did this in a way that respected their situation. His brothel scenes reveal the forlornness of the women working there, their helplessness in face of a bourgeoisie that mercilessly exploited them.