

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Toulouse-Lautrec's Vivid World Comes Alive at the Polk Museum of Art

Lakeland, FL (January 19, 2021) – The Polk Museum of Art is thrilled to announce its newest — and largest ever — exhibition, “Toulouse-Lautrec and the Belle Époque,” opening February 13, 2021. Featuring more than 225 works, the exhibition offers visitors remarkable insider access to the world of Post-Impressionist artist Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, one of the greatest masters in the history of art.

This large-scale exhibition, which will occupy all three of the Museum’s main gallery spaces, aims to transport audiences back to France and into the so-called “Belle Époque,” or “Beautiful Age,” of late 19th century Paris. With its hundreds of works displayed throughout the Museum, this extraordinary exhibition will immerse visitors fully in the avant-garde culture of 1890s France through Toulouse-Lautrec’s illustrations of the period. Proclaimed as one of the greatest modern masters, Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901) created an incredible array of works over the course of a decade-long career, from paintings and drawings to his most famous and recognizable prints, posters, and advertisements. In his art, Toulouse-Lautrec depicted the vivid world of Paris at the turn of the 20th century, recreating the spaces, subjects, and entertainments he loved most.

“It is a privilege to handle the art of a master like Toulouse-Lautrec and to create a compelling narrative that re-introduces our community to an era like late 19th century Paris,” said Matt Belcher, the Museum’s preparator, who is responsible for the visual presentation of exhibitions at the Museum. “This is truly an impressive collection of work, the likes of which we haven’t seen in Central Florida or Polk County before.”

As Museum visitors will soon discover, Toulouse-Lautrec’s background and upbringing in aristocratic French society stands in stark contrast to the bohemian, anti-bourgeois world he depicted in his celebrated work. Stunted in his own growth as a child and shunned from elite society, Toulouse-Lautrec used commercial media — most notably advertising — to help collapse the lines that separated what was deemed “high” and “low” art of the time and share widely the bohemian, nonconformist side of Paris in which he felt most at home.

“Despite his noble lineage, Toulouse-Lautrec used his art to advertise the anti-elite world of artistic Paris. His Paris was the Paris of outsiders, creatives, and entertainers,” said Dr. Alex Rich, executive director and chief curator. “Toulouse-Lautrec is recalled today as the illustrator of Montmartre, the district of the Moulin Rouge, the cancan, and cabarets. With this spectacular exhibition, which has been in the works for nearly four years and delayed because of the pandemic, we cannot wait finally to welcome our audiences to a storied period where imaginations soared — and hope our visitors’ own imaginations soar in turn as they delve deeply into the world of the Belle Époque.”

“Toulouse-Lautrec and the Belle Époque” will be on view in the Museum’s Dorothy Jenkins Gallery, Gallery II, and Hollis Gallery from February 13 to May 23, 2021. The exhibition comes from the collection of Herakleidon Museum, Athena, Greece and is offered through [PAN Art Connections, Inc.](#) This exhibition is supported by the Museum’s Affiliate Partner, Florida Southern College, Exhibition Partner, the Ting Tsung and Wei Fong Chao Foundation, and Exhibition Sponsors: M. Craig Massey Exhibition Fund, R. Bruce and Melissa Rich Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, Visit Central Florida, Florida Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, City of Lakeland, and the Mayor's Council on the Arts.



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About the Polk Museum of Art at Florida Southern College

The Polk Museum of Art at Florida Southern College is a not-for-profit, teaching museum that seeks to enhance lives through inspirational and engaging art experiences for all. It is the largest and only nationally accredited visual arts organization in Polk County and the only Smithsonian Affiliate art museum in Central Florida. The Museum's COVID hours are Tuesdays–Saturdays 10 am to 3 pm and closed Sunday, Monday, and major holidays. The facility is handicapped accessible and special needs assistance is available. Admission is free, thanks to our strategic partner, The Ting Tsung and Wei Fong Chao Foundation.

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