

TOULOUSE LAUTREC EXHIBITION

SUNDAY, 11 SEPTEMBER – 2011

11.30AM -1PM

**The Courtauld Institute of Art
Somerset House Strand
London WC2R 0RN
Lunch after the exhibition is optional**



Jane Avril, the dancer, was one of the stars of the Moulin Rouge in the 1890s. Known for her alluring style and exotic persona, her fame was assured by a series of dazzlingly inventive posters designed by the artist Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Jane Avril became an emblematic figure in Lautrec's world of dancers, cabaret singers, musicians and prostitutes. She was also a close friend of the artist and he painted a series of striking portraits of her. These go beyond Toulouse-Lautrec's exuberant poster images of the start performer and give a more private account of Avril captured off-stage.

This landmark exhibition is the first to celebrate this remarkable creative partnership which has to come to define the world of the Moulin Rouge. Bringing together Toulouse-Lautrec's most famous paintings, posters and prints from international collections, it captures the excitement and spectacle of bohemian Paris in the 1890s.

Henri Marie Raymond de Toulouse-Lautrec-Monfa was born at the chateau de Malromé near Albi, Tarn in the Midi-Pyrénées région of France, the firstborn child of Comte Alphonse de Toulouse-Lautrec-Monfa and Adèle Tapié de Celeyran. He was therefore a member of an aristocratic family (descendants of the Counts of Toulouse and Lautrec and the Viscounts of Montfa, a village and commune of the Tarn department of southern France). A younger brother was also born to the family on 28 August 1867, but died the following year.

After the death of his brother his parents separated and a nanny took care of Henri through this time. At the age of 8, Henri left to live with his mother in Paris. Here he started to draw his first sketches and caricatures in his exercise workbooks. The family quickly came to realise that Henri's talent lay with drawing and painting, and a friend of his father named Rene Princeteau visited sometimes to give informal lessons. Some of Henri's early paintings are of horses, a speciality of Princeteau, and something that he would later visit with his 'Circus Paintings'. His legs ceased to grow, so that as an adult he was only 1.54 m (5 ft 1 in) tall, having developed an adult-sized torso, while retaining his child-sized legs.

He drawn Montmartre, an area of Paris famous for its bohemian lifestyle and for being the haunt of artists, writers, philosophers and prostitutes. When Moulin Rouge cabaret opened its doors, Toulouse-Lautrec was commissioned to produce a series of posters. His mother had left Paris and while Henri still had a regular income from his family, making posters offered him a living of his own. The cabaret reserved a seat for him, and displayed his paintings. 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, known as the outrageous La Goulue ("The Glutton"), who created the "French Can-Can"; and the much more subtle dancer Jane Avril.

An alcoholic for most of his adult life, Toulouse-Lautrec was placed in a sanatorium shortly before his death. He died from complications due to alcoholism and syphilis at the family estate in Malromé at the age of 36. He is buried in Verdélais.