

# Paris, the 1890s

Date

1997

Publisher

The Museum of Modern Art, Department  
of Prints and Illustrated Books

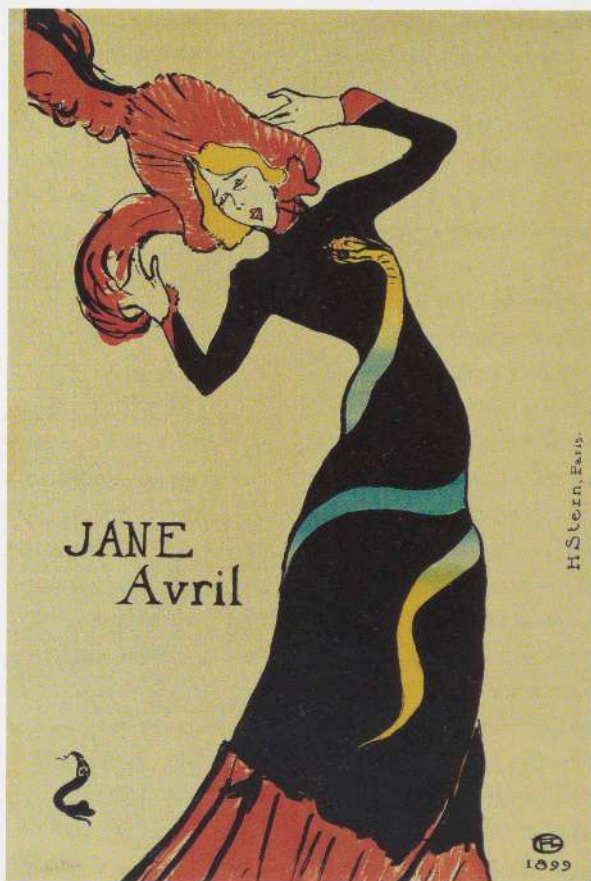
Exhibition URL

[www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/251](http://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/251)

The Museum of Modern Art's exhibition history—  
from our founding in 1929 to the present—is  
available online. It includes exhibition catalogues,  
primary documents, installation views, and an  
index of participating artists.



## Paris ~ The 1890s



1776 The last decade of the nineteenth century in the city of Paris conjures up an image of vitality and excitement—bright lights, cancan dancers, the Eiffel Tower, and the bohemian artists of Montmartre. The invention of electricity helped create the ambience of the City of Light in this *Belle Epoque*, and costume balls, street parades, dance halls, and *café-concerts* contributed to the *joie de vivre*. But at the same time, the industrial revolution had bred unrest caused by the threat of unemployment, the formation of trade unions, and the hostility of strikers. The arrest of Alfred Dreyfus in 1894 on charges of treason was also a source of bitter dissension until his vindication in 1906.

In the world of art, Impressionism had given way to several varied manifestations of Post-Impressionism. Paul Gauguin, Paul Cézanne, and Georges Seurat were creating seminal works. Japanese woodblock prints—with their focus on everyday subjects and their flat, vivid colors, linear contour patterns, and abrupt perspectives—were highly influential, as was the sinuous curvilinearity of Art Nouveau. In addition, a Symbolist element explored inner emotions and spirituality as an alternative to the outward exuberance of the period.

Printmaking reflected this variety of artistic impulses and added to them the technical innovations that had occurred in color lithography and the entrepreneurial initiative of inventive publishers devising new ways to find an audience for printed art. Prints were created as objects of private contemplation for the homes of a new

generation of bourgeois collectors. They also made their way into the public arena through posters, theater programs, sheet music, political journals, and other ephemera.

The abundance of such artistic activity in Paris in the 1890s constituted a "print boom." The medium displayed an energy and level of creativity that mark this period as a high point. Prints became vehicles for spreading the ideas of the avant-garde, and by reaching from the private home into the streets of Paris, they also contributed to the vitality of modern life at the dawn of the twentieth century.

Deborah Wye, Chief Curator  
Audrey Isselbacher, Associate Curator  
Department of Prints and Illustrated Books

For further reading:

- Patricia Eckert Boyer, ed., and Elizabeth Prelinger. *The Nabis and the Parisian Avant-Garde*. New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press and The Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, 1988.  
Phillip Dennis Cate, ed. *The Graphic Arts and French Society, 1871-1914*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press and The Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, 1988.  
Phillip Dennis Cate and Sinclair Hamilton Hitchings. *The Color Revolution: Color Lithography in France 1890-1900*. Santa Barbara and Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, Inc., and New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University, 1978.  
Colta Feller Ives. *The Great Wave: The Influence of Japanese Woodcuts on French Prints*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1974.  
Barbara Stern Shapiro et al. *Pleasures of Paris: Daumier to Picasso*. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1991.

Cover: Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. *Jane Avril*. 1899. Lithograph, 22 1/4 x 14 1/8" (56.0 x 35.7 cm). Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. All reproduced works are from the collection of The Museum of Modern Art, New York, with the exception of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's *Moulin Rouge—La Goulue*.

Brochure © 1997 The Museum of Modern Art, New York

This brochure is supported in part by a grant from *Wine Spectator Magazine*.

## Prints for the Private Collector

Under the impetus of imaginative publishers who both helped create and seized upon the new interest in prints, the private collector was offered a diverse array of lithographs, etchings, and woodcuts commonly issued in portfolios containing numerous works. Such portfolios included either the work of a single artist on a specific theme, or works by a variety of artists selected by the publisher to be presented under the umbrella of his particular portfolio concept. Although the content of a single-artist portfolio was more thematically unified, the ambitious "group" portfolios now offer valuable overviews of the avant-garde activities of the period. One of the most influential projects of this kind was *L'Estampe originale* (*The Original Print*), a series of nine portfolios available by subscription and published by André Marty, which together contained 95 prints by 74 artists, ranging from established masters to relative unknowns.

Many of the artists involved in printmaking were members of the group called the Nabis. Under the far-reaching influence of the British Arts and Crafts movement, they wished, among their other aims, to create objects for everyday use. This phenomenon generated additional formats for collectible printed art in Paris during the 1890s. Besides prints issued in portfolios, which might be kept in their original housing and not actually hung on the walls, the private collector was also offered large-scale prints, or *estampes murales* (wall prints), to decorate the

interior of his or her home. A four-panel folding screen created in lithography by Pierre Bonnard relates to this concept. Likewise motivated by the desire to integrate fine art with daily life at home, Maurice Denis executed a lithographed design for wallpaper.

In support of this high level of print collecting activity, specialized journals on the subject flourished, such as *L'Estampe et L'Affiche* (*The Print and the Poster*). These publications not only included valuable information for the private collector, such as listings of the latest print releases and articles on exhibitions and issues relevant to printmaking, but also commissioned and contained original prints within their pages. *L'Estampe et L'Affiche* even issued as a separate book critic André Mellerio's important treatise on color lithography, *La Lithographie originale en couleurs* (*The Original Color Lithograph*), with a lithographed cover and frontispiece by Pierre Bonnard. Although the true flowering of the French *livre d'artiste* (artist's book) came after 1900, a number of literary volumes embellished with artists' original prints were published and collected in Paris during the 1890s.

As a result of the energetic and creative efforts of artists and publishers alike, private collectors overcame a prejudice against printmaking as a merely reproductive or commercial medium, and took advantage of its uniquely democratic nature. The appreciation of the artistic possibilities intrinsic to distinct printing techniques led to a great flourishing of the medium, the ramifications of which continued into the next century.



**Pierre Bonnard.** *La Promenade des nourrices, frise de fiacres* (Nannies' Promenade, Frieze of Carriages), 1899. Lithograph, each panel 54 x 18½" (137.2 x 47.6 cm). Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund

**P**ierre Bonnard (1867–1947) was a member of the group of artists known as the Nabis (Hebrew for “prophets”). One of their aims was to synthesize fine and popular art in the form of objects used to enhance the home, such as the folding screen, a popular form of interior decoration in Europe at the turn of the century. Bonnard first executed a painted version of this screen in 1894 and later chose to recreate it as a lithograph (published in an edition of 110 copies), which

could reach a wider commercial audience. His ingenious composition exploits the screen’s unique format as the foreground group of children rolling hoops either accelerates forward or is restrained back depending upon how the screen is folded. The image’s asymmetry, flattened perspective, and exploitation of broad unprinted areas of paper exemplifies the Nabis’ reliance on the Japanese print as an artistic model.



**Edouard Vuillard.** *L'Avenue* (*The Avenue*) from the portfolio *Paysages et Intérieurs*. 1899. Lithograph, 12 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 16 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (32.2 x 41.5 cm). Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller

*Paysages et Intérieures* (*Landscapes and Interiors*), consisting of twelve lithographs and a lithographed cover, typifies the format of a single-artist portfolio unified around a specific theme. Edouard Vuillard (1868–1946), like his close friend Bonnard, was a member of the Nabi group and studied lithography in the Ancourt printing workshop, where Bonnard and Henri



**Edouard Vuillard.** *La Cuisinière* (*The Cook*) from the portfolio *Paysages et Intérieurs*. 1899. Lithograph, 14 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 10 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (36.0 x 27.6 cm). Gift of Mrs. Bliss Parkinson

de Toulouse-Lautrec often worked. The subject matter for this portfolio relates to the Japanese custom of creating suites of prints portraying outdoor scenes combined with intimate depictions of daily life. Considered Vuillard's most important work as a printmaker, it was published by Ambroise Vollard, one of the most celebrated publishers in the history of the modern period.



**Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.** *La Clownesse assise* (Seated Clowness) from the portfolio *Elles*. 1896. Lithograph, 20 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 15 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (53.0 x 40.3 cm). Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller



**Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.** *Femme au tub—Le tub* (Woman at the Tub—The Tub) from the portfolio *Elles*. 1896. Lithograph, 15 $\frac{1}{16}$  x 20 $\frac{1}{16}$ " (39.8 x 51.9 cm). Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller

**H**enri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864–1901), who gained instant celebrity for a poster advertising the Moulin-Rouge dance hall, went on to create 368 prints during his brief career. Known for his depictions of Paris's *demi-monde* (the fringes of acceptable society), Lautrec was commissioned by publisher Gustave Pellet to create a portfolio of ten prints with an illustrated cover and frontispiece, catering to the market for erotic prints. *Elles* ("they" in the French feminine

form), however, does not have blatant erotic content. It is thought to portray the domestic life of a lesbian couple, one of whom was the well-known performer Cha-u-ka-o (a phonetic transcription of *Chahut-chaos*, a form of the cancan). Lautrec's creativity with the lithography medium is evident in his brilliant layering of relatively transparent inks used in conjunction with the juxtaposition of dots of various colors.



Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Cover for *Yvette Guilbert* by Gustave Geffroy. 1894. Illustrated book with 16 lithographs, page: 14 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 15 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (37.5 x 32.5 cm). The Louis E. Stern Collection



Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Plate 11 from *Yvette Guilbert* by Gustave Geffroy. 1894. Illustrated book with 16 lithographs, page: 14 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 15 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (37.5 x 32.5 cm). The Louis E. Stern Collection

In 1894, the influential print publisher André Marty commissioned Lautrec to illustrate journalist Gustave Geffroy's text on the cabaret performer Yvette Guilbert, whose signature costume included long black gloves. Geffroy's text, rather than focusing on the subject herself, is a social commentary on the audience of the *café-concert*, a popular and inexpensive form of entertainment. Lautrec's illustrations do not literally refer to the text, but depict the singer in

various states of preparation for and poses during performance. The artist's intrusion of his images into the arrangement of the text, and the printing of both text and illustrations in the same olive tone, lend a conceptual and aesthetic unity to this work, which would influence book illustration throughout the modern period.



**Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.** Cover for the portfolio *L'Estampe originale*, no. 1. 1893. Lithograph, 23 $\frac{3}{16}$  x 33 $\frac{3}{16}$ " (59.8 x 86.0 cm). Grace M. Mayer Collection

Between 1893 and 1895, publisher André Marty issued *L'Estampe originale* (*The Original Print*), a series of nine group portfolios aimed at the upper-middle-class consumer market. Its subsequent commercial success encouraged the spread of print collecting's popularity, and made it a prototype for ensuing publications. *L'Estampe originale's* goal, as stated in its foreword by critic

and print advocate Claude Roger-Marx, was "to make these quarterly albums into a platform for new and individual talents, and to assemble an up-to-date body of work that will worthily represent the art of our time in the eyes of history." Lautrec's cover for the portfolio's first installment serves as an icon for the printmaking renaissance. It depicts celebrated dancer Jane



**Henri-Gabriel Ibels.** *Au cirque (At the Circus)*. 1893. Lithograph, 19  $\frac{1}{4}$  x 10  $\frac{1}{4}$ " (49.2 x 26.1 cm). Gift of Marcel LeComte

Avril, one of Lautrec's favorite subjects, studying a freshly pulled print as Père Cotelle, master printer for the Ancourt workshop, operates the press. This focus on the individually hand-pulled, as opposed to mass-produced, side of print-making reflects the respectability that this medium had newly attained through the combined energies of creative publishers and artists.



**Ker-Xavier Roussel.** *Dans la neige (In the Snow)* 1893. Lithograph, 13 x 7  $\frac{1}{4}$ " (33.0 x 19.6 cm). Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund



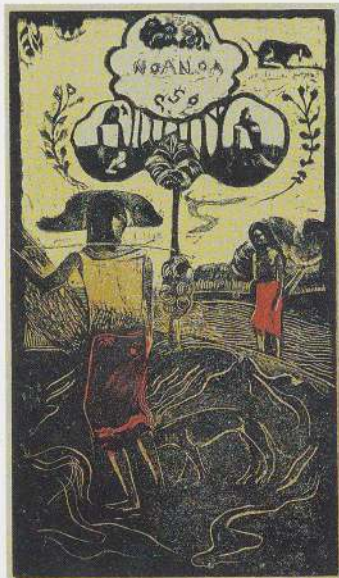
**Paul Ranson.** *Tigre dans les jungles (Tiger in the Jungle)*. 1893. Lithograph, 14  $\frac{1}{16}$  x 11  $\frac{1}{4}$ " (37.0 x 28.6 cm). Gift of Neal A. Prince.

Henri-Gabriel Ibels (1867–1936), Paul Ranson (1862–1909), and Ker-Xavier Roussel (1867–1944) were all members of the Nabi group, and as such represented the more avant-garde faction of *L'Estampe originale* artists. Their works illustrated here, from portfolio no. 1, are all color lithographs, mirroring Marty's partiality to that medium over etching, the previously preferred technique for artworks. Marty's predilection for color lithography would be crucial to its overcoming its identification as a predominantly commercial medium.



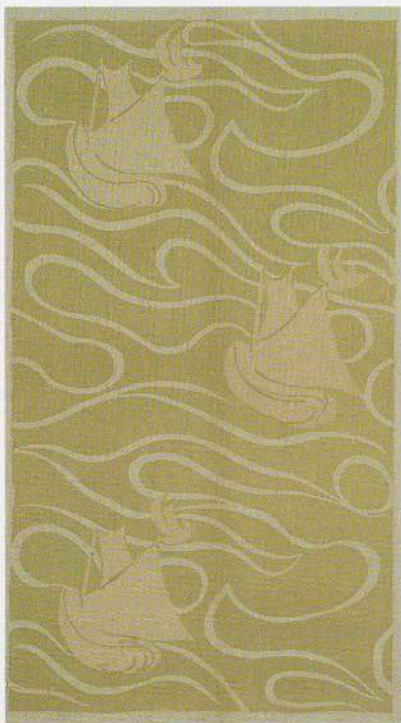
**Félix Vallotton.** *Le Mensonge* (*The Lie*) from the portfolio *Intimités*. 1897–98. Woodcut, 7 x 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (17.8 x 22.5 cm). Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller

Swiss artist Félix Vallotton (1865–1925), whose career was spent in Paris, is best known for his graphic black-and-white woodcuts depicting street scenes with social and political themes. *Intimités* (*Intimacies*), however—a portfolio of ten woodcuts portraying emotionally fraught encounters between a man and a woman in domestic settings—was the artist's most popular work. Published by the Parisian literary and artistic journal *La Revue Blanche* (*The White Review*), these prints include provocative titles appearing as captions within each image that give the series a distinctly narrative tone. Yet, rather than following one coherent story line, the illustrations exist as individual vignettes, each retaining a considerable measure of ambiguity as to its true narrative content.



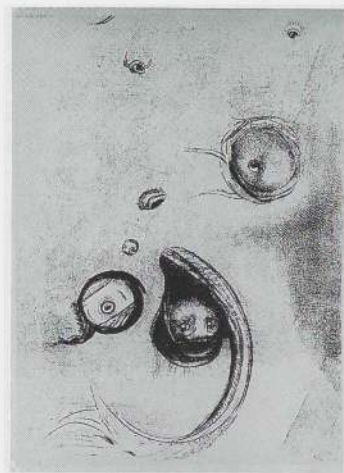
**Paul Gauguin.** *Noa Noa* (*Fragrant Scent*). 1894. Woodcut, 14 x 8 $\frac{1}{16}$ " (35.5 x 20.5 cm). Lillie P. Bliss Collection

Never published as Paul Gauguin (1848–1903) conceived it, *Noa Noa* (*Fragrant Scent*) was probably meant to be an illustrated book containing texts by the artist and by poet Charles Morice that would clarify the meaning of Gauguin's Tahiti paintings. The ten *Noa Noa* woodcuts, shown by the artist in his Paris studio in 1894 and reviewed in the popular press, had a formidable impact on the avant-garde. Gauguin's complex use of the woodcut medium, a combination of both sensitive and crude approaches to incising the wood-block, had no real precedent.



**Maurice Denis.** *Les Bateaux roses* (The Pink Boats). 1893. Lithographed design for wallpaper, 35 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 19 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (90.5 x 50.0 cm). Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund

Maurice Denis's (1870–1943) theoretical writings on art include the decidedly modernist assertion that a picture is basically a surface covered in colors arranged in a particular way. A principal spokesman for the Nabi group, and aligned with their penchant for decorative arts, Denis created four designs for wallpaper. Here the sinuous repetitive lines, matte colors, and flat treatment of modeling and perspective epitomize his own words and heighten a sense of pure decoration.



**Odilon Redon.** . . . et que des yeux sans tête flottaient comme des mollusques (. . . and eyes without heads floated like mollusks) from the portfolio *La Tentation de Saint-Antoine*. 1896. Lithograph, 12 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (31.0 x 22.5 cm). Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller

Odilon Redon (1840–1916), associated with the Symbolist movement, was a masterful lithographer whose brilliant use of black eclipsed the prevailing taste for colorful imagery. Symbolism's insistence on content drawn from deep emotional sources relates to the introspective nature of Redon's fantastic creations. This work is from Redon's third series illustrating Gustave Flaubert's *La Tentation de Saint-Antoine* (*The Temptation of Saint Anthony*), published by Ambroise Vollard as a portfolio of twenty-four lithographs. As was frequently the case with Vollard's overambitious undertakings, his intention of issuing these works also as an illustrated book was fulfilled only decades later, in 1939.



**Pierre-Auguste Renoir.** *Le Chapeau épinglé* (Pinning the Hat). 1898. Lithograph, 23 $\frac{1}{16}$  x 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (60.5 x 50.1 cm). Lillie P. Bliss Collection

Montmartre art dealer Ambroise Vollard (1867–1939), who quickly spent the income he realized selling modern paintings on producing lavish print publications, went on to become the single most important print publisher of his time. Encouraged by the success of Marty's *L'Estampe originale*, he too issued ambitious group portfolios. The title of the first, *L'Album des peintres-graveurs* (*The Album of Painter-Printmakers*), reflected his desire to commission prints by avant-garde painters and sculptors rather than by professional printmakers. Undaunted by its lack of commercial success, Vollard released a second portfolio with the revised title *L'Album d'estampes originales de la Galerie Vollard* (*The Album of Original Prints from the Vollard Gallery*), meant to have more popular appeal. Plans for a third were abandoned as Vollard began to focus on publishing portfolios of works by individual artists. For all of his publishing endeavors, Vollard had to tenaciously pursue artists, some of whom were not initially interested in making prints. A hallmark of



**Paul Cézanne.** *Les Baigneurs, grande planche* (*The Bathers, large plate*), for the portfolio *L'Album d'estampes originales de la Galerie Vollard*, no. 3. 1898. Lithograph, 16 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 26 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (43.6 x 52.5 cm). Lillie P. Bliss Collection

Vollard's publications, whether issued as individual prints, such as Pierre-Auguste Renoir's (1841–1919) *Le Chapeau épinglé* (*Pinning the Hat*), or in portfolios, was his close attention to the practical details of printmaking—only the finest papers and inks were used by the master craftsmen enlisted to print Vollard's editions. It was the publisher's intention that, enticed by seductive colors and sumptuous papers, the collector would purchase prints as more affordable substi-



**Paul Signac.** *Port de Saint-Tropez* (*Port of St. Tropez*) for the portfolio *L'Album d'estampes originales de la Galerie Vollard*, no. 3. 1898. Lithograph, 17 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 13 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (43.8 x 33.4 cm). Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund

tutes for unique works. Renoir's *Le Chapeau épinglé*, Paul Cézanne's (1839–1906) *Les Baigneurs* (*The Bathers*), and Paul Signac's (1839–1935) *Port de Saint-Tropez* (*Port of St. Tropez*), while representing different factions of the avant-garde, all embody the luxuriously printed surfaces characteristic of a Vollard publication.

## Prints for the Public Domain

In the 1890s, posters constituted the printed art format that reached the widest public. While private collectors sought them, especially in examples before the addition of advertising text, it was actually the average citizens walking the streets of Paris who were their designated audience. Posters had a profound impact on the way the city looked. Covering walls and kiosks, these large, brightly colored images created what has been called "the visual signature of the epoch."

Several factors cultivated this proliferation of poster art. Laws for posting bills had been relaxed, and designs were no longer subject to complex legal regulations and time-consuming approvals; advances in lithography printing allowed for a range of colors and enlarged formats; a burgeoning capitalism needed new markets, which fostered advertising; and finally, Paris was the center for avant-garde art, and there were many artists there who needed the income and desired the recognition that poster commissions could bring.

Posters were created for a variety of commercial products, from milk to cigarette papers to champagne. Literary and artistic journals as well as newspapers increased readership through such advertisements. The latest novels and art exhibitions were announced in the same way. And popular entertainment inspired some of the most memorable posters of all. Striking images celebrated the picturesque musical establishments of the period and their flamboyant

performers, whose fame has long outlived them through these vivid characterizations.

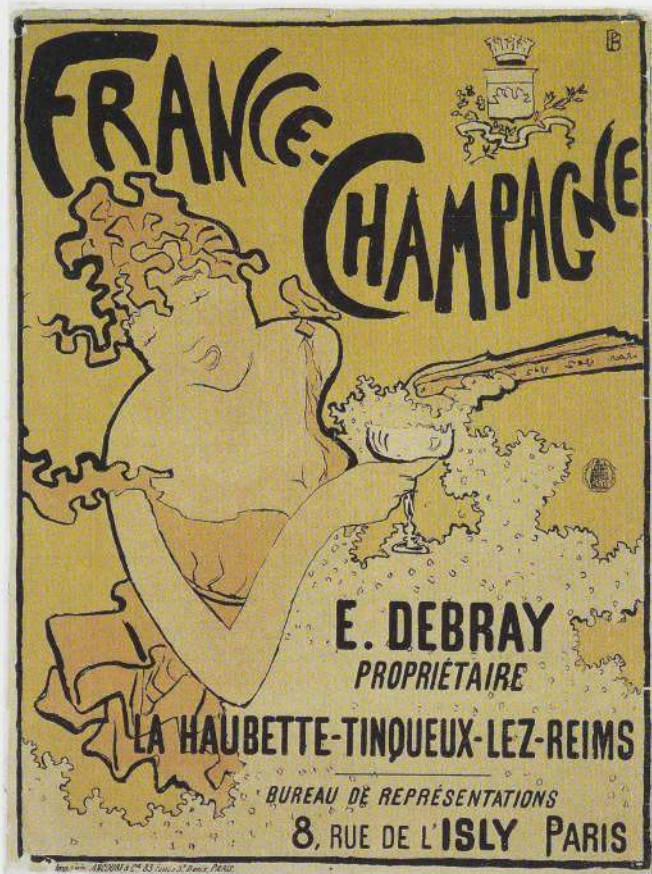
More serious, legitimate theater productions were also promoted by means of posters, while the programs given out at these events were similarly artist-designed. Such imaginative endeavors were usually conceived by resourceful theater directors who traveled in avant-garde circles. Artists were also invited to decorate sheet music for children's piano books, the music of dance hall performers, and even songs decrying social injustice. Many were in sympathy with working-class concerns, and their prints reflect the disparities between the economic classes and the strikes and riots that were commonplace. In addition, the Dreyfus Affair, with its divisiveness, generated artist adherents on both sides.

In bringing to a broad public the innovations of a radical and often misunderstood avant-garde, printed art in this period achieved one of its great distinctions. The intermingling of the so-called "high" culture of artistic ideas with the "low" culture of advertising foreshadowed many of modern art's developments in the century to come. In printed art in particular, the 1990s provide an interesting parallel in artists' current efforts to reach out to the general public in the form of billboards, subway placards, and even T-shirts. More generally, however, examples can be found throughout the twentieth century of an active give-and-take between the visual components of popular art forms and those of the fine arts.



Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. *Moulin Rouge—La Goulue*. 1891. Lithograph, 77½ x 48½" (196.8 x 123.2 cm). Courtesy Wine Spectator Collection

*Moulin-Rouge—La Goulue* was the first of thirty posters created by Lautrec. While his subjects would eventually include the advertising of new books, current art exhibitions, and commercial products, he is best known for his portrayals of the Parisian entertainment world, which epitomized the glittering period of the 1890s. Unlike previous poster designers, Lautrec chose to focus attention on specific entertainers, an advertising innovation that surely contributed to the celebrity of *La Goulue* ("The Greedy One"), a dancer known for her sensuous version of the cancan, and her partner *Le Désossé* ("The Boneless One"), whose supple movements earned him his nickname. Here they beckon spectators to the *Moulin Rouge*, a cabaret and dance hall with a windmill structure, which became a landmark in the bohemian neighborhood of Montmartre.



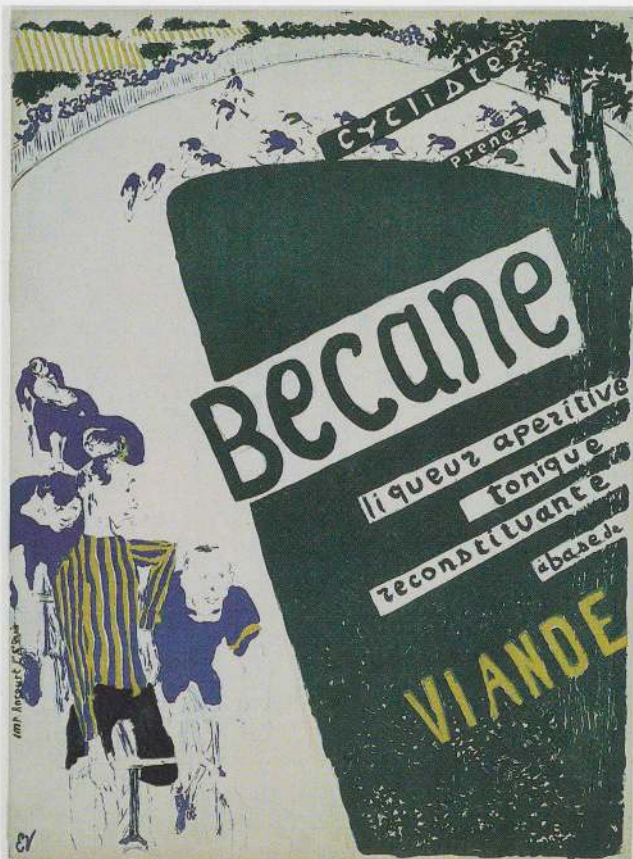
**Pierre Bonnard.** *France-Champagne*. 1891. Lithograph, 30½ x 22½". Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund

Pierre Bonnard's commission for *France-Champagne* came very early in his career and signaled to him that earning a living as an artist (rather than as a lawyer, which his family preferred) might be feasible. The lively and engaging qualities found here relate to the vibrant spontaneity found in the work of Jules Chéret (1836–1932), the father of the French advertising poster. The device of employing a scantily clad young woman to sell a product is one that continues today. Yet the highly expressive use of color and the decorative patterning of lines and flat shapes take the subject beyond observable reality and emphasize the overall design of the composition. Such an emphasis was found among many avant-garde artists influenced by Paul Gauguin's symbolic use of artistic elements.

Amidst the overall compositional structure and gray color that dominate this poster, one's focus must adjust to find the figure of a woman holding a copy of the celebrated artistic and literary journal *La Revue Blanche*, a street urchin gesturing toward the magazine, and another newsstand customer shown from behind. The letters of the title are also subjected to compositional demands as they wrap around and merge with the background and foreground. Throughout, Bonnard abstracts his subject, emphasizing visual patterns. The woman depicted here is probably Misia Natanson, wife of one of the three Natanson brothers who edited and published this journal whose title, *Blanche* (white), referred to the sum of all colors in the spectrum, signifying an openness to varied opinions. The journal featured the work of Vuillard, Vallotton, and Lautrec, among others, as well as that of literary and theatrical luminaries of the day.



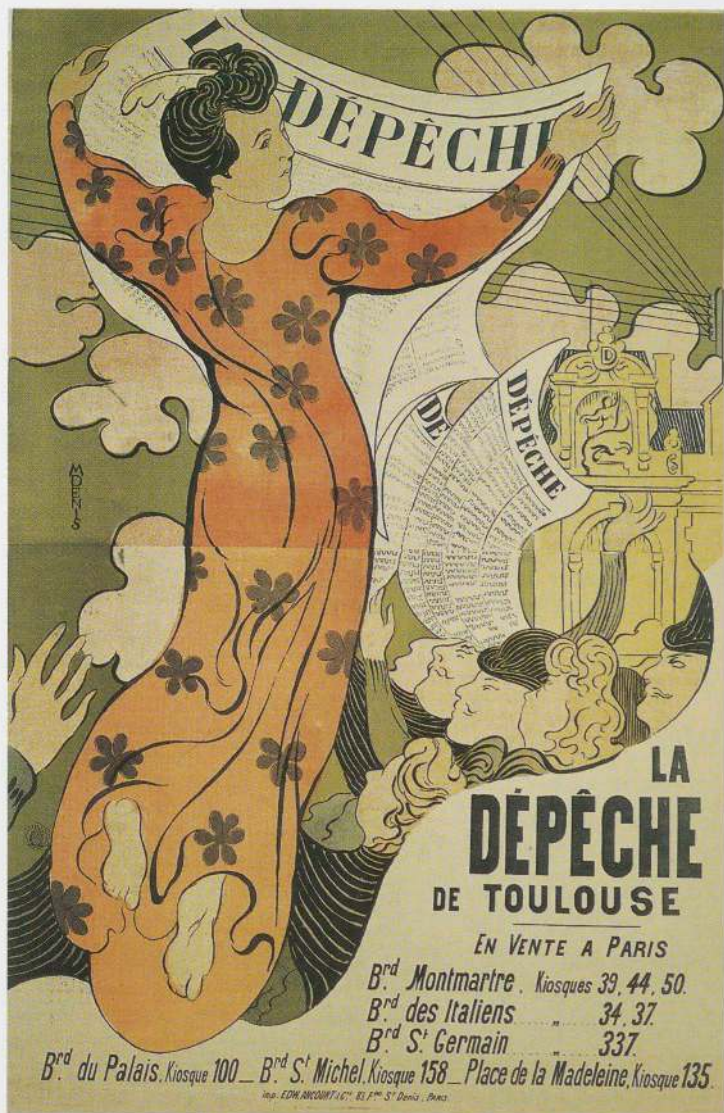
Pierre Bonnard. *La Revue Blanche* (The White Review). 1894. Lithograph, 30<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 23<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub>" (77.3 x 58.9 cm). Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund



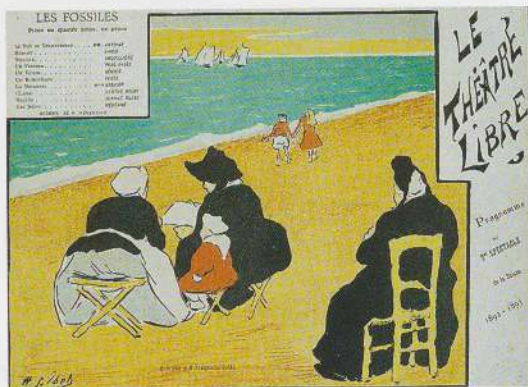
Edouard Vuillard. *Bécane*. c. 1894. Lithograph, 30½ x 22¼" (81.0 x 59.5 cm).  
Gift of Arnold Ross

Like his friends and fellow Nabis Bonnard, Denis, and Roussel, Vuillard made prints in numerous formats during this period, but he accepted only one poster commission. In this advertisement for the commercial product *Bécane*, a fortified drink for sports enthusiasts, Vuillard brings together both the visual concerns of the avant-garde and the specific requirements of commodity marketing. The word *Bécane* makes a bold and immediate impact, with large letters and central placement on a black background. Only secondarily does the viewer comprehend the imagery of a bicycle race track, depicted by means of a radical diagonal and acutely distorted perspective—characteristics found in Japanese woodblock prints. Vuillard also creates an impression of speed, with cyclists pedaling to the forefront at left and seemingly shouting “*Bécane!*” The message is that this product and winning go hand-in-hand.

As the leading theoretician of the Nabis, Denis formulated principles that would serve as tenets of abstraction in modern art. "Remember that a picture, before being a horse, a nude or some kind of anecdote, is essentially a flat surface covered with colors assembled in a certain order," he said. In this poster, which advertises the newspaper *La Dépêche de Toulouse* for a Paris audience, he uses curving shapes and a graceful linearity to create an ethereal effect and foster the idea of a soaring freedom of the press. The proliferation of newspapers and journals at the time was in part due to new laws in the 1880s which lifted restrictions on the press. Some innovative publishers, as in the case of *La Dépêche*, played a further patronage role by both providing exhibition spaces for artists in their offices, and issuing prints for sale.



Maurice Denis. *La Dépêche de Toulouse* (The Toulouse Dispatch). 1892. Lithograph, 52¼ x 34½" (132.7 x 87.7 cm). Acquired by exchange

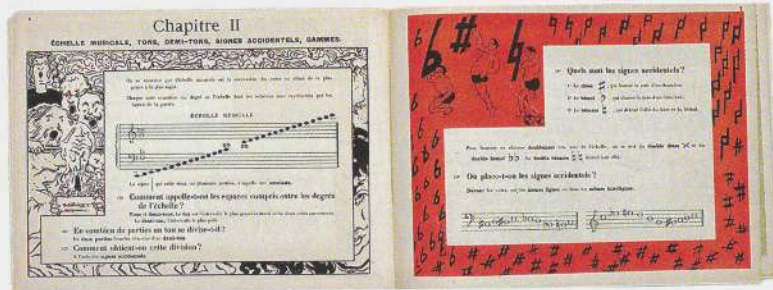


Henri-Gabriel Ibels. *Les Fossiles (The Fossils)* by François de Curel, for *Le Théâtre Libre*. 1892–93. Lithographed theater program, 9 x 11" (23.0 x 28.0 cm). Linda Barth Goldstein Fund

For the 1892–93 season of the experimental Théâtre Libre, Ibels was commissioned by its progressive director, André Antoine, to illustrate eight programs. This theater championed a naturalist style and themes of the common man, and Antoine invited a range of artists to design programs for its productions. For Ibels in particular, scenes of everyday life, sometimes with a distinctly political bent, were a frequent artistic subject. Here, the shadow theater, a popular form of entertainment, influenced his silhouetted figures depicted on a summer outing.

While music, with its suggestive rather than descriptive nature, was of great symbolic interest to the Nabi artists, Bonnard decorated this children's piano book, based on the Solfeggio instruction technique, as a family project. Undertaken with com-

poser Claude Terrasse, the husband of his younger sister, this small volume was published in an edition of 2,000. Each page is filled with clever illustrations meant to keep a child's attention during practice.



Pierre Bonnard. *Petit Solfège illustré (Little Illustrated Solfeggio)* by Claude Terrasse. 1893. Illustrated book with 32 photolithographs, page: 8 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (21.1 x 28.5 cm). The Louis E. Stern Collection



Félix Vallotton. *La Charge* (*The Charge*). 1893. Woodcut,  $7\frac{1}{8} \times 10\frac{1}{4}$ " (20.0 x 26.0 cm). Larry Aldrich Fund

In *La Charge*, Vallotton's novel perspective, emphasizing the two-dimensional surface of the sheet, demonstrates his interest in Japanese woodblock prints. It also serves to bring the viewer into the midst of this scene of police brutally attacking street demonstrators. Vallotton was one of many artists who sympathized with the frustrations of workers over economic and social injustices. He often chose socially charged subjects for his prints and for illustrations in the many socialist and anarchist journals of the day.



Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen. *Lettre d'un Gréviste* (*Letter from a Striker*). 1893. Lithographed and stenciled music sheet,  $10\frac{1}{8} \times 13\frac{1}{4}$ " (27.3 x 34.8 cm). The Ralph E. Shikes Fund

Théophile Steinlen (1859–1923) was a prodigious printmaker who created hundreds of individual prints, journal illustrations, posters, and sheet music covers. He made this lithograph for the creative and enterprising music publisher Georges Ondet, who commissioned many artists as illustrators. Typical of Steinlen's sympathies for the downtrodden, this subject concerns a striking worker singing to his sweetheart with conflicted sentiments of pride and resignation.



Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Le Photographe Sescou (The Photographer Sescou)*, 1896. Lithograph, 24 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 30 $\frac{1}{16}$ " (61.3 x 78.5 cm). Grace M. Mayer Collection

Although Lautrec often employed a flattened-out perspective, patterned and abruptly cropped shapes, and other visual components of Japanese prints, his work included an insightful sense of caricature as well. He designed this advertisement for his friend, photographer Paul Sescou. While it was typical to include a beautiful woman to sell a product, Lautrec satirizes Sescou, who was a well-known womanizer.

Sescou's client, a fashionably dressed woman, seems to be fleeing in fright, while a grotesque shape on the right (actually the subject of the poster) suggests an animal about to strike. In fact, Sescou was not primarily a portrait photographer, but rather specialized in reproducing paintings. He was occasionally employed by Lautrec and appears in several of the artist's drawings and prints.

Lautrec was of aristocratic background, but his physical handicaps may have led him to seek the camouflage that could be provided by the exotic types who frequented music halls, cafés, and even brothels. He was equally entrenched, however, in the artistic and intellectual life of the period. This poster, in its style and subject, brings together those overlapping worlds. Commissioned for the cabaret *Divan Japonais* (Japanese Settee), which was decorated with lanterns and other Japanese motifs then in vogue, the image silhouettes dancer Jane Avril in the audience. To her right is the critic Edouard Dujardin, who championed the abstracting characteristics of Japanese prints. Yvette Guilbert, another celebrated performer, is on stage, recognizable by her long black gloves.



Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. *Divan Japonais* (Japanese Settee). 1893. Lithograph, 31 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 23 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (80.3 x 60.7 cm). Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund



**Pierre Bonnard.** *La Petite Blanchisseuse* (*The Laundry Maid*) from *L'Album des peintres-graveurs*, 1896. Lithograph, 11¼ x 7¼" (29.5 x 20.0 cm). Gift of Victor S. Riesenfeld

Produced in conjunction with the exhibition  
 Paris—The 1890s  
 June 19 to September 2, 1997

**The Museum  
 of Modern Art**  
 Department of Prints  
 and Illustrated Books