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NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY NEWS

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TOULOUSE-LAUTREC PRINTS ON VIEW AT THE BLOCK MUSEUM THIS WINTER
Northwestern exhibition curated by S. Hollis Clayson and undergraduate art history class

- Free exhibition offers new perspective on world-renowned modern artist
- Exhibition highlights the final decade of Toulouse-Lautrec's life with 18 lithographic works
- Work represents prints, celebrity culture and the entertainment district of late 1800s Paris
- Professor Clayson to present overview of Toulouse-Lautrec's work and life at 5 p.m. Jan. 21

EVANSTON, Ill. --- The work of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, one of the best-known and widely-reproduced artists of modern times, gets a fresh look at Northwestern University's Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art this winter in an exhibition curated by undergraduate students and developed in a course taught by renowned 19th-century French art expert, S. Hollis Clayson.

Free and open to the public, "Toulouse-Lautrec Prints: Art at the Edges of Modernity" opens Jan. 13 and runs through April 19, 2015. This exhibition highlights the final decade of Toulouse-Lautrec's life with a focused selection of 18 lithographic works, including public posters and advertisements, publications and privately circulated portfolios.

The works have been lent by Chicago-based collectors Andra and Irwin Press, supporters of the Block Museum who have bequeathed a significant number of works from their collection to the museum. Irwin Press is a Northwestern alumnus and member of the Block Board of Advisors and a professor emeritus of the University of Notre Dame.

Showcasing the complexity and variety of Toulouse-Lautrec's production, this exhibition presents his work against the rise of printmaking, celebrity culture and the entertainment district in Paris in the late 1800s. It offers a fresh view of this extremely talented artist, a quirky aristocrat who walked a fine line by depicting the edges of respectable society.

"This exhibition reveals a Toulouse-Lautrec the public may not know -- a deft and innovative printmaker whose work had an amazing range in terms of audience and style," explains S. Hollis Clayson, professor of art history and the Bergen Evans Professor in the Humanities in the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences. "Through the lithographs in this exhibition, viewers will see approaches ranging from caricature to delicate portraiture and forms ranging from flat un-modulated color to delicate atmospheric spattered ink. Toulouse-Lautrec worked for many different audiences, from workers looking at street posters to elite art connoisseurs."

Part of what sets this exhibition apart is that it has been curated by students in the undergraduate art history course, "Museums: The Fin de Siècle Poster." Guided by Professor Clayson, the class of 13 students worked collaboratively on exhibition research, thesis and

design, including a class visit to the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City to study its current exhibition, “The Paris of Toulouse-Lautrec: Prints and Posters.” (For more information on the MoMA exhibition in New York, which runs through March 22, 2015, visit <http://www.moma.org/visit/calendar/exhibitions/1493>.)

Discussing the experience, student Jesse Itskowitz, Northwestern class of 2015 says, “it's scary to have in your hands some of the most important works in modern art, but working on this exhibition has been an absolute thrill. Professor Clayson is one of the sharpest and most thoughtful people with whom I've had the opportunity to work while at Northwestern.”

On Wednesday, Jan. 21 at 5 p.m., the Block will host “An Evening with Toulouse-Lautrec,” which will feature Professor Clayson providing an overview of Lautrec’s career and the exhibition, after which each student-curator will give a brief presentation. The event is free and open to the public.

Chicago philanthropists Andra and Irwin Press lent works from their collection for this exhibition to support teaching and learning from art at Northwestern University. Irwin Press (Weinberg ’59) comments: “We were thrilled when Professor Holly Clayson proposed an undergraduate class curating an exhibition with a number of our original posters and lithographs by Toulouse-Lautrec. When the class visited us in October to view and select the pieces, the students’ excitement in the artist’s work up close was palpable. We can’t wait to see how they interpret his work, and we’re immensely gratified that students and Block visitors will share our enthusiasm for this brilliant, unique artist.”

This exhibition continues an initiative started by the Block’s Director Lisa Corrin in 2012 to provide gallery space and museum resources to student-curated exhibitions, including exhibitions that are developed as part of Northwestern courses. The initiative underscores the Block’s role as a teaching museum, offering emerging scholars and curators an opportunity to jump-start their careers.

Recently, an exhibition curated by two Northwestern Ph.D. candidates in art history, Jill Bugaski and John Murphy, “The Left Front: Radical Art in the ‘Red Decade,’ 1929-1940,” won the 2014 American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) Award of Merit and is scheduled to open at the Grey Art Gallery, New York University on Jan. 13, 2015.

“These student-curated exhibitions provide a space for experimentation, innovation and fresh perspectives. The Block is proud to showcase the ideas of the next generation of scholars and curators and to provide the public with an opportunity for these thought-provoking encounters with art,” states Lisa Corrin, The Ellen Philips Katz Director of the Block Museum. “We are grateful to Andra and Irwin Press for their commitment to making accessible, now and in the future, great works of art that will support teaching across the disciplines at Northwestern.”

POSTERMANIA AND HENRI DE TOULOUSE-LAUTREC

In the final decades of the 19th century, large brightly colored posters advertising commercial entertainments began appearing on Paris city streets. This moment of “affichomanie,” or “postermania,” transformed the urban environment, adding advertising and intense color to a world that had long been dominated by monochromatic public notices and conventional art.

Postermania set the stage for the celebrity of a singular French artist, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864–1901). Already emerging as a specialist in the representation of the marginal pleasures of Paris starting in 1886 in his paintings and drawings, Toulouse-Lautrec struck gold in 1891 with his first lithographic poster. It was a 5-foot-high multicolor advertisement for Le Moulin Rouge, a nightclub in the city’s brash entertainment district of Montmartre. Le Moulin Rouge was the first Parisian club built to explicitly feature tawdry performances with a bourgeois audience in mind.

These large-scale original posters and smaller reproductions appealed to art buyers, alongside the parallel vogue for smaller prints in various media in portfolios. Prints soon became inescapable as more artists turned to lithography, which also attracted growing numbers of art collectors.

This exhibition has been curated by Northwestern students in Professor S. Hollis Clayson’s Weinberg College undergraduate art history course “Museums: The Fin de Siécle Poster.” The Block Museum thanks Andra and Irwin Press for graciously lending from their collection, a significant group of which is bequeathed to the Block.

CONSTRUCTION AND PARKING INFORMATION

The Block Museum is located at 40 Arts Circle Drive, on Northwestern University’s Evanston campus. A long-term construction project has limited access to Arts Circle Drive. For the most up-to-date directions, visit www.blockmuseum.northwestern.edu/visit/directions-and-parking/index.html.

Parking in the lakeside garage and lot directly south of the museum is always free after 4 p.m. on weekdays and all day on weekends.

ABOUT THE MARY AND LEIGH BLOCK MUSEUM OF ART

The Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art is the fine art museum of Northwestern University. It serves the academic and cultural needs of the University and Chicago area community with thought-provoking exhibitions, a rich and diverse permanent collection, dynamic programs, and classic and contemporary film screenings at Block Cinema.

Celebrating its 35th anniversary in 2015, the Block is a dynamic, imaginative teaching and learning resource that aims to inspire a new generation of artists, scholars and arts professionals. It is free and open to all, and visitors are invited to participate in experiential learning opportunities that bridge the classroom and the world beyond the campus. Learn more at www.blockmuseum.northwestern.edu.

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