

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Henri de TOULOUSE-LAUTREC (Albi 1864 - Saint-André-du-Bois 1901)

Sheet of Studies of Horses and Greyhounds

Pencil with touches of black ink.

Faintly stamped with the Toulouse-Lautrec studio stamp (Lugt 1338 or 5894) at the lower right.

200 x 310 mm. (7 7/8 x 12 1/4 in.)

Throughout his youth Toulouse-Lautrec made countless drawings of horses, with and without riders, as well as studies of hunting dogs and birds, in his school notebooks, while some of his earliest attempts at painting were portraits of horses. Raised in a family where riding and hunting were important activities, Lautrec was himself a horseman, although his physical deformities meant that he was unable to be very active. Drawn in 1881, when he was seventeen years of age, the present sheet is a fine example of the young artist's evident gifts as a draughtsman, even before he had begun a formal period of training in the Parisian studio of his first teacher, the equestrian and animal painter René Princeteau. As the scholar Götz Adriani has pointed out, Lautrec's *'early work of 1879-1881 reflects very clearly his family milieu, characterized by hunting, horses, packs of hounds, falcons bred specially for the Count, whippers-in and coaches.'* As the same writer has noted of the present drawing in particular, *'Everything is in motion on this sheet, which is filled to the edges with detail studies. The leaping horses and greyhounds are made to resemble each other as if undergoing a sort of metamorphosis.'*

Many years later, Toulouse-Lautrec may have referred back to this youthful drawing when he came to design the lithograph *Le Jockey* in 18983. This was part of a series of colour prints of racing scenes commissioned from the artist of which, however, only four lithographs were eventually produced and only *Le Jockey* was ever actually published. *Le Jockey* depicts a horse and jockey seen from behind, and the attitude of the galloping horse in the print is akin to that of the horse at the centre of the present sheet.

The present sheet was probably acquired directly from the artist by the Parisian publisher Gustave Pellet (1859-1919), who published some of the finest colour lithographs by Toulouse-Lautrec, as well as works by Louis Legrand, Maximilien Luce, Charles Maurin, Jean-François Raffaelli, Felicien Rops and Paul Signac. This drawing was inherited by his daughter Maud Exsteens-Pellet and son-in-law Maurice Exsteens (1887-1961), who had taken over Pellet's gallery and publishing business, and was later acquired by the pioneering German-born Swiss industrialist and collector Robert von Hirsch (1883-1977).

Exhibitions

Paris, Galerie Marcel Guiot, *Exposition Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec*, 1928, no.90; Possibly Berlin, Galerie Alfred Flechtheim, *Seit Cézanne in Paris*, 1929, no.180 ('*Pferdestudie. Zeichnung*'); Tübingen, Kunsthalle Tübingen, *Toulouse Lautrec: Gemälde und Bildstudien*, 1986-1987, no.7; Hamburg, Hamburger Kunsthalle, *Aus der Werkstatt des Künstlers: Druckgraphik und vorbereitende Zeichnungen der Sammlung Hegewisch*, 2000; Hamburg, Hamburger Kunsthalle, *Von Delacroix bis Cézanne: Französische Zeichnungen des 19 Jahrhunderts aus der Sammlung Hegewisch und dem Kupferstichkabinett der Hamburger Kunsthalle*, 2004-2005.

Literature:

Maurice Joyant, *Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec 1864-1901: Dessins - estampes - affiches*, Paris, 1927, p.182 ('*Chevaux et chiens*'); Maurice Joyant, ed., *Dessins de maitres français IX. Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec: Soixante-dix reproductions*, Paris, 1930, no.16, pl.16; Geneviève Dortu, *Toulouse-Lautrec et son oeuvre*, New York, 1971, Vol.V, pp.342-343, no.D. 2.063; Götz Adriani, *Toulouse-Lautrec*, London, 1987, pp.32-33, no.7; Bernard Denvir, *Toulouse-Lautrec*, London, 1991, p.42, fig.26; Sebastian Giesen, *Aus der Werkstatt des Künstlers: Druckgraphik und vorbereitende Zeichnungen der Sammlung Hegewisch*, exhibition catalogue, 1999-2000, p.98, illustrated p.46.

Artist description:

Born into an aristocratic family in Albi in the south of France, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec drew from an early age. He studied in Paris with René Princeteau and Léon Bonnat before enrolling in the art school in Montmartre established by the painter Fernand Cormon, where among his fellow pupils were Vincent Van Gogh, Emile Bernard and Louis Anquetin. Although not a Parisian by birth, Lautrec became indelibly associated with the city and its inhabitants, whose days and nights he recorded in numerous amusing and expressive drawings. He was particularly drawn to the dance halls, cabarets, theatres, restaurants and cafés of Montmartre, where he lived from 1884, enjoying a decadent lifestyle. He produced lithographs for *Le Mirliton*, the magazine published by the performer Aristide Bruant, and portrayed many of the singers and dancers who could be found at such venues as the Moulin de la Galette and the Moulin Rouge.

Toulouse-Lautrec first established a reputation as a painter (especially of portraits) and illustrator, exhibiting at the Salon des Indépendants in 1889 and 1890. He also began producing a number of lithographic posters for the Moulin Rouge, which proved very successful. Lautrec continued to design posters for other clients, and at his first commercial exhibition at the Boussod and Valadon Gallery in 1893, half of the works shown were posters. The artist eventually produced a total of thirty-two posters, while also receiving commissions for lithographs and book illustrations. A second solo exhibition took place at the Galerie Manzi-Joyant in Paris in 1896, followed by one at the Goupil Gallery in London the next year. Prone to excessive drinking, Lautrec suffered signs of mental illness in his later life, due to alcoholism and syphilis. He was confined to a sanatorium for several weeks in 1899, during which he produced a series of drawings on circus themes. He remained very weak after his release from the hospital and suffered two strokes before his death in September 1901, at the age of thirty-six.

The significance and value of Toulouse-Lautrec's extensive and varied output as a painter, draughtsman, lithographer and poster designer remained largely unrecognized throughout his life, outside of a small circle of friends, collectors and connoisseurs. Although an exhibition was mounted in Toulouse in 1907 and a monograph devoted to the artist appeared in 1913, his oeuvre did not receive much posthumous public recognition until the 1920s, when the artist's mother donated a large collection of his work to establish the Musée Toulouse-Lautrec in his birthplace of Albi. A major retrospective at the Louvre in 1931 that included well over four hundred works cemented his reputation.