**Toulouse-Lautrec, Henri de**

**Toulouse-Lautrec, Henri de** (1864-1901). Many immortal painters lived and worked in Paris during the late 19th century. They included Degas, Cйzanne, Gauguin, Van Gogh, Seurat, Renoir, and Toulouse-Lautrec. Toulouse-Lautrec observed and captured in his art the Parisian nightlife of the period.

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec was born on Nov. 24, 1864, in Albi, France. He was an aristocrat, the son and heir of Comte Alphonse-Charles de Toulouse and last in line of a family that dated back a thousand years. Henri's father was rich, handsome, and eccentric. His mother was overly devoted to her only living child. Henri was weak and often sick. By the time he was 10 he had begun to draw and paint.

At 12 young Toulouse-Lautrec broke his left leg and at 14 his right leg. The bones failed to heal properly, and his legs stopped growing. He reached young adulthood with a body trunk of normal size but with abnormally short legs. He was only 1.5 meters tall.

Deprived of the kind of life that a normal body would have permitted, Toulouse-Lautrec lived wholly for his art. He stayed in the Montmartre section of Paris, the center of the cabaret entertainment and bohemian life that he loved to paint. Circuses, dance halls and nightclubs, racetracks--all these spectacles were set down on canvas or made into lithographs.

Toulouse-Lautrec was very much a part of all this activity. He would sit at a crowded nightclub table, laughing and drinking, and at the same time he would make swift sketches. The next morning in his studio he would expand the sketches into bright-colored paintings.

In order to become a part of the Montmartre life--as well as to protect himself against the crowd's ridicule of his appearance--Toulouse-Lautrec began to drink heavily. In the 1890s the drinking started to affect his health. He was confined to a sanatorium and to his mother's care at home, but he could not stay away from alcohol. Toulouse-Lautrec died on Sept. 9, 1901, at the family chateau of Malrome. Since then his paintings and posters--particularly the Moulin Rouge group--have been in great demand and bring high prices at auctions and art sales.