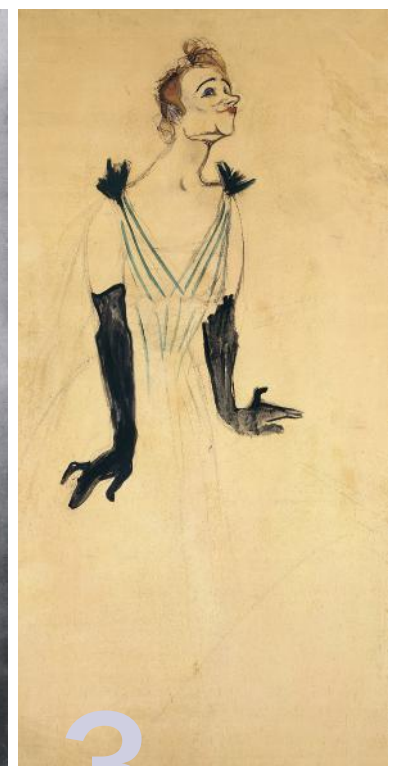


1.



2.



3.

The stars

1. *La Loie Fuller aux Folies-Bergère*, 1893, Oil on board
2. *Yvette Guilbert*, 1895 © Bibliothèque nationale de France
3. *Yvette Guilbert*, 1894, Charcoal and oil-based paint on Manila paper

1. LOÏE FULLER AND POLAIRE

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec discovered Loïe Fuller (1862-1928) at the Folies-Bergère where she was performing a solo dance number. Surrounded by her stage-lighting team, the American dancer had put together a number in which the lower half of her body remained motionless while she drew slow figures with veils on the end of wands. Her choreographies, in which light played a central role, had titles like *Serpentine*, *Violet*, *White Dance* and *Butterfly*. She performed on a glass floor surrounded by mirrors which reflected her silhouette to infinity. She was a set designer who used the new technical props in the service of dreams and art. In the study made in 1892-1893, *Loïe Fuller at the Folies-Bergère*, the first of a series of colour lithographs, Lautrec concentrated the play of light and the colour effects of the veils and the repetition of a light and fluid movement into a spiral arabesque. In a swirl of soft rolling curves, Loïe Fuller's body seems to disappear, and only the upward movement is emphasised by vertical lines. Lautrec conveys more than the fleetingness, the mystery and the imaginary, he gives life to the ephemeral. An insatiable observer, he was drawn to atypical characters of the entertainment world. In the 1895 study *Mademoiselle Polaire*, he captures the image of Emilie Zoé Bouchaud (1874-1939), a café-concert singer of Algerian origin, better known under that pseudonym. With a bold blue line, Lautrec catches her in bending movement as if cut in two at the waist. It was this special physiognomy and her very studied poses that gained Polaire her success at the Ambassadeurs.

2. 3. YVETTE GUILBERT

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec noticed Yvette Guilbert (1867-1944) at the *Divan Japonais* in 1890. Fascinated by red-headed women, he was also drawn to the stage presence she had developed from scratch. Lautrec's taste for line drawings of figures in silhouette, which could seem simplistic but which aims at the catching the expressiveness of movement, found its ultimate inspiration in the character of Yvette Guilbert. Toulouse-Lautrec represented her for the first time with her head cut off by the top of the poster he made in 1893 for the reopening of the *Divan Japonais* café-concert. This original cropping showed that the long thin figure dressed in green with black gloves needed no introduction. In the plan for the poster to announce the 1894-1895 season of the singer at the Ambassadeurs, Lautrec portrayed the simple and distinguished look created by Yvette Guilbert, with an expressive line. With suitable detachment, she would recite ribald and mocking texts humorously showing up the excesses, shamelessness and faults of her contemporaries. Yvette Guilbert did not understand Lautrec's approach and rejected the charcoal sketch he submitted.

She showed greater appreciation for two albums of lithographs which were more successful: the *Suite française*, in 1894, is an album of sixteen plates where the sobriety of the page layout is perfectly matched by the text written by the critic Gustave Geffroy. This work published in a run of a hundred copies, all signed by the singer, was aimed at getting her better known. On the cover, Toulouse-Lautrec chose to symbolise the singer with the most recognisable accessory of her stage costume, the black gloves, drawn flat without modelling. The *Suite anglaise*, created in 1898, contains nine lithographs of restrained drawings representing the singer performing her best-known songs *La Glu* or *La Soularde*. The Musée Toulouse-Lautrec conserves one copy of each of these albums as well as eight lithographic stones from the album called *Suite anglaise*. In 1895, Yvette Guilbert ordered an enamelled earthenware plaque, the only ceramic piece ever made by Lautrec. At the end of the nineteenth century, avant-garde artists went in for all techniques without ranking them. so as to think about total art and with a resolve to bring art closer to daily life.