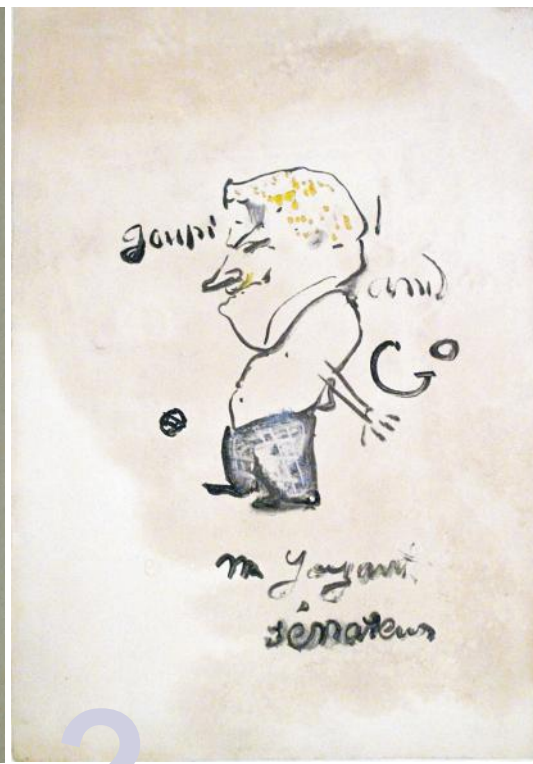




1.



2.



3.

Drawing or design?

1. *Elsa dite La Viennoise*, 1897, Graphite on grey-blue paper
2. *Charge de Maurice Joyant*, 1899, Colour monotype
3. *Cocyte dans "La Belle Hélène"*. Bordeaux, 1900, Watercolour

1. 2. LINE

Until the seventeenth century, the French language made no distinction between *drawing* and *design* as in "intention". In Toulouse-Lautrec's work, line serves to fix his thought and transpose the perceived reality. His capacity to synthesise a physical portrait and a psychological portrait is seen in the economy of the means employed. He only keeps the essential elements of the description and portrays the subject with a fluid and nervous line. In *Rue des Moulins* the artist met *Elsa* nicknamed *la Viennoise*, a prostitute of Austrian origin whose portrait he made in 1897. He depicts the physiognomy and impassive character of his model in a few lines of lead pencil on blue-grey paper.

Lautrec was a great admirer of Edgar Degas (1834-1917) who lived for drawing, and was keen on photography and reinvented the monotype which he often used between 1876 and 1886. By subtraction, by scratching directly on a uniform ink layer on a metal plate, in copper or zinc, or by make an ink drawing directly onto the support, he ran a single proof of the image on paper. In 1899, a year in which Lautrec produced a series of 39 drawings on the circus, a recurrent theme in his work, he created six monotypes in colour including *Au circus (Le clown)* and *Charge de Maurice Joyant*. His fluid and spontaneous line is well served by this printing process.

3. LATE DRAWINGS

On leaving the Neuilly clinic in the spring of 1899, Lautrec stayed briefly in Le Havre where he used the barmaid of the bar *Le Star* as his model, emphasising her smile and her youth. A red-chalk drawing made before the oil on panel conveyed the freshness of Miss Dolly's face. He spent the winter of 1900 in Bordeaux and attended the performances of *La Belle Hélène*. This three-act opera by Meilhac and Halévy to music by Offenbach fascinated him with its off-beat dynamic production. His taste for parody and disguises can be seen in this crayon drawing. The fluid and exaggerated gestures of the woman with the bust strongly pulled back contrasts with the comic and gangly allure of the soldiers. Using a concise, energetic line, the artist transcribes the comic side of the situation. Mademoiselle Cocyte, the lead singer of the Théâtre de la Gaîté, played Hélène, and Lautrec admired her voice and her figure of a "frisky and buxom matron" (in *La petite Gironde*, December 28th 1900). The mTL's has to thank the Society of Friends of the Museum for the donation of the exceptional drawings which round out its collection. The fragility of the works on paper necessitates the turnaround of the display.