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Eva Maria Raepple

College of DuPage, raepple@cod.edu

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Recommended Citation

Raepple, Eva Maria, "Divan Japonais: Toulouse-Lautrec and Japanese Art" (2008). *Philosophy Scholarship*. Paper 1.
<http://dc.cod.edu/philosophypub/1>

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Divan Japonais: Toulouse-Lautrec and Japanese Art

In 1896, during a tour of Loire Chateauxs, Maurice Joyant (1864-1930), a life-long friend and biographer of Henri Toulouse-Lautrec's (1864-1901) works, happens to reveal his admiration for Claude Monet's (1840-1926) series of landscape paintings, portraying the Seine at Giverny. Lautrec brusquely interrupts his friend and responds:

Nothing exists but the figure, the landscape is and should be insignificant, only an accessory: the landscape painter is a nothing short of a brute artist. The landscape should not serve any other purpose than to enhance an understanding of the character of the figureWhat figure might Monet have released had he not given up to paint these."¹

Lautrec's passionate reply speaks eloquently of his deep interest in the human being. Entangled in life's antagonism of ugliness and beauty, Lautrec portrays the impertinence, the noble, the ferocious, the gentle, the exotic as well as the obscene with an indifference that is as merciless as it is compassionate. Without interest in painting ideal delightful landscapes or beautiful formal portraits, adorned with decorative artistic means, Lautrec captivates his audience with fragmented views of a society in the houses and streets of Paris. The artist penetrates the social world with brush, color, and pencil, leading the gaze to explore the multifaceted complexity of life hidden behind the veil of acclaimed decency of the French life, frequently sheltered behind a facade of bourgeois civilization.²

The painter experienced Paris at the height of a period, characterized by a striking interest in exotic, foreign lifestyles, spurred by lively commercial trade with the Far East. Wonder and excitement for a different world and its distinctive lifestyle captivated the imagination of many Parisians, creating excitement and longing for an art of life. Leaving behind the last vestiges of the Empire in 1870, the city's inhabitants found plenty of opportunities to defy traditional conventions, and thinking. Interest in new ways of seeing and representing also proved to be an inspiration for the impressionistic painters and their second generation, allowing them to largely abandon constraints of conventional painting and to develop new styles that speak with original vigor. Distinctive Asian artistic styles and techniques offered a visual language that should be as attractive to its French audience as it allowed the artist to radically reshape revered social conventions and moral attitudes through an artistic lens. Venturing beyond the boundaries of his country in search renewed templates, Lautrec radically revises long established artistic traditions in the West. He develops techniques learned from artists in the Far East, in particular from Japan, transferring his experience

of the kaleidoscope of Parisian life into a forceful visual language. In this process, he reshapes perceptions of long valued moral judgments.³ This paper examines some of the formative influences of eighteenth century Japanese art on the development of visual characters in Lautrec's work. I argue that Lautrec draws on techniques in Asian art, effectively creating a visual language that gracefully suggests nothing less than a reevaluation of values. Evoking an inclination for an aesthetic of life in the *demi-monde* in Paris, Lautrec's visual language promotes sensibilities characteristic for a Japanese aesthetic and lifestyle that are also intrinsic to a traditional cultivation of moral virtues in Asia.⁴ The focus is on an analysis of a particular lithograph entitled, *Divan Japonais* which serves as an announcement for the opening of a cabaret with the same name in Montmartre in Paris.⁵ The argument will be developed in conjunction with an analysis of diverse forms of visual language apparent in two works of Lautrec, a print by Japanese artist Kitagawa Utamoro (1753-1806), and a photo of the dancer Jane Avril (1868—1943). My goal is to demonstrate that in using unconventional artistic techniques and motifs, Lautrec introduces not merely a novel way of seeing the world but visibility becomes the means for Lautrec to create new values.

In the medium of art, Lautrec, himself a member of the French upper class, detects a tool to uncover life in its versatile appearances, immersing himself into the world of the *demi-monde*. The multifaceted world of the cabaret which offered a flourishing environment for the sex trade in 19th century Paris was of course not undisputed particularly among the part of the population that took pride in officially representing the so-called Parisian *bonne bourgeoisie*.⁶ Unmasking the pretense of décor, Lautrec's work visually unmasks but also reevaluates traditional boundaries set by the "pathos of distance"⁷ among members of a society which the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche aptly characterizes as the social class of the noble, powerful, higher-ranking, and higher-thinking people who felt and set themselves and their actions up as good.⁸ For the noble *creators of values*, life had never been as clearly determined by social boundaries and moral principle. Yet, to gain considerable esteem and admiration in society required a certain appearance in public life.⁹ Respectability of marriage, as officially documented act, presented as it arguably still does, one of the most delicate moral issues among nineteenth century Parisians.¹⁰ Sexuality and its appeal, have always entertained a contentious relation with the determined moral canon of "ought" and "ought not" of official value judgments in most social relations.¹¹ The rather colorful role of the cabarets around Montmartre with their damsels and respective guests in a society that greatly cared for proper appearance and etiquette is well known.¹² Like Nietzsche who similarly lamented the loss of healthy morality,

governed by instinct for life, Lautrec relentlessly documents the desperate searches for escape from the stringent constraints on human life. In his lithographs, he uncovers the polite glimmer of a society working arduously to keep up appearance of a certain moral attitude, while seeking the pleasure and enjoyment of life in the *demi-monde*.

Lautrec - never shy of derisive exaggeration of gestures and arabesques in his drawings - frequently captures burlesque extravaganza, tragic moments, and vulgar spectacle in the cabaret as probably no other artist. Delighting in the turbulence of an exciting environment, a lithograph as the one featuring the performer Mademoiselle Cha-u-ka-o, eloquently attests the painter's fascination with brothel life. [Fig.1] The portrayal of the acrobat strikes the viewer in its sensual ambivalence. The acrobat Cha-u-ka-o is sitting lonely on the back of a building. In contrast to colorful white and yellow tones of her upper body, costume, and face, the black leggings of her open legs provocatively invite the gaze to linger and ponder the temperament of her acrobatic talent. Meanwhile festive life pulsates around the corner. The visitors of the performance move on in their respected lives after Cha-u-a-ka-o satisfied their yearning for excitement. The separate yet intersecting worlds of the *bonne bourgeoisie* and the environment of the cabaret could have hardly been accentuated more emphatically. Cha-u-ka-o's melancholic face speaks of the tragic role of the human figure in the turbulence and glimmer of the nightly entertainment, celebrated by a society who would also despise the debauched lifestyle of their female heroes in the cabaret.

Yet if Cha-u-a-ka-o invites the spectator to contemplate the ambiguous role of the *damsels* in the brothel, Lautrec's lithograph *Divan Japonais* sets a very different tone. [Fig. 2] The poster raises an expectation for a place, recently redecorated in the latest East-Asian fashion, where high sophistication and pleasure meet. Promising stylishness, intelligence, and erudite taste, the lithograph visually entices the gaze to imagine an elegant nobility and promiscuity, a lifestyle associated with the courtesans in the Japanese 'Green Houses' of the Asian Yoshiwara, the famous "Good Luck Meadow" in Edo, present day Tokyo.¹³ Lautrec's *Divan Japonais* suggests an aesthetic pleasure that guests of the cabarets and dance halls would not necessarily have identified with life in Montmartre. In nineteenth century Paris, the area more often perceived as an environment of vulgar behavior.¹⁴ In a culture in which aesthetic beauty was enjoyed as the disinterested "delight in the mere knowledge of perception as such, in contrast to the will" according to the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, the lively enjoyment characteristic for traditions of sexual aesthetics in Asia offered an enticing perspective.¹⁵ Lautrec's *Divan Japonais* masterfully stages an aesthetic appeal for passion

and desire for a place long associated with the stigma of the fallen will.¹⁶ Evoking the yearning for a foreign world among the spectators, the lithograph does not just exert an aesthetic charm but stirs nothing less than the yearning for reversal of traditional moral categories of “good” and “evil”, “righteous” and “unrighteous”, “pure” and “impure”, as ascertained in the context of erotic relationships in the 19th century Parisian society.

In 1889, the opening of the Paris World Fair, mesmerized the people, who detected their interest in non-western cultures, among these Japanese artifacts and prints. Although craftsmanship from the Far East had long been in demand in Europe, from the late sixteenth-century on, Japanese goods and artifacts only became accessible after Commodore Perry of the United States Navy opened the ports to the world in 1854. The Japanese exhibitions in London and Paris firmly established the fame of Japanese artifacts and art.¹⁷ In turn, the exotic became fashionable, portraits of women in kimonos, the establishments of tea shops as La Porte Chinoise, and lacquers and sword guards were signs of the novel mode. Lautrec collected Japanese prints and a number of carved figures in his own studio.¹⁸ The Galerie Durand-Ruel exhibited prints by Kitagawa Utamoro and Andō Hiroshige (1797-1858). For artists like Lautrec, newly detected styles and techniques spurred the release from traditional conventions of painting and printing. A palette of possibilities offered the path on which the illusion of the natural through the lens of single perspective could readily be left behind, replaced by flat silhouettes, large areas of colors, and fragmentation.¹⁹ The revolution occurring in painting was nothing less than a full review of the central concept of space as developed since the Renaissance. Partial angles of vision and flat backgrounds inspired the artist to experiment with innovative visual concepts. Yet the new techniques were not only a departure from long established doctrine's of European structure and perspective in painting but served as an innovative language to express the vibrancy of life in the *demi-monde*, visually removing a carefully set façade of pretentious decorum in the French society.

Japanese woodblock prints provided vital inspiration for painters like Lautrec, whose prints anticipate the most successful means of modern marketing. The value of poster advertising was swiftly recognized by business owners, such as Charles Zidler and Joseph Oler, managing the Moulin Rouge. Bright colors, shapes, and contours of the favorite *damsels* suggested a desirable atmosphere of the dance hall to a national but also international audience. After-all, the colorful images of celebrities, dancing scenes, and acrobatic movements were readily available to be encountered by spectators of all classes and incomes in the streets of Paris. The poster offered a most effective

visual invitation to join in a delightful leisure time.²⁰ Templates, allowing for easy recognition of the celebrities and places, were of utmost importance for a product, for which the purpose was promotional display of the *damsels* of the dance halls. Lautrec's lithographs strike the viewer because of their distinct style and composition. The viewer is faced with nuanced portrayals of human spectacles. Although the works are series productions, all lithographs carry the hallmarks of his meticulous workmanship.

The 1893 lithograph, *Divan Japonais*, brilliantly exploits the Japanese artistic techniques and devices, creating not only a stunning advertisement but exhibiting the popular nightlife of Paris in an exhilarating manner. In its evocative appeal to elegant charm and refined taste, the work advertises a highly desired ideal of refined femininity along with the transgression of socially accepted boundaries. The gaze is immediately caught by the figures of Lautrec's good friends, the dancer Jane Avril accompanied by the art critic Édouard Dujardin (1861—1949). Their slender, refined dark silhouettes without shadows dominate the lithograph. Both of them are spectators of a performance by the famous dancer Yvette Guilbert (1865-1944), whose silhouette remotely lingers in the left hand corner of the poster. Although Guilbert is the suggested star of the performance, the focus of the gaze is fixed on Avril and Dujardin who dominate the foreground of the poster.²¹ Black and white contrasts, without intermediate nuances stand out against a lighter background, in which the orchestra and Yvette Guilbert oscillate into the fleeting moment. The scene of mesmerizing sense perception leaves the completion of what is seen to the imagination. What, therefore, is perceived as spectacle? Why would the viewer immediately recognize the figures as Avril, the art critic Dujardin, and the dancer Guilbert? How are colors, shapes, and fragmentary silhouettes of Lautrec's lithograph suggestive of certain characters? The French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980) argues that the image itself has no depth, its object is absent.

This object is not there, and we know it is not there. We therefore find, in the first place, an intention directed at an absent object. But this intention is not empty: it directs itself through a content, which is not just any content, but which in itself, must present some analogy with the object in question. ²²

In other words, the lithograph is a print, an inert, static combination of colors and shapes. Only in the gaze of the viewer does the composition begin to come alive. The signs on top of the poster, of course, direct attention towards the cabaret, the *Divan Japonais*, in 75 rue Des Martyrs in Paris.²³

Guilbert, the shadowy dancer whose head disappears into the edges of the frame, may be recognized because of her famous black gloves. The composition of colors, shapes, and fragmentary silhouettes effectively focuses the field of vision, soliciting the spectator to imagine the cabaret scene. The lithograph's evocativeness does not reside in perfect resemblance to the object, a goal which would much more adequately be achieved in a photo.

To highlight some of the distinctive characteristics of the lithograph a comparison with the virtue of photographic representation is instructive. Although the photo is always representing a perspective of the photographer, it nevertheless is more likely to be perceived as an accurate representation for a historical moment by those who are exposed to it. The snapshot of Avril from the year 1893, presents a portrait of a dancer, frivolously smiling, throwing one leg high up in the air. [Fig. 3] The photo provides an immediate impression of Avril's work in the cabaret, a direct referent attesting and molding in the black and white a moment in history that indeed existed. The photograph achieves perfect resemblance, inexhaustibly renewing one posture perceived from a chemically induced "copy" of past reality. Such momentary attestation to reference does of course not completely exclude the resourceful measures a photographer will take to capture the most favorable moment in Avril's dance. Nor does the photo prohibit the play of imagination invoked in the response from the spectator. Yet as Roland Barthes argues: "the photograph possesses an evidential force, and...its testimony bears not on the object but on time."²⁴ In contrast, the lithograph gives the scene in the cabaret *Japonais* an aura that pretends to transcend time and space. Such an effect is rooted in its distorted reference to the moment of history, which is alluded to in only a roughly approximate analogy.

Lautrec had learned from the Japanese artists that a certain precariousness of shape and distinctive pose, empty spaces, and stark contrasts could captivate the gaze. His lithograph *Divan Japonais* omits exact reproduction of the historical moment in time and space, resulting in an elusive perspective. The highly acclaimed artist Avril is not dancing but a spectator of the performance. Linear transparency and visual immediacy provide the spur to imagine not only the famous dancer but also the promise of meeting a woman of distinguished taste and class in Lautrec's lithograph. The task to attribute significance to the lines and shapes is the role of the imaginative gaze and reflection aided by schematic references. In order to suggest a mode rather than past reality, Lautrec exploits minimalism and exaggeration in few strokes and colors, an artistic technique he learned from the Japanese masters of woodblock print. With few simple lines the impression of a cultivated sensual

conversation played on stage call to mind familiar scenes and figures for those spectators familiar with the cabaret in Montmartre. The lithograph thus pretends to tell a story which is imagined by the erudite spectator who connects the lines and colors with Avril and Dujardin both known for their style as well as intellectual refinement. After all, Dujardin was an art critic the founder of the literary journal *Revue Wagnérienne*. Avril, frequently joined a circle of famous poets and painters, including Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898), Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), Paul Fort (1872-1960), Alphonse Allais (1854-1905), Arsène Houssaye (1815-1896), and Lautrec in the literary *café vachette* in Paris.²⁵ Familiar with the scene, the avant-garde spectator would not have been hard pressed attributing significance to the scene in imagining Dujardin's delight, savoring the beautiful company of the highly praised intelligent woman and well known dancer of ethereal grace in Paris. Evoking superior excellence and stylishness, the lithograph thus invites the erudite viewer to delve into an adventure promised as sophisticated and pleasurable experience of high standard in the newly opened cabaret. The *Divan Japonais* suggests an aura of stylishness through content and composition, an intriguing advertisement that speaks to the urbane client and member of the Parisian intellectual circles, to be drawn to the cabaret. These clients would likely have been familiar with Dujardin as an art critic of the innovative Japanese style and would have recognized the allusion to Degas' famous painting, *The Orchestra of the Opera* (1868-69), with its cropped stage, foreground figures, and orchestra display.

An atmosphere suggestive of a refined Japanese style environment visited by an erudite clientele has of course been the celebrated trademark of the so-called *Green Houses* in the famous "Good Luck Meadow" of Yoshiwara. This nightless part of Edo, present-day Tōkyō, served by Geishas entertaining men with conversation, dance, and song was vividly portrayed by Japanese artists such as Kitagawa Utamaro in his *The Twelve Hours of the Green Houses*. [Fig.4] The establishments were the highly prized places to serve a circle of visitors respected in the Japanese society. Utamaro's 'Hour of the Boar' (10 pm to Midnight), depicting a courtesan serving saké to the client's entourage offer interesting insights into Lautrec's adaptation of Japanese style and use of color. Characteristic for Utamaro's artistic approach is the prominent central perspective, the color black focusing the eye on few fixed viewpoints that determine the "visual story." Yet what cannot be perceived via the eyes is equally if not even more important than the visible in the print. Accordingly, the entourage, supposedly the delicious gathering is not apparent in the print. Only the gesture of the courtesan and her attendant points the spectator to imagine the scene.

As in Utamoro's scene, Yvette's recognizable shadow is barely on the edges of the frame in Lautrec's lithograph. The viewer's eye is guided to envision space outside of the frame, invited to explore the glamorous cabaret scene of the *Divan Japonais*. Angles, colors, lines, and shapes serve to allow the gaze to savor what does not come into view but is redolent of a scene to be imagined as much as to be desired. Spurring the gaze to move beyond the frame, Lautrec's lithograph thus evokes an alluring expectation, the flavor of an adventure to come. The spectator reminded of the prints of slender Japanese in Paris art galleries, surely must have enjoyed anticipating an adventure worthy of class and status in the cabaret *Japonais*. Tactfully, Avril's contours that are reminiscent of the Japanese Geishas in works of Utamoro's 'Hour of the Bor' introduce a promise for a world Far East. To imagine an aesthetic of life associated with the Japanese lifestyle in the 'Green Houses' likely exerted great attractiveness. Who would be concerned what decency required for aristocracy and bourgeoisie in Paris?

The poster advertising the cabaret *Divan Japonais* very carefully invites the spectator to reevaluate a lifestyle despised as uncivil in many circles of French bourgeois society in promoting the esteemed intimacy with the high class Geisha in the Yoshiwara as experience of taste and sophisticated allure.²⁶ The invitation of the lithograph could hardly provide a more captivating attraction in favor of accepted noble promiscuity as believed to be known from the high class courtesan of the Yoshiwara in Japan.²⁷ The limitless vista of fragmented scenes, connoting Japanese style in the *demi-monde*, far surpasses what one can distinguish more clearly. Allure not radical statements carry the gaze beyond the Parisian societal boundaries. The cabaret *Japonais* thus promises aesthetic grace in the lived world, experienced in cultivated imagination of continuous transience. In contrast to distinct bourgeois norms and values of a Parisian society, an art of life is suggested, a life to be tasted visiting the cabaret. Sexual appeal and pleasure is silently given a highly desirable value, which Lautrec is successfully suggesting as aesthetic beauty. Asia artistic techniques hence did not merely provide a new look for the posters but a language that allowed Lautrec to visually transmit a reevaluation of traditional values in the aesthetic beauty of a lifestyle connected with the Japanese Yoshiwara. The poet Arthur Symons described Avril "as Salomé when she danced before Herod and Herodias...*une grande amoureuse des ateliers*".²⁸ One perhaps should equally pay tribute to the painter Lautrec who untangles traditional moral stigma and the pungent fear of entering the tainted immoral world from the life of a dancer like Avril. Subtle lines, shapes, polite gestures, and compositional techniques allow Lautrec to gently undo elements of established moral sentiments.

Ultimately, the poster initiates a visual entry to a noble *Divan Japonais* outside the norms of Parisian daily life, carefully inviting the spectator to take on new values.²⁹

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¹ Maurice Joyant, *Henri de Toulouse Lautrec*, (Paris H. Floury, 1926), p. 192. (trans. Eva Maria Rapp).

² The term “gaze” provides the link between the optical characteristics of Lautrec’s work and its social dimension since the term is comprised of the visual aspect as well as the spectator who experiences the work. See: Margret Olin’s discussion, which defines gaze as conceptual space in which formal and social theory intersect. “Gaze” in: Robert S. Nelson and Richard Schiff, eds., *Critical Terms For Art History*, 2nd. ed. (University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 318-329.

³ Sigfried Wichmann. *Japansime: The Japanese Influence on Western art since 1858*, trans. Mary Whittall et al. (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 1981), pp. 8-10.

⁴ Yuriko Saito describes the fusion of the moral dimension and Japanese aesthetics analyzing Japanese sensibilities towards objects and respect and attention to human needs:

although this moral dimension of aesthetic life is specifically incorporated in some arts, such as the tea ceremony and haiku, it is deeply entrenched in people’s daily mundane activities and thoroughly integrated with everyday life, rendering it rather invisible. (p. 85)

“The Moral Dimension of Japanese Aesthetics,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 65 no. 1 (2007): 85-97.

⁵ Cate, Philip Dennis; Bogomila Welsh-Ovcharov, *Emile Bernard. Bordellos and Prostitutes in Turn-of-the-Century French Art*, The Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 1988)

⁶ Regarding an analysis of the variety of establishments of the sex trade and gallantries in nineteenth century Paris see: Alain Corbin, *Women for Hire. Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, trans. Alain Sheridan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 120-54.

⁷ The term “pathos of distance” is used by Friedrich Nietzsche to describe the conviction of the higher ranks in the society that their superior role in their relation to lower ranks allows them to set the standards for values. Raymond Geuss, “Nietzsche and Morality,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 5 no. 1(1977): 1–20.

⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Helen Zimmern (scanned and achieved Nietzsche’s Labyrinth 2002), part 9, sec. 257 <http://www.mala.bc.ca/~johnstoi/Nietzsche/genealogytofc.htm> (accessed April 1, 2008). See also: Jacqueline Scott. “Nietzsche and decadence: The revaluation of morality,” *Continental Philosophy Review*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, printed in the Netherlands, 31 (1998): 59–78. 1998.

⁹ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, part 9. sec. 260.

¹⁰ Philippe Ariès. “Die unauflösliche Ehe” in: hersg. Philippe Ariès, André Béjin, *Die Masken des Begehrens und die Metamorphosen der Sinnlichkeit: Zur Geschichte der Sexualität im Abendland*, übers. aus dem Französischen Michael Bischoff (Frankfurt/M: Fischer Verlag 3 ed.1984), pp. 193-95.

¹¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Götzendämmerung. Moral als Wüternatur 4* (Köln: Könnemann Verlag, 1994), p. 309. Nietzsche’s genealogy of morals offers a striking analysis for the dichotomies that characterize Western sensibilities. In contrast to Nietzsche, Lautrec addresses the social contexts which are directly influenced by concepts of good and evil, visually destabilizing traditionally perceived value systems in nineteenth century Europe.

¹² Lautrec inhabited the colorful world, populated by the socially marginal, pimps, women in search for money and fame, aristocrats and members of the bourgeoisie accompanied by so-called *demi-mondaines*, a place his own mother did not desire to visit. Julia Frey describes the character of the place as follows:

Unlike much of Paris, which was still rigidly bound by social barrier and codes of politeness and dress, Montmartre was stronghold of bohemianism. Previously it had been notorious as the most dangerous village in the region, known or at least three hundred years as a place where illicit activities and riotous dissipations were tolerated. It was used as a hideout by criminals of all sorts.

Toulouse Lautrec, (New York: Viking Penguin, 1994), pp. 4-5; 130-132.

¹³ For a brief history of the *Yoshiwara* see: Cecilia Segawa Seigle, “The Courtesan’s Clock: Utamoro’s Artistic Idealization and Kyōden’s Literary Expos, Antithetical Treatments of a Day and Night in the Yoshiwara,” in: *A courtesan’s day: hour by hour*, Amy Reigle Newland, ed. (Amsterdam: Hotei, 2004), pp.7-18.

Regarding a comprehensive notion of ethnic quality of *iki*, characteristic of the sophisticated lifestyle, elegance, taste, and fresh appeal of the Japanese high class Geisha see: Kuki Shūzō, *The Structure of Detachment. The Aesthetic Vision of Kuki Shūzō*, trans. Hiroshi Nara (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2004), pp. 13-60.

¹⁴ Ph. Huisman and M.G. Dortu, *Lautrec by Lautrec*, trans. C. Bellow (New York: Viking Press, 1994), p. 75.

¹⁵ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. Payne (New York: Dover, 1958), vol. 1, pp. 200-202, 330-331.

¹⁶ Richard Schusterman offers an excellent discussion of traditional notions of “*ars erotica*” in Asia, which emphasizes an aesthetic of sexuality in contrast to an ideal of disinterested and distanced contemplation of beauty among nineteenth century philosophical theories of aesthetic. Although Schustermann focuses on traditional texts from India and China, it is argued here that the Japanese sophisticated lifestyle expected of the courtesans in the Yoshiwara certainly carries the characteristics of an erotic aesthetic. “Asian *Ars Erotica* and the Question of Sexual Aesthetics,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 65 no. 1 (2007): 55–68.

¹⁷ Frank Whitford, *Japanese Prints and Western Painters*, (New York: Macmillan, 1977), pp. 97-105.

¹⁸ Julia Frey. *Toulouse Lautrec*, p. 229.

¹⁹ Frank Whitford, *Japanese Prints and Western Painters*, pp. 207-19.

²⁰ Catherine Pedley-Hindson. “Jane Avril and the Entertainment Lithograph: The female celebrity and *fin-de-siècle* Questions of Corporality and Performance” *Theatre Research International*, 30 no. 2 (2005), 108-123.

²¹ Interestingly, Guilbert did not perform at the Divan Japonais nor was she scheduled to do so when Lautrec created the lithograph. The artist’s interest’s clearly focused on the allusive ambiance of the poster. See: Julia Frey. *Toulouse Lautrec*, p. 229.

²² Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Imaginary*, trans. Jonathan Webber (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 19.

²³ For the location see: Ph. Huisman and M.G. Dortu, *Lautrec by Lautrec*, pp. 248-49.

²⁴ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill & Wang, 1981), pp. 88-9.

²⁵ Sartre, *The Imaginary*, notes 30.

²⁶ Kuki Shūzō. *The Structure of Detachment*, pp. 40-54.

²⁷ For a discussion of the differences regarding the view of promiscuity in Japanese social life and Western judgments highly esteemed ideal of monogamy and ascetic lifestyles see: J. Hiller, Utamoro (New York: Phaidon 2nd ed. 1979), pp. 50-58.

²⁸ Arthur Symons as quoted in: Julia Frey. *Toulouse Lautrec*, p. 273.

²⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche. *Genealogy of Morals*, part 1, sec. 2.

Images:

[Fig.1] Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec , *Mademoiselle Cha-u-ka-o* (1896) Crayon brush spatter, and transferred screen lithograph with scraper in five colors on woven paper, 20-1/2 x 15-3/4 inches, San Diego Museum of Art.

[Fig. 2] Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec , *Divan Japonais* (1893) Crayon brush spatter, and transferred screen lithograph printed in five colors, 80.8 x 60.6 cm, Kunsthalle, Bremen.

[Fig. 3] Photo: Jane Avril. ca. (1893). In: Huisman and M.G. Dortu, *Lautrec by Lautrec*, trans. C. Bellow (New York: Viking Press, 1994),

[Fig. 4] Kitagawa Utamoro, *Hour of the Boar* (c. 1749) Series: The Twelve Hours of the 'GreenHouses'. Size: Ōban. Publisher: Tsutaya Jūzaburō. Censorship seal: kiwame. Collection: Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Bruxelles.

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