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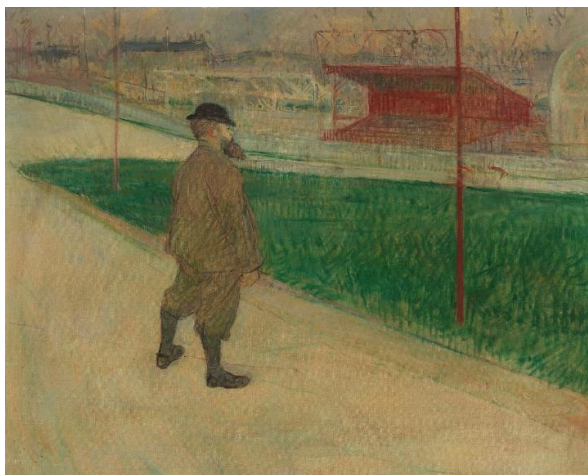
Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (Albi 1864-1901
Château Malromé, Saint-André-du-Bois)

Tristan Bernard au Vélodrome Buffalo

Oil on canvas

25 5/8 x 31 7/8 in. (65 x 81 cm.)

Painted in 1895



Provenance

Tristan Bernard, Paris, by whom acquired directly from the artist.

Wildenstein & Co., New York, by whom acquired from the above in 1937.

Private collection, New York, by whom acquired from the above, in February 1946.

Acquired from the above by the previous owners.

Literature

G. Coquiot, *H. de Toulouse-Lautrec*, Paris, 1913, p. 151 (illustrated; titled 'Portrait de M. Tristan-Bernard').

A. Alexandre, 'Exposition rétrospective de l'oeuvre de H. de Toulouse-Lautrec', in *Les Arts*, no. 152, Paris, August 1914, p. 15 (illustrated).

T. Duret, *Lautrec*, Paris, 1920, p. 48.

G. Coquiot, *Lautrec, ou quinze ans de mœurs Parisiennes, 1885-1900*, Paris, 1921, p. 122.

A. Astre, *H. de Toulouse-Lautrec*, Paris, 1925, p. 110.

M. Joyant, *Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, peintre*, Paris, 1926, pp. 184, 200 & 288 (illustrated p. 185).

P. de Lapparent, *Toulouse-Lautrec*, Paris, 1927, p. 11.

G. Jedlicka, *Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec*, Berlin, 1929, p. 377 (illustrated; titled 'Tristan Bernard').

T. Bernard, 'Toulouse Lautrec Sportman', in *L'Amour de l'art*, no. 4, Paris, April 1931, n.p. (illustrated fig. 3).

P. MacOrlan, *Lautrec, Peintre de la lumière froide*, Paris, 1934, p. 119.

É. Schnaub-Koch, *Psychoanalyse d'un peintre moderne: Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec*, Paris, 1935, pp. 36, 86 & 210.

G. Mack, *Toulouse-Lautrec*, New York, 1938, pp. xiv, 229 & 258 (illustrated pl. 37).

M. Davidson, 'Impressionist and Later Portraits', in *Art News*, New York, 5 March 1938, pp. 11 & 24 (illustrated p. 11).

J. Lassaigne, *Toulouse-Lautrec*, Paris, 1939, pp. 114 & 166 (illustrated p. 114).

F. Jourdain, *Toulouse-Lautrec*, Paris, 1948, pl. 36 (illustrated).

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W. Kern, *Toulouse-Lautrec*, Bern, 1948, pp. 12 & 14 (illustrated pl. 36).
F. Jourdain & J. Adhémar, *T-Lautrec*, Paris, 1952, no. 92, pp. 72, 88, 112 & 125 (illustrated pl. 92).
J. Lassaigue, *Lautrec*, Geneva, 1953, p. 95.
D. Cooper, *Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec*, London, 1955, p. 124 (illustrated p. 125).
H. Perruchot, *La Vie de Toulouse-Lautrec*, Paris, 1958, pp. 264, 274 & 351.
É. Julien, *Lautrec*, Paris, 1959, p. 36 (titled 'Portrait de Tristan Bernard').
Collection Génies et Réalités: Toulouse-Lautrec, Paris, 1962, p. 127 (illustrated p. 89).
M.G. Dortu & P. Huisman, *Lautrec by Lautrec*, London, 1964, p. 185 (illustrated p. 184).
M.G. Dortu, *Toulouse-Lautrec et son oeuvre*, vol. III, New York, 1971, no. P. 571, p. 348 (illustrated p. 349).
G.M. Sugana & J. Devoisins & C. Gonella, eds., *Tout l'oeuvre peint de Toulouse-Lautrec*, Paris, 1977, no. 539, p. 122 (illustrated).
C.F. Stuckey, *Toulouse-Lautrec: Paintings*, Chicago, 1979, no. 76, p. 244 (illustrated).
F. Le Targat, *Toulouse-Lautrec*, Barcelona, 1988, no. 85, p. 61 (illustrated).
J. Frey, *Toulouse-Lautrec: A Life*, New York, 1994, p. 354 (illustrated fig. 29, n.p.).
C. Beltramo Ceppi Zevi, ed., *Toulouse-Lautrec: un artista moderno*, exh. cat., Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, 1995, n.p. (illustrated).

Exhibited

Paris, Galerie Durand-Ruel, *Exposition H. de Toulouse-Lautrec*, May 1902, no. 107, p. 26 (titled 'Au Vélodrome Buffalo').
Paris, Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, *Potraits d'hommes*, December 1907 - January 1908, no. 132 (titled 'M. Tristan Bernard').
Paris, Galerie Manzi-Joyant, *Exposition rétrospective de l'oeuvre de H. de Toulouse-Lautrec*, June - July 1914, no. 69, p. 14.
Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, *Exposition H. de Toulouse-Lautrec*, April - May 1931, no. 141, p. 45 (illustrated pl. 10).
New York, Wildenstein & Co., *Great Portraits from Impressionism to Modernism*, March 1938, no. 44, p. 37 (illustrated pl. X; titled 'Tristan Bernard').
New York, Knoedler & Co., *Views of Paris*, January 1939, no. 41, p. 24.
New York, Wildenstein & Co., *A Loan Exhibition of Toulouse-Lautrec for the Benefit of the Goddard Neighbourhood Center*, October - November 1946, no. 26, p. 35 (illustrated p. 34; titled 'Tristan Bernard').
New York, Wildenstein & Co., *Jubilee Loan Exhibition, 1901-1951: Masterpieces from Museums and Private Collections*, November - December 1951, no. 59, n.p. (illustrated).
Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art, *Toulouse-Lautrec*, October - December 1955, no. 67, n.p. (illustrated; titled 'Tristan Bernard'); this exhibition later travelled to Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago, January - February 1956.
Los Angeles, Municipal Art Gallery, 1958.
New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Paintings from Private Collections, Summer Loan Exhibition*, July - September 1960, no. 121, p. 11.
New York, Wildenstein & Co., *Toulouse-Lautrec*, February - March 1964, no. 43, n.p. (illustrated; titled

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'Portrait of Tristan Bernard').

Minneapolis, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, *The Past Rediscovered: French Painting, 1800-1900*, July - September 1969, no. 82, n.p. (illustrated n.p.).

London, Hayward Gallery, *Toulouse-Lautrec*, October 1991 - January 1992, no. 38, p. 166 (illustrated p. 167); this exhibition later travelled to Paris, Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, February - June 1992.

New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, on long term loan, 2007 - 2019.

New York, Nassau County Museum of Art, *La belle époque*, May - November 2021, pp. 11 & 22 (illustrated pp. 9-10).

In his brief but storied life, the famously eccentric French artist Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec – who died in 1901 at the age of 36 – created paintings and drawings that glamourized the nightlife of *fin-de-siècle* Paris. Lautrec is best known for his lithographs and posters popularizing dance halls, such as the two-meter poster for the Moulin Rouge (*Moulin Rouge, La Goulue*, 1891) which made him famous in Paris with spectacular speed. His vibrant depictions of cabaret performers, dancers, and streetwalkers have since come to epitomize the Bohemian metropolis. An irreverent and resolutely modern artist, who once submitted a portrait of a Camembert cheese to the official Salon, Lautrec's work is difficult to categorize. Early in his career he was influenced by the Impressionists, but he ultimately moved beyond their interest in the optical veracity of the visual field to focus his singular, and simplified, formal language on contemporary society.

Tristan Bernard au Vélodrome Buffalo is one of a number of works the artist created capturing his friends and acquaintances. As Colta Feller Ives asserts, 'the faces of people who amused or were dear to him were always at the centre of Lautrec's art. It was as if by portraying them, he drew them closer and made them uniquely his' (*Toulouse-Lautrec in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, exh. cat., New York, 1996, p. 26). The present work captures the artist's friend, the playwright Tristan (born Paul) Bernard, then the *directeur sportif* at the new bicycling racetrack the Vélodrome Buffalo. As in his depictions of Parisian *dramatis personae* – dancers on their stages, courtesans in their *maisons closes* – Lautrec has here captured his friend ensconced in his professional environs. Bernard stands comfortably upright, surveying the track that is his demesne. He wears the newly fashionable knickerbockers that became popular towards the end of the nineteenth-century among the sporty set, particular with cyclists, further cementing his position in this arena. Bernard was reportedly so pleased with the painting that he hung it in his living room for years.

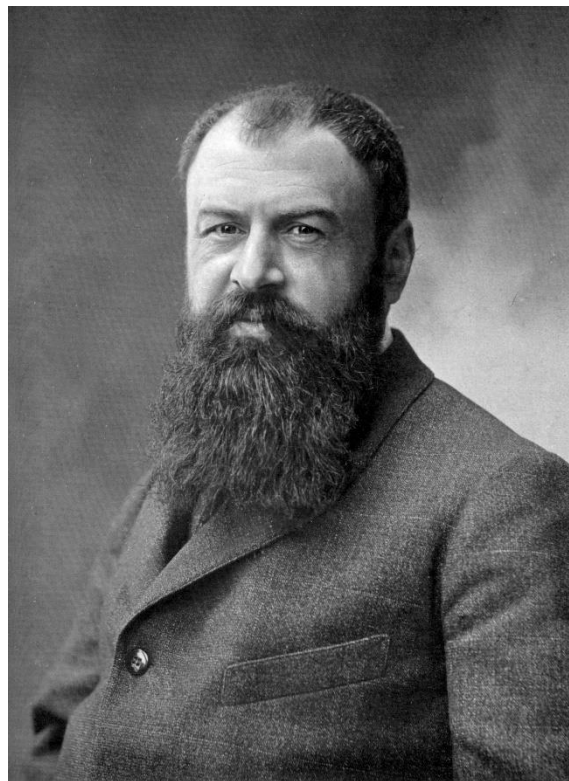
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Poster advertising *Courses de Vélocipèdes sur le Vélodrome Buffalo*, Paris. Bibliothèque Des Arts Decoratifs, Paris. Photo:
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Tristan Bernard, circa 1910. Photo: © Apic/Getty Images.

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The late nineteenth century saw a rise in public interest for organised sporting events. Alongside established horse races, the first automobile race was held in France in 1894 – the same year that French historian Pierre de Coubertin began to campaign for the modern Olympic games. The Vélodrome Buffalo was built in 1892 to host the increasingly fashionable sport of bicycle racing. By 1900, it had become ‘the most popular spectator sport in France’ (H. Pearson, ‘Chain reaction,’ *Apollo*, vol. 192, no 690, October 2020, p. 67). In his recollections, Bernard remembered the artist’s frequent presence at the Velodrome: ‘Lautrec often came to the races. He would meet me on Sunday, we would lunch together and go off to one of the stadiums. I would let him into the enclosure along with the officials, but he usually went off and sat on the lawn. I think the race results interested him little, but he was fascinated by the setting and the people’ (quoted in J. Bloch Frey, *Toulouse-Lautrec: a life*, 1994, p. 353).



Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *The Simpson Chain*, 1896. San Diego Museum of Art. Photo: © San Diego Museum of Art / Gift of the Baldwin M. Baldwin Foundation

Lautrec was enamoured with speed. Through Bernard, he met famous bicycle racers, sketching them as he did circus performers and jockeys with a focus on the sleek lines of their athletic bodies (*Zimmerman et son appareil*, Art Institute of Chicago). On Bernard’s recommendation he was asked to design an advertisement for Spoke bicycle chains, but his work was ultimately deemed unusable as he was more interested capturing

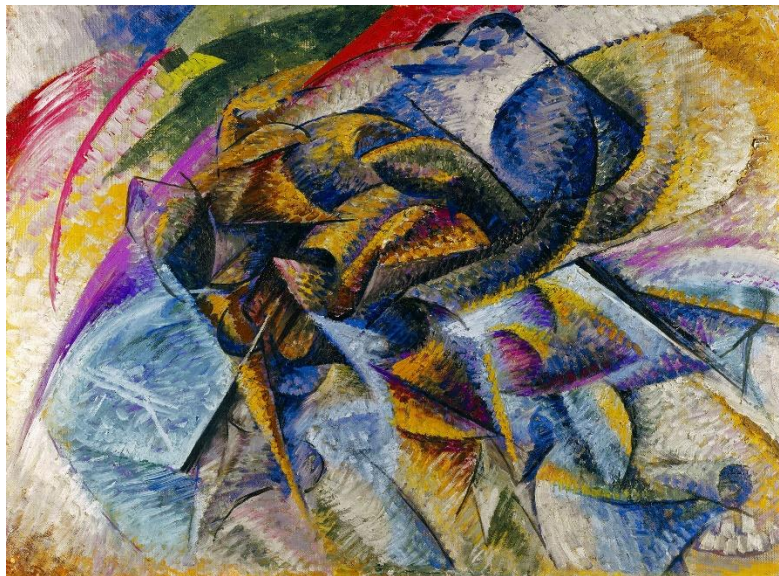
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in the speed of the cyclists than highlighting the chain (J. Bouchot-Saupique, 'A Group of Toulouse-Lautrec Drawings in the Cabinet Des Dessins,' *Master Drawings*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1965, p. 169).

The present work typifies Lautrec's sharp and playful compositions. The raceway rises at left, a cropped curve that creates a sensation of turbulent, unsteady speed. Bernard gazes across the track to a small group of cyclists, deftly captured with economy of stroke as they approach the track's bend. Lautrec positions the viewer just behind Bernard, embedding us within the composition and inviting us to participate as spectators. The format echoes the vertiginous perspective employed in Lautrec's poster of the performer Jane Avril (Los Angeles County Museum of Art), where the boards of the stage seem to rise up rather than recede inwards. This two-dimensionality is also seen in his *Equestrienne (Au Cirque Fernando)* (Dortu, no. P312; The Art Institute of Chicago), in which the opaque white of the circus ring floor swings up and to the left before being abruptly truncated by the edge of the painting. Notably, while Lautrec undoubtedly knew of bicycle racing's extreme popularity, and enjoyed the sport himself, he chose here to capture the stands empty of viewers. Rather than distract from Bernard's figure with throngs of excited, cheering fans, he focuses the image around his friend's stoic figure.



Umberto Boccioni, *Dinamismo di un ciclista*, 1913. Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice. Photo: © Photo SCALA, Florence, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais

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A relentless technical innovator, Lautrec often modified his paints to create *peinture à l'essence*, removing the oil and diluting the pigment. The washes of colour in the present work – as in the concrete of the racetrack – may have been created using this *essence*. Vigorous hatched lines and strong outlines, particularly visible in Bernard's form and the infield's vivid grass, add texture and force to the fields of colour. Lautrec, like his contemporary Vincent van Gogh, was heavily influenced by the flattened compositions and swathes of pure colour in Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints, which Lautrec would have seen at the 1890 exhibition at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, as well as in Van Gogh's studio at 54 rue Lepic in Paris.