

**PRESS RELEASE**

# **GÉRICAULT TO TOULOUSE- LAUTREC. FRENCH LITHOGRAPHS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY**

**22 JUNE TO 10 SEPTEMBER 2017**

**Press preview: Wednesday, 21 June 2017, 11 am**

**Städel Museum, exhibition hall of the Department of Prints and Drawings**

**Frankfurt am Main, 1 June 2017.** From 22 June to 10 September 2017, the Städel Museum's Department of Prints and Drawings will devote its exhibition hall to the diversity of nineteenth-century French lithography. The invention of this entirely new method of "stone printing" at the end of the eighteenth century ushered in a new era in the reproduction of images. In comparison to older printmaking methods, the range of expressive means offered by lithography was wider, the printing process faster, and the editions larger. In France, prominent artists began experimenting with the new technique around 1820, and over the course of the nineteenth century decisively expanded its artistic possibilities.

The spectrum of works on view includes eloquent compositions by Théodore Géricault, one of the rare lithographs Goya produced during the 1820s in exile in Bordeaux, Eugène Delacroix's Goethe and Shakespeare illustrations and Honoré Daumier's comments on politics and society in the form of newspaper caricatures. The show also features Édouard Manet's virtuoso inventions, Symbolist works by Rodolphe Bresdin and Odilon Redon, and masterworks of colour lithography by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and the "Nabis" Édouard Vuillard and Pierre Bonnard dating from the end of the nineteenth century. The works on display, numbering about ninety in all, represent highlights of this century and technique and provide insights into the superb holdings of the Städel's Department of Prints and Drawings. Fifteen new acquisitions of the past years are also on exhibit.

"Our summer exhibition of masterworks of nineteenth-century French lithography shines a spotlight on the considerable quality of the Städel Museum's collection of prints and drawings. At the same time, it offers a striking impression of our continual efforts to expand our holdings in this area", comments Städel director Philipp Demandt.

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Martin Sonnabend, head of the collection of prints and drawings to 1750 at the Städel Museum, adds: “It is impossible to fully grasp the rich manifestations of nineteenth-century French artistic lithography without an awareness of the technical, economic and artistic advantages of this completely novel method for producing and reproducing images. One of the exhibition’s chief aims is therefore to shed light on the relationships between the works and their production so as to sharpen the viewers’ perception of these works.”

### **The technique**

Alois Senefelder of Munich invented lithography in 1798. Unlike relief and intaglio printing (e.g. woodcut and engraving), it is a planographic method. The areas to be printed and those not to be printed are on the same plane, and separated from one another chemically, through the differing qualities of fat and water. In the nineteenth century, finely pored limestone – which possesses all the physical properties required for the process – was used as a printing plate. The artists drew the image directly on the polished stone surface. As they could choose freely between crayon, pen or brush, they had a wide range of expressive possibilities at their disposal. What is more, because lithography allowed the fast and efficient production of large editions, it played a significant role in the industrial mass reproduction of images that developed over the course of the nineteenth century. At first it was used primarily to print maps and sheet music (Senefelder himself was a singer, musician and composer), and then – in the early nineteenth century – increasingly for pictorial images, especially in the areas of illustration, caricature and reproduction. The first artistically significant lithographs originated in the second decade of the century, above all in France.

### **The exhibition**

“Géricault to Toulouse-Lautrec. French Lithographs of the Nineteenth Century” begins with **Francisco de Goya** (1746–1828). Goya was already over seventy when he first employed the new printmaking technique for his art. In 1824 he had retreated to Bordeaux in Southern France to escape the repressions of the Spanish restoration government. There he produced the four sheets of the *Bulls of Bordeaux* series (1825), his only lithographs ever to be published in an edition (of 100 copies each). Goya used crayon to draw directly on the stone, and his *Bulls* are among the early masterworks in the new technique. Thanks to an acquisition made in 2013, the Städel museum is fortunate enough to have one of these rare and much sought-after lithographs in its holdings.

Over the course of his brief career, **Théodore Géricault** (1791–1824) produced nearly eighty lithographs in addition to his paintings and drawings. In many cases he used the medium for experiments in printmaking, as was the case with the monumental *Retour de Russie* (*Return from Russia*, 1818). His rare *Boxeurs*

(*Boxers*) – one of Géricault's early print masterpieces – dates from the same year. In it the artist, who outspokenly advocated the liberation of slaves, depicted the black and the white boxers as equal contenders. During his prolonged stay in London in 1820 and 1821, Géricault had his series of *Various Subjects* (1821) published by Charles Hullmandel (1789–1850), a prominent pioneer in the field of lithography. After Goya and Géricault, **Eugène Delacroix** (1798–1863) is the third prominent artist figure among the early lithographers. The painter began creating his first dynamic and innovative works in the technique around 1825. In the context of his lithographic endeavours, he was drawn to demonic aspects in Shakespeare and Goethe (he produced 17 lithographic illustrations on the latter's *Faust* in the 1820s alone) as well as to the beauty and ferocity of wild animals, as seen, for instance, in *Lion de l'Atlas* (*Atlas's Lion*, 1829).

The invention of lithography brought in its wake a flowering of a type of topographical illustration known as the travel picture. Influenced by English examples, the genre began to spread in France around 1820. The lithography technique permitted the quick and economical production of scenes of famous and beautiful sights with the appearance of great authenticity – even to the point of virtually photographic realism – as well as their publication in, for example, the impressive *Voyages pittoresques et romantiques dans l'ancienne France* (*Picturesque and Romantic Journeys in Old France*). The aim of these volumes was to publish all of France's monuments of nature and art. After acquainting the visitor with travel pictures by such artists as **Richard Parkes Bonington** (1802–1828) or **Eugène Isabey** (1803–1886/1887), the exhibition turns to the genre of newspaper illustrations. Particularly in the areas of illustration and caricature, the new printmaking technique enabled skilled draughtsmen to market striking images in the form of prints with little effort. The most prominent and diverse exponent of the art of caricature in nineteenth-century France was undeniably **Honoré Daumier** (1808–1879). He never enjoyed academic training; instead, it was lithography and the emergence of the illustrated satirical newspaper that paved his way to a career as a newspaper caricaturist that earned him a living for more than four decades. Whereas he initially concentrated on political topics, a tightening of the press laws later compelled him to take up genre depiction. His oeuvre encompasses a staggering 4,000 lithographs, distinguished as much by their contemporary historical character as by their high and timeless artistic value. Although **Édouard Manet** (1832–1883) worked with the lithography technique only briefly, his works in this medium exhibit a remarkable degree of idiosyncrasy and the utmost formal liberty. This is evident in, among other examples, *Les courses* (*The Races*, 1872) and the *Portrait of Berthe Morisot* (1872).

**Odilon Redon** (1840–1916), an exponent of Symbolism, produced a total of some 200 lithographs that represent a decisive step forward in the development of the printmaking technique as an artistic medium in its own right. Particularly worthy of note is his development of the blacks – which he endowed with an unmistakable,

velvety materiality – as a special strength and distinguishing feature of lithography. A striking case in point is his *Pégase captif* (*Captive Pegasus*, 1889).

The emergence of colour lithography at the end of the nineteenth century introduced new impulses to the artistic exploration of the medium. One chief factor in the renewed appreciation of art prints was the growing interest in culture within the rapidly developing metropolitan society of Paris. Even people of more modest means began to collect art, and in that way to partake of contemporary art production. The art dealer Ambroise Vollard (1865–1939) responded very cleverly to the needs of the new clientele, and in the 1890s persuaded both **Paul Cézanne** (1839–1906) and **Auguste Renoir** (1841–1919) to work with colour lithography. In the same decade, Vollard also commissioned four young artists – **Pierre Bonnard** (1867–1947), **Édouard Vuillard** (1868–1940), **Maurice Denis** (1870–1943) and **Ker Xavier Roussel** (1867–1944) – each to produce a lithograph portfolio with the aim of acquainting a larger public with their work. Bonnard's portfolio, entitled *Quelques aspects de la vie de Paris* (1895–1899), is made up of prints showing everyday segments of reality and situations of an unspectacular nature but possessing the charm and gentle humour of intimacy. Vuillard's *Paysages et intérieurs* (1899) series manifests his well-developed sense of surface structures that contributes decisively to the impression of density and concentration while at the same time never taking on the character of material. The exhibition features the complete series by Vuillard, thirteen prints in all, as well as excerpts from the portfolios by Bonnard, Denis and Roussel.

**Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec** (1864–1901) brings the presentation to a close – an artist who executed an impressive 350 colour and black-and-white lithographs. He considered lithography a means of artistic expression entirely on a par with painting, and it contributed more to his fame during his lifetime – and his popularity ever since – than his painted works. In general, Toulouse-Lautrec was little interested in the distinction between free and applied art: he produced his lithographic works for use as posters, menus or theatre programmes as well as for independent editions that sold to a growing circle of devotees.

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**Curator:** Dr Martin Sonnabend (Head of the Collection of Prints and Drawings to 1750, Städel Museum)

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**Location:** Städel Museum, Schaumainkai 63, 60596 Frankfurt am Main

**Opening hours:** Tue, Wed, Sat, Sun 10 am – 6 pm, Thu + Fri 10 am – 9 pm, closed Mondays

**Admission:** 14 euros, reduced 12 euros, families 24 euros; free admission for children under the age of twelve. Groups of at least ten persons: reduced admission per person. Groups are required to book in advance: please call +49(0)69-605098-200 or contact [info@staedelmuseum.de](mailto:info@staedelmuseum.de).

**Advance ticket sales online at:** [tickets.staedelmuseum.de](http://tickets.staedelmuseum.de).

**General guided tours of the exhibition:** Sun 2 pm. The number of participants is limited; no prior booking required.

**Social Media:** The Städel Museum is communicating the exhibition in the social media with the hashtags #Lithografie and #Staedel.