

**THÉOPHILE ALEXANDRE STEINLEN**  
**(1859 – 1923)**

Théophile Alexandre Steinlen was born in Switzerland in 1859. He studied art at Lausanne and later became active as a textile designer in Mulhouse. In 1882 he arrived in Paris where he worked as an illustrator for the journals *Mirliton*, *Assiette au Beurre*, *Chat Noir*, and *Gil Blas*, for which he produced over four hundred lithographs. As an artist he was not merely a commercial success but showed great sensitivity toward his subject matter.

Besides illustrating advertisements for a variety of products, Steinlen was famous for his posters of cabaret and music hall performers. Perhaps the most noteworthy of these is one done for the French singer Yvette Guilbert's performances at the cabaret *Les Ambassadeurs*, executed in 1894. Guilbert preferred Steinlen's posters to another famous version, done by Toulouse-Lautrec, in which the artist distorted her features and figure, making her appear thin and bony to the point of freakishness. The two artists are often compared, although Steinlen's poster art, drawn with the same bold simplicity as Lautrec's, is marked by an air of sweetness and a quieter mood. However, his later work for the journals, like that of Lautrec, became increasingly satirical and critical of society.

Steinlen, too, often drew genre scenes of the working class, capturing day-to-day life in Paris with a simple, endearing style. In total, Steinlen created 382 original lithographs and 115 etchings. Like Toulouse-Lautrec, Steinlen contributed some original lithographs to publishers of popular songs who would use them as cover art for their sheet music. Théophile Steinlen died in 1923 in the Cimetière Saint-Vincent in Montmartre. Today, his works can be found at many important museums around the world including at the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., United States.

He was very fond of animals, especially cats, and often included them in his posters. Steinlen's cats proved so popular, in fact, that they became a trademark of his work