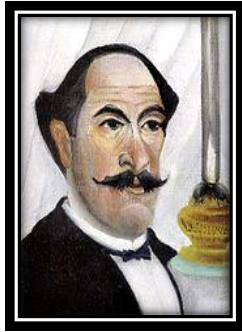


Henri Rousseau

(ahn-REE roo-SO)
French painter

1844 – 1910

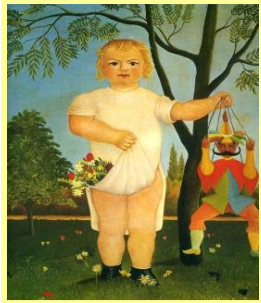
66



Henri Julien Félix Rousseau was a Post-Impressionist painter in the Naïve or Primitive manner and known as "*Le Douanier*" ("the customs officer"), a humorous moniker of his occupation. Ridiculed during his life, he became recognized as a self-taught genius whose works are of high artistic quality.

Henri was born in Laval, France in 1844 into the family of a plumber. He attended Laval High School as a day student and then as a boarder, after his father became a debtor. His parents had to leave the town when their house was seized.

He was mediocre in some subjects at high school but won prizes for drawing and music. He worked for a lawyer and studied law, but "attempted a small perjury and sought refuge in the army," serving for four years, starting in 1863 (19). After his father's death, Rousseau moved to Paris (24) to support his mother.



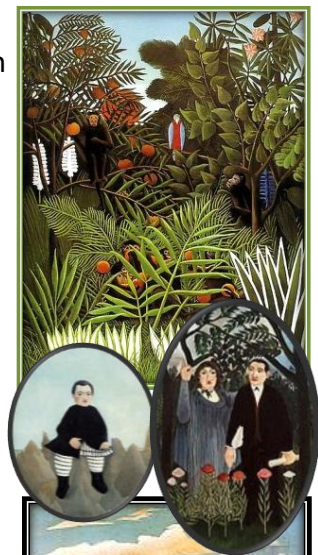
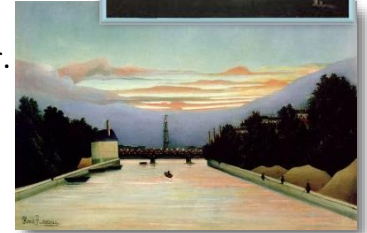
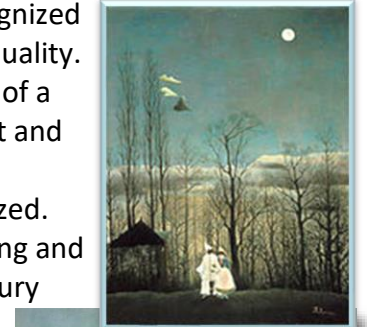
At (24), he married Clémence Boitard, his landlord's 15 year-old daughter. They had six children (only one survived). At (27), he was appointed as a tax collector on goods entering Paris. His wife died in 1888 (44) and he married Josephine Noury in 1898 (54). He started painting seriously in his early forties, and by age 49 he retired from his job to work on his art full-time.



His best known paintings depict jungle scenes, even though he never left France or saw a jungle. His inspiration came from illustrated books and the botanical gardens in Paris, as well as taxidermied wild animals. He also met soldiers who had survived the French expedition to Mexico and listened to their stories of the subtropical country they had encountered. He described his frequent visits to the Jardin des Plantes (Plant Garden): "When I go into the glass houses and I see the strange plants of exotic lands, it seems to me that I enter into a dream."

He claimed to have invented a new genre of *portrait landscape*, by starting a painting with a view, and then depicting a person in the foreground.

Rousseau's flat, seemingly childish style often shocked people. He was ridiculed but the work shows sophistication.



Self-portrait of the Artist with a Lamp, 1903 (59).
A Carnival Evening, 1886 (42). *La tour Eiffel peinte par Henri Rousseau*, 1898 (54). *Child with a Puppet*, 1903 (59).
Exotic Landscape, 1908 (68). *The Flamingoes*, 1907 (67).

Boy on the Rocks, 1895-97 (51). *Muse Inspiring the Poet*, 1909 (65). *Self Portrait*, 1890 (46).
Flowers in a white vase. *Bouquet of Flowers*, 1910 (66).



From 1886 (42), he exhibited in the Salon des Indépendants. Although his work was not placed prominently, it drew an increasing following. *Tiger in a Tropical Storm (Surprised!)* (47), was Rousseau's first serious review.

At 53, he produced one of his most famous paintings, *The Sleeping Gypsy*. At 61, *The Hungry Lion Throws Itself on the Antelope* was exhibited near leading avant-garde artists such as Henri Matisse.



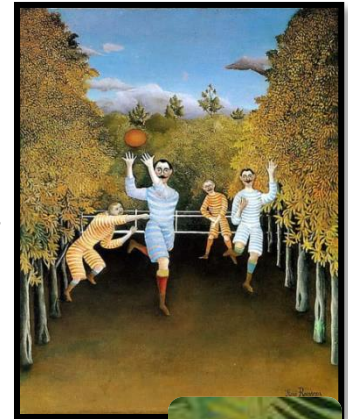
When Pablo Picasso found on the street a painting by Rousseau being sold as a canvas to be painted over, he recognized Rousseau's genius and went to meet him.

After Rousseau's retirement at 49, he supplemented his small pension with part-time jobs and work such as playing a violin in the streets. He also worked briefly at *Le petit journal*, where he produced a number of its covers.



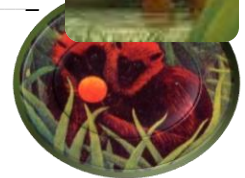
His final work, *The Dream*, was exhibited at the 1910 Salon des Indépendants just before he died.

Rousseau's work influenced several generations of vanguard artists, including Picasso, Jean Hugo, Léger, Beckmann and the Surrealists. The animated film *Madagascar* was partly inspired by Rousseau and the song *The Jungle Line* by Joni Mitchell is based upon a Rousseau painting.



What do you remember?

- Rousseau's work was recognized as great right away and he became rich selling them. T or F? ____ . Explain: _____
- Rousseau's favorite painting subjects were _____
- What was the name of the new genre of painting attributed to Rousseau? _____
- What movie (produced in 2005) was influenced by Rousseau? _____
- What about his spiritual life? _____



What Historical Timeline Who

1867 – Strauss *Blue Danube Waltz*,

1870 – Franco – Prussian War

1876 – Tchaikovsky *Swan Lake*

1840 – 1893 – Pyotr Tchaikovsky, Russian

1884 - 85 – Chinese – French War

1886 – Statue of Liberty dedicated

1889 – Eiffel Tower

1893 – Ford's first automobile

1896 – radio, First modern Olympic games (Greece),

Tiger in a Tropical Storm (Surprised!), 1891 (47). *The Sleeping Gypsy*, 1897 (53).
The Hungry Lion Throws Itself on the Antelope, 1905 (61). *Fight Between a Tiger and a Buffalo*, 1908 (64).
The Equatorial Jungle, 1909 (65). *Mandrill in the Jungle*, 1909 (65). *The Football Players*, 1908 (64).
 Three Small vignettes of *Apes in the Orange Grove*, 1910 (66).

Main source of document: Wikipedia.

labELbrass.com