



KING of Danish Posters

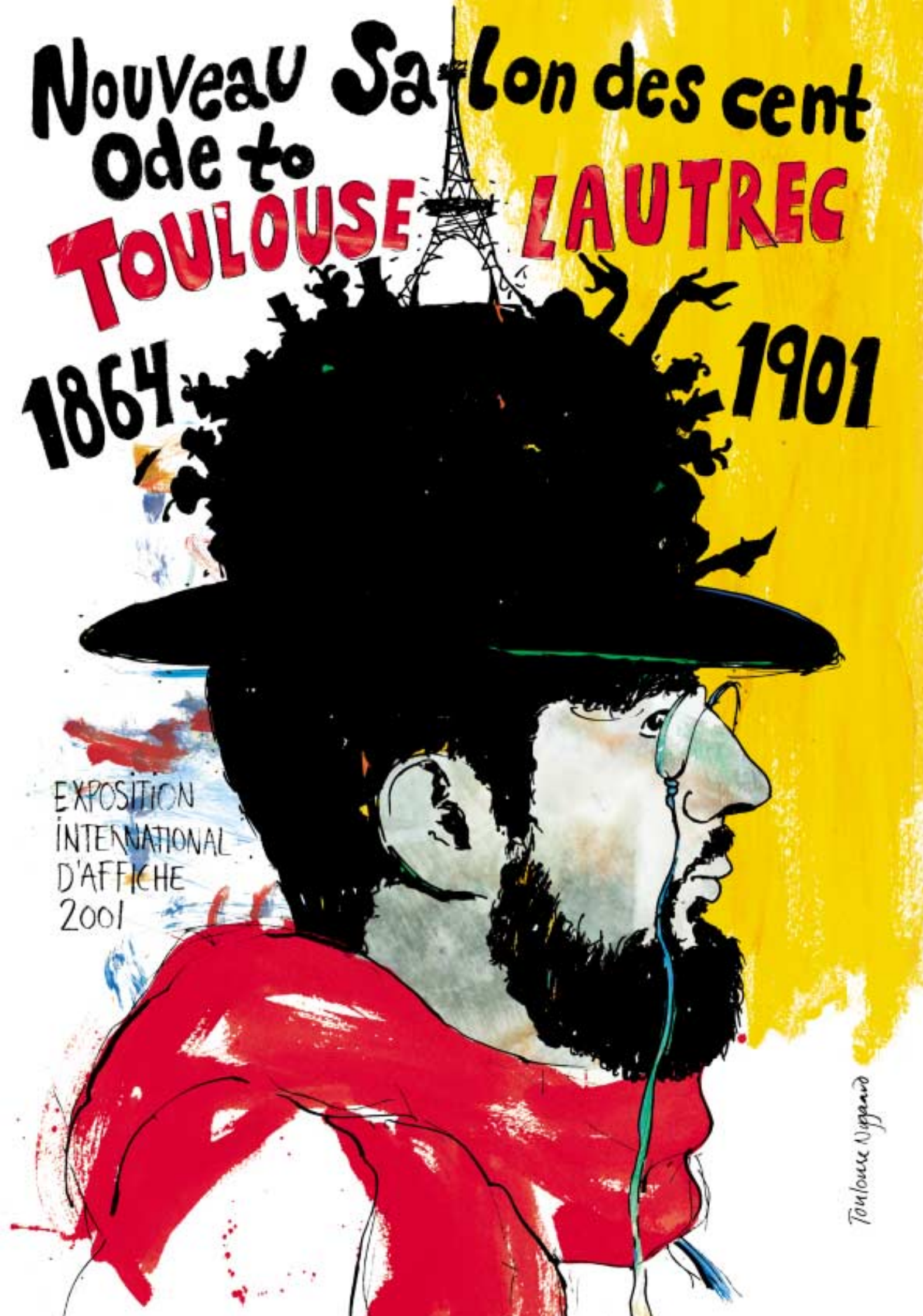
Just outside the train station in Fredensborg, which is situated 50 kilometres north of the Danish capital Copenhagen, a sign points the way to 'The Castle'. By following the direction of the sign, within one minute one arrives at Finn Nygaard's home and studio. And although Finn Nygaard has long been considered 'The King of Danish Posters', admittedly, the sign-posted castle, which serves as the summer residence of the Danish Royal family, is situated slightly further afield.

Finn Nygaard's studio used to be situated smack in the centre of Copenhagen. Very recently, however, he moved everything – posters, computers and various equipment – to Fredensborg.

Mostly in order to cut back on the time spent commuting from his home to the studio, yet also because the necessity to be based centrally has diminished now that artwork and computer files so easily transmit electronically.

"The removal company had their hands full," Finn Nygaard admits. Hundreds of framed posters, diplomas and logos, collected throughout his life, were carefully wrapped up, moved and then unpacked again.

The last 20 years have seen Finn Nygaard influencing the world of graphics – with more than 300 posters to his name, as well as a distinguished career as a graphic designer. He has designed logos for the entertainment giant Egmont, the toystore Fætter BR and the Danish political party Venstre – as



well as having created large-scale identity packages for a variety of corporate businesses. It is slightly ironic, though, that he is especially well known outside Denmark. As you read these words, a large Chinese publisher is polishing off a sizeable volume about this Danish artist, as part of a series of books titled 'World's Great Masters'.

His extensive portfolio and industriousness usually leaves the impression that he must be an elderly citizen, yet his birth certificate states 1955. "I often come across people muttering 'Not that Finn Nygaard', when I've been introduced around the world," he says.

"Until recently I had four employees, but I ended up spending most of my time doing administration work. And, I mean, I am a designer! So I decided to simplify things and move everything back to Fredensborg. Also, at times when the studio had to sustain five wages, I had to take on contracts which didn't always appeal to me.

The studio has had its ups and downs, and although I've enjoyed having a number of employees, I have come to understand that it's best when I work on my own – with one assistant only. And that's what I am doing now," says Finn Nygaard.

For a five-year period Finn Nygaard was a partner in the Danish design fairytale Eleven Danes. "I got to really push myself and test my limits. However, age has shown me that everything stabilises, and that one discovers where one's real talents lie. And I do believe that one needs to work really hard to be good, and to maintain that momentum.

"I don't really believe that there are bad assignments. Rather, it's a matter of approaching all assignments with a professional attitude and then find appropriate solutions. Profit is always secondary," he says.

JAZZ

AARHUS INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL JULY 24-29 1989



“Some designers dream about changing the world, and, admittedly I have had those dreams myself. You can’t change that much, though. But what I’ve discovered is that I can do my best professionally, and hereby push and tweak things a little.

“Basically, I perceive myself to be a happy person. I smile a lot. And there is a touch of humour in everything I do. Also, I do like to turn things upside-down at times. I was recently asked to do a poster for China, which ended up being a kind of political manifesto – human rights being an issue close to my heart. So I drew a globe, of which one half was covered in darkness, and added the caption: “Good Morning China – Good Night Europe”. I did hesitate whether to send it or not – you know, would it be considered at all? Yet, it came to be shown in the exhibition in China, and I am really pleased that they found the courage to show it publicly.

Should one ever get involved in things? Well, I am a great believer in getting my hands dirty. It’s no good to stand on the sidelines and point fingers at people. No. Let’s get in there and interact and inform, and hope that our viewpoints may push things and people along a bit. “I have a deep love of most things in the Far East. I love Japan, and have always loved the calligraphy of the Far East. Also, I am deeply taken by the calm contemplation often found out there.

“Am I afraid of success? No! I actually don’t really understand what success is meant to be. I have a tremendous self discipline, and what really matters to me is the creative process – the creation of something. Obviously, the result has to be bearable, but it is still the process which is the driving force for me.” And then Finn Nygaard smiles again. “You know, suddenly one day I realise that I have designed 300 posters and that people want to exhibit them! Yes, of course that is satisfying!

JAZZ

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The year 2001 was the one hundredth anniversary of the death of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec – one of the world’s most celebrated poster artists. And it was commemorated the world over – amongst other places with a large poster exhibition in Paris, in which one hundred international artists were asked to pay tribute to Toulouse-Lautrec.

After Paris the exhibition will tour the world for a few years, and, amongst the artists you will find Finn Nygaard, who humbly comments: “I am proud to have been asked – and proud to be in such good company.”

“I work as a graphic designer. For me it is a matter of adding a splash of colour or creating the outline of a brochure. It has to work – and when it comes to it, everything is a challenge. Yes, I am very fond of dealing with colour.

“I love jazz and the theatre, which I believe is reflected in my posters. I listen to jazz from I get up in the morning until I go to bed at night. It is a very important part of my life. Saying that, though, recently Mahler’s music has been filling up my universe.

“When I look back at my posters, I remember exactly how I felt when I designed them. Each poster has become a kind of milestone in my life. I have been running a design studio for 22 years, yet I remember each and every one of the posters! “If an opera company wanted me to do a poster for their performance of Tosca, I would need to listen to the opera, read the libretto and find out about stage direction etc before I could even begin to consider the process. You see, my posters must reflect their subjects,” he says.

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