

STOP 15: Folies-Bergère. The fire dance 1897; Jules CHERET



Music: From Richard Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries*

Quote: Second voice

Music is the joy of the ears. I would wish to make it the delight of the eyes, to render it pictorial, to make it visible.

Narrator

Those were the words of the American dancer, Loïe Fuller - who is shown here, whirling round, cloaked in sheer yellow fabric. The poster, by Jules Chéret, advertises Fuller's appearance at the Folies-Bergère – the Paris venue where she became an overnight sensation when she made her debut there on the 5th November 1892. Her act was hugely

innovative. It included her trademark *Serpentine Dance*, which involved dressing in swathes of silk with wands sewn in the sleeves - allowing her to swirl the fabric to create spectacular sculptural forms. With the theatre in darkness, multi-coloured electric lights and images from a magic lantern were projected onto her costume.

This is one of many lithographic posters that Fuller commissioned and paid for to publicise her performances. The editor of *The Poster* magazine wrote:

With excellent judgement she went to Chéret — Chéret the master of gorgeous and fantastic colour—to herald her earlier performances in that metropolis, to the gaiety of which his posters have added so materially.

Narrator

Chéret was a pioneer of the colour poster. In the late 1860s he brought to Paris the first large lithographic presses capable of three-colour printing. His technical brilliance comes through in the way he overlaid colours to achieve a full spectrum of hues and tones, while recreating the effect of brushstrokes. It was Chéret who introduced art to the

advertising industry for the first time - paving the way for the younger generation, led by Lautrec and Bonnard.