

STOP 4: Queen of Joy 1892, Henri de TOULOUSE-LAUTREC



Narrator

The writer Victor Joze was Lautrec's neighbour and drinking partner. He commissioned this poster to promote his satirical novel, *Queen of Joy, the Morals of the Demi-monde*, which was – as the poster informs us - *available in all the bookshops*. The book's cover was designed by another progressive young artist, Pierre Bonnard - demonstrating how real artistry could be brought to a range of different publications in this era.

Lautrec was never one to sidestep a scandal, and in this poster he shows us the moment when the book's gold-

digging protagonist, Hélène Roland, embraces her elderly patron - the banker Baron de Rozenfeld. Her artfully styled lock of black hair, the beauty spot and her revealing red dress all point to Hélène's louche behaviour - while the submissiveness of the portly older man, indicates he has been completely ensnared. The book's title, *Reine de Joie*, is a thinly veiled reference to a French term for a prostitute: *une fille de joie*.

The Jewish banker Baron Alphonse de Rothschild recognised himself as the central character of this steamy novel. And he tried to block the circulation of both the book and the poster. The shrewd art dealer and bookshop owner, Edmond Sagot, quickly bought up the stock of posters and sold them for 4 francs each. A poster advertising Sagot's bookshop is also on display in the exhibition.