

At the Circus

As a child, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec loved watching circus performers. The circus later became an important subject for his art. In 1899 he drew thirty-nine circus scenes over a period of several months. *At the Circus: Work in the Ring* portrays a horse and a female rider galloping around a brightly dressed ringmaster. They are

shown from an unusual viewpoint, as if glimpsed by someone sitting in the stands. Toulouse-Lautrec created a fascinating contrast between the large, powerful horse and the slender rider, whose skirt floats in the air. How fast do you think the horse is moving? What in the drawing helps give you this impression?



Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (French, 1864–1901), *At the Circus: Work in the Ring*, 1899.

This photograph shows Toulouse-Lautrec at work in his studio around 1890.

Question

Compare *At the Circus* with Renoir's *Acrobats*. How would you describe the differences between these two works of art about the circus?

Pierre Auguste Renoir (French, 1841–1919), *Acrobats at the Cirque Fernando* (Francisca and Angelina Wartenberg), 1879.

The young acrobats Francisca and Angelina Wartenberg are shown in a ring at the famous Cirque Fernando in Paris. This circus was a favorite destination for many artists, who loved its lively atmosphere. Look for this painting on the second floor of the Allerton Building.

