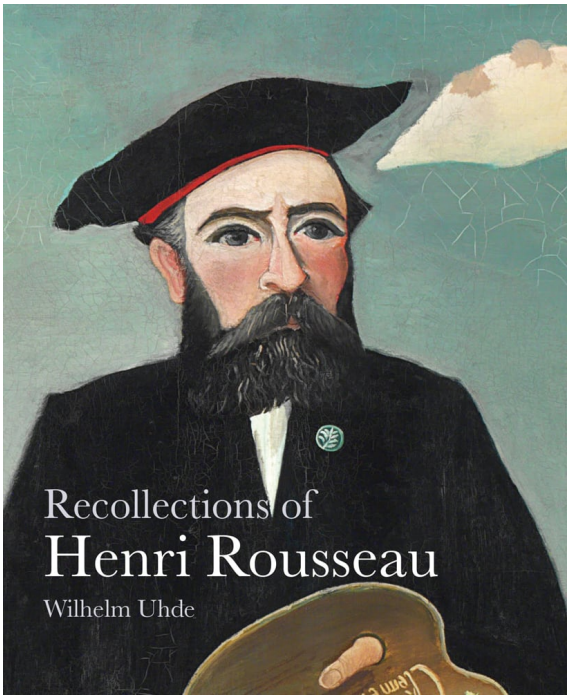
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Recollections of Henri Rousseau

Wilhem Uhde

Edited by Nancy Ireson

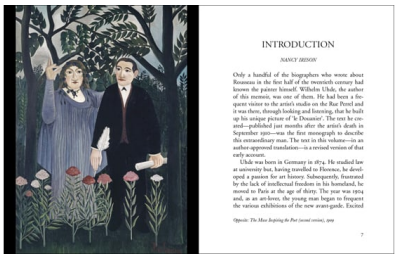
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- A movingly personal portrait of the French post-impressionist painter Henri Rousseau, written by art dealer and friend Wilhelm Uhde

Henri Rousseau (1844-1910), known as Le Douanier (the Customs Officer) after his day job, was the first outsider or naïve artist in the history of Western art to be recognised at his true worth. His astonishing paintings, particularly of jungles, have now entered popular consciousness to such an extent that it is difficult now to imagine how strongly they were resisted at the time.

Much of the credit for this transformation is due to the author of these Recollections, the dealer and historian Wilhelm Uhde. It was Uhde who put on Rousseau's first exhibition, and the catalogue he wrote for the occasion is the basis of the Recollections. In it he painted the picture of a man of naïveté, humour, gentleness and total commitment to an art of whose importance he was utterly convinced.

The version printed here is the final revision. An introduction by Nancy Ireson sets the Recollections in context.


INTRODUCTION

NANCY IRESON

Only a handful of the biographers who wrote about Rousseau in the first half of the twentieth century had known the painter himself. Wilhelm Uhde, the author of this memoir, was one of them. He had been a frequent visitor to the artist's studio on the Rue Perrel and it was there, through looking and listening, that he built up his unique picture of 'le Douanier'. The text he created—published just months after the artist's death in September 1910—was the first monograph to describe this extraordinary man. The text in this volume—in an author-approved translation—is a revised version of that early account.

Uhde was born in Germany in 1874. He studied law at university but, having travelled to Florence, he developed a passion for art history. Subsequently, frustrated by the lack of intellectual freedom in his homeland, he moved to Paris at the age of thirty. The year was 1904 and, as an art-lover, the young man began to frequent the various exhibitions of the new avant-garde. Excited





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