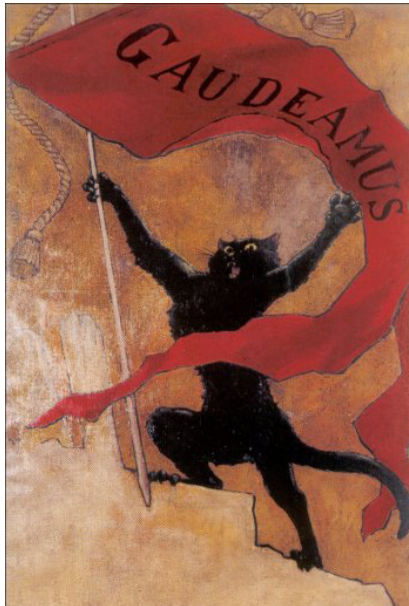


Cats and Anarchy

Allan Antliff

2023 is the Year of the Cat, so we thought it appropriate to grace a special issue of ADCS focussing on Southeast Asia with the Vietnamese Mèo Mun ('Meow Moon') collective's kitty logo.

Of course, cats have a long standing relationship with anarchism. To take but one example, in 1890, Swiss-born anarchist Theodore Steinlen (1859-1923) immortalized anarchy on the barricades in the guise of a black cat raising a red banner emblazoned with the slogan "Gaudeamus" (rejoice!).



Theodore Steinlen, Gaudeamus, c. 1890 oil on canvas, 172 x 84 cm

Fellow agitator Zo d'Axa (1864-1930) captured the anarchic tenor of Steinlin's cat, "who conscripts nothing and who is guided by only by his impulsive nature and the complexities of his passions; this outlaw, outside of any school; this isolated one, seeker of the beyond."¹ Speaking of moons, Steinlen also left us with an immense painting of Parisian cats massing on roof tops in the city's working class district.



**Theodore Steinlen, Apotheosis of the Cats of Montmartre, 1889/90
oil on canvas, 164.5 x 300 cm**

His rebellious nighttime prowlers are drawn to the luminous orb silhouetting one of their own, whose noble stance speaks to the unsurpassable spirit of feline independence. In popular French lore, a full moon was said to awaken cats to their "undomesticated, unbounded nature:"² clearly, Mèò Mun's cat is in good company.

Notes

¹ Zo d'Axa cited in Madgaleen van Herk, Steinlen: Of Cats and Men (Amsterdam: KattenKabinet, 1995), entry 15, 52.

² van Herk, Steinlen: Of Cats and Men, entry 16, 57.