

Realism

(From about 1840 until the late 19th century)
(Western Post Renaissance Art)



Introduction

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- **Realism** in the arts is the **attempt to represent** subject matter **truthfully, without artificiality and avoiding artistic conventions, implausible, exotic and supernatural elements.**
- **Realism** as an art movement was **led by Gustave Courbet** in France.
- It **spread across Europe** and was influential for the rest of the century and beyond, but as it became adopted into the mainstream of painting it becomes less common and useful as a term to define artistic style.
- Realist works of art may emphasize the mundane (social), ugly or sordid, such as works of social realism, regionalism, or **kitchen sink** realism.

time period of REalism

- The **Realist movement** in **French art** flourished **from about 1840 until the late 19th century.**
- Artists of this movement were trying to convey a **truthful** and **objective vision** of **contemporary life.**

Origins

From 1400 to 1800, Western art was dominated by Renaissance-inspired academic theories of idealized painting and high art executed in the Grand Manner. Thereafter, caused partly by the huge social changes triggered by the Industrial Revolution, there was a greater focus on realism of subject - that is, subject matter *outside* the high art tradition. The term Realism was promoted by the French novelist Champ Fleury during the 1840s, although it began in earnest in 1855, with an Exposition by the French painter **Gustave Courbet** (1819-77), after one of his paintings (*The Artist's Studio*) had been rejected by the World Fair in Paris. Courbet set up his own marquee nearby and issued a manifesto to accompany his personal exhibition. It was entitled "*Le Realisme*".

subject matter

Favorite subject matter for **Realist artists** included:

- **Common scenes of rural life**
- **Urban working class life**
- **Scenes of street-life**
- **Cafes and night clubs-life**
- After some time **Realist painters** as well as **increasing frankness** in the treatment (presentation/composition style) **of the body, nudity & sensual** subjects.