

Chantelle Williamson
2107345
Illustration
ADAD4018 Ways Of Thinking
Gwenllian Beynon

1519 - word count

Realism

This essay will be dating back and looking at the history of realism art and the realism movement, what started the realism movement and changed the way we look at modern art. Realism is generally used to describe artworks that are created almost in a real and photographic way. Realism is a way of accurately depicting the world or objects as you see them, to show truth through reality. Taking time and precision to draw or paint exactly what you see and what is true to you. This essay will also be looking a little into the life of artist Gustave Courbet who was a French painter that led the realism movement in the 19th century, and what change he and the realism movement had on realism art. This essay will also be completing a semiotic evaluation of some artworks created by Gustave Courbet and trying to see signs and meanings that Courbet's artwork may portray. This essay will also end with a conclusion of all the gathered information throughout and what has been learned completing this essay.

Realism, occasionally known as Naturalism first was known in France during the mid 18th century. Artists were starting to explore different avenues and creative ways. Realism ignored traditional ways and created art that could be seen as they were truly viewed. This art movement was said to have created the start of modern art, many artists would create their view in an honest manner without disguising any eyesore elements. After the 1848 revolution France had firmly established the right to work.

Realism became popular with the working class people and commoners becoming the representation of these new realism artworks. The realism movement frowned on romanticising being involved in their work, this true style of painting unveiled raw and confronting paintings of life bringing society closer. Many people wanted to help with the growth of honest realism paintings, people would happily model and be painted.

through this movement it has created other styles of realism in history. The biggest progression for realism was artist Gustave Courbet, who led this movement. Realism encouraged the development of modernism and artists would exhibit their work and create fame for themselves.

Gustave Courbet stated "mayor, who weighs 400, the parish priest, the justice of the peace, the cross bearer, the notary market, the assistant mayor, my friends, my father, the choir boys, the grave digger, two old revolutionaries" to portray the funeral of his great uncle in his painting, *Burial at Ornans (1849)*. exhibiting this painting it created a lot of attention from others.

Gustave Courbet was an acclaimed French artist and was a pivotal part in the future of realism. His paintings had a sense of reality from what he was seeing. "All I have tried to do is to derive, from a complete knowledge of tradition, a reasoned sense of my own independence and individuality". A quote from Courbet. He was motivated by a dislike for strictures of French academy, although he had fame, Courbet remained to a humble country lifestyle. In early life Courbet moved to Paris and indulged into realism painting from models and nature. He was so dedicated he would deny to paint something he couldn't physically see stating, "show me an angel and I will paint one". Courbet became questioned in the 1860s when he would create erotic paintings, and use his voice to write columns on his opinions. so much so he served 6 months incarcerated in 1873. Some of Courbet's most famous works are '*the desperate man*' an oil canvas painting located within a private gallery. many pieces are located in the metropolitan museum of art these are '*After the Hunt*', '*Young Ladies of the Village*', '*The Source*', and many more. The work that created the turn in modern French art is '*A Burial At Ornans*'. A quote reads "Courbet was in the habit of giving his own definition of his art, and did so notably in his preface to the catalogue of his exhibition in the avenue Montaigne in 1855. He was a realist, more than that he was realism. The proud title which he gave to his exhibition.



A Burial At Ornans (1849-1850)

Gustave Courbet



The Source (1862)
Gustave Courbet



Young Ladies of the Village (1851-52)
Gustave Courbet

Thanks to many known famous theorists, one of them being Ferdinand de Saussure a Swiss semiotician and philosopher, born in 1857, who's ideas created the path for semiotics, it is possible to depict language, and information, signs that hide meanings behinds them, and possibly what someone is trying to convey through their drawing and artwork. Making it

possible to look through hidden layers. Ferdinand de Saussure said “signs of language are arbitrary, in the sense that the relation between their physical and symbolic distinction from each other has no other grounds but convention”.

The Source by Gustave Courbet we can see a woman standing in the nude, she appears to be in a forest or within the nature, standing in water. She could be washing herself in the water, this could signify that the woman is perhaps poor, the colours are dark, this could be early morning or perhaps the evening time. The painting symbolises water and possibly a season of the year. No eye contact could be a sign of rebel and deviation, Courbet was known to make his own rules and particularly at this time women’s bodies were weaponised in the French intervention and considered socially inferior to men.

Women would have small occupation selling goods like fruit or flowers, this could signal why the woman depicted in the image is stood in nature. Water symbolises purity, wisdom, power, grace, this also links with the title of the piece The Source, this could mean literal water source as we see depicted in the image.

Comparing this image to another of Courbet’s *young Ladies of the Village* we can see that they are created within a close timeframe to one another, also all women are depicted in these artworks. We can see that in both there is no eye contact and both images seem to be a shot of real life, in the moment pieces.

Young Ladies of the Village we can see 3 older ladies and a younger, this could be showing the lives of the women, this could be a family, perhaps sisters. Also there are 3 animals in this piece, this could be a sign of wealth along with the ladies attire, they look very well dressed for this time. They could be harvesting fruits as we see one of the ladies is carrying a basket on her arm. The sky is blue this portrays a warm day it looks like the sun is shining on them. A lot of green symbolises nature, referencing and tranquil. The blue sky’s could symbolise stability, wisdom and intelligence.

To conclude this essay, the realism movement changed the modern art world and the way people see art. The movement allowed the world to be seen in its truest form whether it be good or bad. Acclaimed French artist Gustave Courbet was determined and focused on his *work*. He had a clear effect and change within the modern art world when it came to realism, pushing the boundaries, making bold choices and leading the realism art movement. The realism art movement created a big shift and also caused some controversy for Courbet and many others. He wanted to paint and show the world for its true form even in the bad times this led to trouble for Courbet serving time in prison.

Semiotics have progressed and allowed the capability to read signs and messages through people’s works, and the ability to depict the hidden layers of what someone may be trying to say. People are now able to understand more of the work they are looking at and dive into the mind of the artist. Making it possible in this essay to look through the works of Courbet, the language in which he paints. And comparing different art works he has with one another.

Bibliography

Arty Factory. (2022). PAINTINGS BY GIOTTO. [Online]. Arty Factory. Available at: https://www.artyfactory.com/art_appreciation/great-artists/giotto/giotto.html?fbclid=IwAR04dAv5m5Hnf [Accessed 22 November 2022].

Art in Context. (2021). Realism Art – A History of Realism and the Realism Art Movement.[Online]. Art in Context. Last Updated: 1 February 2021. Available at: https://artincontext.org/realism-art/?fbclid=IwAR3JnePS53MOBqDuBgxcNvO_NXbMfdmpdZVJfmsynezgR2uSzZ7ge [Accessed 22 November 2022].

Dr. Claire Black McCoy, "Gustave Courbet, A Burial at Ornans," in Smarthistory, October 1, 2017, accessed December 13, 2022,

Francie Chassen-López. (2022). The Weaponising of Women's Bodies in the Wars of Reform and French Intervention in Mexico, 1857–67. [Online]. Wiley Online Library. Last Updated: 17 March 2022. Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1468-0424.12606?af=R&fbclid=IwAR3LLpVV4jI5ngnuHfhq6hShe1> [Accessed 22 November 2022].

Tate. (2022). REALISM. [Online]. Tate. Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/r/realism?fbclid=IwAR0Eu60THRdPPeHFmSRVOxHCOokShrWyQe5hlgrCZsk> [Accessed 22 November 2022].

The Art Story. (2022). Gustave Courbet. [Online]. The Art Story. Available at: <https://www.theartstory.org/amp/artist/courbet-gustave/?fbclid=IwAR2rXocL422QEINTHjJuirmJxkyW6pkrgAR> [Accessed 22 November 2022].

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. (2023). Ferdinand de Saussure. [Online]. Britannica. Last Updated: 22 November 2022. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ferdinand-de-Saussure> [Accessed 10 December 2022].

William Heinemann. (1913). Gustave Courbet. London: J.B Lippincott Company. p.8.