ART
IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE
NINETEENTH CENTURY
REALISM

Week 1, 30.09.2011

Art in the nineteenth century:

the birth of “–isms”

For Western civilization, the 19th century was an age of chaos and disorder. The church lost its power, monarchies collapsed, and new democracies suffered from growing pains. In short, the tradition was out and the future was open to any development.

Unfamiliar forces like industrialization and urbanization made cities be full with masses of dissatisfied poor people. The fact pace of scientific progress, and the ills of unrestrained capitalism caused more confusion.

The art world of the 1800s covers several “–isms,” each overreacting to the other. Instead of one style dominating for centuries, —as Renaissance and Baroque did — one movement is followed by its countermovement in rather short sequences.

We should know that:

• Each “–ism” represented a trend in art, we may call it as “style”.

For most of the 19th century, three major styles competed with each other, in the first half Neoclassicism, Romanticism, (which were your subject in the last semester) and in the second half of the century Realism— that we will evaluate in depth today.

Toward the end of the century, a blur of schools —Impressionism, Post impressionism, Art Nouveau, and Symbolism— came and went in quick succession.
 NEOCLASSICISM  
VALUES: Order, solemnity  
INSPIRATION: Greek and Roman art  
TONE: Calm, rational  
SUBJECTS: Greek and Roman history, mythology  
TECHNIQUE: Stressed drawing with lines, not color; no trace of brushstrokes  
ROLE OF ART: Morally Uplifting, inspirational  
HALLMARK: Severe, precisely drawn figures, which appeared in the foreground, without an illusion of depth. Paintings as if polished, simple compositions.  
ARTISTS: Jacques-Louis David (founder), Ingres, Copley, Stuart,  

Oath of the Horatii, 1784, Louvre, Paris.  
David’s “Oath of the Horatii” is the painting that marked the death of Rococo, and birth of Neoclassical art, which stressed order and solemnity as its inspirations. The painting shows the neoclassical art style, and employs various techniques that were typical for it:

- The background is deemphasized, while the figures in the foreground are emphasized to show their importance.
- The use of dull colors is to show the importance of the story behind the painting over the painting itself.
- The picture is clearly organized, depicting the symbolism of the number three and of the moment itself.
- The focus on clear, hard details and the lack of use of the more wispy brushstrokes preferred by Rococo art.
- The brushstrokes are invisible, to show that the painting is more important compared to the artist.
- The men are all depicted with straight lines miming the columns in the background signifying their rigidity and strength while the women are all curved like the arches which are held up by the columns.
- The use of straight lines to depict strength is also demonstrated in the swords, two of which are curved while one is straight foreshadowing that only one brother would survive the encounter.
- The brother closest to the viewer (presumably destined to be the sole survivor) is dressed in colors matching that of the father while the garb of the other brothers is obscured but seems to mimic the colors being worn by the women.
- The frozen quality of the painting is also intended to emphasize rationality, unlike the Rococo style.
- The only emotion shown is from the women, who were allowed to feel, while it was for the men to do their duty with heroic determination.
- The fact that it also depicts a morally complex or disturbing story lends to its classification as a neoclassical work.

 ROMANTICISM  
VALUES: Intuition, Emotion, Imagination  
INSPIRATION: Medieval and Baroque eras, Middle and Far East  
TONE: Subjective, spontaneous, nonconformist  
COLOR: Unrestrained; deep rich shades  
SUBJECTS: Legends, exotica, nature and violence; Revived interest in medieval tales called romances.  
GENRES: Narratives of heroic struggle, landscapes with wild animals  
TECHNIQUE: Quick brushstrokes, strong light-and-shade contrasts.  
COMPOSITION: Use of diagonal  
ARTISTS: Delacroix, Constable, Turner, Cole, Bierstadt, Bingham
**REALISM**

VALUES: Real, Fair

INSPIRATION: The Machine Age, Marx and Engel’s Communist Manifesto, Photography, Renaissance art

TONES: Calm, rational

SUBJECTS: Facts of the modern world, as the artist experienced them; Peasants and the urban working class; landscape; Serious scenes from ordinary life.

TECHNIQUE: Varies, but the final product depicts the story as close as to its real appearance.

HALLMARK: Precise imitations of visual perception without alteration; no idealization, or sensationalization.

ARTISTS: Courbet (founder), Daumier, Rousseau, Corot

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The Raft of the Medusa is an oil painting of 1818–1819 by the French Romantic painter and lithographer Théodore Géricault (1791–1824). The artist completed this painting when he was just 27. Géricault inaugurated Romanticism with this canvas contrasting images of extreme hope and despair. The work has become an icon of French Romanticism. It is in monumental scale: 491 cm × 716 cm. The story that it depicts is from a contemporary event that caused a political scandal: a government ship, the Méduse, carrying French colonists to Senegal sank off the west coast of Africa due to the incompetence of the captain, a political appointee. The captain and crew were first to evacuate and took over the lifeboats, and leave 149 passengers behind. They drifted for twelve days without food or water, and due to the hot weather and equatorial sun, starvation, and madness, only 15 of the immigrants survived, while the rest died. The event became an international scandal, in part because its cause was widely attributed to the incompetence of the French captain acting under the authority of the recently restored French monarchy.

In choosing the tragedy as subject matter for his first major work—a depiction of an event from recent history—Géricault consciously selected a well-known incident that would generate great public interest and help launch his career. The event fascinated the young artist, and before he began work on the final painting, he undertook extensive research and produced many preparatory sketches. As the artist had anticipated, the painting proved highly controversial as its first appearance in the 1819 Paris Salon, attracting passionate praise and condemnation in equal measure. However, it established his international reputation, and today is widely seen as seminal in the early history of the Romantic movement in French painting.
**Realism (1830-1870)**

After the 1848 Revolution, Realism emerged as a cultural movement in France.

It first appeared as a reaction to Romanticism and Neoclassicism.

As you remember, those were specific art movements that tried to idealize the subject matters. Realism in the visual arts, on the contrary, was signified as the opposite act of such idealisation. Realism is the accurate and objective depiction of the ordinary, visible world. As Realists prefer an observation of physical appearance over imagination, subjects are represented in a straightforward manner without embellishment and without the formal rules of artistic practice.

Realism is an approach to art in which subjects are depicted in a manner as straightforward as possible, without idealizing them and without following rules of formal artistic theory.

Artists discarded the formulas of Neoclassicism and the theatrical drama of Romanticism to paint familiar scenes and events as they actually looked.

They were strongly opposed to Romantic subjectivism and exaggerated emotionalism.

The Realists believed in the ideology of objective reality. Their aim was to promote truth and accuracy through their art. This was a notion based on Positivist thinking. And this thinking prompted further artistic developments:

- the use of realism in Academic art,
- the emphasis on the optical illusions of light, and
- the development of photography as a key source.

Shortly after the introduction of photography, the emphasis on creating works that were "objectively real" became stronger and the application of new technologies in art making became a major trend.

Realists saw the practices and ideas of Neoclassicism and Romanticism as artificial, and rejected their style and subject selection.

With the lives and activities of everyday people considered worthy subjects, the Realists attempted to portray these people exactly how they saw them, highlighting the often ugly appearances, problems and customs of the middle and lower classes.

In doing so, they became linked to demands for social and political reform and expressed a taste for democracy.

Up until that point, the attitudes, conditions and settings of contemporary society were ignored for stiff, conventional images.

Advocates of the Realist style commonly rejected the strict teachings of the notable Salons, Academies and other institutions.
As the name implies, this is a style of painting that depicts the subject matter as it appears in reality, without distortion or stylization.

Realism, also known as the Realist school, was a mid-nineteenth century art movement and style in which artists discarded the formulas of Neoclassicism and the theatrical drama of Romanticism to paint familiar scenes and events as they actually looked.

Typically it involved some sort of social or moral message, in the depiction of ugly or commonplace subjects.

Artists who best epitomise the Realist style include:

• Gustave Courbet,
• Honore Daumier,
• Hilaire Germain Edgar Degas and
• Edouard Manet.

Artists limited themselves to facts of the modern world as they personally experienced them. Only what they could see or touch was considered real. Gods, goddesses, heroes of antiquity were out. Peasants and the urban working class were in. In everything, from color to subject matter, Realism brought a sense of muted sobriety to art.

Courbet, Gustave (1819-77). French painter Courbet is the founder of Realism. Upto that day, art critics and the public were accustomed to pretty pictures that made life look better than it was. Courbet was against such idealization, and purification. He preferred to portray ordinary places and people truthfully.

• He was a painter of figurative compositions, landscapes, seascapes, and still-lifes.
• He courted controversy by addressing social issues in his work, and by painting subjects that were considered vulgar: the rural bourgeoisie and peasantry, and the working conditions of the poor.
• He believed that the only possible source for a living art is the artist’s own experience, not any scene from history.
• His work, along with the work of Honore Daumier and Jean-Francois Millet, became known as Realism. For Courbet, Realism dealt not with the perfection of line and form, but entailed spontaneous and rough handling of paint, suggesting direct observation by the artist while portraying the irregularities in nature. He depicted the harshness in life, and in so doing, challenged contemporary academic ideas of art.
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The Burial, one of Courbet's most important works, records an event—the funeral of his grand uncle—which he witnessed in September 1848. People who had attended the funeral were used as models for the painting. Previously, models had been used as actors in historical narratives; here Courbet said that the people he painted was all familiar. They were "all the townspeople". The result is a realistic presentation of them, and of life, in Ornans. The painting depicts a ordinary ritual. The scale of the painting, however, was oversized and resembled to those which previously would have been reserved for a religious or royal subject. It is therefore taken as a thrust into the grand tradition of history painting. And, the painting lacks the sentimental rhetoric that was expected in a genre work: Courbet's mourners make no theatrical gestures of grief, no sign of misery, and their faces seemed more caricatured than ennobled. The critics accused Courbet because of his deliberate pursuit of ugliness. Eventually the public grew more interested in the new Realist approach, and Romanticism lost popularity. The artist well understood the importance of this painting; as Courbet said: "The Burial at Ornans was in reality the burial of Romanticism."
The Painter's Studio; A Real Allegory
1855 - Oil on canvas, 361 x 598 cm; Musee d'Orsay, Paris
The painting itself was recognized as a masterpiece by Delacroix, and the famous philosopher Baudelaire. It is an allegory of Courbet's life as a painter, seen as an heroic venture, in which he is flanked by friends and admirers on the right, and challenges and opposition to the left. Friends on the right include the art critics Champfleury, and Charles Baudelaire, and art collector Alfred Bruyas. On the left are figures (a priest, a prostitute, a grave digger, a merchant, and others) who represent what Courbet described in a letter to Champfleury as "the other world of trivial life, the people, misery, poverty, wealth, the exploited and the exploiters, the people who live off death."

The Meeting, or Bonjour, Monsieur Courbet, 1854
Oil on canvas, 132 x 150.5 cm., Musée Fabre, Montpellier
This painting is traditionally seen as representing an imaginary roadside encounter between the artist and his patron. It seems like Courbet had just arrived to Montpellier via the stagecoach departing in the distance and met his patron Bruyas, who is accompanied by his manservant Calas and his dog Breton. This depiction was imaginary, that makes us to interrogate the paintings style. As mentioned realism was the depiction of real personal experiences, but unlike the fake story told by this painting, Courbet traveled to Montpellier via railway rather than a stagecoach.

What was modeled here by Courbet was a legendary figure from medieval Christian mythology and was often used in Romanticism. The original legend concerns a Jew shoemaker who laughed at Jesus on the way to the Crucifixion (fixed to Cross) and was then cursed to walk the earth until the Second Coming. In the painting, Courbet identified himself likewise, as a wandering artist with that of the legendary shoemaker, condemned to wander for eternity.
By the 1870s, Courbet had become well established as one of the leading artists in France. On 14 April 1870, he established a “Federation of Artists” (Fédération des artistes) for the free and uncensored expansion of art.

The group's members included:

- Gustave Courbet,
- André Gill,
- Honoré Daumier,
- Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot,
- Eugène Pottier,
- Jules Dalou, and
- Édouard Manet.

Honoré Daumier (February 26, 1808 – February 10, 1879) was a French printmaker, caricaturist, painter, and sculptor, whose many works offer commentary on social and political life in France in the 19th century. A prolific draftsman who produced over 4000 lithographs, he was perhaps best known for his caricatures of political figures and satires on the behavior of his countrymen. He provoked anti-governmental views with his caricatures. He was a Republican, therefore sentenced to six-months imprisonment in his thirties.

- His paintings were like the documents of contemporary life. He mostly pictured the daily manners with satirical overtones.
- The canvas becomes a medium of political insubordination against the government.
- The representation of poverty, the images of revolution, all were representing political views of the artist.
- He depicts the current social life in a way that lacks any sentimentality.
- Uprising is the picture of a protestor.

*Uprising*, c. 1860; Oil on canvas, 87.6 x 113 cm; The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.
Third Class Carriage (Un Wagon de Troisieme Classe) 1862-1864; oil on panel 26 x 33.9 cm.; Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco.

Honore Daumier was deeply interested in people, especially the underprivileged. In Third Class Carriage he shows us, with great compassion, a group of people on a train journey. We are especially concerned with one family group: the young mother tenderly holding her small child, the weary grandmother lost in her own thoughts, and the young boy fast asleep. The painting is done with simple power and economy of line. The hands, for example, are reduced to mere outlines but beautifully drawn. The bodies are as solid as clay, their bulk indicated by stressing the essential and avoiding the nonessential. These are not portraits of particular people but of mankind.

BARBIZON SCHOOL in France:

- Instigating their own approaches to art making, the Barbizon School of landscape painting emerged in France as the closest Realist group.

- Headed by Camille Corot and Jean-Francois Millet, this group of artists attempted to create faithful depictions of nature and had strong interests in visible reality.

- They work in the open air in the hamlet of Barbizon not far from Paris.

- Each of the members of the so-called Barbizon school possesses his own pictorial manner, but they were all united by their love of French countryside.

- As a rule: the Barbizon painters worked outside in natural conditions, often selecting the most ordinary landscape motifs. Only their large canvases intended for exhibition at the Salon were finished in the studio.
Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot (July 17, 1796 – February 22, 1875) was a French landscape painter and printmaker in etching. Corot was the leading painter of the Barbizon school of France in the mid-nineteenth century. He is a pivotal figure in landscape painting and his vast output simultaneously references the Neo-Classical tradition and anticipates the plein-air (open-air) innovations of Impressionism.

Characteristics:
- Nature becomes the subject of the paintings.
- En plein air (is a French expression which means "in the open air", and is particularly used to describe the act of painting outdoors.)
- Effets de soir (also called effets desoir or effets de soir et de matin) are the effects of light caused by the sunset, twilight, or darkness of the early evening or matins.

Corot was taught “to reproduce as scrupulously as possible what I saw in front of me.”

He brought a natural, objective style to landscape painting, capturing the quality of a particular place at a particular moment.

Corot used a limited palette of pearly, silvery tones with olive green, and soft wispy strokes.

The nearly monochromatic landscapes of his later years were so popular that they were among the most forged paintings in the world.
Corot was “attracted by everyday town life, casual passersby, fleeting moments. Many of Corot’s landscapes possess a lyricism engendered by his direct perception, his sensitive response to what he saw. The artist preferred changing states, dying sunsets, sudden gusts of wind, stormy weather, skies clearing after the rain, but, unlike the Romantics, he chose secluded corners of nature, surrounded with trees with rustling foliage and outlines that melt in a misty haze. The human figure in his landscapes serves as a kind of barometer for determining the mood of the landscape image.”

Souvenir de Mortefontaine (Recollection of Mortefontaine) is a 1864 oil-on-canvas painting by French artist Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot. It is a scene of tranquillity: a woman and children quietly enjoying themselves by a glass-flat, tree-flanked lake.

The painting is generally acknowledged as one of Corot’s masterpieces. It is among the most successful of Corot’s later, more poetic works.

The painting captures an idealized scene while still drawing from the real world.

Corot’s early painting showed Realist leanings, but as his career progressed he began to combine more Romantic elements, and his works are often viewed as a bridge between Realism and the evolving Impressionist movement.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WORK:

• The brushwork is precise as in Realist painting and the painting has a more muted palette than the bright colours favoured by the Impressionists.

BUT: Because of the lake and landscape captured by broad rather than detailed strokes and Corot’s careful attention to the play of light within the scene, Souvenir de Mortefontaine is considered as a threshold between Realism and Impressionism.

SO: Corot’s broad brushstrokes is important, because it was revolutionary and did not belonging to Realist teachings.

• The play of light with brushstrokes and the use of color is important, because it was a marginal style, which later became one of the hallmarks of Impressionism.
Jean-François Millet (October 4, 1814 – January 20, 1875) was a French painter and one of the founders of the Barbizon school in rural France. He extended the idea from landscape to figures — peasant figures, scenes of peasant life, and work in the fields. Millet is noted for his scenes of peasant farmers; he can be categorized as part of the naturalism and realism movements. The naturalist point of view believes to represent the nature the same as it is. In The Gleaners (1857), Millet portrays three peasant women working at the harvest. There is no drama and no story told, merely three peasant women in a field.

Millet first unveiled The Gleaners at the Salon in 1857. It immediately drew negative criticism from the middle and upper classes, who viewed the topic with suspicion. Having recently come out of the French Revolution of 1848, these prosperous classes saw the painting as glorifying the lower-class worker. To them, it was a reminder that French society was built upon the labor of the working masses, and landowners linked this working class with the growing movement of Socialism and the dangerous voices of Karl Marx and Émile Zola.

- A warm golden light suggests something sacred and eternal in this daily scene where the struggle to survive takes place.
- Along the horizon, the setting sun silhouettes the farm with its abundant stacks of grain, in contrast to the large shadowy figures in the foreground.
- The dark homespun dresses of the gleaners cut robust forms against the golden field, giving each woman a noble, monumental strength.

The painting was commissioned by a wealthy American, Thomas G. Appleton, and it was completed during the summer of 1857. But, when the purchaser failed to take possession in 1859, Millet added a steeple and changed the initial title of the work, Prayer for the Potato Crop to The Angelus.
Pierre Étienne Théodore Rousseau (April 15, 1812 - December 22, 1867), French painter of the Barbizon school, was born in Paris, of a bourgeois family which included one or two artists. Early in his life, Rousseau developed an appreciation for the French countryside, and after a brief employment at sawmill, he began painting landscapes. His influence came from naturalist painters. Rousseau's work became well known and sought after in the 1850's. However, he preferred to remain in his cottage in Barbizon, where he died in 1867.

Les chênes d’Apremont, 1852. Oil on Canvas, 63.5 x 99.5 cm, Musée d’Orsay, Paris.

French painter and printmaker who in his own work accomplished the transition from the realism of Gustave Courbet to Impressionism. Manet broke new ground in choosing subjects from the events and appearances of his own time and in stressing the definition of painting as the arrangement of paint areas on a canvas over and above its function as representation. Exhibited in 1863, his Le Déjeuner sur l’herbe ("Luncheon on the Grass") aroused the hostility of the critics and the enthusiasm of a group of young painters who later formed the nucleus of the Impressionists.

Le Déjeuner sur l’herbe 1863; Luncheon on the Grass; Musee d’Orsay; Oil on canvas, 81 x 101 cm

The painting was regarded as a scandal, because of the nude woman, sitting between two clothed men. That has never been seen. It is not a realist painting as the social and political paintings of Daumier, but it is regarded in the same category due to the artist's individual freedom in selecting the subject. The brush strokes are not hidden.
Manet did not hide the brushstrokes: the painting looks unfinished in some parts.

The togetherness of the naked woman with the clothed man is a theme from history, therefore this painting is regarded as a Manet’s reinterpretation of the old masters, which included his impressions.

The controversies were perfectly configured by Manet both in vertical and in horizontal axis: the nude women, clothed man opposition in horizontal axis, and the clothed women and nude women contrast in the vertical axis.

The shock value of a nude woman casually lunching with two fully dressed men in a rural setting, was accentuated by the familiarity of the figures.

The roughly painted background lacks depth — giving the viewer the impression that the scene is not taking place outdoors, but in a studio. This impression is reinforced by the use of broad “photographic” light, which casts almost no shadows: in fact, the lighting of the scene is inconsistent and unnatural. The man on the right wears a flat hat with a tassel, of a kind normally worn indoors.

The sharpness of contrast between model and foreground items and dark background added a modern vivacity to the Venetian-type subject.
In this famous painting, Manet showed a different aspect of realism from that envisaged by Courbet: his intention being to translate an Old Master theme, the reclining nude of Giorgione and Titian, into contemporary terms. It is possible also to find a strong reminiscence of the classicism of Ingres in the beautiful precision with which the figure is drawn, these were his clear references to tradition.

The new life of paint and method of treatment in this and the other works by Manet had a stimulus to give to the young artists who were eventually to be known as Impressionists.

Manet's paintings of cafe scenes are observations of social life in nineteenth century Paris. People are depicted drinking beer, listening to music, flirting, reading, or waiting. Many of these paintings were based on sketches executed on the spot. Several people are at the bar, and one woman confronts the viewer while others wait to be served. Such depictions represent the painted journal of a flâneur. These are painted in a style which is loose, yet they capture the mood and feeling of Parisian night life. They are painted snapshots of bohemianism, urban working people, as well as some of the bourgeoisie.

In The Cafe Concert, shown at left, a sophisticated gentleman sits at a bar while a waitress stands resolutely in the background, sipping her drink.
In Racing at Longchamp, an unusual perspective is employed to underscore the furious energy of racehorses as they rush toward the viewer. The brushstrokes are accentuated to emphasize the speed.
The painting is filled with contemporaneous details specific to the Folies-Bergère:

• The distant pair of green feet in the upper left-hand corner belong to a trapeze artist, who is performing above the restaurant's patrons.

• The beer which is depicted, Bass Pale Ale (noted by the red triangle on the label), would have catered not to the tastes of Parisians, but to those of English tourists, suggesting a British clientele.

• Manet has signed his name on the label of the bottle at the bottom left, combining the centuries-old practice of self-promotion in art with something more modern, bordering on the product placement concept of the late twentieth century.

• But for all its specificity to time and place, it is worth noting that, should the background of this painting indeed be a reflection in a mirror on the wall behind the bar as suggested by some critics, the woman in the reflection would appear directly behind the image of the woman facing forward. Neither are the bottles reflected accurately or in like quantity for it to be a reflection. These details were criticized in the French press when the painting was shown. The assumption is faulty when one considers that the postures of the two women, however, are quite different and the presence of the man to whom the second woman speaks marks the depth of the subject area. Indeed many critics view the faults in the reflection to be fundamental to the painting as they show a double reality and meaning to the work.

• The increased use of the new technology of photography began to free artists such as Manet to do more than merely imitate life. At any rate, Manet was confident enough to take liberties with literal transcription for the sake of composition.

• The painting has been interpreted as a modern paraphrasing of Las Meninas by Diego Velázquez.

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