

Exhibit Title: Staying Amazed:

Universal Realism and the Science of Seeing Beyond Style: An Exhibit of Realist Art

Organized and written by Mark Koslow with the advice of Gabriel Weisberg

My trilogy, collectively called Persistent Fictions, also contains a few essays on art. I situate art history with a wide cultural and historical context. Some of this is in the following exhibit, but much more is in the essays on Praxiteles: “Misuses of Scholarship in the Making of the Myth” and “Beyond the Dead End of Traditional and (Post)/Modernist Aesthetics”

<https://markkoslowpaintingsthoughtandnature.files.wordpress.com/2017/01/persistent-fictions-the-varieties-of-religious-delusion-latest-version-1.pdf>

See also my Blog which contains many essays on my art and that of others. Here:

(Note: The following 10 pages is a necessarily rather thick and complex essay on realism, aesthetics and history which explains why this exhibit is different than most. (some might call it ‘turgid’ and I would not entirely disagree) If that does not interest you skip on down to the exhibit itself which is written in a Haiku-like and descriptive manner, much easier to read.)

Staying Amazed

The history of art is a bloated thing in many ways. It is in large part propaganda for the ruling classes: Chinese emperors, Napoleon, Christian “saints”, Hindu gods and goddesses, Taoist or Zen superstitions, Greek myths, Presidents, idealized workers for the communist state, Campbell soup cans, huge empty minimalist monuments to the corporation. None of that interests me much

anymore, indeed, if it ever did, it was part of my learning about the world, but now, it is no longer of much moment, because I see through it. Indeed, I have come to the point where I find a lot of paintings for the wealthy and corporations repulsive. Some of it is just bad art, like Barnett Newman or Warhol, who did not really make art at all, it is just overpriced commercial art and ads. A relative of mine interviewed Warhol and he told me privately that Warhol was one of the most vacuous headed men he ever met. This is confirmed by his writing.

The paintings of Rubens, Watteau's over dressed women, Hindu or Egyptian sculptures on temples, Chinese decorations for the royal halls, were all well done as 'art', but how much does that matter really? Is well done political propaganda art, or just well done propaganda? I find Ruben's 25 or so paintings of the bloated life of Marie D' Medici to be excessive, fawning, lying even, and rather ridiculous. In some of them there are some great passages of real painting. Is it art? Well, only in small sections. Is the art I love also propaganda? Yes, some of it, but at least it has the merit fo being propaganda for the less advantaged and not the rich, who steal from others. I like art that is honest and sincere.

What really interests me is the art that questions power and poses an alternative history. This is an alternative history of art. What interests me in history is the actual events and appearances of real people, nature and objects. Since most art is propaganda of one sort or another I have spent some decades trying to find art that is not that. I prefer an art that seeks to make inquiries, based on facts, keeps all species in view, includes the poor, and explains the world and our existence on earth as it really is, without lies or elite mythologies. I find myself studying this kind of art regularly for decades now.

I originally thought this was going to be an exhibit for museums, but I finally realized that museums are not really interested in art per se, but in power and wealth: propaganda and class lies, in short. I doubt any museum with perhaps a distant exception or two would put this exhibit up, even in the shortened form I suggested to some of them. All the art here I have taken out of merely economic history and put back into actual history. Vermeer's Maid or Rembrandt's couple, are not just price tags, but actual appreciations of real people doing ordinary things in time and place. I like art that is beyond the reach of money and markets. History is not an elite vision but actual people doing things much like we do ourselves. In the twisted world we live in the ordinary and actual has become the subversive and is seen as dangerous to those who maintain elite economic delusions. Great art does this, even if it was not meant to do so.

So instead I have decided to put this exhibit up online, for those who might be interested in such art, and I imagine there are a few. They may not be able to articulate why they are interested, but I know why. Most of the work I show here is not about wealth or power but about ordinary people, reality, animals, people working, women or places. It is about reality, real life, the actual, in both human and natural worlds. These works are not gold bars in Fort Knox or “cultural capital”. That sort of thinking destroys art. I am interested in an art that is close to science and that is real. It does not shirk beauty but does not shy away from death, poverty or ugliness either. Much of it is art that did not make anyone a lot of money, though some of it did, perhaps by accident, as is the case with Van Gogh, who died thinking his art would always be neglected. Yet most of Van Gogh’s work has never been sold, to this day. It is of greater worth to have never been touched by greedy hands. But truth in art does not require money to be made and Vincent knew this, Once he started making art, he never stopped, money or no. I am not saying money is dirty, but the people who wield it sometimes are. Since the passing of Citizens United through the Supreme Court, “Money is Speech” and the rich have a far greater voice than the poor and the middle class. This is a repulsive anti-democratic law. Art for the rich tends to be repulsive in the same way.

If the art I admire has a name it is Realism, though I do not mean by this term just those who painted around the time of Courbet, as great as he was. It goes back far before that time and extends far beyond it, even to today.

So what is Realism? My contention, supported by the facts, is that Realism is by far the most important art movement now ongoing for over 500 years. Gabriel Weisberg defines realism in the 1980 catalogue as the being done by those who “sought to revitalize the centuries old artistic tradition of accurate, truthful recording of the world and to give this tradition contemporary relevance” Yes, Realism goes back to Van Eyck and Da Vinci and is extended into the Realism at the time of Rembrandt, up to Courbet and the “naturalist school” and on up to the present leaving all other “isms” behind it. It is not a superficial ‘style’ per se, but a deeper way to think about life, history and nature. Defining art by style is to make it merely a footnote to fashion. It is not that at all. To define art as fashion and style makes it a trivial capitalist enterprise to be run by galleries, critics and speculators. The ideology of style has made art a cult of Disneyish fashion worlds devoted to entertainments. In contrast, Realism has not really been about money,-

-Rembrandt and Vermeer, for the most part, were not working for money, in Rembrandt's greatest works were done when he was out of fashion and poor.. Realism has mostly eschewed fashion and is by far the most profound movement in all of art history, and it closely parallels the history of science. Far from following fashion Courbet was exiled to Switzerland because he lived the meaning and not just the language or realism.

I put together this exhibit of Realist art largely from things I have seen or loved over many years. Indeed, I put things in this show which are deeply part of what I love and how I see the world, over many decades. I did this mostly on my own. Though I did have some advice from Gabriel Weisberg. He only suggested one art work, the Caillebotte below. But I did use things from his books on the Realist Tradition and Beyond Impressionism. I admire his books very much. He is one of the few art historians who values work about the middle and lower classes. So the exhibit that follows reflects both my interests and those of Dr. Weisberg. But the responsibility for the exhibit is mine really. He is more careful and less openly political than I.

If some version of this exhibit ever goes up anywhere, I would like it to be done in memory of Dr Sherman Lee, his thoroughness and his fine scholarship. Dr. Lee and Dr. Weisberg put together the original show The Realist Tradition, which had a big influence on me in 1980 and beyond. Besides being popular and beautiful, this was an intellectually challenging and scholarly show that produced one of the most detailed and complete catalogues ever done at Cleveland Museum of Art. Sherman Lee said of the 1980 show that the exhibition “makes a genuine contribution to knowledge and popular understanding.”. It did more than that. Actually it was a brilliant work of historical scholarship and showed just how important Realism was and still is, not just in France but world wide. The current show takes off from that show to demonstrate that Realism is the most important event in the art world in over the last 500 years. This is not an idle claim but one that is true and will withstand the test of time. I have included some Asian work to show that this really is a world wide movement. I have written the commentary and interpretation of works in Haiku-like evocations too. Haiku at its best is evocative fact, and tends toward science and reality too. Haiku is a natural extension of the realist impulse.

The close relation of science and Realism characterizes the acts of seeing pictured in the best art of the last 500 years. One surprising thing about looking at over 500 years of Realist history

is that there is little overt stylistic difference between Leonardo and Van Eyck at the beginning, or a Courbet or Dinnerstein more recently. It records changes externally but does not change itself all that much. To say that Realism is not a style, as I said earlier, is to say that it is the one art movement in 500 years which is consistent and grows deeper and deeper with each sincere and dedicated artist. Realism, unlike modernism, is content driven, not superficially fashion driven, and thus style is not what it is about. This is why realism is not that changeable. It records real things, not merely subjective states or clever colors and quips. And the fact that it is driven by insight and looking is what makes it a profound record of experience and objectivity. It is not merely subjective conceit and money driven, but rather is an attempt to understand the world as it is. Realism is profound and records our history, and that is why museums and art critics have largely opposed it. It is evidence based, factual, and truly democratic, not dogmatic, and thus they cannot control it, unlike modern art, which is empty and easy to control. Realism comes from artists, many of whom were not about money, and they did it out of love and sympathy, not to entertain the unjustly wealthy.

Realism is in many ways a movement of contradictions. Generally it is detached, but sometimes it is very involved and political, sometimes at the same time. It can be classical and to a degree, romantic or emotional. It is prone to storytelling or, at times, more descriptive and objective, or even photographic in its devotions. Weisberg rightly sees photography as an addition to painting, as a sort of aid to an artist's sketchbook, rather than a diminishment of skill, and this is right.

Realism excites social awareness and protests. There is a tendency of people in our current age of corporate greed towards to "compassion fatigue", which leads them, often wrongly, to label paintings done 150 years ago as "sentimental", when actually many of them are very fine pictures of real sufferings at the time. An example, one of many, would be Bramley's lovely and moving work on the death of a sailor and the suffering of his wife. Very real things, and to suppose they never happened is to deny history and live in a psychopathic bubble, as do many republicans and some democrats, unable to feel for others.

To its credit as a solid example of empirical inquiry, there is not much overt "progress" in Realism, but there is a deepening appreciation of all things and beings on earth. Unlike other movements Realism is consistent and is not a superficial fashion but a deepening appreciation of life on earth the puts all other art movements into the superficial shadows,.

Realism is not is not a religious, upward, ascent toward elite or aristocratic transcendence. It is not about myths but about demythologizing. Realism is a deepening of human awareness of our actual world over a very long time and is, indeed, opposed to religion, even if some of its products might seem religious. Some realist artists have gone off into those illusions as a means of escape the pressure of social classes and injustices, as happened with Dagnan Boveret, for instance. Realism is not a transient and rather vapid style, like Cubism, Minimalism or Mannerism, nor is it an unreal fantasy like the mythology/ “history” paintings of the Rococo, the mytho-fantasias of the French Empire or surreal images of the 20th century. “History” painting of the sort ones sees from Byzantine art to a few Rembrandts and Ingres was not historical but pure political myth. Christian Greek and Islamic myths were used to justify cruel empires and unjust regimes. “Genre” painting was also misnamed as is was not merely a lower ‘kind’ of painting than historical, which was a way of demeaning it in the past, but rather was painting about life and not really “genre” at all. Yes there are many ‘kinds’ of realism, but the procedures are the same if one does waves, kids, or forests. It was a wide and various attempt to create many new types of ways of talking about reality, painters of scenes from human life, or marine landscapes, wildlife, dogs, still life, horses, mothers with children, women at windows, men working, just about everything one could think of. Genre art should be called Life Art, not genre or merely anecdotal. It describes, records and imagines, and is the most various and complex art ever made.

While some impressionistic works are realist, a good deal of impressionism is superficial studies of human subjectivity or just bad painting. Realism is a way of understanding the world from many points of view, and thus is deeply involved in the concrete and the visually satisfying. It is not an empty “conceptualism”, or an equally empty “installation”, which quickly degenerates into word play, mind-game theatrics and vacuous proto-sculptures.

Realism is not part of the Symbolist movement either, which itself morphs into the quasi religion of abstract art, as the career of Kandinsky and Mondrian show. Realism is exceptional in its use of art materials, indeed, it is the best use of art materials in history, but it is not about that. The narcissistic obsession with art itself is exclusively ‘modernist’, Concern with its own art materials and methods characterizes a bankrupt and inept art that is merely subjective and abstract, and which stupidly opposes realism. Such art about art has all the merit of a braggart who cannot do what he claims. One makes art “beyond the paint”, as Van Gogh called it.

But Realist art is not corporate art. Realism is beyond all that, beyond the ridiculous distinction between modernism and so called “post modernism”. Yet Realism is not an escape, as realism is about the here, the actual, and not the beyond. Realism is therefore not a very effective tool of propaganda, though it has been abused as such. It is too based in skepticism and so at its best is an inquiry into the facts and realities of nature and peoples actual lives. It is self-questioning and not self bragging, and even tries to suppress awareness of itself in the interest of its content.

What does lead to ‘progress’ in Realism is not an historical purpose, a teleology, dictatorship of the state or of the proletariat, or Manifest Destiny either. Some Realists did fall for these delusions. But that is all ideological fiction. What does ‘progress’ in realism is an increased sensitivity to fact and existence, inquiry, a deepening appreciation of the natural world, as well as the social world. It is a concrete awareness of actuality and thus of human and animal suffering. It is also a concrete awareness and depiction of history, not of historical purposes which is a function of fictional ideologies, but an awareness of actual people and events, ecologies and beings within them.

Naturalism is a subset of Realism and is part of it. Realism is Naturalism in the sense that both are about nature and human nature too. Realism has no real rapport with religion, but rather a rapport with science. So called “Wildlife Art” is also a subset of realism, as is Botanical art. It advances with the liberation of women, people of color, trades and farmers, machinists and blacksmiths, garment workers, children, animals and plants. It celebrates Native Americans, women artists, gays and working people. It opens up into nature, environments and the recognition of the importance of animals. If one just looks at the history of painting and drawing dogs or horses, it is clear what Realism is and can do. Abstract art in contrast does not do any of this. It exalts a subjective incomprehension, and a corporate class and creates an esoteric and elite emptiness that is really about vacuous monied objects.

There was a realism in the Rococo, in Chardin and the Nain brothers, but in general the 1700’s are a sort of aristocratic wasteland, and realism gets so mixed up with class and injustice it is hard to take seriously. Recent realism in America has taken a disturbing turn in imitating the excessive decadence of the 1700’s. The reason for this is the hoarding and greed of the upper classes, similar to that under Louis 14th. Watteau did beautiful drawings, but his paintings are

very hard to take. Fragonard and Boucher created a theater for the ultra-rich and paintings are more hair powder and gilded furniture than real. One can see here what brought on the French Revolution, the excess, greed and unfairness of the ultra-rich eating their cake while the poor starve.. One sees the same fawning after power in the painting work of Ingres and some of the painting of nostalgia for the Ancien Regime in France. David's paintings of Napoleon as Emperor have a similar flavor of excessively fawning hyperbole. Van Dyck is horrendous in his gigantic portraits of the ultra-rich. Huge abstract corporate paintings are likewise utterly empty glorifications of the corporate owners of these contentless works. Realism seeks to free us of these elite exclusions and hoarding, so as to make women, people of color, nature and all that live in it, even animals and the seas, better off. The poor have standing in realism, democracy and science favor everyone and not merely the well off. This is not a show about the 1%, which can be seen at any art museum, but an art for the bottom 99%. Da Vinci shows best what realism is in his practice of trying to draw everything, from simple machines, to anatomy, to children, water, light, space mountains and everything he could he defines painting as

“painting embraces or includes in itself every object produced by nature or resulting from the fortuitous actions of men, in short, all that the eye can see. He seems a poor master who can only do the figure well. For a [good artist can not only see] how many and various actions are performed by men only, but how many different animals there are, as well as trees, plants, flowers, with many mountainous regions and plans, springs and rivers, cities with public and private buildings, machines too, fit for the purpose of men, diverse costumes and decorations and arts? And all these things ought to be regarded as equal value, by the man who can be termed a good painter.

That this means is that drawing the human figure is just the beginning, art is about everything and all subjects are equal to it, as all subjects are equal in nature. This is far ahead of its time, and of our time too. Realism is not an exploitive art but an art that seeks to understand and nurture all that is good on earth. There is nothing of the cramped, empty corporate and abstract art about it. It is deep and gritty, poetic and homely and explores the facts and reality of things, not the negation of reality, not cyberspace or religious fictions. Realism is part of the struggle against classism and economic elites that are destroying our planet. As many museums and art galleries

are taken over by the corporate elite they, of course, dislike Realism and the over 500 year history of its democratic ascendancy. They are opposed to the meaning of Leonardo's vision and that of Darwin too. They oppose unions, nature's rights, and often human rights in practice. They want to stop it, and turn art into corporate emptiness and money, but the truth is otherwise. Life is everywhere and it is the earth and all that is on it that matters. Realism shows reality. It shows how much we have to change what we do to make the lives of everyone better. It always has this critical edge. Even if it is hidden, as in Da Vinci's drawings or Goya's portraits.

So I wrote Dr. Weisberg to thank him for the great show he put together in 1980. I learned that he has done many shows since then. He said he wanted to do one at CMA. I suggested that was a good idea and he told me to start putting it together. I put together paintings I love which I have been collecting for years as well as ones I found in his books. Once I saw that the climate of culture today is decidedly and foolishly, against such art, I decided to put this exhibit up, much expanded, on my website. Better to have it out there for someone, even if few.

Modernist museums rely on ignorance of art, and an overwhelming obscurity, to insure viewers are so embarrassed not to know that they are looking at, so they will accept it. Realism does the opposite and makes it immediately clear exactly what it is talking about, obviating the need of curator and critic controls. Creating modern art was and is an effort at cultural propaganda, there is really no such thing,-- it is really a dogmatic iconography. "Modernism" is a ruse created by substituting empty 'styles--cubism, dada, minimalism etc.-- for reality. There is a pervasive misuse of the term 'modern'—all recent art is modern by definition "Modern" art, really just an empty category of a style and a set of vague rules governing an art for art's sake fashion. Modern art is, not an art, but a fashion within art—other kinds of art, notably Realism, go on at the same time, sidelined.

The fashion of this misnamed 'modernism', thus becomes a sort of religious dogmatism that insists "one should believe it without questioning," rather as the Catholic Church once demanded.. Modern art is deliberately obscure or absurdly clever, relying on obscurity to obfuscate and veil meaning to allow curators and critics to manipulate the crowds. But most people know modern art is mostly a meaningless fraud. Yet, month after month the art magazines pander to the public with arcane

essays that explain nothing as if it were something. Most so called “Modern art” is an abuse of the public and of democracy.

Instead of this, I wanted to make an exhibit that is very clear, made up of works I have loved for many years. I wanted it to be clear what it is talking about on social issues, people of color, social injustice, global warming, the harm done by economic elites, CEO's, Presidents, a critique of elite art of all kinds, in favor of profit sharing and workers,, the rights of nature, women and animals. Most museums are now set up to serve elite powers, corporate entertainments, and sustain an empty mix of meaningless ‘modernist’ objects owned by the wealthy, whose meaning is little more than their price tag.

Since most good art is already outside the art market of museums all over the world I finally realized current museums in the US would not put up a fair show that questioned the powers that be. That is the old stuff they keep in the basement, or put it out, begrudgingly, only because people like it. I sent this exhibit to many museums: the Butler, CMA, Cincinnati and Toledo in Ohio as well as San Francisco and Amsterdam. Would they accept an exhibit that questioned the museum itself and show not only some of the most beautiful art that world has yet produced, but some of the fairest and most inclusive? These are indeed among the main works that matter in the last 500 years.

This is not an exhibit for wealthy museum donors but for scholars and ordinary people. It is not a show for elites who wish to exploit the disgusting concept of “cultural capital” for their own enrichment, but rather an exhibit that shows ordinary people what they really are, what they naturally love, and what empowers them. This is not an exhibit for 1%, but it is for everyone else, the bottom 99%. The exhibit was meant as a gift of beauty and thoughtfulness to everyone. It really was designed to please nearly everyone in the western and eastern world. It is about the closeness of art to the people and the facts of nature. It was meant to create wonder and amazement as well as ‘sympathy with intelligence’. It has a moral teaching as well as a great deal of fact and information about the past and the present. It even recommends certain ways of thinking and seeing.

The only museum that reacted positively was the Vincent Van Gogh museum in Amsterdam. They said they would think about putting up parts of it and that it is they said it is a very “impressive” and “daring”. This is not surprising since the values this exhibit promotes are not

different than those of Vincent Van Gogh, who was himself a great artist and social historian. So this is a show that is about what the elites actually want nothing to do with: beauty, skill, delicate perceptions of nature and the world, critical thought, science, animals, women, intelligence and social fairness.

This exhibit is far too ‘radical’ for most museums which are conservative centers for corporate or ‘free market’ propaganda. The “boards” of museums are mostly composed of business ideologues. Members of the Board are primarily interested in preserving their own status and the narcissistic values of their own class. They know little about art but want to steal its prestige for themselves. The lack of content in modernist works is about creating brand names and an esoteric elite of repressive critics, curators and museums that promote ‘free market’ capitalism of a global kind. The idea of the “brand” comes from harming cattle with a red hot iron and burning their skin, creating ownership of another species. The best art is usually beyond ownership—beyond brands--- and does not see any buying or selling. I meant this show to be anti-Trump, anti-brand and all that he and it stands for. He is a psychopathic power monger who favors the economic thieves and militarist racists that are destroying America and the planet. They are the cause of the global warming they deny, these gung-ho “entrepreneurs” with a “passion for business” who monetize all they touch, like Midas, who starved because he would not give up his gold.

The fashionable idea of the artist as a ‘myth’ is false. Actually, the creating artist goes back to the Chauvet caves or before 35,000 years ago, and is not about money. There certainly were and are artists who were fools and sell-outs, though this does not begin till art is patronized.. But art is a real impulse that goes back to human origins, and is far more ancient than capitalism, which is merely a fashionable and temporary mistake. On the other hand, the curator is only a few centuries old, if that. The ‘myth of the curator’ or the “myth of the critic” is ascendant and they have become demi-godish arbitrators of taste the world of corporate delusions. How do I deal with the realization that museums are trying to ignore the very art that I love most? What putting this exhibit together showed me is that most of the art I love are the very things the ultra-rich hate, and for me, that is entirely to the credit of the art shown here. Being blacklisted by a museum for telling the truth about museums and how they actually behave is a honor for me. I don’t much care. Museum directors are rarely intelligent art lovers. They are mostly money

experts and competitive clones of the Boards they serve.

The art I love is an extension of values I deeply care about, and I love what has to do with nature, inclusion, family, ordinary life and sympathy with intelligence. It is frightening to realize that most museums love the opposite, which is why so much of what they do is about making money, hateful, prone to lies, false attributions, emptiness, vanity and cruel coldness, creating distinctions without a real difference, violating Occam's razor.. Of course nowadays the museum is not really about art anymore. All the good art is taken, mostly, so they have little to do, as all the museums are throwing parties and trying to win entertainment dollars hosting weddings or Disney-like events of great vapidness. They exhibit very few things worthwhile, and refuse exhibits that propose art that everyone would enjoy, except for big 'blockbusters' which generally extoll the virtues of unjust theocracies and aristocrats, such as Egypt or the Vatican.

The primary art tendency of the last 500 years is Realism. It is not a style but an inquiry into reality. Real art is rejected by the elites, which is to the credit of the art. I love museums, do not get me wrong here. I love the real history in them, I love that they remove objects from economies. They preserve good things despite themselves, or because of the rare good director or curator. But those that run them now are mostly the enemy of the older art they contain. They love corporate art, bad drawing, art lacking intelligence and sympathy. I include lots of art on nature, on the plight of the poor, the fact of the exploited and underpaid having the right to rebel against unjust overlords. I put in anti-war paintings, no nationalist stuff, lots of things about other races. Though I use nation states to organize this material, Realism is actually against nationalism and favors a borderless world such as birds and plants live in. I merely use place names to indicate geographic places, not nation states. I show no vacuous, corporate art about art. I put in many works about working, workers and making a livelihood in an honest way, many women artists, no disparagement of animals, It is a very inclusive show. Those who hate this kind of art show themselves as pro-injustice, pro-war, pro- corporate clones who are turning the beauty of culture into a capitalist scheme.

Dr. Weisberg got me worked up to do this. I enjoyed it immensely and will probably never

do it again, but one day a reformed museum will put it up, or most of it. This exhibit is a rare thing nowadays, a show about truly great art. Such a thing hardly exists anymore: a non-fantasy, non vapid show about real people and real concerns. I do it in praise of Dr Weisberg's work as an art historian, as well as Dr Lee, expanding and following up on their 1980 show. It was originally intended to reaffirm the brilliance of CMA after a series of poor or corrupt directors, a questionable Board and an unresponsive and insular atmosphere that put the place into a tail spin of decline. It was meant as a gift to a declining institution. But above all it is a celebration of some of the art I have loved for many years. So this an exhibit of art such as I would wish to see myself.

It is a exhibit of great beauty and compassion as well as progressive inquiry. Henry David Thoreau said that the best things in life involve 'sympathy with intelligence'. I agree with that and think that is what this show is all about. I have done what I could to put all this together, partly to thank Dr. Weisberg. But I wish also record some of the most amazing art in the world, which I hope will teach others to help keep on creating a long lasting Realism. We all need to learn the importance of Staying Amazed. Being human, caring, and being of the earth and all the species on it, is what matters, It turns out that there is nothing more subversive of unjust elites than honest art, done by deeply feeling and thinking artists. That is what realism has been doing for over 500 years. Zhang Zeduan, and Da Vinci began this, with Van Eyck, and they wanted us all to keep Staying Amazed. Really amazed, not falsely amazed like advertising exploits but truly in love with the mystery of life and nature. Caring about the poor, other peoples, nature and animals. That is the secret to making the world a better place. It is meant to create a fair economy that serves everyone, not just the unjustly rich. These works are all full of wonder and love for a world quickly being sold to the highest bidder, gene spliced and 'branded'.. It is the best thing in life to celebrate earth with care. This is an exhibit of vibrant, living, creative works, full of life and meaning.

Over View List of Works in the Exhibit

The exhibit would cover a lot of ground and widen the definition of realism.. At the beginning of the exhibit there might be for instance blow up images created by of the originators of Realism. One would be the town bridge and church sections of part of the Van Eyck (Rolin) and anatomy and geometry drawings from Leonardo. Maybe large photos of Leonardo's hands or anatomy drawings (Windsor collection) could be used of their work.

Once entering the exhibit, one sees examples of the progress of realism and its alliance with science up through present. The best artworks are not objects but part of the painter who shares with us his or her life with our lives. The following is a selection of suggestions and possibilities which might or might not be obtainable for an actual exhibit but here are shown side by side with less costly works. Insurance companies, unfortunately, now control much of the content of exhibits. That is wrong. Here I can exhibit whatever I wish, provided it is out of copyright.

So initially Zhang Zeduan, Jan Van Eyck and Leonardo Da Vinci are compared and contrasted as the originators of Realism. I arranged to exhibit by geographic locations, but that is arbitrary and I do not mean at all to support the idea that nation states matter. They do not matter at all to Realism, which is not bound by any state or culture. Courbet claimed to be his own country, and that is right, we are all free and our own independent states.

So after Van Eyck and Leonardo I include Botticelli's Three Graces.

Then comes the following:

Dutch

Pieter De Hooch,

CMA's Concert

The Bedroom in National Gallery.. DC

Johann Vermeer, the Milkmaid

Gottfried Schalken, Artist and Model Looking at an Ancient Statue by Lamplight –

Gerard ter Borch- (reuniting the London National Gallery piece with the CMA Terbroch?)

Boy Ridding his Dog of Fleas 1665.

Rembrandt etching, self-portrait with Saskia CMA collection,

Portrait of Titus,

The Couple, probably misnamed Jewish Bride.

Van Gogh, drawing Pollard Birches, 1884 VVG museum, to be contrasted, side by side, with
Anton Mauve's Shepard and his Sheep, Cincinnati art museum

Van Gogh and Van Rappard compared

Theodor Verstraete

Spring

Danish

Anna Archer

The Maid in the Kitchen

Sunlight in the Blue room

Peter Ilsted, Girl at the Open Door and/or, In the Bedroom.

Eero Jarnfeldt In the Bilberry Forest

Eero Jarneflet French Winebar 1888

Peter Monsted

Sunset through the Forest

Woodland Glade

French

Nain Brothers, Dance of the Children Whereabouts?

Maurice DelaTour autoportrait

Chardin, Toledo figure with cat

Ingres drawing, Madame Désiré Raoul-Rochette CMA

Ingres nude Louvre

Martin Drolling. Kitchen Interior

Eugene Delacroix: Orphan Girl in a Cemetery

Ernst Messonier: The Painter CMA

Jean Francois Raffaelli

The Realist

Family of Peasants

Rosa Bonheur, Ram's Head Study, Wherabouts? and Ploughing Scene – Walters museum
Baltimore

Jean Francois Millet. Starry Night, Yale

Vincent Van Gogh, Starry Night

Vincent Van Gogh, Night Cafe

A Man with a Hoe

Dandelions.

Camille Corot: The Artists Studio Nat. Gal, DC

Julien Dupre Hay Making Scene 1884 st. Louis museum

Jules Bastien-Lapage (Wood gatherer, Minn.)

Pascal Dagnan-Bouveret: "In the Forest" Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nancy

Leon Bonvin:

Rural Scene 1865.?

Piece without title, see below

dGrasses and Roses 1863 Walters Baltimore

Fantin Latour Madame La Rolle, CMA

Theodule Ribot, The Milk Maid CMA

English Realism

The horse anatomy drawings of George Stubbs,

Stubbs, Foals and Mares

Hans Holbein, Portrait of a lady with Squirrel and Starling. 1527

Joseph Wright. Two paintings: on of the Planets and Three Persons viewing the Gladiator. They
show the relation of art and science.

J.M.W Turner

The Fighting Temeraire

Drawing and watercolor studies

JMW Turner, The Mouth of the Avon, near Bristol

Ford Madox Brown, Hayfield 1855

Millais, Blind Girl, Birmingham or Ophelia, Tate?,

Millais, the Ornithologist, John Gould

Hunt: Our English Coasts Tate,

Frank Holl: Peeling Potatoes, Yale, Center for British art,

Hubert von Herkomer, Eventide, Workhouse. Liverpool?

George Clausen Winter Work, Tate The Girl at the Gate, Tate?

Luke Fildes "Applicants at the Casual Ward" Holloway College UK?

Frank Bramley A Hopeless Dawn

Elizabeth Forbes, "School is Out" ?,

Walter Langley: Waiting for the Boats.?

The Orphan

Gwen John: Doriela by Lamplight

Stanhope Forbes, The Little Smith

Laura Knight: The Kite, or Gypsy Splendor

German Realism

Menzel: Iron Rolling Mill

and a drawings from his sketchbooks,

Chinese Realism

Zhang Zeduan, the Qingming Festival

Qian Xuan, Early Autumn

Jiang Zhaohe

Refugees

Du Fu

String Harmonies

Japanese Realism

Asai Chu, Spring Ridge

Yamamoto Hōsui, Young girl with a candle

Eikyu Matsouoka, The Hill of Grass, 1926

Eikyū Matsouoka, The pond of Ikaho 1925

Yokohama Taikan, Peaks of Chichibu at Spring Dawn 1928

Harada Naojiro. Old Man

Robert Frederick Blum, The Ameya

Robert Frederick Blum, The Venetian Lace Makers

Russian Realism,

Issac Levitan, March, Apple Trees in Blossom ?

Issac Levitan Donkey in Snow

Nicolai Kasatkin: Poor People Collecting Coal

Ilya Repin. Volga Boatmen

Ivan Shishkin. In the Wild North

Latin American

Manuel Blanes

Paraguay

Parana

Francisco Lasos

Inhabitant of the Mountains

Haravicu

Three Races

Almeida Júnior

Guitar song

Martin Heade

Hummingbird and Orchids

Morpho Butterfly

Frederick Church

Cotopaxi

Antonio Beni Public Protest

American Realism

Eastman Johnson, Fiddling His Way 1866, to be set beside the Sidney Mount in the CMA collection to encourage comparison of the two. One done before the civil war and the other after.

Eastman Johnson: Negro Life in the South

Alfred Kappes Tattered and Torn 1886

Gustave Caillebotte nude on Couch

Frederick Church, Konigsee, Bavaria, Cooper Hewitt, National Design Museum
Mountains

Interlude: Art school Practice in the 18-1900's.

Thomas Eakins the Swimming Hole. Amon Carter museum Texas

Alfred Munnings Nudes studies whereabouts?

Jefferson David Chalfant Art school study De Young museum

Photo of model posing in a sculpture class. to be copied for wall.

Male nude .unknown origin

Laura Knight self portrait with nude

Collen Barry nude, 2009

E. Irving Couse , Elk Foot 1909. Nat. Portrait Gallery DC

Andrew Wyeth Geraniums 1960 Brandywine museum Chadd's Ford Pa.

George Hitchcock: "Flower Girl in Holland" Chicago Institute

Burt Silverman ?

Max Ginsberg Discussion

Dean Mitchell Quincy Worker

Clyde Aspevig, flowers and winter scene

Harvey Dinnerstein, Stay Amazed.

Written and arranged by Mark Koslow

Note: drawing in pencil would be allowed in this special exhibition, except during times when there are large crowds. Photography, not allowed.

Visual Presentation of the Exhibit:
with comments

The earliest realist work is probably this Chinese scroll (only a detail here it is 22 feet long) by Zhang Zeduan (1085–1145) It has about 800 people in it and many animals. It is an amazing piece of work that deserves close study. The Chinese made a very accurate animated version of the work which is also very interesting. Here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxff-4GktOI>

or here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FeK0DYHLWgE>

The beginning of the show would contrast the Zhang Zeduan work with the Van Eyck below, as they are very similar in certain ways, both being vast and very detailed, despite being nearly 300 years apart. These two works set the stage for future realism both in China and Europe.

;ljhjkop[]lkmn b



1140

Compare this with the Van Eyck below.



Left side , 1435. The boats are not dissimilar to those of Zhang Zeduan, and the people are walking or riding across the bridge as in Zhang's work. It is interesting that two of the first realist works from unconnected places would both be or panoramic subjects, whole towns, a bridge and many people going about their daily affairs. Visual depiction of real life begins with these works.



Right side of Chancellor Rolin by Van Eyck.

Notice the small figures below the cathedral.

This painting shows Autun France in Burgundy, where Rolin lived.

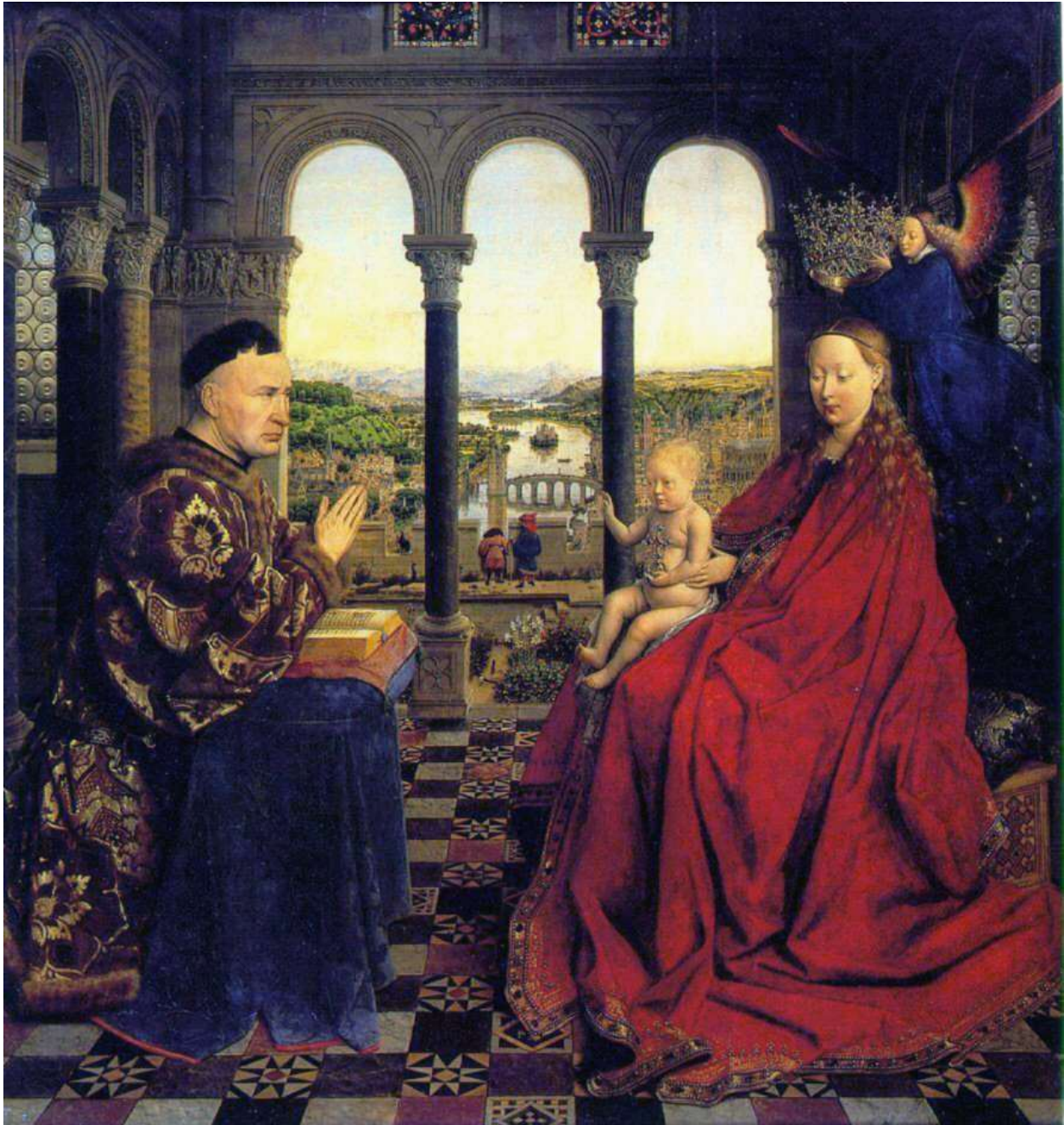




A picture of the town of Autun France in 1335.

A larger image like this would be needed, and a much better photo to be blown up so the individual figures in it can be seen. To the right of the hands above one can see figures in the street. The depiction of this town is really the origin of Realism, in Europe,

The arrival of Hugo Van Der Goes' Portinari Altarpiece in Florence 1483 appears to have a wide effect in disseminating Van Eyck's ideas about realism. Oil paints will be refined by Van Eyck and Leonardo tried to emulate that, and did not succeed very well but it is clear that it was realism that he was after. The corners of Van Eyck are one of the few places where one can see real life in art in the 1430's. The Italians were still making programmatic Icons for the most part. Only the Chinese were investigating how to paint the real world.

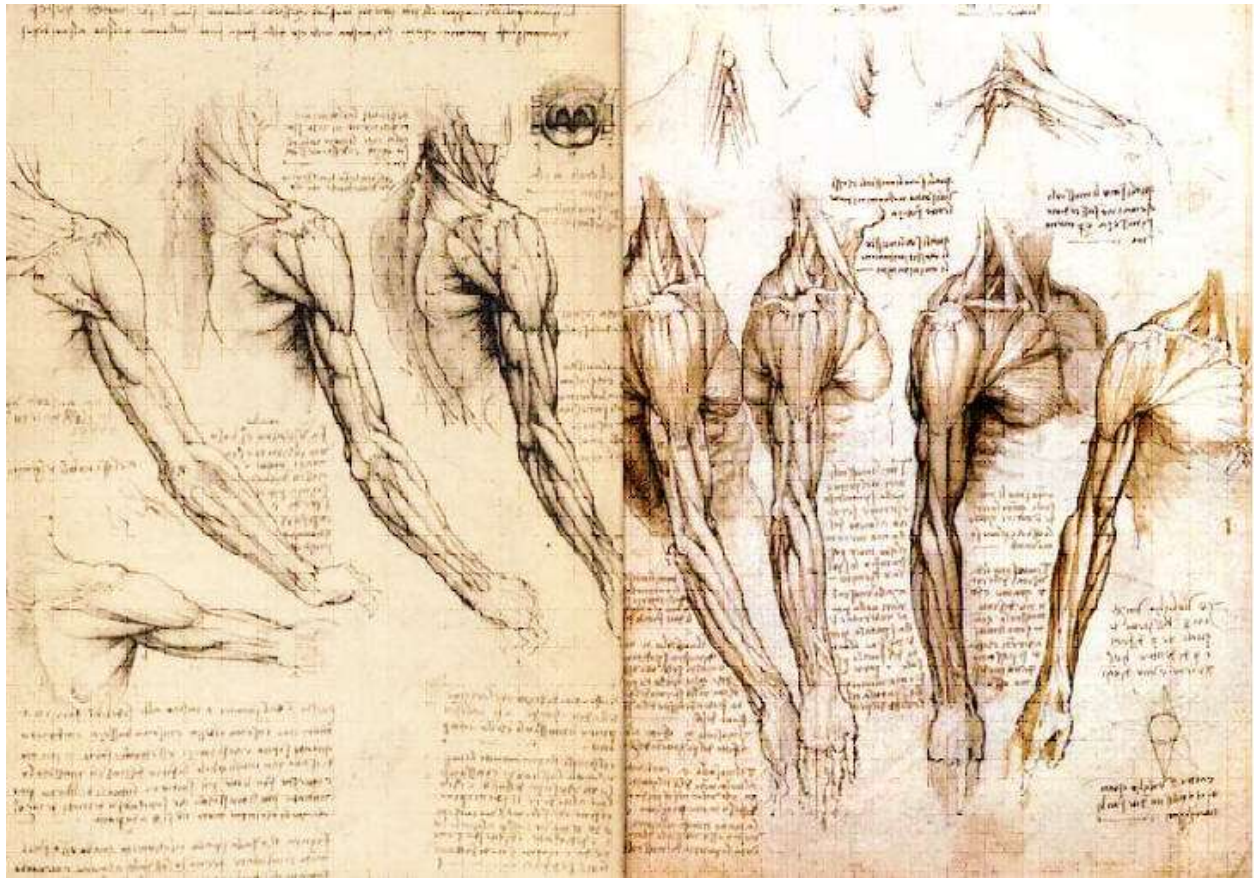


here is the whole work. The two areas that interest me are out the elaborate door and window, to the right and left of the bridge, as well as the bridge itself. It shows a huge space and aerial perspective, and is one of the first works to ever do that.

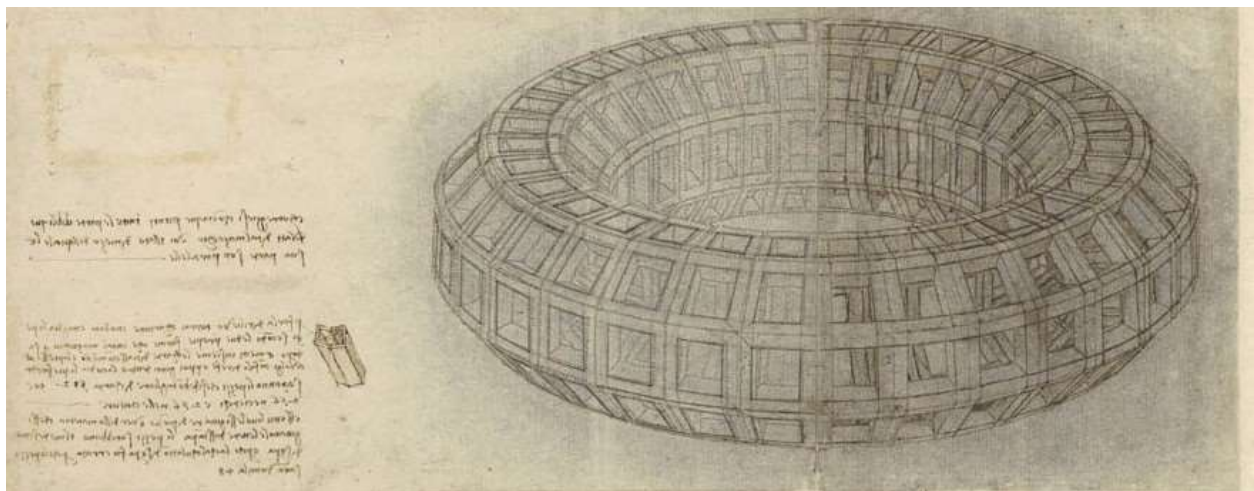
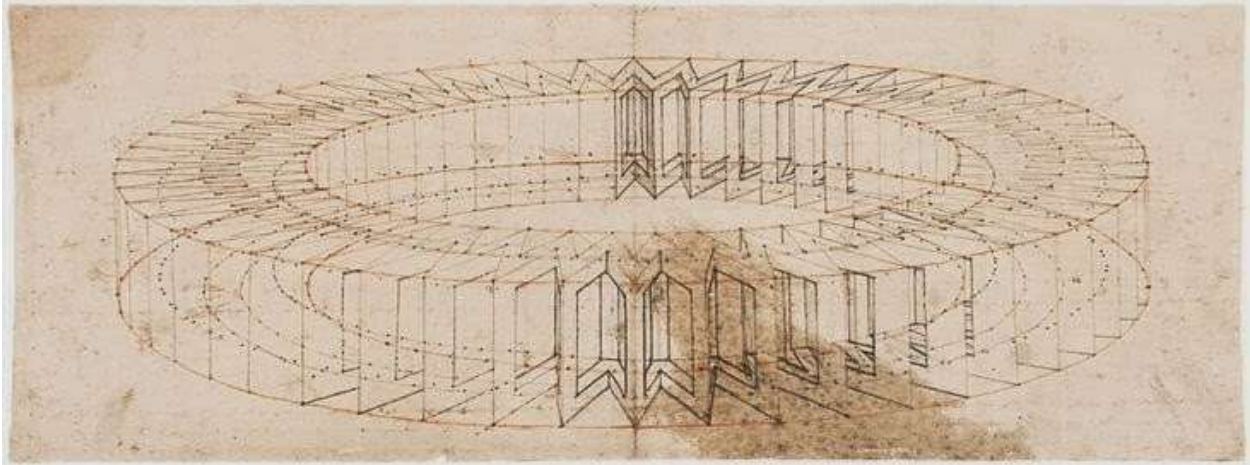


One of Leonardo's finest drawings, possibly for the Ginevra Benci painting in DC, though that is unclear. Here is an experiment I did in pursuit of what Leonardo intended this drawing for.

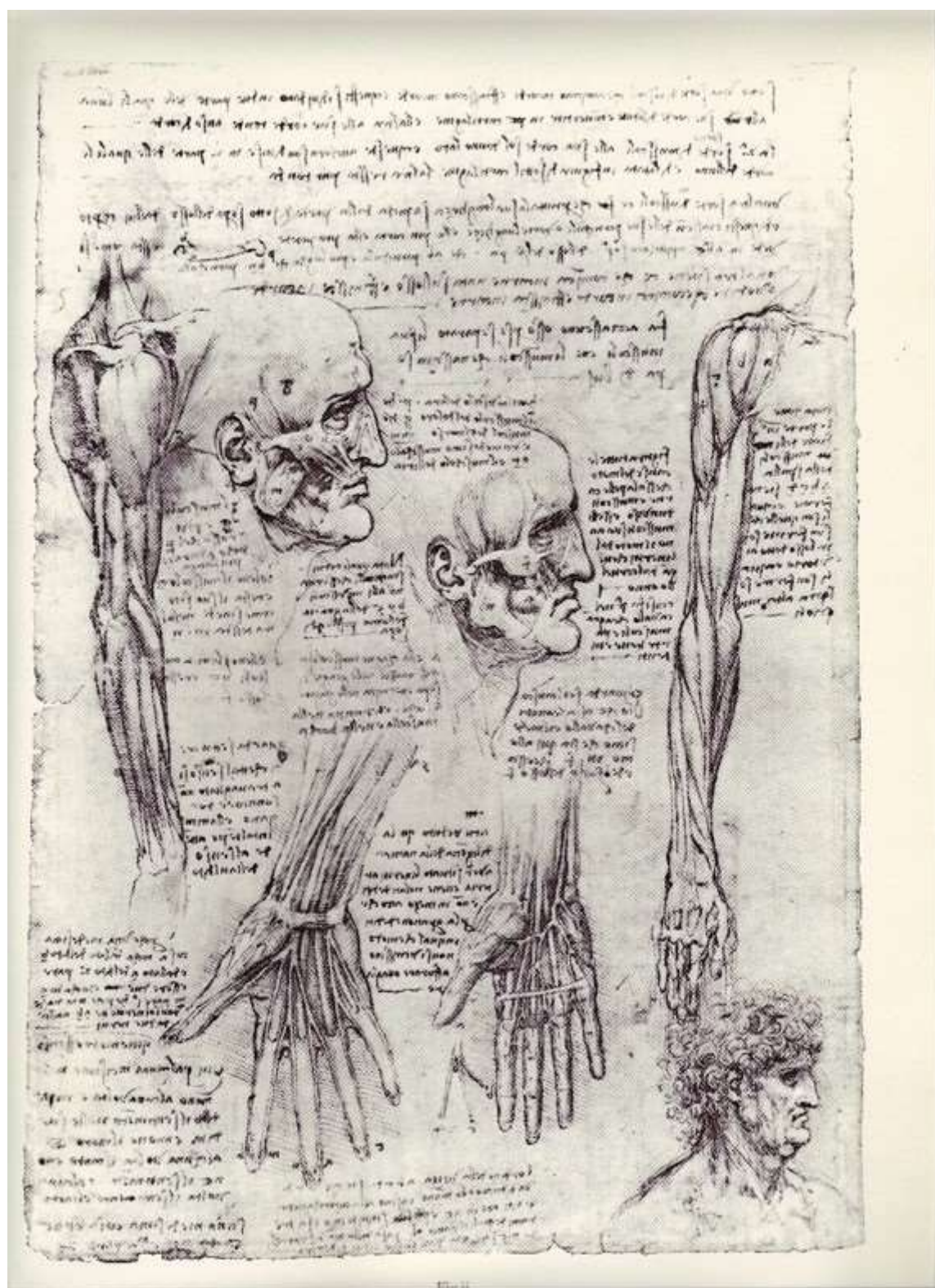


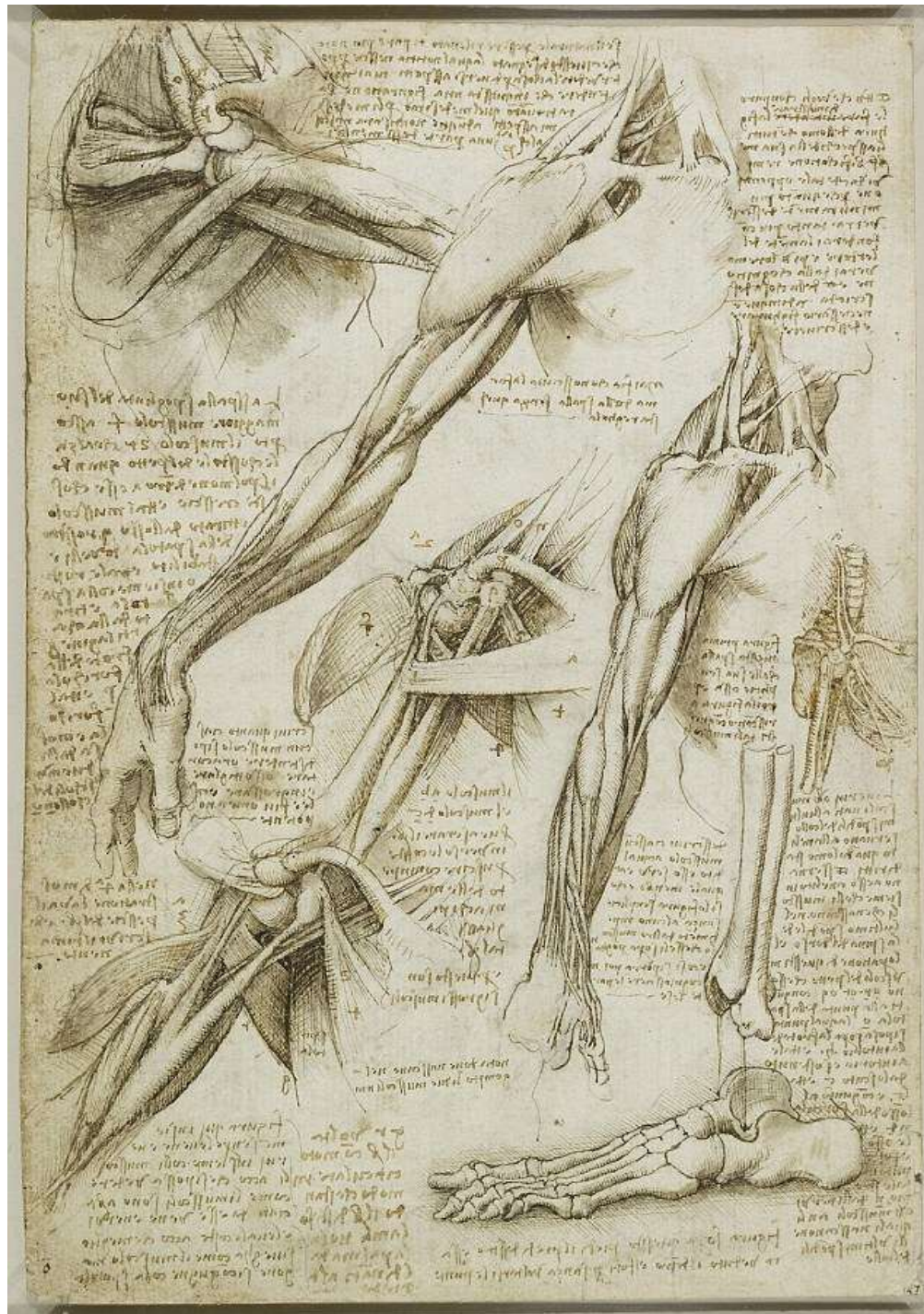


Leonardo was probably the best draftsman ever. He did not just draw but thought as he drew. His drawings are so accurate things are still being discovered in them. His anatomy drawings in particular are so well done that they are still admired by anatomists. They are the best observed anatomy drawings ever. The whole of Realism is already in his drawings. Drawing for him is inquiry and science and he is the first real scientist. Drawing and painting is not just eyes, but the thinking mind that is behind them.



Leonardo had so many interests. Here he shows himself to be a great mathematician, and figured out the intricate perspective and geometric designs in very precise lines.





In the show, one or two of these images of Leonardo's drawings, hands and anatomy will follow the Van Eyck, and explanatory blurb will explain that these images are the origin of realism, and that Leonardo was influenced by Van Eyck via Northern works that came into Italy in the

1480's. This also will be a blown up image, oversized photo. Good images of the Van Eyck and relevant sections of the Rolin Madonna would have to be acquired which should not be too hard.



Botticelli was 7 years Da Vinci's senior and was in his school at the Verrocchio workshop. The beautiful and elegant drawing of these three women is still unsurpassed in the history of art. Canova did a sculpture on a similar theme, but it is still not as light and diaphanous as this. Leonardo criticized Botticelli's landscapes, rightly, but never his figures.

Dutch Realism



Jacob Cornelisz. van Oostsanen Painting a Portrait of His Wife, 1550, thought to be by Dirck Jacobs(1497-1567) Toledo Museum

This is a very rare work. The portrait is really a copy of his dad's self portrait, and his son Dirck copied that painting here. Dirck also decided to put his mom in the painting. So this is really a love poem by Dirck to his parents. No other artist has done this. It is a painting of two generations. It very rare painting. As far as I know there is no other example of this.



Pieter De Hooch, CMA's Portrait of a Family Playing Music

A lovely work, quite as good as any of the Vermeer paintings. Better in some ways, as it shows us the light of the 1600's, --what it really looked like --coming through the window into this room. The music weaves with the light. The Mother or nurse, dog and child are all listening. I love the listening Dog, as he seems to feel the music in his pose. Notice the fine porcelain jar, possibly Chinese, atop the exquisitely made linen cabinet.



The Bedroom in Nat. Gallery.. DC

One of my favorite of De Hooch's works, The light through the window. I cannot help it, I like it better than Vermeer. I think De Hooch was Vermeer's mentor, not so much the other way. Now the light is inside the painting and is coming through the door with the child, who has come in to ask Mom something. You can see Mom is going to say yes. How could she not?



Caspar Netcher



This is not a painting that could ever be loaned for this show, but I put it in the online show because it is so fine and expressive. Wonderful color, light and clarity.



Gerard Ter Borch- (reuniting the London National Gallery piece with the CMA Terbroch?)

I do not know that these were a pair, but it does seem likely. I wrote the National Gallery in London and they can only say that it is suggested that it is pair. They do not know for sure either. Ter Borch was an exceptionally fine artist, even for that period of fine artists. The notion of "Genre" was not yet invented when these picture of real people were done. I like the idea of getting rid of the idea of genre, which was a pejorative term, as Genre painting was thought to be beneath mythology painting, which was aristocratic conceits and allegory. Genre is really just paintings from life, so let's call it Life painting. Courbet called it real allegory, but that is somewhat convoluted.



Gerard te Borch. 1665. Boy Ridding his Dog of Fleas



Artist and Model Looking at an Ancient Statue by Lamplight –
1675-1680 by Gottfried Schalken 1643 – 1706, in a Private Collection.

I love Schalken's candlelight studies more than Caravaggio. Less crime and moral sociopathology and more warmth, wonder and thought filled gestures. The study of light is less artificial too. A classical and realist work of grace and delicate beauty. They are enjoying the candle light on a classical sculpture. The importance of classical sculpture to the growth of realism is considerable.



Rachel Ruysch, Detroit Institute

One of the great women of history. She not only did wonderful paintings inspired by science and suggested a sort of proto-Darwinian view of things, but she also had many children. A woman of enormous creative power, sensibility and loveliness.



Woman at a Window, Waving at a Girl c1650, 47.5cm x 39.2cm by Jacobus Vrel

Vrel's work is curious in many ways. He did a lot of street scenes, apparently in and about Amsterdam. They are so accurate they have been used to write about social conditions in cities like Amsterdam



Rembrandt etching, self-portrait with Saskia CMA collection,

Rembrandt. He is one of the first of the great lovers of the ordinary. That is his wife Saskia sitting next to him as he creates a drawing of them both. He drew all the time, and had amazing control of paint. No one is quite like him. With him the wonder of things never went away and he kept painting it till he died.



Rembrandt portrait of his son Titus

A picture of a child thinking, pondering, perhaps doing some homework.



Rembrandt. Jewish Bride. Probably misnamed. The physicality of the hands and sleeves, the warmth of the touch. No kings, no queens. Kindness and love and that red and gold so refreshing.



Van Gogh, drawing "Pollard Birches", 1884 VVG museum, to be contrasted, side by side, with

Anton Mauve's "Shepherd and his Sheep", Cincinnati art museum.

These works show that Vincent really has both feet firmly in the realist world. Indeed, Vincent's argument with Gauguin is really about Realism versus symbolism and abstract art. Vincent could not give up realism. Rightly so too. As his illness got worse he held on to the world as hard as he could, but finally the illness defeated him.



Anthon Van Rappard on the left and Van Gogh on the right. These men were painting together. Probably the best friend Vincent ever had, besides Theo. The two men must have been standing very close to each other to do these nearly identical views.



There is reason to suppose that these were also done by Van Gogh and Rappard during Rappard's long visit to Vincent in Nuenen, 1884. Vincent was sitting a little further to the right.. There is another one that may have been done with Rappard too.

Vincent was friend with the painter Eugene Bock too, who did works about the Borinage region of France where Vincent had the crises that turned him against religion and made him an artist. There is a portrait of Bock by Vincent.

Constantin Meunier also did some pictures for the Borinage where Vincent had his "molting period" as he mentions in his letters. See also the work of Cecile Douard, who did drawings similar to Vincent's first attempts of woman carrying coal in sacks. See also the Emile Zola novel Germinal.



by Anton Mauve 'In the vegetable garden' (1887)

Mauve intrigues me. This is so lovely, and shows a practice done all over the world to try to save money. It is a lot of work to have one's own garden. Nowadays it is not always a savings to do this, as opposed to buying veggies from someone who grows them by larger and more intense methods. Now organic things are very expensive too. So it is a question. Should one do it or not.

Is it worth the effort? Yes it is beautiful and I have loved it. But.....



'End of the working day' (1887) by Jules Breton



Evert Larock. The Cinder Picker

Larock died at only 36 of tuberculosis. This was his last work. He cared deeply about the poor and chose to make his last work about them. It has real tenderness in it, even more than the tenderness of a Beckett play. .It is real, not surreal. Lovely modeling and control of tones too.



Theodor Verstraete

Museum Tournai

Such days make living on the earth such a wonderful thing, despite all the sorrows. Spring light and flowers in the grasses.

Danish Realism



Anna Archer The Maid in the Kitchen.

What a sense of color and light in space she had. An intimate space, a kitchen one wants to be in. A person in a small kitchen, late in the day, not a feminist protest at all, but an enjoyment of eating and life.



Anna Archer. Sunlight in the Blue Room

It helps to have a daughter to see how much they love crocheting and knitting. This is also a study of light, and the poetry of light and blue and a young mind and pair of hands growing, like the shadow of the plant on the wall, growing up.



Peter Ilsted, Girl at the Open Door

Reading. Warm light and a good book, the doors open to the breeze outside. Inside, sunlight comes through all the windows, all the way back through the house. Free air: freedom of mind, clear as sunlight on the window panes.



This one appears to be in a private collection, might not be obtainable.

Ilsted is less surreal and angst ridden than Hammershoi, his brother in law, and more accepting of life and children . He is an intimate painter. Again he paints the luminosity that goes with reading. Almost a smile on her face and the light almost like a smile on the wall.



Peter Ilsted, In the Bedroom 1901.

Takes off her slippers. About to get into bed. The body so wants to lie down. The warmth of the light, soft covers, tired.



Peter Monsted Woodland Glade

Great place to picnic with the baby.
Moss on the tree's roots, sun spots of the forest leaves.



Peter Monsted 1859-1041 Sunset Over a Forest Lake

Swallow near the lily pads,
flying low over the water
as the great sun breaks through the trees and shines
on everything.



Eero Järnefelt In the Bilberry Forest.

Children with their Dad, like chimps enjoying treats the forest makes, in season.
Happiness is not only human. They are a tribe in the woods.



Eero Jarnefelt

French Winebar 1888

Worn hands, worked a lot. Taking a break.
Face tired but still full of life and awareness.
His worn hands, sad eyes,
having suffered,
arrests me in his gaze.

French Realism



Dance of the Children

Three that are not looking at us, dancing,
three that are looking at us, and yes, we love music too.



Chardin, Toledo figure with cat

This is a smaller version of a composition he did that is similar but has a child in it too. Hard work, cat nodding off. What is soaking in the large bowl?—a towel, or a shirt?



Maurice DelaTour Toledo museum

He was a great pastelist, and one of the few painters of the 1700's that one can admire without too many misgivings. That was the century of upper class gluttony, and powdered and gilded excess that brought us the French Revolution. But De La Tour's smile is infectious, even though it appears that he suffered in life very badly, and to make a living had to do portraits of kings. Not a happy fate, even if it brought him money. Why glorify pretence?



Ingres drawing, Madame Désiré Raoul-Rochette CMA

One of the best drawings in the Cleveland collection. Very subtle, and such delicate lines and infinitesimal shadings and blending. It was a joy to look at the real drawing. I'd never seen such delicate shading. The face shines out of the graphite. Beyond the precise delineation of the clothes and hairstyle of the time, there is the modeling of the face, a real Maestro of faces, inimitable.



Ingres. I saw this in the Louvre when I was a young man. It had a glow that was missing in the works around it. His best painted work, I think. There is a real person in it, despite the characteristic distortions. Rest and quiet, like a few of Raphael's works, and this is what Ingres sought to do his whole life. It helps to see the real thing, but it is even in the reproduction somewhat.



Martin Drolling.

In the history of the kitchen, this is an early attempt. Even with brooms on the wall, when one has kids, it is hard to keep egg shells off the floor. The little one sews just like her mom. The sister near the window has her feet on the babies chair. No need of candles on such a clear day outside and the light on the copper pots on the wall, and the one on the counter top and even one on the shelf on the right, for washing, dishes or oneself. How light holds objects and objects hold the light, streaming thorough the window. Both young women look at us. We are like Martin and share his eyes, who just walked in and know them, know the light on those brown walls.

I saw this work in the English edition of a French book which tries to show the social history of human lives expressed through living arrangements, how kitchens, bedrooms, bathrooms or

privies are set up. It is called Daily Life in Art, by Beatrice Fontenel.



Orphan Girl in a Cemetery

One of Eugene Delacroix's best portraits and a very early one. 1824.

He was a literary painter, and his Journal is a tour of writers from Rome to 19th century France.

I did a charcoal copy of this in my teens. Such longing in her and so unaware of her beauty. It is not about beauty really, but the taste of life and the desire to live it. Why is she in a cemetery, and what is she thinking, I have always wondered, but never known. His early Journal seems to hold some keys to it. The Journal shows that in 1824 Delacroix was very concerned with

Gericault's death, which disturbed him greatly. He also was very concerned with love and women. This painting is about both love and death. He talks about his great longing that year. This young orphan woman seems to be something of a self-portrait as she is full of longing yet is seated in a cemetery. Perhaps someone close to her died, and she longs for a different life than the one she has. I must have sensed something of his longing when I did a copy of it when I was 15 or 16.

Life, what is it, why are we here?



Ernst Messiaen: The Painter CMA

A nearly perfect small work of its kind. Vincent Van Gogh mentions this work in Letter 288. He writes:

“There’s a [The] Painter by *Meissonier* that I find beautiful; it’s that figure seen from behind, bending forwards, with the feet on the cross-bar of the easel, I believe. All one sees is a pair of knees drawn up, a back, a neck and the back of a head, and just a glimpse of a fist with a pencil or something like that.⁵ But the fellow does it well, and the action of concentrated attention is caught, just like in a certain figure by Rembrandt where a little fellow sits reading, also huddled up, with his head resting on his fist, and one immediately feels that sense of being absolutely gripped by the book.”



Jean Francois Millet. Starry Night, Yale.

This is probably the origin of Vincent’s image of the Starry Night. Seeing the fact of our place in the universe is both daunting and marvelous. Walking on a road far from cities one can still see

this. It is there if you go there and look for it on a clear night. Millet tried to evoke the roots of all astronomical curiosity and insights here. A man of deep amazement.

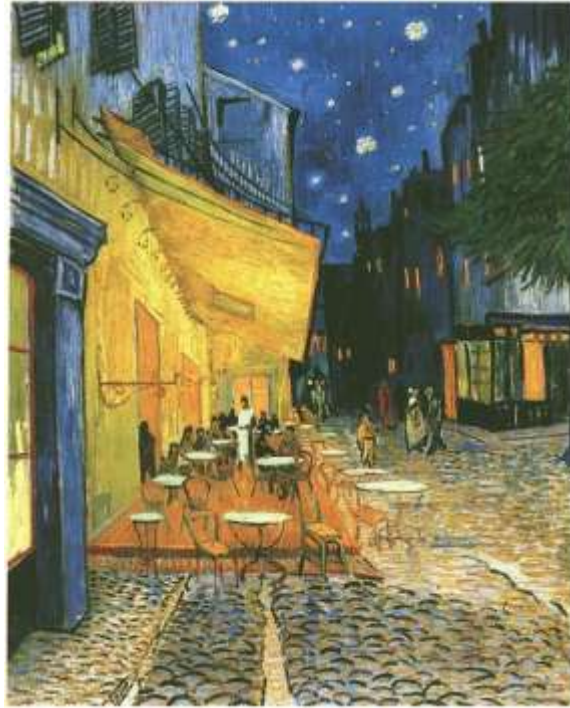
Vincent did at least three Starry night pictures. Below are two done in Arles in 1888.



Vincent Van Gogh, Starry Night

He did a few of these after Millet. He wished the couple below could be him. He was painting with candles on his hat. Such a night, no reason to go away on those boats, he felt he was nearly home, under these lights and those stars shining down on him. This is where I want to be, no, it is where I am now.

Vincent was Dutch, not French, but I have included him here because of his close relationship to Millet, whom he adored. Also these paintings were done in France.



Vincent Van Gogh, The Night Café

Not a place where one ruins oneself. Magic happens on a night like this, like the couple that walks across the street, work all done, arm in arm, relaxed. Nights in a city however small, can be just like this. Marvelous and magical.

Van Gogh's work is usually included under the category of Post Impressionism, along with Gauguin, Seurat and others. I would contend this is incorrect. He is an eccentric realist, who never really left the orbit of Anton Mauve. Impressionist overtones and superficial stylistic experiments enter his work after his stay in Paris, but the 'reality' of his work increases as he battles with his own illness and reports on it in work after work until his death. He was a very intelligent and sympathetic man. This is as evident in his letters as in his painting. By 1890, when he died, he had made one of the greatest of all realist documents in his work and his letters together. It is an extraordinary depiction of life art and social arrangements in late 1800's and is realist and socialist in its implications. He is not an impressionist really but a realist who records the struggle of an individual against the prejudices and social history of his time, an history that he meticulously recorded in his amazing letters and paintings. His paintings should be seen

alongside his letters, as the museum in Amsterdam named after him has tried to show.

For much more on Van Gogh and his importance to seeing what Realist art really is, see the 6 volume set of books of Vincent's letters put out by the Van Gogh museum, perhaps one of the best art books I have ever read. Van Gogh's letters and Thoreau's journals are both great realist texts, social histories and visions of nature in the 19th century. These two series of books state the Realist objective pretty clearly and show the lives of both men deeply involved with trying to make art adequate to reality. These two books and the complete paintings and drawings of Da Vinci are the 'bibles' of anyone who cares about realism.



Jean Millet, A Man with a Hoe.

Hard Work, why do the poor who work hard always make the least pay, whereas those who do very little get the most? It makes no sense and this insight is the root of many political ideas since the Enlightenment. This complaint does not go away even after endless preaching of the ideology of "Free Markets". CEO culture fails everyone, especially the earth. Money thieves rig

it so it all flows up to them and they stop those who complain about the crimes. Give people crappy TV and computers and cell phones. Discourage any question about how it is all arranged and for whom. Does not fair profit sharing seem far more reasonable and just than the system of CEO plundering we now have? Realism is an art of asking uncomfortable questions. Why are we here? Is it to take from others or to make the earth the wonderful place we all know it is or can be, each having their just place on it. Injustice discouraged. When will fairness reign? That is the question this painting has been asking for nearly 150 years.

The separation of the corporation and the state. That is a constitutional amendment that is past due.



Millet, dandelions. Boston Museum of fine arts. A fine Botanical study.

An appreciation of the wonder in the simplest facts of nature and people is what Realism is all

about. If you can see it in the light on a lovely dandelion gone to seed, you can see it in people's eyes too. It can be on their faces, their clothes, in the eyes of birds. Many artists, scientists and writers have understood this. Millet paused to express it here. Even light on the grass is worth looking at closely. This is a jewel of a work.



'End of the working day' (1887) by Jules Breton

A picture of the sun, and of finally going home. Romantic?, no, not really. It is a picture of what it must have felt and looked like. How good it must have been to go home in such beauty after a day of hard work. Is that cotton? No, its potatoes. The Brooklyn museum, where this is, says that Breton said "art was to do [the workers] the honor formerly reserved exclusively for the gods.". Yes, except gods never existed, and so the honor really belongs to the potato plants, the sun, the earth, and last to eat them, after those who nurture them. No one would be here without plants and sun, so pay workers better who pick them, it is hard work. Overseers? Owner? Who needs them? The workers should make more than either owners or overseers, who do little or nothing.



Jules Breton Joslyn art museum

Something of a poet, Breton wrote of this work that "their faces haloed by the pink transparency of their violet hoods, as if to venerate a fecundating star"— a variant of which is in the MET in NYC. Fecund means live giving, pregnant. They are working, but it does not stop them from seeing wonder, and they are themselves wonderful.



Jean-Francois Raffaelli. The Realist

The reality of the artist,--- himself a little scruffy, a little rough around the edges, a dirty old coat, not shaved,---all this gets into the painting, Yet, such a delicate hand, such a controlled and loving effort to show things as they are. Look how he holds the brush....A man outside a factory, knowing his own worth.



Jean Francios Raffaelli The Family of Jean-le-Boiteux, Peasants from Plougasnou, 1876

His grandma is very tired, the dad defiant, but his mom is tough and she sews, smiling slightly as she seems to know that the will to live better is not meaningless and she is patient and persevering+.



Bonheur: shows her search for objectivity and devotedness to nature. Leonardoesque in her turning of the form. Trying to understand nature on its own terms instead of through human needs. Yes, to understand what humans need, look at what nature has done.



Rosa Bonheur at the Walters in Baltimore. It would be great to get the big horses in the MET but that is probably no go. She loved animals, and that makes it easy to love her.



Bonheur Horse Fair



Camille Corot: The Artists Studio Nat. Gal, DC

Small work, perfect composition there are several of this kind, but this is the best of them. A geometry of squares and right angles and a model who plays the Mandolin. The dog wants attention but she is so rapt by the painting and cannot look away yet. And the artist, he obviously loves the green vest and the red ribbon the woman is wearing and the arrangements of canvasses and objects on the wall, as well as the dog's interest in the model. He watches, detached but very interested.



Gustave Courbet. CMA

This is his last work, he died shortly after this, a dejected exile. Poor Courbet. Some effort should be made to tell the story of his unjust internment for a crime he did not commit. Someone should tell how he was forced into exile from France. He was dying when he did this work, Castagnary's posthumous defense of Courbet should be quoted and Petra Chu's versions of his letters consulted. Ernst Meissonier unjustly blacklisted him from the Salon, the biggest art show in France, and pronounced him "as if he were dead". He wasn't. In this great last work, the little girl makes rings of flowers to put on the goats' heads and a goat kisses her on the forehead. The mountains loom in mystery and what would Courbet have done in the lower right corner? It is still unfinished. Was Courbet guilty? His own letters and this painting say he was not. He was not a perfect man, but he did not deserve this, this man with a good heart who loved goats. That empty space, he wanted to fill it, but the French government killed him, his friend Castagnary says. Did they? That is partly what the evidence suggests. This is not just an indictment of the art world, but of the hypocrisy of power too.



Courbet's *Atelier* is a great work. No doubt about that. It is far ahead of his time, as it is really about the “personal as political”, a concept that does not become explicit till the 1960's. He called it a “real allegory” which really undoes the whole ideology then prevalent that envisioned allegory only as an metaphor for unreal kings, metaphorical mythological figures and aristocratic allegories. It contains satires of the French government at the time. This painting assumed the French Revolution and has internalized its values. Courbet what in opposition to the restoration of the French monarchy and suffered deeply from its unfairness and prejudices.

It would be nice to see the overpainted portrait of Jeanne Duvall restored, but as yet that has not happened, even with the elaborate ‘restoration’ done by the Louvre. Ms. Duvall is visible slightly to the left of Baudelaire's head on the far right. Her invisibility is really about Baudelaire's hypocrisy, as he wanted the woman he loved painted out because he was ashamed of her. There is no reason to preserve that example of misogyny.

Courbet said that art is about knowledge and this is right: science, inquiry and knowledge. He made some mistakes, as we all do, but he had it basically correct. So Courbet follows Da Vinci, all Realists do, to differing degrees. Constable thought that art is science, which is not far off the mark either. It is a burden to carry this, of course, as Leonardo already knew. But life involves burdens, and there is no escaping that. As one can see in all these works, the compensations to be had by the pursuit of art, are nearly endless. So the burdens are relatively light, in so far as the pursuit of the truth is not too painful and nature is always kept in view. Life perpetuates itself, and so does art. They are the same thing in a certain way. But art is not life too, and this is the sadness in it. The struggle, the effort of tell the truth, the thanklessness of it, it never ends, even though, in the end, one comes to an end oneself. The work goes on. This is evident in both Courbet paintings above, where showing nature as it is is seen as one of the principle aims of Courbet's and all realism.

(For more see Petra Chu's translation of the Letters fo Gustav Courbet)



Julien Dupre Hay Making Scene 1884 st. Louis museum,
this was in the 1980 show at CMA.

It is a powerful work, brilliant use of paint and very strongly composed. It might rain soon. Getting cold. Look how well he has drawn that hay-cart. The hay is flying on the ground where the pitch fork is about to pick up the hay. Like strings of gold. The man on top of the haystack. What perfect horses and look, a bit of sun comes over the field beyond the hay-cart. It will make her crimson headscarf luminous and red in a few seconds.



Jules Bastien-Lepage (Wood gatherer, Minn.)

Lot's has been said about this work, concerning alert old age and heedless youth. But no one has explained the beauty of the vegetation, or the awareness shown by the old man and the young girl. It is a painting full of life. He remembers the joy of being alive. She follows her excitement about flowers. It is a moment and is precious.



Pascal Dagnan-Bouveret: "In the Forest" Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nancy

Such reverence for music even among men who must cut trees and the women who feed them. Something so solemn is in this picture that even the cow is stilled. Bread in the basket, soup in the pot, and all the strong men, made as docile as the cow. They love the music and it puts them all into a reverie and profound pleasure. Clear use of paint, very precise work, emotional, yet objective.



Leon Bonvin: Rural Scene 1865.

These are four small, intimate and very detailed works, to be placed side by side in a short row. Bonvin was a hard worker, who died, very young, in despair of ever selling his work. Yet his things are pages saturated with his love of life. There is such a concrete and glorious love of the smallest detail. He was a man of great amazement and wonder. He was not a man who would have ever said OK to the ideology of “cultural capital”. He was a man who loved the small, and wanted to help his family survive.



Léon Bonvin, Country Scene, 1865



Leon Bonvin title whereabouts?

Even the “weeds” matter and struggle. Even they have great beauty in them. Who would deny it, and say that they should not exist too? It is not a weed to itself, so is it a weed at all. No, Bonvin did not think so and neither do I. Bonvin reminds me sometimes for Fidelia Bridges, and American artist who also did veery detailed picture of wild plants. The two should be compared to the artist Marianne North, whose works in Kew Garden London, and still large under appreciated. All three of the artists should be compared to Thoreau and Darwin. All four of these are working under the influence of Darwin. An entire show should be done just about this,.



Leon Bonvin: Grasses and Roses 1863 Walters Baltimore

Can you turn sunlight into a rose? Easy to poison fields, harder to understand what grows there so beautifully, if you do not. Doing the work of understanding, look what happens.

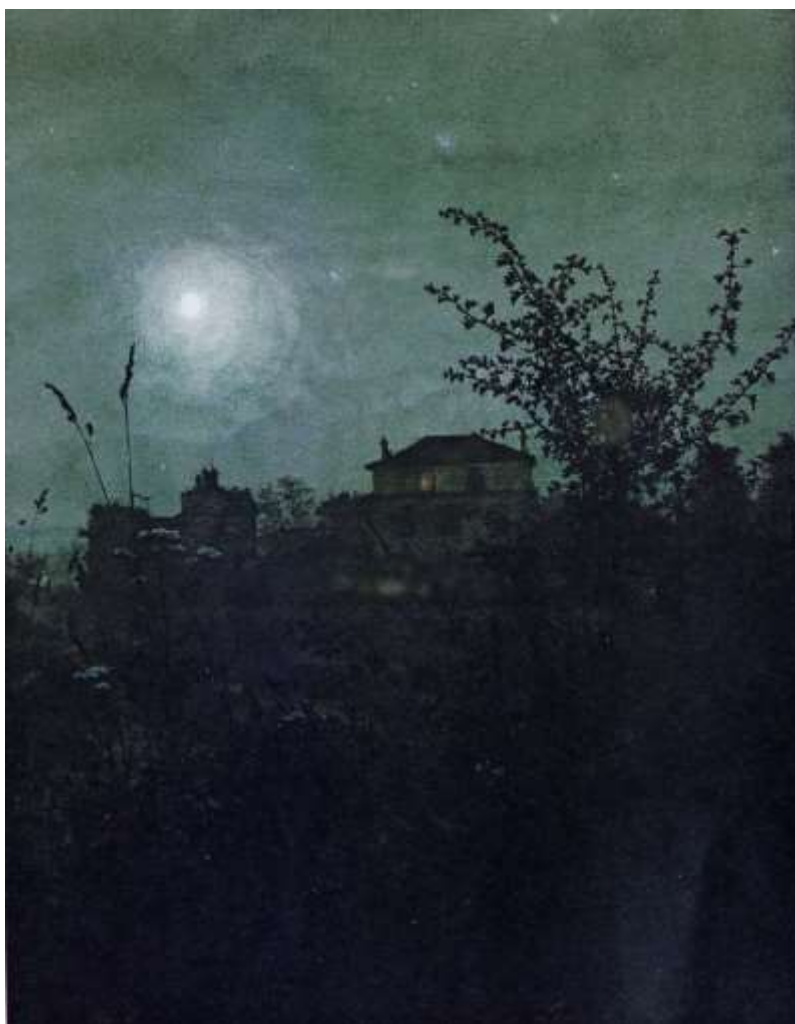


Bonvin above, 2 Fidelity Bridges below. Both are painters of the intimate and ordinary landscape.

It is worth comparing both to Marianne North who has a museum devoted to her or her works at Kew Gardens in London. It would be so interesting to see someone do a work on these artists, with some comparisons to Thoreau.

Leon's study of Moonlight would be a great study to publish with Henry's book on Moonlight. I tried to get Bradley Dean to do his magic on the Thoreau book on moonlight, which is all messed up, with the pages of it scattered. Brad was going to that but he died (2006) and no one has picked up the work. He estimated to me it would take 1000 hours at least to edit and arrange it.

Bonvin's study is profoundly accurate, as are many of his works.



?



Jean Eugene Buland. Innocent Wedding 1884 Carcossone, musee de beau arts.

What a French village really looked like in the 1800's. Young love and a child just born in the midst of that. Some say these young people are just pretending and are not married yet and there is no tiny baby in the carrier. Maybe, maybe not. In either case it is a gorgeous work and new life is soon to arrive.

Vegetables and flowers are in the midst of it. Such cabbages. It is indeed a world to enjoy. Not perfect, no doubt, but one with valuable and ordinary things in it. Many painters in the 1800's were celebrating that. Who understands what they meant now? It is worth remembering what they were trying to get us to see. Can one say this in an abstract owork? One can try, but not really or so well.



Fantin Latour Madame La Rolle, 1882 CMA

Fantin Latour was a realist, but he was also a maestro of the use of oil paint. There are few that can scumble and glaze as well as he. This is an example of that. I have tried drawing this painting several times and have learned a lot about it. It is very subtle and the use of the paint has great depth in it, due to the excellence of the techniques he used. Those fingers resting on the table, and the flowers on the wood next to them. The bracelet akimbo and who is she looking at with that flower in her hand? Her husband maybe? Her husband was also painter, Henry Larolle.



Fantin Latour Toledo?

Latour is one of best still life artists, along with Chardin. Those peeled orange slices and the shadow of the glass vase.



Theodule Ribot, The Milk Maid CMA

Sherman Lee got this lovely small work for CMA. This dark work taught me a few things about the beauty of greys. The little girl is coming out of the dark, probably early in the morning, after milking a cow and now she has a container of some fresh milk, The sun will soon be up and she wants to feed her dog. He knows it is coming and turns to her. The cat is asking for some too, in the way cats do..

British Realism



Hans Holbein, Portrait of a lady with Squirrel and Starling. 1527

Holbein was a wonderful Draftsman.

This is unusual for him. Why the woman would have a rosary is not known. But she sits amidst the animals and birds.



1766c A Philosopher Lecturing on the Orrery oil on canvas 147 x 203 cm Derby Museum and Art Gallery, Derby UK

1766

Children love the planets and anything to do with the stars and nature. They are amazed by so many things. Has anyone studied why it is lost as people get older? What does the world do to wreck something so delicate and marvelous?

“A Philosopher Lecturing on the Orrery (1766c) shows an early mechanism for demonstrating the movement of the planets around the sun. The Scottish scientist James Ferguson (1710 – 76) undertook a series of lectures in Derby in July 1762 based on his book “Lectures on Select Subjects in Mechanics, Hydrostatics, Pneumatics, Optics & c.” (1760). To illustrate his lectures, Ferguson used various machines, models and instruments. Wright possibly attended these talks, especially as tickets were available from John Whitehurst, Wright’s close neighbor, a clockmaker and a scientist.”



Three persons viewing the gladiator by Candlelight. Joesph Wright

The making of art is born of the same impulses that make science what it is. Like the Shalken earlier in this show this work is meditating on the wonder seen in classical sculpture and what we can know about the world through our bodies and minds. Wright is using the same expressions on those who admire art as those who admire the planets. Interesting that Realism touches both.



The horse anatomy drawings of George Stubbs

Da Vinci's peerless mentality applied to horse anatomy. Stubbs worked very hard to gain this knowledge and he was perhaps the best horse painter since Leonardo. Learn by doing.



Stubbs. Mares and Foals.

Yes, Horses, their rippling muscles, their pride.

Good to their babies. They talk to each other all the time.

Such beauty of form, who can express it in words.

No one, But in paint, that is different.



Gericault Horse's Hindquarters.

Yes, he was French but it is worthwhile to compare him with Stubbs. He seems to have started at the top left. He went across to the right. First two are strong, second two less so, last three better. Each one different. The second line is better. He started to really understand. The last line is the best. He begins to grasp the light on the muscles more completely. The muscles and tails begin to shine. The studies get bigger. Hooves go off the canvas. He begins to see how amazing these animals are.



Alfred Munnings.

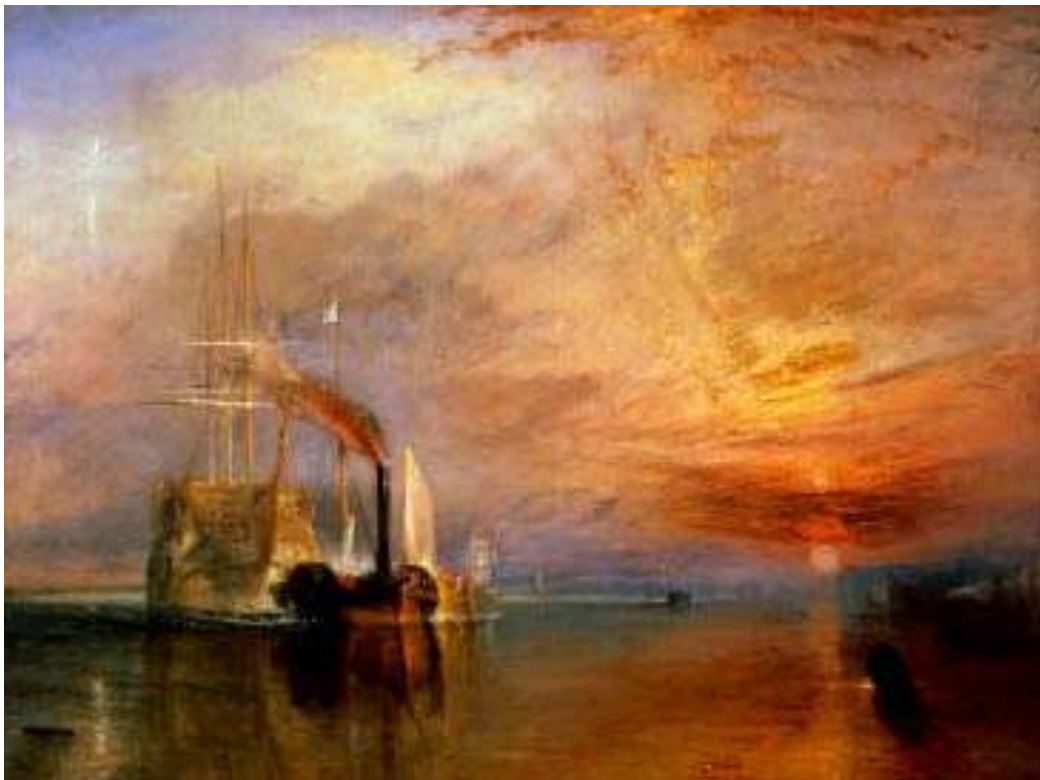
Each horse more beautiful, even if imperfect. Until the last horse, drinking water in the shimmering twilight.



JMW Turner Drawing and Watercolor of the same place:.Berwick on Tweed

Turner was a great traveler and recorder. He did amazingly precise drawings of specific places, architecture, mountains. Whole towns.. This is two. There are thousands. He did a drawing of one section of the town and a watercolor of the rest. I put them together. They fit. The river enters the sea here.

This probably cannot be in the show, but one of Turner's works should be in it. Maybe the following or the Burning of Parliament or this one:



The Fighting Temeraire

Turner thought this his best work. One should ask why. I know why I think it is. The balance of colors, warm and cool light and dark, red blue green and yellow is nearly perfect. It expresses a harmony of atmosphere and light that is extraordinary. This is the main thing he loved, as he sought this in many works all his life, and did the best here. He also, almost incidentally, loved the subject of an old wind ship being towed by a then modern coal or oil fired ship into dock to be torn up and scrapped. It is a sad subject, but it is hard to see the sadness of it with so much beauty around the event. The paradox of so much beauty surrounding a sad human fact of history is probably what made Turner like this more than any other picture he did. His love of nature

and color meets his concern with human fact and history head on, unresolved, “fighting” and paradoxical. Beauty, existence, dying.



JMW Turner, The Mouth of the Avon, near Bristol, seen from the Cliffs below Clifton, 1791–1792 © Bristol Museum and Art Gallery

This might be a portrait of Turner himself, as a young man. His whole life is in the small work, implicitly. Looking for the wonder and beauty of life on earth. It reminds of one Courbet who did many mouths of caves, grottoes, origins and river sources.



Ford Madox Brown, Hayfield 1855

The painter sits resting against a hay bale. Two kids watch him from the cart. The moon is rising over the English fields..



Millais, Blind Girl, Birmingham or Ophelia, Tate

,
The Butterfly on the girls cloak tells the whole story. The beauty of the world is everywhere, even if you do not see it: she feels it: the little girl is her eyes. I think she tells her about the double rainbow. The crows are cawing. But both girls do not even see the butterfly, only you do.



This is really a portrait of Lizzie Siddall posing as Ophelia. If ever there was a work that captured better the loveliness of the English landscape in spring, I do not know what it is. It combines this with a Shakespearean love for detail and exact care that is astonishing. The drawing for this work is a piece of poetry all by itself. The wet hair, the eyes still seeming to see, and the parted lips, sad and lost.





The ornithologist . John Evert Millais.

The great Ornithologist John Gould shortly before his death in 1881. This was originally called the Ornithologist, which is better than the later title Ruling Passion.

There are many great painters of birds, plants, trees, insects and flowers. These are Realist painters and belong here too. But we do not have the space for them all.

for an interesting commentary on this work see

<http://www.victorianweb.org/painting/millais/paintings/king3.html>



Millais, John Everett

Old now, and sere, but still part of the world and the wonder of it. Walking home. You can hear the crunch of the snow and feel the weight of the basket.



Hunt: Our English Coasts, Tate

I have often thought this the best English landscape. It captures the beauty of England in May. An island of flower growers. The sea is done like a John Brett. The sheep are full and getting heavy with wool and wonderfully rendered. Complex vegetation. What a gentle symphony of land, animals, flowers and color. Just wonderful.



Edwin Landseer, The Old Shepard's Chief Mourner.

Landseer is often accused of sentimentalism. But this painting is actually quite accurate to dogs and other animals behavior. They are often capable of deep love. I have seen dogs mourn in similar ways. They can be very emotional animals, I have even seen geese mourning the loss of their eggs. Sentimental? Only if that is not a bad thing, here it is quite real.



Frank Holl: Peeling Potatoes, Yale, Center for British Art

I once stayed in an old, small Irish house and it looked like this. I do not know where Holl painted this, but it looks to be winter, late in the day, and she works. The baby is finally asleep and the light is lovely though the window. It is a calm time or day and she is content with her life.



Hubert Von Herkomer, Eventide, Workhouse. Liverpool

Houses for the old, nursing homes or assisted living they are called now, were an atrocity—many were then as many are now, an unspoken atrocity. One of the best arguments for eliminating private insurance companies and hospitals for health care. They warehouse the old, and let them languish in these halls of the hopeless. No one talks about it. Pretend it is not there. Take away the greed from medicine and we can make sure people are not treated as badly as they are now and they were then. Realism has been a great source of protest. It implies an ethical alternative. So little protest now, so little knowledge of what is happening.



Hubert Herkomer on Strike, *Royal Academy of Arts, London*

The harshness of labor hoping the managers will be fair, but they rarely are, as Zola showed in his novel, *Germinal*. The current financial system is rigged against workers here and overseas, turning the one against the other in a scheme that enriches those who have too much already. The resentment builds and eventually the wealthy classes will have to give back all they stole. The man in this painting has an anger that still seethes in our world, even the weather now reproaches what is being done. This painting is a reproach. That too, has to be looked at.



Robert Koehler 1886, The Strike

An American version of the same thing. This painting was rejected by American museums, to their shame, and sold to Europeans, as Gabriel Weisberg shows in some of his writings.. It is a great work and typifies the struggle of millions in the 1800's, as now. Hiding the misery of millions helps no one. This work was hidden for many years. At least some Europeans were not willing to hide the truth of it. In the last 20 years unions have seen unbelievable threats and harm done to them. Donald Trump got in to the White House lying to people who lost their jobs and income to slave wages in China India and elsewhere. The cult of the CEO is the result and cause of this. That class is the real problem in today's world, the cause of Global Warming, species destruction, loss of jobs, lack of health care and so much else.



George Clausen Winter Work, Tate

The flavor of the earth can be smelled in the cold weather and they need to work despite the cold. Their little girl is off to school and the beets are dirty with same soil as is on their hands. The old woman looks at her daughter with interest and concern. Mothers look at the kids like that.



George Clausen. The Girl at the Gate

She has hopes, that is why she is so sad. She waits, but does not know what for. Will it ever come? Such lovely flowers, and her hair so well tied back and the chickens just fed. Her look explains it, and her worried mother.

Many of the best realist paintings are almost like Japanese Haiku.



Luke Fildes "Applicants at the Casual Ward" Holloway College UK

This is not just Dickensian but the way things were for many, then and now. Waiting for help from a government that is run by and for the rich, mostly. They get help right away.



Frank Bramley. a Hopeless Dawn

He did not come home, The fate of many fisherman was to leave this when they drowned.
Some asked why.



Elizabeth Forbes, "School is Out"

There is joy even at the end of the day, and even though the boy on the bench in front has to wait till his time out is over. Women's paintings of children are often more expressive and detailed than men's. She did many paintings about children.



Walter Langley: Waiting for the Boats.

This is not the history painting, this is real life in Newlyn in the 1870's. It was a hard thing to be a sailor's wife. But there was beauty in it too, and many friends.



Walter Langley: The Orphan (waif)

A perfect composition and subtle use of forms and colors. Beyond this it is about the kindness of others.



Widowed and Fatherless. Thomas Kennington (1888)

Is the girl sick? Sister is sad too. Mother sews with an elegant hand, and is still dressing in black. It is a wonderful hand, the sewing one, nearly as lovely as the drawing by Leonardo of a hand. Certainly the best sewing hand I have ever seen. Is the girl in bed dying? Both the mother and the sister are very worried. But the mother would not be sewing if she were dying. Cholera, perhaps or influenza?. London stopped dumping raw sewage in the Thames near this time. Maybe she will recover. Just a flu.h



John Byam Liston Shaw, Boer War.

Shaw's work here combines a narrative with a very advanced objectivity. It is about a woman who does not see the beauty of nature so much this year, because she lost the man she loves in the Boer War in South Africa. The woman is too sad to see how beautiful the river and flowers

are,. Maybe next year she will feel it again, maybe not. How many amazing green harmonies she is not seeing.

Like Millais' "Blind Girl" it celebrates the beauty of England in the spring. It is an amazing evocation of the riparian botany of a stream side in Britain, In this it also recalls delicate Bonvin's evocations of nature in France. Realism began early to celebrate the small things in nature, as one can already see in Van Eyck. It is still doing it here, and on up to the present. This is not just shapes in paint, and this does not get old.



Gwen John: Doriela by Lamplight

An image of freedom and learning in Gwen's early life, with much sorrow to follow for her. The lovely twilight out the window. She would never paint such happiness again, but she kept trying. That is the main thing.

see Sue Roe's biography of her



Stanhope Forbes, The Little Smith

The blacksmith was everyone's helper and one of the earliest scientists. This is not just nostalgia, but life made easier by one who knew the ways of metals. Weisberg writes in the catalogue of the 1980 CMA show the Realist Tradition, that the blacksmith image, common in painting at that time, was popular because it showed a

“personage, an artisan who refused to modify his individuality and his independence, relying on his own efforts and experience to provide a long standing, traditional service to his community.” (pg. 65)

Realism is one of the best records of this destroying of people's livelihoods by corporate culture, then as now. Many trades that had a direct relationship to other people are now gone.



Laura Knight: The Kite Iziko museum of Capetown.

One of her best works, this is image of childhood and its joys and freedoms. It is also a great portrait of the English countryside and a Cornish coastal town far below. Infinite vistas, and what happiness in that great expanse! The girl in red and so much wind!



Laura Knight 'Gypsy Splendour', 1939 national Gallery UK

She had a great eye of character and an inclusive imagination that was not afraid to show those who are different with enthusiasm and verve. I like this woman, what a character, and I bet her kids did too. She is a rainbow.

Chinese Realism

As shown at the beginning of the show the earliest realist work is probably this Chinese scroll by Zhang Zeduan (1085–1145) It has about 800 people in it and many animals. It is an amazing piece of work that deserves close study.

a static picture of the whole scroll can be seen here:

<http://mesosyn.com/cp4-2.html>



Here is a later version of the bridge done by another artist copying Zhang Zeduan



Qingming shanghe tu, Qing dynasty, 1736, copy after Zhang Zeduan nearly 600 years later.



Qian Xuan 13th c. early autumn. Detroit Museum

Realism in China often has political metaphors hidden in it. But even if this is the case, as is likely here, the poetry of the composition goes way beyond the political meanings. Some say that this work is critical of the Mongol rulers of the time. Perhaps, but that is not why I love the work. I used to have a copy of this on my wall, and it is a marvelous and accurate depiction of real life in a wild pond. It is about life in a pond, the dying and the living, the sun on the water, the porous skin of frogs, the fecundity of the wetlands. It is a favorite subject of anyone who has spent a lot of time studying plants and animals, birds and nature in general. The original is longer, this is a detail of the main section. Below is a detail of this work. Notice the tiny gnats or mosquitoes.





Jiang Zhaohe 1904 – 1986. Refugees.

So much sadness in the war with Japan, on both sides. This is a record of a senseless war, like all wars. A powerful Chinese realist painter. Even if he meant to justify the Chinese side, it still is a condemnation of all wars. How foolish to want the kind of power that causes this, on either side?



detail from the above





Jiang Zhaohe , Portrait of Du Fu, (Tu Fu) poet

I love Du Fu, certainly one of the best poets to come in China and one of the best ever.



Jiang Zhaohe 1904 – 1986 Harmony of Strings

I saw a young Chinese man playing this instrument in San Francisco in 1979. It is a great drawing in paint.

Japanese Realism

Japanese Realism is a relatively recent development, not much more than a hundred years old in terms of a pervasive influence. Though there was a tendency to a realist aesthetic far back in both Chinese and Japanese history.



Asai Chu Spring Ridge, 1903

The clothes houses and Cherry trees all show this as a Japanese work, but otherwise it is a western landscape oil painting. But the sensibility is Japanese, evocative and nicely composed. Realistic depiction of fields from this time often show other plants growing in with the plants. This is no longer seen given the prevalence of the use of toxic chemicals to kill so called “weeds”



Young girl with a candle

山本芳翠 Yamamoto Hōsui

interesting combination of chiaroscuro with a Ukiyo-e theme.



Matsuoka Eikyu, The Hill of Grass, 1926

The so called Yoga school of painting was not about “yoga” the eastern, physical practice of body disciplines. but about mixing western and eastern painting. The term was first used in the Meiji period, to distinguish such works from indigenous traditional Japanese paintings, or” Nihonga”. Some really wonderful things came out of this, worthy of Issa or Basho. This work

has a solitary individual walking in nature with a wonderful landscape beyond. I saw a similar work once where a woman was walking by a body of water, and had a similar solitude and beauty. I've yet to find it again, as I did not notice the name on it. I've thought about it for years. Partly because of the misogyny that is so much a part of Japanese patriarchal culture, these images of solitary women in nature have deep feeling in them. In recent decades that has been changing.



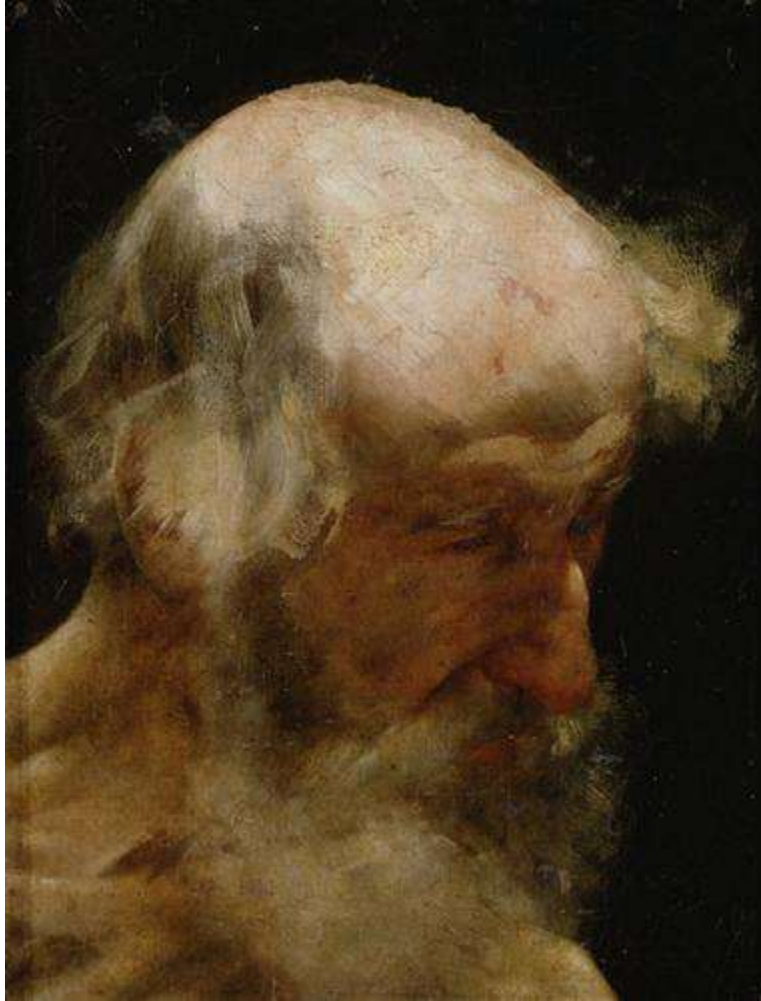
Eikyū MATSUOKA, The pond of Ikaho 1925



Yokohama Taikan

Peaks of Chichibu at Spring Dawn 1928

I had a book of Taikan's works in my teens and though he is not always successful at integrating east and west, when he does it well, as here it is strikingly lovely. Again there is a real poetry in his things.



Harada Naojiro. Old Man

I do not know this artist at all, but it is wonderful head, and very well done. The brain case, eyebrows nose and beard and all very well realized and expressive.



This was done in Japan, old Tokyo. I saw this first many years ago and still love it. I have always enjoyed street life in many cities. It is by an American from Cincinnati. It is a scene by Robert Frederick Blum called "the Ameya", which is a candy blower, hence all the kids and young mothers crowded around him. Notice some of the babies are asleep, so it is mostly the young mothers who are looking at the candy!. Done in 1893, it evokes a street scene in a Japanese city of Tokyo seen by the artist. It is a vibrant lively work. There is even a rickshaw driver who has stopped to have a bit of candy. I love the little shops in the background.

Blum said of Japan that it was "the most glorious experience I have ever had," and this is very likely his best work, done shortly before he died. This is in the Met.

Another work by Blum, not part of his Japanese excursion, is this very sympathetic painting of Venetian Lace makers. He had a brilliant and vibrant approach to such scenes of everyday life.

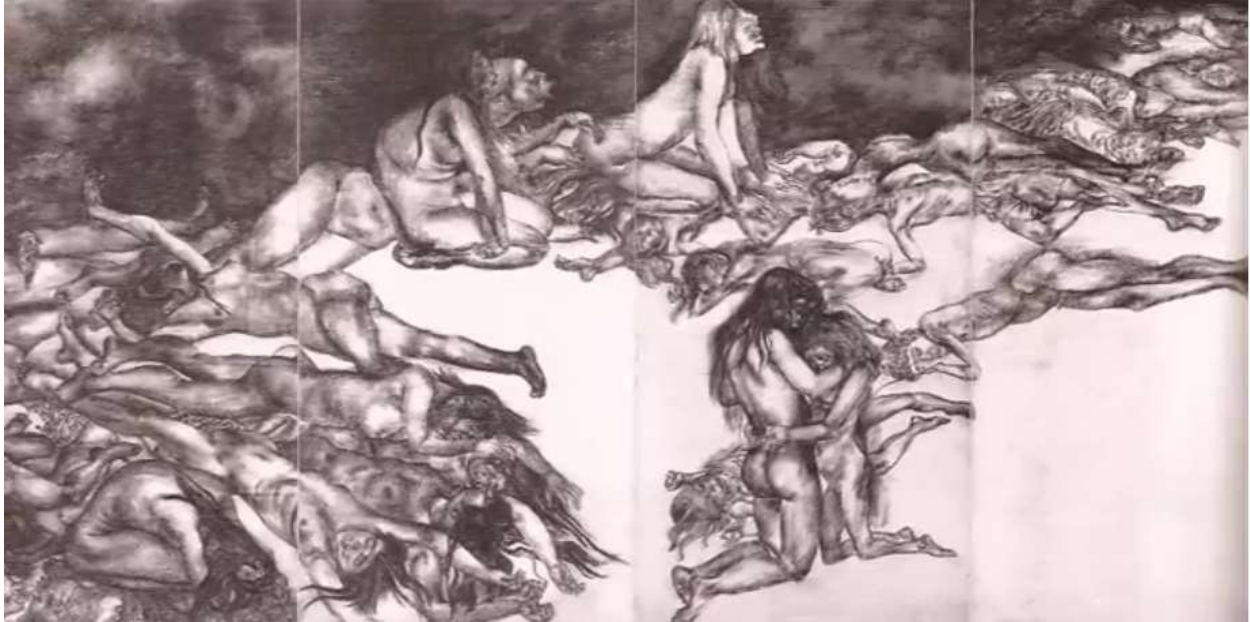
There are similar paintings by John Singer Sargent of this trade, but Blum is better. This work like the one above, is full of light and life. It is in Cincinnati



I love his Flower Vendor in Tokyo below. Not here is his Silk Merchant, which is also very evocative of Japan over a century ago.



“The Flower Market in Tokyo (Tokyo no Hana Ichiba)”



One last work that I should mention, a very unusual one is the Hiroshima panels by Iri and Toshi Maruki. They are realistic works based on deep observations but horribly deformed by the bodies, fire and ruins that the Marukis saw in Hiroshima, where they went, three days after the bombing. They also did one on Nagasaki, the killing of American prisoners of war and Auschwitz. They are anti-war works. I deeply appreciate these works by these Japanese artists, since I have seen hours upon hours of the military films made just after the bombing and so I have seen some of what the Marukis saw. I agree with them that all wars must be stopped.

“The people depicted in the paintings are not only Japanese citizens but also Korean residents and American POWs who suffered or died in the atomic bombings as well. The Marukis tried to represent all those affected so as to make their cause an international one and above that one of universal importance to all human beings.”



It is an amazing and disturbing series of works. I am only showing fragments of it here. There is nothing like it in the whole world and though it is not strictly a realist work, it is actually more than a realist work, as it shows first hand images of an event these artists witnessed and were so affected by it they spent their lives painting it. It is a realism that exceeds itself, not a super realism at all or a photo realism, but an effort to communicate the unthinkable and unpaintable.. I cannot imagine but that this subject would be treated in a way unlike other subjects. These are great works. It is interesting to compare Murasaki version of Nanking with the Chinese painter Jiang Zhaohe, who painted the same thing above. They are two very different works but both are valid and both a protests against war and pleas for peace everywhere. I agree with both of them.

These are unusual works about exceptional events. I say they go beyond realism because there are no real images of this, nor can anyone make one. This is the realist images we have of this horrid and stupid waste of life. The bombs never should have been used and mothers, grandmothers and babies should not have been murdered. The Americans already knew the Japanese were going to surrender. There was no reason to drop any experimental bombs. Look at the small dog above, his hair all burned off and barely alive. There were many such dogs, birds, and every other animal, including humans who were maimed or killed by the horrendous weapon which should not exist, much less be used or tested.

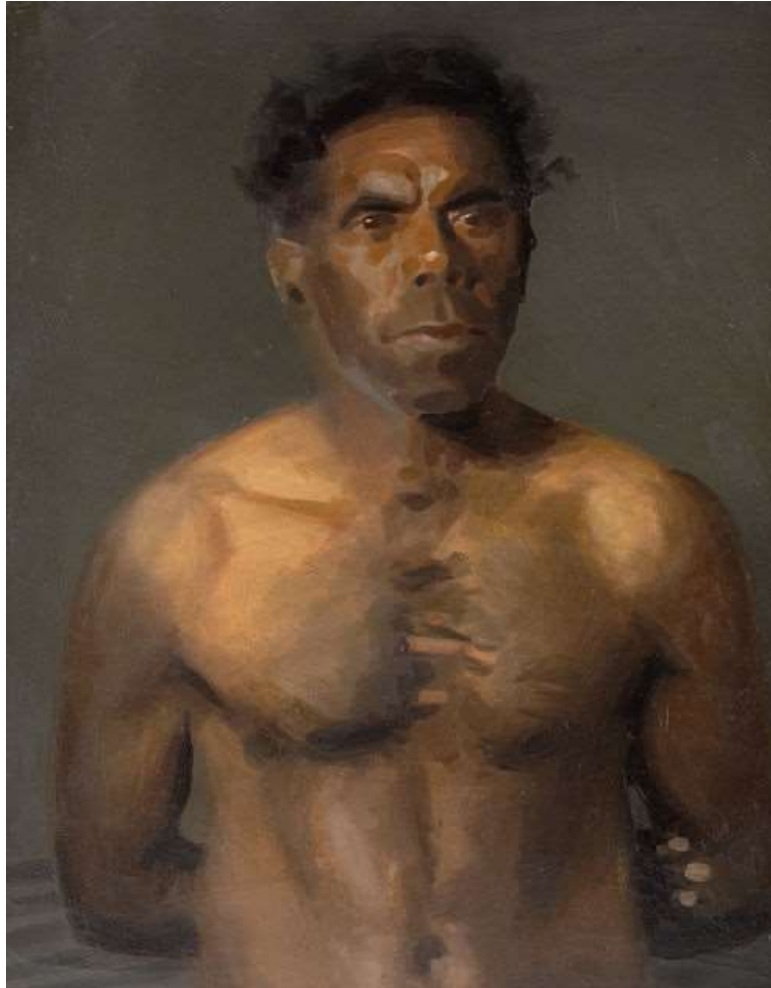
A film of these murals can be seen here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTpDqYPEY5Q>

Australian Realism



These two paintings are by Percy Leason. His reader above is a great work of tonalism and the man appears to be utterly engrossed in the book. He did a series on Australian Aborigines that reminds me of Elbridge Burbank's studies of Native Americans in their sympathy and accuracy.



Aboriginee

Russian Realism



Isaac Levitan – March.

Too cold for the ground to unfreeze. The snow is nothing short of magnificent, the grey tones and the footprints, the variable shadows of the trees. At least the sun is out, how long before the donkey gets to go back to the barn?



Issac Levitan Apples Trees in blossom

Levitan was a great lover of the countryside in Russia and did many paintings of it. He crowds the blossoms towards himself and toward us. I want to sit on that bench for a while and breathe.



Isaak Levitan, Golden Autumn, 1895. Oil on canvas. The State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Levitan calls forth the same beauty of the Land evoked by Pasternak in his novel Doctor Zhivago. Certainly one of the great books of the 20th century. Stalin did not like that book much. Of course not. But Pasternak and Levitan saw something in Russia and adjacent lands that Stalin was too cold to see. They saw the land itself and the people on it.



Ilya Repin *Barge Haulers on the Volga*, State Russian Museum, St Petersburg.

A kind of slavery in Russia. They were called Serfs there. When I was a kid I took piano lessons and the teacher made me play the Volga Boat Man over and over, but little did I know I was playing a song about slavery. Now I know. It is a powerful protest painting, amazingly well drawn and conceived.

I am mostly Irish, but partly Russian and it is hard not to love this work. I find the mistreatment of these workers outrageous. Russians have often abused their own or others. Much like today. It did not stop with the Czars, it did not stop with communists, it is now worse under the capitalists. When will it stop?

NIKOLAI KASATKIN 1859-1930

Köyhät keräämässä hiiliä hylätystä louhoksesta Fattigfolk samlar kol i en övergiven gruva Poor people collecting coal in an abandoned pit 1894

State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg



Beautifully done and drawn despite the terrible subject, which shows people digging coal in an abandoned pit. It shows a poverty that existed in Russia many Americans cannot imagine, or prevent themselves from thinking about. There is beauty even in that, if you let yourself have an eye for it.

This is a gorgeous work, one of the very best.



Ivan Shishkin, In the Wild North.

This could be in Colorado or the Sierra Nevadas. Moonlight on snow covered pine in the mountains.

German and Scandanavian

Adolf Menzel Iron Rolling Works



Adolf Menzel

This was dangerous work, terribly underpaid. Now they have moved this kind of work to China and elsewhere, and it is still underpaid, but you are not told about it.

My Dad worked in the steel business, before it was moved overseas by greedy men. He loved steel, like a blacksmith. But corporations ruined it, for him and for so many others. There should be separation for the corporations and the state, just as there is a separation between Church and state. CEOs would oppose this, just as the Churches did. Give up all that power and wealth. Not likely, they only want the lower classes to give up all theirs.

Menzel was one of the best draftsman of the 1800's. Many sketch books filled with the most marvelous drawings, like the old woman who is next..



Adolph Menzel 1894

He captured her sadness and her beauty, in the midst of her age.

There are many of these in his sketchbooks. They are too little known outside Germany.



Fritz von Uhde, the Arrival of the Organ Grinder

Everyone is startled by the arrival of the organ grinder, who is near the back gate surrounded by very happy children. One can follow the red dresses back to him or the perspective lines on the ground back to the happy kids. Mosses grow on the flagstones. Why is the little girl on the right not going and what is the woman on the left thinking about? It is an amazing moment catching an instant.



detail of the organ grinder



Theodor Verstraete Organ Grinder 1891

Other realist pictures of this time explore the loneliness of the musician as he goes from town to town. The organ is so heavy. Traveling between towns like a Salesman today, or scissors grinders.

What were the lives of Organ Grinders like? Various painters tried to answer that question. Like the next painting.



Silent Partner aka The Organ Grinder by Abbott Fuller Graves 1894

His monkey died. Many condemn such 'genre' images as 'sentimental', Some were no doubt, but these things happened to real people, make no mistake.



Karl Jensen-Hjell

At the Widow. Portrait of the Artist Kalle Løchen, in Oslo, Norway

Jensen Hjell died at only age 26, of tuberculosis. It was common then, and was what Thoreau and Evert Larock died of (see above). This is a portrait of a painter friend of his, Kalle Lochren. It must have been one of the best times in his life. You can see it in the little objects he surrounded himself with. Both the color and the light are sensitive, well observed and nuanced, as is the carpet, vases and the other objects in the room. The cup on the table, the red blanket his back rests on. His happiness is in the pink ribbon he wears.

It is a complex portrait of a person told in many ways. But more than this it is an image of deep study by an artist who is very much aware of outside light and the inside solitude of reading and study and the love of his art as the expression of both realities: the inside and the outside and how they relate to each other. Light through the window, the unreal ideality of the painting on the wall. The conflicting choices of a young man facing the world. Much of the painting is also the record of choices made by the artist pictured and the artist who is painting it, and so it is a double portrait of both Karl and Kalle. Amazingly well thought through.

This is what art is, this aloneness in the midst of the existence of things and oneself. The world as it is for humans and other animals. The fake world of marketers of the newest thing, actually that does not matter. The approval of the crowd is nothing really. One has no best thoughts in a crowd, one merely seeks a way out. But in the studio, one talks to the past and the future and the present is so full of efforts to see and understand. Study, inquiry, what is it all about except this effort to grasp what was not clear days or years ago. I do not condemn the world, far from it, I just find the seeking of approval of other people I hardly know very tiresome, real work lies elsewhere, and that brings little attention. One pays attention, one does not seek it for oneself. Painting can be a way of loving others, if they are lovable. Those who are loveable are by definition, close. It is that closeness that is in great art. It is visible in all these works, in subtle ways, whispering only to those who have not forgotten how to listen, like the young artist above is listening, with his mind out the window, in the book and in the room, all around him.

Latin American Realism

(Don Ramos, a Latin American historian, helped me some on this section)

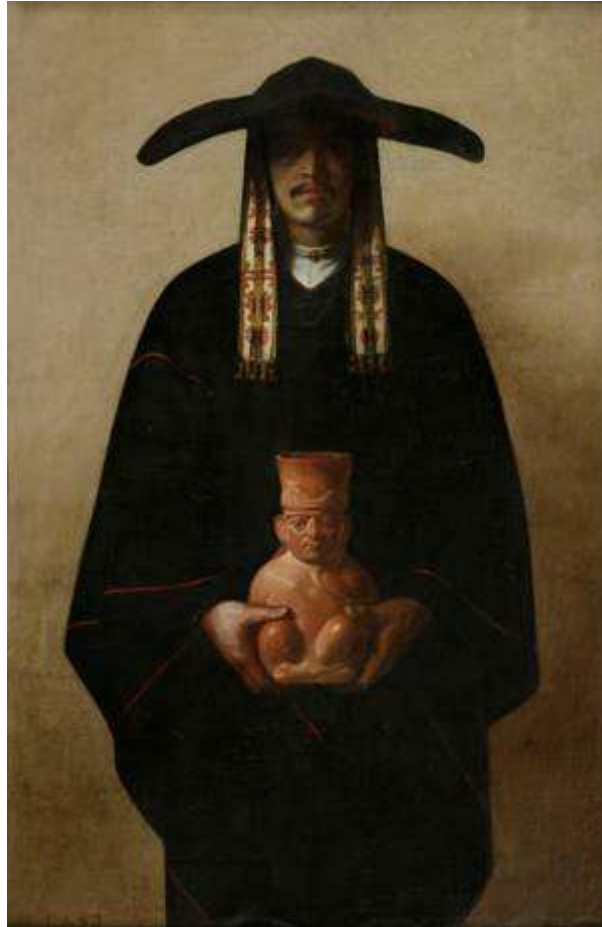


It is by Juan Manuel Blanes and is just called Paraguay. It shows a Paraguayan woman wondering among dead men. Paraguay was in a war with Brazil and Argentina between 1864 to 1870. During that war somewhere between 70-90% of the male population was killed. The Paraguayan leader was Francisco Solano Lopez, and it is sometimes called the worst war in Latin American history. It is a sad and moving protest work against war, as I see it. Pointless destruction of life. But a great memorial to all those who died.



Juan Manuel Blanes Paraná landscape 1880

Blanes was an artist from Uruguay. Here he celebrates the nature near the Parana River in his area. The girl reaches up to one of the many butterflies that live there too.



by Francisco Laso del Rios. It shows a Incan point of view combined with a naturalism, mysterious and realistic at the same time.



This one also is by Francisco Laso del Rios. "Haravicu" this is called. The landscape in the background evokes the Cordillera, which is the Andes mountains running all the way down the west side of the South American continent. Darwin describes some of its ecology in his Voyage of the Beagle. This is Laso's understanding of how the Incas, actually looked. I have never seen such a good effort to picture them. Does every Peruvian know this work?



Francisco Laso “Three Races or Equality Before the Law” 1878

His three races is one of the first expressions of equality in the art of South America. Three children play cards. It seems to be equal and it should be. But the picture has the irony that the white boy gets to go first. Is that his comment on the injustice of it? My daughter wondered about that. I think she might be right. Is this Laso’s quiet protest?

Laso was a wise Peruvian who saw the inanity of the *casta* or system of racism that had such a negative effect on Latin American history. He wrote:

“A painter sees everything through art... When we see so many different faces mixed up, and above all, when we look at the immeasurable variety of colors that result from the mixture of Europeans, Indians and Africans, we have been able to compare to that meeting of Peruvians with a palette richly adorned with abundant colors and varied hues [...]

The Peruvian statesmen think in a fatal way that the country cannot be constituted [because of] the diversity of races ... In the name of art, we say and say that it is not as

bad as it is supposed to be.

Artistically speaking, we can say that you can paint with just one color, but you paint better with four, and it does not hurt that there are thirty colors in the same palette.

According to art, there is no color that is superior to the other. The white, the yellow, the red, and the black are equally useful ... And in the great workshop of the earth, in which God has placed races of various kinds and colors, why are these colors not useful? One to the other, changing in their properties to reach perfection in the picture of humanity. All men are the same, the skin means nothing.”



Darwin's book about South America, the Voyage of the Beagle is partly a social history as well as an important scientific text about some of the observations that are part of Evolution. There are many photos of Darwin, many of them excellent, but I still prefer this watercolor of young Darwin (31 yrs. Old), by George Richmond in 1840, shortly after Darwin returned from his Voyage.

Except for the Native peoples everyone in South America is an immigrant. The same is true of North America. Darwin is important to the history of the place for being one of its best observers and someone who voiced dissent against the practice of slavery and animal abuse there.

Laso's freedom from racism was the result of the Bolivarian revolution of Simon Bolivar and his partner Manuela Saenz. Bolivar wanted to free both Natives and mixed races, and make them equal to the Creole (white-europeans)Spaniards. He did not quite succeed, but the seed was planted.

Darwin saw this problem in Latin America. Darwin left on his trip in 1831. Bolivar died in 1830. So they did not meet. The only tie between Bolivar and Darwin is Alexander von Humboldt, scientist and traveler who explored south America like no one else until Darwin.. Humboldt met them both. He had a huge influence on Darwin, but Bolivar was in a low period when he met Humboldt. But Bolivar claimed that Humboldt was the first to envision a free Latin America. There is some truth to that. The paintings I have chosen here reflect the importance of all three men to the eventual liberation of South America, still ongoing: nature preserved as an evolving thing, the elimination of the casta system, the end to slavery, liberation from colonial rule. By the time of Martin Heade, Frederick Church and Marianne North, South America had begun the process of opening minds, stopping colonialism and getting rid of the violations of slavery. It would have a long way to go, but to varying degree we can thank Bolivar, Humboldt and Darwin for starting some of this.



Almeida Júnior (1850–1899)

This evokes what is expressed in Flamenco guitar and dance.

He sings to her and she to him, and the rustic image evokes Latin culture and the expression of love in its music.



Juan Manuel Blanes

This is the only picture I have allowed into this show that suggest animal abuse. Here a few flightless birds called Rheas are being hunted by a Gaicho. Hunting animals is common on all continents and I only show it here because it is, first a beautiful work. Secondly, hunting is spoken of so often in Darwin's Voyage of the Beagle as a common fact in the Pampas and elsewhere in 19 century South America. The Pampas are grassy plains that stretch from Argentina north. Darwin's descriptions are very vivid. Darwin later would become a man interested in animal rights, and he was very anti-slavery. South America seems to have taught him a lot both about humans and animals and he did not want to see either suffer. This painting is so characteristic it could easily be an illustration of Darwin's text.

Also the image of the cruel Gaicho is one that Domingo Sarmiento tried to lionize in his racist ideology of "civilization"(Europeans in cities) verses "barbarians" meaning nature and Native Americans.



Charles Comte de Clarac



Martin Heade

I did not want to include Martin Heade in South American art but finally had to. I could not find much to show how nature was viewed in The Amazon in the 1800's by South Americans themselves. This certainly does not mean there are no fine works on this subject by them. It just means I cannot find them and I looked everywhere I could think of for weeks. So I have been forced to use western artists who did work in Latin America. I am not sure why there are so few images done by Latins of the Amazon. This surprised me. as this has changed in recent decades, as I will show..There are more recent paintings, but I am mostly trying to show the history of realism here, and include only a few later artists



There are at least 25 or more of these works with Hummingbirds and flowers by Heade, mostly done in Brazil around 1865. They are among his greatest works and show the landscape near the Amazon and often have orchids, Hummingbirds and other details of life there. They are truly amazing works. They are physical, full of light and vivid in color.

I did more research on the subject on why there is little art that was done early on by Latin artists on the Amazon region. Dr. Don Ramos, Latin American professor I studied with and admire, suggests that this might be because of Iberian thought, which associated nature with barbarity and racist views of native Americans, and preferred cities and civilization. He credits this to the

Argentinian thinking Domingo Sarmiento. The source of this goes back further, to a racist fear of native Americans and a Christian fear of nature..

This may explain why I had so much trouble finding images of the Amazon region from the 1800's because the "jungle" or rain forest may not be much respected in Latin America. It has been cruelly treated, cut down and burned for many decades. Domingo Sarmiento saw nature in demeaning and stark terms. Dr. Ramos says that "Where westerners saw nature as a gift, Iberians saw it as a threat. Thoreau vs Sarmiento." The image of the cruel Gaucho, above, is one that Sarmiento tried to lionize in his racist ideology of "civilization"(Europeans in cities) verses "barbarians" meaning nature and Native Americans. Thus, the source of these views goes back further than Sarmiento, -- it goes back to a racist fear of Native Americans born of liberalism and Catholic fear of nature..

In contrast to Sarmiento is Bolivia's recent announcement of the Universal Declaration of Nature's Rights in 2009. This is exceptional and new. "My personal view is that the liberals wanted to remake nature, the conservatives wanted to exploit it; and the folk wanted to live with and in nature", Dr Ramos says. This tentative improvement in South American relations with the natural world is already implied perhaps in Pablo Neruda great love of nature as exemplified in his poems and his life. He was a great lover of birds, stones, geology and shells, among many other natural things. It would seem that South America has come full circle and the natural world, once condemned by Sarmiento and others is now seen as a model for how to improve the world ravaged by the nature hatred that goes with endless development and a capitalist and Marxist economy. Dr. Ramos cites the "folk tradition" heavily influenced by Native sources as the origin of a contrary tendency in Ecuador and Bolivia which are more pro-nature. Hopefully this will persist and spread.



Heade's Morpho Butterfly.



Marianne North ,Flowers and Fruit of the Maricao Passion Flower, Brazil, 1873 –

Marianne North was an English woman who traveled around the world painting in oils. She donated nearly all of her 900 paintings to Kew Gardens in London and she paid for the building to house them. They are amazing works that show flowers and plants from all over the world, painted from life.

Her paintings begin to have an ecological grounding not so much in identification and description, though they are that too, but in seeing the whole environment that a given plant lives in. I admire that.

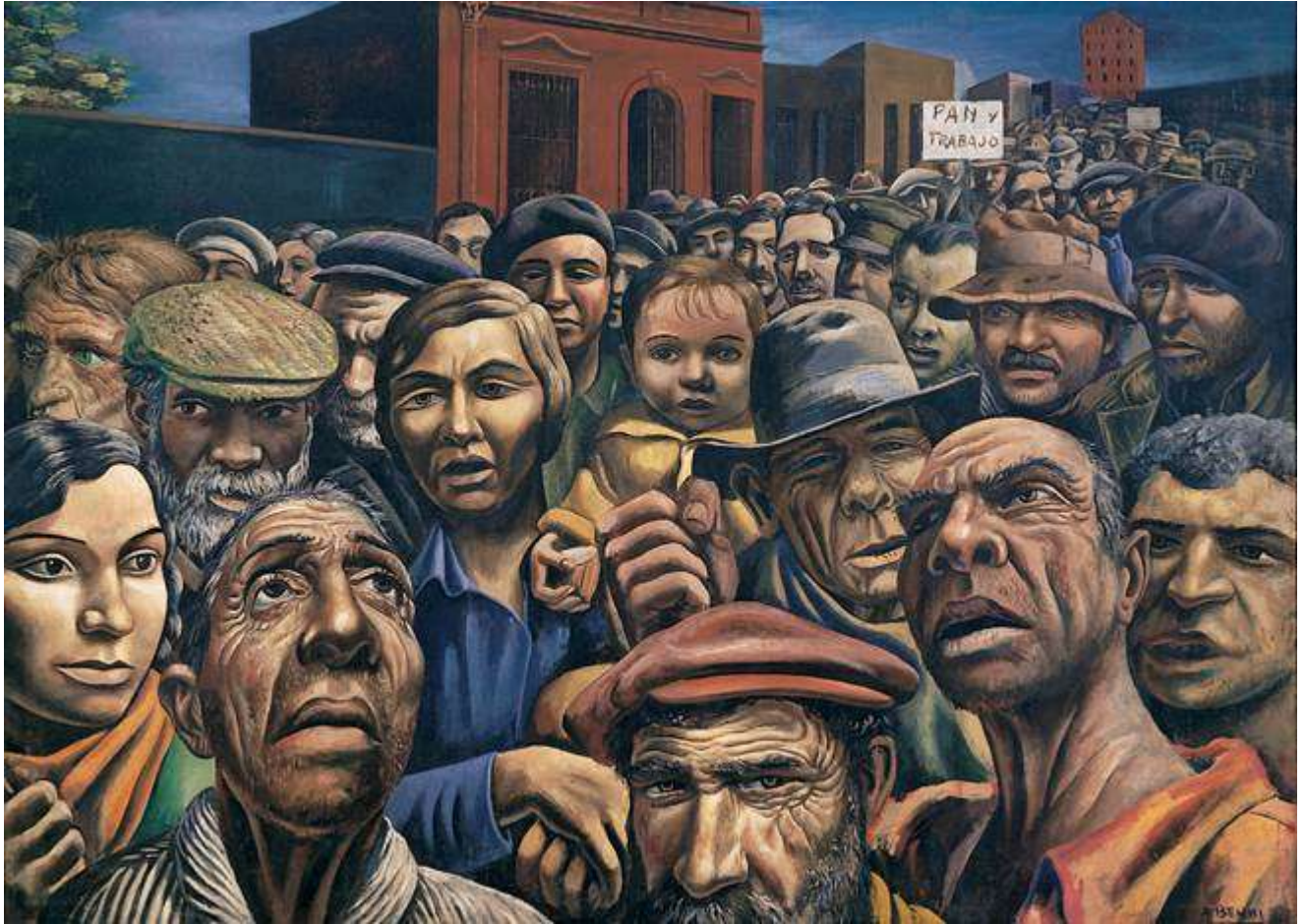


Marianne North. Flor Imperiale, Coral Snake and Spider, Brazil, 1873



Frederick Church Cotopazi 1855

Church did a lot of studies and finished works in Latin America and Jamaica that are very fine. This is one of them.



Antonio Berni / Manifestación (Public Demonstration), 1934

A sea of faces, ignored by the bosses. The man on the lower left seems to sum up the whole crowd, yearning for a better life.

This style of realism tends to get dismissed as socialist realism. I think it is just realism, meaning, reality.

It is quite true that the system as it is unfair, in South America, here, everywhere. But South American in recent years has been much better than the US in trying to be fair to its citizens. It is to be praised for this, though many in the US dislike South American politics and their art, when many Americans know little about either. I have been trying to learn about it, and show a little of what I have learned here. But there is so much more to know. Pablo Neruda is one poet whose art is exactly what I would put here if there were a visual equivalent. There may be. I just have not found it yet. Or maybe a Pablo Neruda in realist painting was just born and will be along in 25 years.



From what I have learned about Latin American art, realism is a rarity there, but a sort of magical realism is common. I am not sure why, perhaps because of the Mexican muralists, Rivera and Kahlo etc. or an influence from Spain. One finds a similar surreal version of realism in some of the great poets from there too, from Neruda to Vallejo. In any case, this is also true of Jose Alberto Marchi, an Argentinian artist who did the painting above in 1994. A lot of his work is too surreal for my taste, but this one stands out as a strong example of realism at its best, as it evokes the whole history of South American mining, even up to the present, where mining has done great harm to workers across the continent. There is of course the horror of the Potosi silver mine, the use of mercury to refine it, with its long term effects of war in Europe, and the waste on war of wealth gained by mining by the Spanish state. There is gold mines of Brazil, even in recent years as well as mining accidents, such the 2010 accident in Coiapo, Chile, one of many such 'accidents', going back centuries. This makes this a profound protest work, as I read it.

American Realism



Sidney Mount, the Power of Music. 1847



Eastman Johnson, *Fiddling His Way* 1866,

to be set beside the Sidney Mount in the CMA collection to encourage comparison of the two. One done before the civil war and the other after. The Mount picture excludes the sympathetic figure of the African American, the Johnson picture not only includes him but makes him the center of relaxed attention.



Old Mount Vernon, the neglected and slave side of the house. Puts Washington into some perspective.



Eastman Johnson: Negro Life in the South, Atlanta museum, Georgia.

The cat going in through that beautiful window. A rooster on the mossy roof. The Banjo player, the little boy dancing. Living as best they can. Is that why the overdressed white woman wants to see it all? Has she stopped seeing “Black people”, none of whom are “black” and started seeing fellow humans?



Henry Ossawa Tanner, 1893, the Banjo Lesson

A student of Eakins, One of his best works full of sympathy and intelligence.



Thomas Wood,
Moses Small, a freed slave, Newspaper vendor in Baltimore, Md.. 1858

He tips his hat to you.

Nice coat.

De Young San Francisco



Alfred Kappes Tattered and Torn 1886

Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Mass

His evokes the Kastakin above. Russia and America are the same in their sufferings. Few understand that, thinking too much about nation states or blinded by money. Like the Kasatkin, this one it is so wonderfully drawn and shaded.

The old woman is about to light her pipe. She is so happy today, in the nursing home. She could be about to start dancing.



American Nocturne by David Powers

This Mural, done by David Powers in the 2000's, was taken down by the town of Elgin, Indiana in 2018, after they found out, 12 years after the mural was put up, that the content of the picture was the lynching of African Americans. A website called the Chicago Reader continues:

“ The mural's story begins August 7, 1930, in another midwestern town—Marion, Indiana. On that day, Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith, two black teenagers accused of killing a white man and raping his female companion, were dragged from their jail cell by an angry mob, beaten, and lynched. (it is unclear that these men did this, as the confessions were extracted under torture, and one of the boys, James Cameron, was also almost lynched but then managed get away. Cameron later started and ran the American Black Holocaust Museum).

A local photographer, Lawrence Beitler, captured the spectacle: the victims hanging from a tree above a crowd of ostensibly ordinary white onlookers. At the moment Beitler snapped the photo, some of the townspeople had turned toward the camera, one man raising his arm to point in the direction of the two bodies.

Beitler sold thousands of copies of that image, which was turned into a postcard and became a notorious icon of American racism. It inspired a New York teacher named Abel Meeropol—a Jew, a Communist, and, later, adoptive father to the sons of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg—to write the searing words and music for the song "Strange Fruit," which Billie Holiday recorded and made famous in 1939.”

<https://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/american-nocturne-elgin-mural-lynching-photograph/Content?oid=22902865>

Abel Meeropol's "Strange Fruit" sung by Billie Holiday

Southern trees bear a strange fruit,
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root,
Black body swinging in the Southern breeze,
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.

Pastoral scene of the gallant South,
The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth,
Scent of magnolia sweet and fresh,
And the sudden smell of burning flesh!

Here is a fruit for the crows to pluck,
For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck,
For the sun to rot, for a tree to drop,
Here is a strange and bitter crop.

Some people, me among them, think this is the greatest musical song of the 20th century. Here is Billie Holiday singing it:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-DGY9HvChXk>



Lawrence Beitler, Aug. 1830



Eastman Johnson Corn Shelling 1864 Toledo

He is still working. It is getting late. His child is beside him, not even aware his Dad is supplying next years food.

The bricks and basket weave, the brown wood box and the cobs. What is the boy making?



Albert Bierstadt, "Farallon Islands Carnegie, Pittsburg

The US government dumped nuclear toxic waste near these islands off San Francisco,. Yet look what lives there.



Albert Bierstadt

Two profound studies of trees. They too weather time and get old.



Joseph Decker

Beautifully observed apples still on the tree. What kind of apples? Granny Smith?



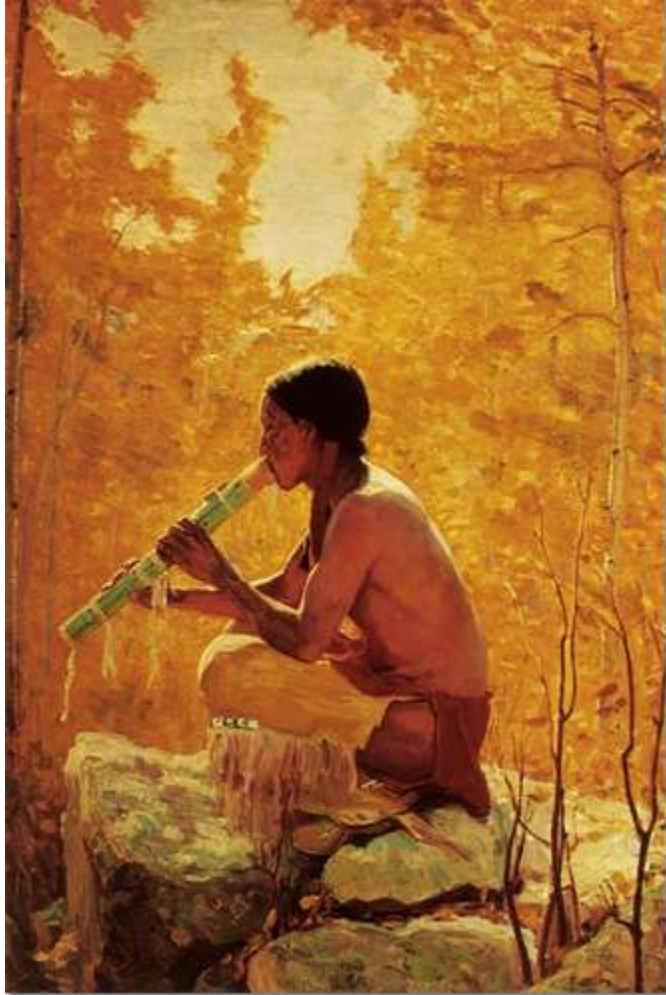
Elbridge Burbank Native American Portraits, Butler Museum., Youngstown, Ohio

Burbank did many of these, and they are some of the best observed portraits on Native Americans ever done



E I. Couse Elk Foot of the Taos Tribe , Portrait gallery Smithsonian

One of the best Portraits in the National Portrait gallery. This is a very strong work that tends to dominate any room it is in. There is a certain wildness and power in the man himself, certainly. I have spent a good deal of time with Native Americans and know that such men exist even now. There is a readiness and defiance I rather admire in it. Not to mention those lovely leggings and great moccasins.



Bert Geer Phillips - Song of the Aspen - Eiteljorg Museum, Indianapolis

Another very powerful work, more lyrical and evocative, even poetic in its musical suggestions, its yellow and ochre notes, its green flute. Who does he play for?



Charles M. Russell (1864–1926)

The Medicine Man, 1908

Oil on canvas

Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas.

This painting by Charles Russell, called “Medicine Man” is certainly one of his best. The Medicine Man himself looks a bit like Sitting Bull. I wonder if he modeled the face on him. Russell is often paired with Frederick Remington, But in general, Remington is prone to racist caricature. Indeed, I thought of using some of his moonlight studies in the Thoreau study on Moonlight I did , but did not precisely because so many of his works have racist overtones and evoke the Cowboy/Indian mythology of Manifest Destiny. Russell in contrast, is less a racist, though he did a lot to contribute to the

cowboy myth, but this work is particularly without racism. It is a great work. Russell writes of it:

“The Medicine Man I consider one of the best pieces of my work and these few words may give you some idea of the meaning of the picture,” Russell wrote in 1908 to the painting’s first owner, Willis Sharpe Kilmer.

“The medicine man among the Plains Indians often had more to do with the movements of his people than the chief, and he is supposed to have the power to speak with the spirits and the animals. This painting represents a band of Blackfeet Indians with their medicine man in the foreground. The landscape was taken from a sketch I made on Lone Tree Creek in the Judith Basin, and I remember when this was game country. The mountain range in the background is the Highwood, with Haystack and Steamboat Buttes to the right. The Blackfeet once claimed all the country from Saskatchewan south to the Yellowstone, and one of their favorite hunting grounds was the Judith Basin. This country today is fenced and settled by ranchmen and farmers with nothing but a few deep-worn trails where once walked the buffalo; but I am glad, Mr. Kilmer, I knew it before nature’s enemy the white man invaded and marred its beauty.”

“I knew it before nature’s enemy the white man invaded”—is chillingly accurate, and implicitly opposed the ideology of ‘manifest destiny’. I have always thought this a particularly fine work on Native Americans and nature. He is right it is his best or one of his best, works. Over all I prefer Henry Farny’s works to Russell and others. The tradition of Cowboy imagery is mostly a lie, and centers around extolling the virtues of genocide, hatred of nature and racist politics.



Frederick Church, Königssee, Bavaria, Cooper Hewitt, National Design Museum

There are many small works by Church that are Maestro works, and this is one of them. The clarity of air and space is amazing. The boat on the green blue water. The recession of planes in the mountains. The foreground tree that sends the background way back. Such clarity.



This is also by Frederick Church. I find it far better than any abstract work, because it is real, and the light is perfect, there is moisture in the air, and the light is just amazing. When I do have abstract longings, as happens now and then, I look at pictures like this one, and am totally satisfied in a way no minimalist, color field painter or AE painter could ever touch. This is the realm of Mountain Lions and Wolverines. Lewis and Clark would have grasped it in wonder.

Interlude on art school Practice in the 18-1900s

Art schools taught drawing and painting in sophisticated ways, including drawing for memory. This is largely lost in most art schools now, except for a few, like Art Students League or Grand Central Academy in NYC. Most art schools are now taken over by a doctrinaire devotion to abstraction or by computer or commercial art, all of which are geared to serve the corporate world. What follows are some works that do not follow the way of today's art schools but rather show the skilled training student used to get, largely kept from them now.



Gustave Caillebotte, Minneapolis Institute of Art

There were many attempts at realist nudes, both male and female, beginning with Courbet's the Origin of the World. This is a woman Caillebotte loved. People without clothes, what is to be shocked by? We all were born that way.



Thomas Eakins the Swimming Hole. Amon Carter museum Texas

This is a really great American painting, perhaps the best male nudes ever done in the US. To understand it really means one must understand European art at the time. Eakins studied in Paris with Gerome and Bonnat and at the Ecole to Beaux Arts. The nude was then the epitome of expressive form, but realism brought it out of mythology, and the middle class was offended by it, which is hypocritical. Both Eakins and Courbet suffered because of that repressiveness. That is Eakins and his dog on the lower right. I have been skinny dipping myself and it is a great pleasure. Nothing wrong with it. To see such a relaxing and enjoyable day so well done and posed is amazing. Those who are ashamed of the body tend to not like this one, but really it is a uniquely human work and one that is perfectly done, well studied and wonderfully composed..



Alfred Munnings (1878 1959) who also studied at similar schools in Paris shows clearly what it looked like to work in such schools with these two very fine studies. Munnings one of the Newlyn School and a great painter of horses. See above

The first is called “a female nude seated and Julien”s Atelier, 1902”. The second appears to be done around the same time, as there are similar paintings and drawings on the far wall and the man with the mustache appears to be in both.

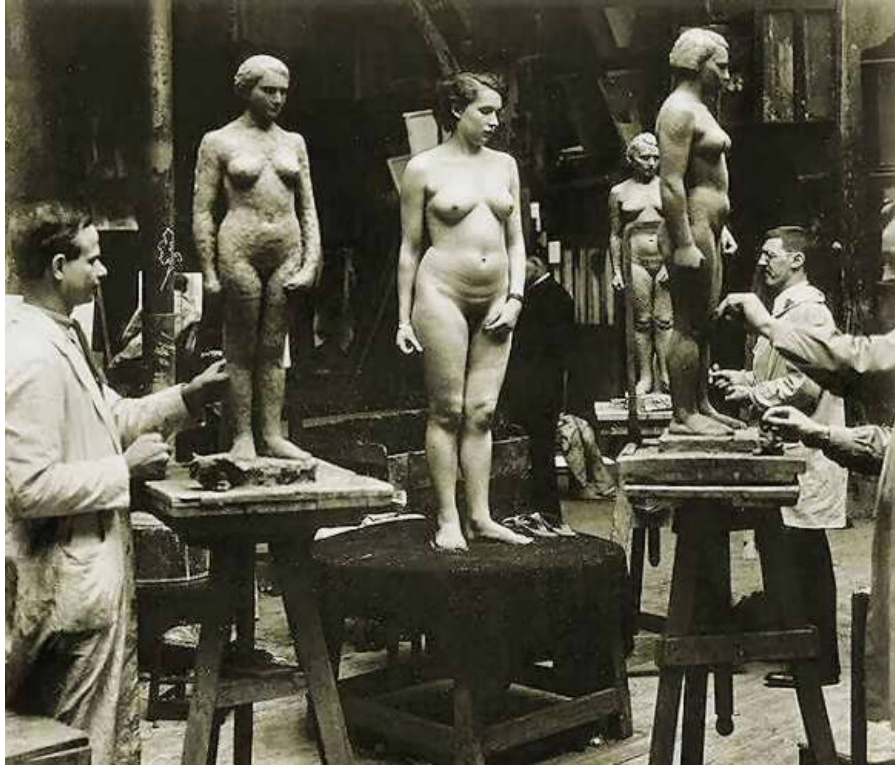
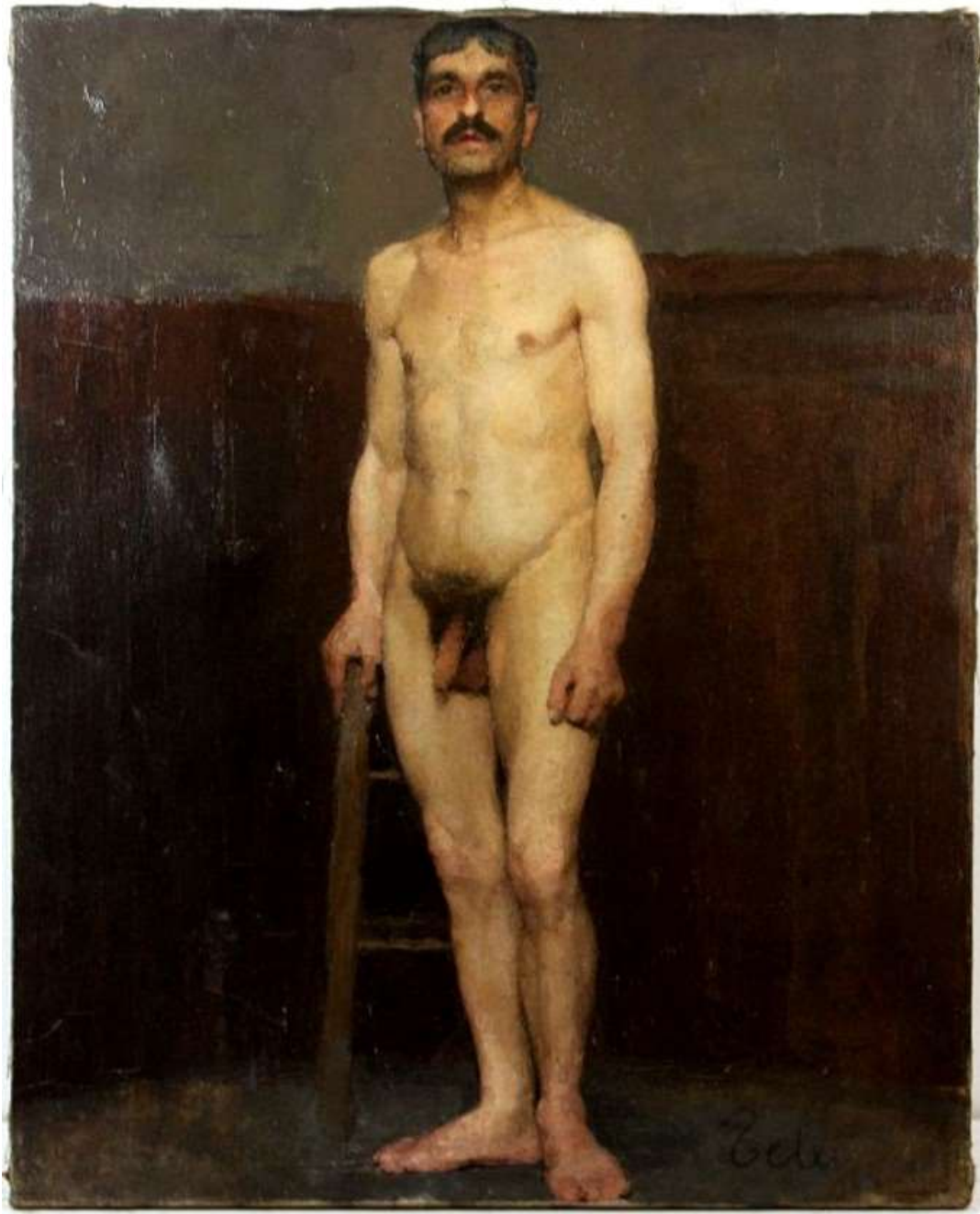


Photo to be put on the Wall in this section



I am not sure who did this. It is an academic nude from the 19th century probably around 1900. I cannot read the signature. But it is a favorite male nude, as it is clear and realized, very well drawn and the person is a real body in real space and has life in him. Good strong work with no apologies and much patience and purpose in it.



Bouguereau's Atelier at the Académie Julian, Paris (1891)

by Jefferson David Chalfant



Academie Julien 1888

One can see that this was very much a male dominated domain. Eakins, in America around the same time, had great trouble doing female models. This changed by the time of Munnings and Laura Knight. In her autobiography Laura Knight talks about how hard it was for females to go

to the life class and how later it became possible for her to do it. That advance is the real meaning of this painting below of her painting herself painting a female body. It was a kind of triumph



Laura Knight self portrait



Collen Barry 2009

By now this is common place and great work has been done, as in this Collen Barry study.



John Singer Sargent, The Black Brook. water color



John Singer Sargent, Gassed. This is a great anti war painting, showing young men harmed by the gassing of troops during WWI. 1918

Probably too big for lending. But maybe some of it could appear as a wall photo? It verges on a “real allegory” to use Courbet’s phrase, but it is a very realist work in its ambiguous way, and

maybe the best realist painting to come out of World War 1. Kennington's son Eric also did some WWI studies. His painting Congueers, originally had the title, Victims, which is more accurate and that is the one that should be used.



George Hitchcock: "Flower Girl in Holland" Chicago Institute

Who can resist flowers, sometimes?



Tom Thompson, thunderhead 1913. National Gallery of Canada Ottawa

Tompson is a Canadian plein air painter, that means he liked to paint outside from life.

Parts of Canada are just like this, wind on the water, shorter trees, something wild in the land.

This work has been analyzed by weather experts, and it tells exactly what happens when a tornado begins to form. It is thus a realist work and has been shown to be very accurate.



Frederick Judd Waugh. 1861-1940

I watched seas just like this when I worked on ships crossing the patches of light on the surf, waves washing in the grey, foam flying and always moving. The wind catches the wave top breaking and blows the foam toward the rocky beach.

Waugh studied with Eakins in Philadelphia



Frederick Judd Waugh, 1861 1940'

Waugh felt the poetry and power of the sea like no one else, In the moiling and boiling of the water in the half-light where the sea piles high into the low rocks. Such yellows in the gray and blue's in the black grey and lights in the foam. The sky makes one aware this is the third planet from the sun, the next planet is Mars and it too has it climatic and geological challenges.



Andrew Wyeth Geraniums 1960 Brandywine museum Chadd's Ford Pa.

One can see through both the windows to the other side, to the sea beyond. A disabled woman is in the kitchen, sitting, living her life. The woman is Christina Olson, the same woman that is pictured in Christina's World. The window panes reflect light back to us. This is an amazing painting that shows a huge space and a person's life in that space. The bright geraniums of the title augment the overall feeling of space and life.



Robert Bateman

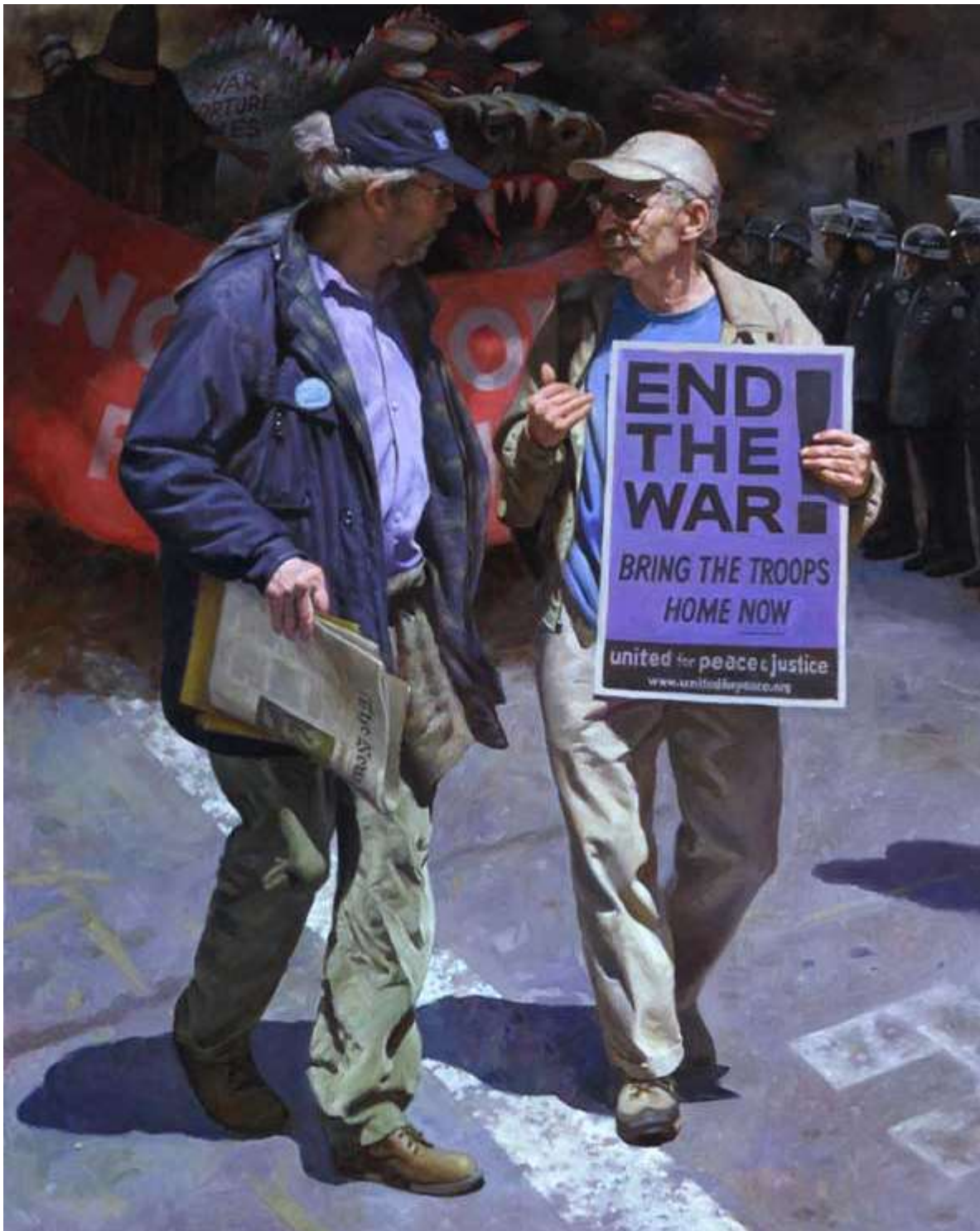
It is amazing that Bateman, an environmental realist, is far more better known and appreciated by a large population of people than any of the artists who sell in New York Galleries. But he is rarely shown in museums. Here he shows swans flying up a creek. They do indeed follow creeks and rivers, and they have a striving and purposeful certainly about their flying forms that he has captured very well. I am not sure where this work is.



Burt Silverman

Silverman, Max Ginsberg and Dinnerstein are three realists who have recorded life in New York City in recent decades. Here we show two beach scenes.

X



Max Ginsberg. Discussion

How long does one keep silent about such things? Why do we let them do it over and over? I think of Basho's great anti war poem

Summer grasses

all that remains of great soldiers'

imperial dreams



Clyde Aspevig

Doesn't everyone love flowers?



Clyde Aspevig

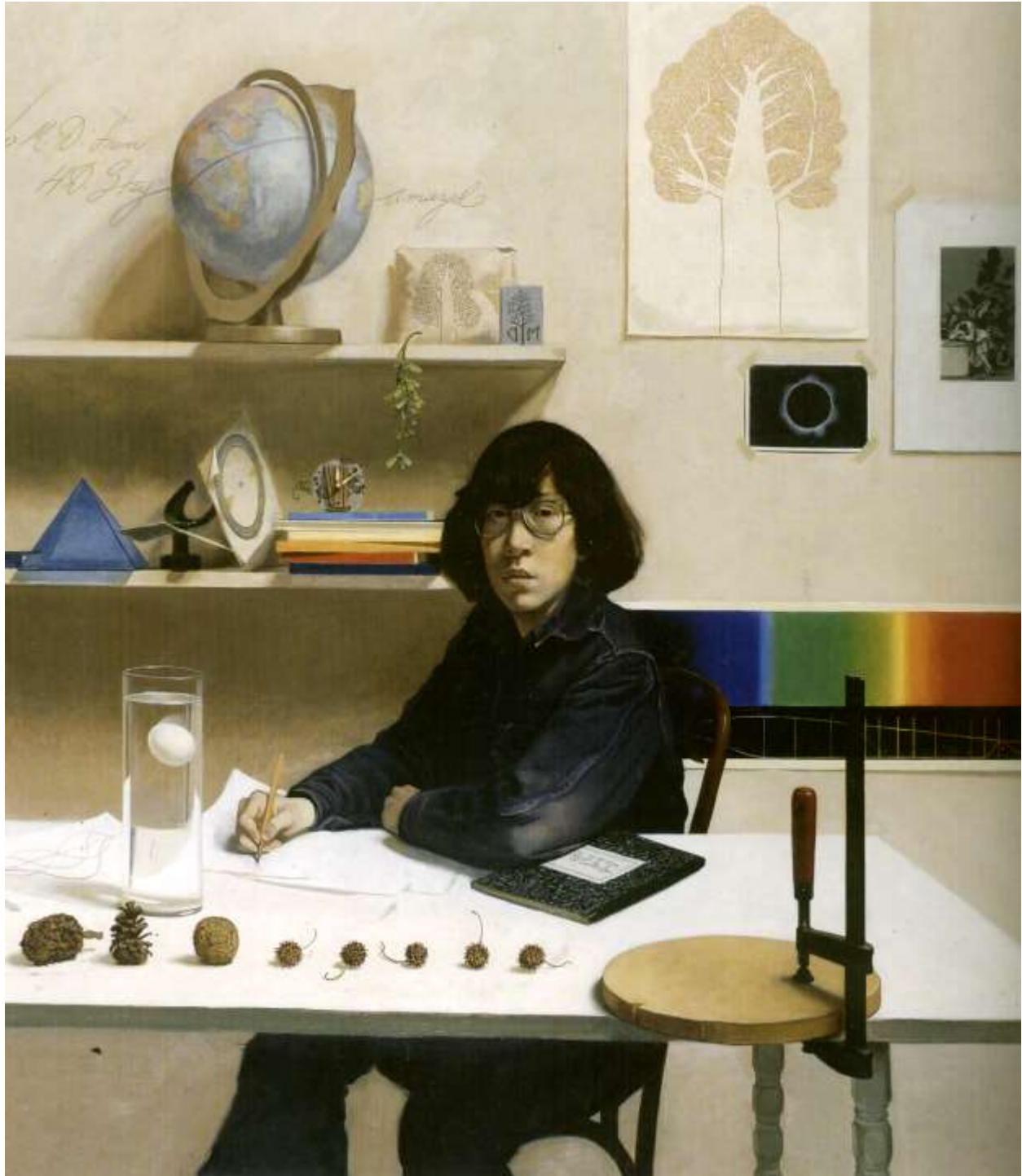
Aspevig is a Plain Air painter who also works in the studio with photos. Sunlight on snow, no one invented that. Not even amazed by itself, yet it is amazing.

One thing I love about Realism is that it is not afraid of such paradoxes, as such paradoxical and contradictory things are part of life. Realism is Life.



Dean Mitchell, Quincy Plant Worker

An African American artist who paints rural America, workers and old people.



Harvey Dinnerstein, Stay Amazed

Probably owned by Dinnerstein, as this is his son
Notice the Goya print on the wall: "The Sleep of Reason produces Monsters". Reason, being

aware, looking, thinking, trying to understand, to be amazed at what is amazing and to be skeptical about what is not. Skepticism, science, inquiry, amazement, this is what is good in the world. A good painter, father and man. Such a well thought out work.

This is a partial exhibit of these works I consider to be among the best done in the last 500 or more years. I could add more, but for now this is quite sufficient. Museums have largely lost touch with this work, and push mostly empty art born of corporate capitalism. These are Disney like objects of great vapidty and are more or less worthless as art. They are mostly ciphers used as investments by the unjustly rich. What I present here is real art done for history, insight and in an effort of grasp reality over many centuries. I offer it for free, and hope this will be seen as some of the greatest art of the last 500 years. Let those who dispute this find art better than what I have put up here. I doubt it can be done.