

# Saarah Ghany

## Art Final

Realism, also referred to as naturalism or verism, was a new style of art adopted in the mid 19th century where artwork was made based on more accurately representing a person, thing, or event. It avoids any kind of artificiality and questionable elements normally associated with Romanticism artwork. Artworks made during the realism movement serve to show the struggles and lives of people during a specific moment. It shows them in their natural element rather than exaggerated or unnatural. Realism was a turning point in art history and marks a significant change in how art was portrayed. As the cities made progress and became more industrial, the main aspects of artwork also changed. Realist artists rejected the Romanticism standards that was depicted in many artworks and decided to paint a new picture, one that depicted the subject more accurately and without exaggeration. Subjects shifted from statues and sculptures of the divine to average, working class people, contemporary settings, and day-to-day scenes.

Gustave Courbet is widely known as a leading figure of the movement towards Realism artwork. He first started the movement by portraying peasants and laborers in the same manner that was typically reserved for religious, historical, or allegorical subjects. Courbet's "The Woman in the Waves" and "The Source" both incorporate distinct elements of realism within them. In addition, "Thomas Cole" by Henry Kirke Brown, "Admiral David Glasgow Farragut" by Augustus Saint-Gaudens and "The Freedman" by John Quincy Adams Ward all have aspects of reality and give some insight to society's values and ideals at the time.



## The Woman in the Waves

**Artist:** Gustave Courbet

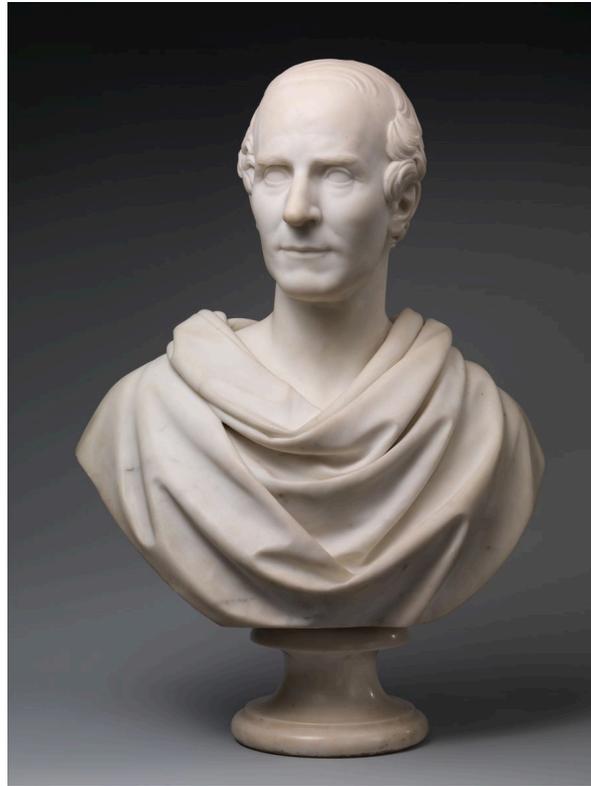
**Date:** 1868

**Museum:** The Metropolitan Museum of Art

In this piece of artwork, Gustave Courbet has made the woman's complexion very pale and pasty to allude to Venus, "the goddess born of the sea". However, Courbet has made sure to add in hair in the woman's underarms to show that human side of her, subverting away from the Romanticism standards of artwork. In addition, he has added a hint of green veins to her breasts to further depict that her human body is not divine and flawless.

Lastly, the contrast in color between the torso and the chest show the natural range of skin color between different parts of skin on the body, which is another

element of realism. For many women, the skin tone of the chest is usually lighter than other parts of the body because the parts of our body including our face that are exposed to the sun can appear darker than rest of the body which is generally covered. The artist has used verism/realism to portray this subject.



## Thomas Cole

**Artist:** Henry Kirke Brown

**Date:** by 1850

**Museum:** The Metropolitan Museum of Art

When I came across this bust in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, I immediately thought back to class where we were introduced to the “Bust of a Man”, which was a clear example of realism, since the bust had wrinkles on the forehead and portrayed features of an aged man. I decided to include this because I feel it represents

realism artwork in America as opposed to always focusing on European artwork. This bust of Thomas Cole, an English born American painter, was created by Henry Kirke Brown to honor him after his death. It portrays Thomas Cole very identical to how he looked during his lifetime, which is a key element in realism art. In addition, the artists does not fail to add in his sparse hair on top of his head as well as his serious facial expression, which is identical to his portrait.



## Admiral David Glasgow Farragut

**Artist:** Augustus Saint-Gaudens

**Date:** 1879–80; cast 1910

**Museum:** The Metropolitan Museum of Art

When I came across this bust, I found it interesting that although the medium used were both bronze and marble, Augustus Saint-Gaudens did not fail to add in texture and detail to accurately portray Admiral David Glasgow Farragut. This statue was made to commemorate Admiral David Glasgow Farragut who earned well deserved praise and glory for the 1862 capture of New Orleans and his victory at the Battle of Mobile Bay in 1864. The artist made sure to include Farragut's squinting eyes, furrowed brow, and the way he always pursed his lips, which are distinct features of the celebrated naval commander.



## The Source

**Artist:** Gustave Courbet

**Date:** 1862

**Museum:** The Metropolitan Museum of Art

This piece by Gustave Courbet caught my eye because it looks so calming because of the water flowing down and the colors used, giving it more of a nature and earthy vibe. I noticed that Courbet has given the model a lot of texture and accentuates her natural curves without exaggerating them. For example, he could have made the dimples on her back more pronounced to contrast boldly against her complexion, but he decided to make it as close to reality as he could. Also, the woman's left leg is bent, which usually causes the skin to look uneven and textured, especially with curvier woman. Courbet does not fail to add in this detail, which adds individuality to this artwork, which is what realism art is all about.

## The Freedman



**Artist:** John Quincy Adams Ward

**Date:** 1863, cast 1891

## **Museum:** The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Lastly, this bronze statue of a semi-nude African American man caught my eye as I was walking through the MET because of the physique of this man and the proportions of the body parts. The muscular figure seems very realistic for a hardworking African American man, and coincidentally the artist was inspired by President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. The broken shackles on the statue's left wrist and held in his right hand allude to the artists' abolitionist stance. I noticed how this man was not glorified or exuding "freedom" but rather he is humble since he is seated and leaning towards one side. This artwork depicts the rawness of slavery and how it was the reality at the time.

## Annotated Bibliography

1. Richman-Abdou , Kelly. "How the Groundbreaking Realism Movement Revolutionized Art History." Edited by Mary Lou, *My Modern Met*, 6 July 2018, [mymodernmet.com/what-is-realism-art-definition/](http://mymodernmet.com/what-is-realism-art-definition/).
2. Galitz, Kathryn Calley. "Romanticism." In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–. [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/roma/hd\\_roma.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/roma/hd_roma.htm) (October 2004)
3. Dr. Beth Gersh-Nesic, "A beginner's guide to Realism," in Smarthistory, August 9, 2015, accessed December 10, 2018, <https://smarthistory.org/a-beginners-guide-to-realism/>.