

Realism: gustave  
courbet, the artists  
studio: a real allegory  
summing up seven  
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[Art & Culture](#), [Artists](#)



Gustave Courbet, one of the best known realist artists of the 19th century, created his painting *The Artist's Studio: A Real Allegory Summing Up Seven Years of My Life as an Artist*, in 1855 (Getlein, 2010, p. 470). As the title denotes the painting depicts Courbet's studio, but in an allegorical way. It is an attempt to summarize the seven years of Courbet's life as an artist, presenting on one corner his rural origins, on the other his present circle and at the center himself working on a canvas next to a naked woman who could be his inspiration or the a personification of the truth (Getlein, 2010, p. 470). The work seems a huge undertaking, as a great number of detail has been included by the artist. I find very interesting the attention Courbet paid on the specific details that would characterize the two juxtaposing groups of people. While the group on the left clearly belongs to the working rural class, the one on the right seems to belong to an intellectual urban elite. The artist stands in the middle of these two worlds not really belonging to any of them. He seems preoccupied in his own work, ignoring the people that surround him, although I feel that this is probably the image he would like to present. Practically, it would be impossible for anyone -especially a successful artist who would want to live from his work- to live isolated in his studio. What I also found interesting is the inclusion of so many contemporary and everyday people in such a big canvas. Scenes like these are not what one would expect from a painting designed to be exhibited and it certainly does not look like anything that had been created earlier. As Getlein (2010, p. 470) says large canvases were reserved 'historic', 'exotic' or 'heroic' subjects. It seems that Courbet aimed at elevating himself and the world that he was living in to that status.

The painting is certainly impressive in its detail and realistic representations of people. Seeing it live in the museum where it is exhibited must be an exciting experience, as I believe that a picture alone cannot capture the full effect the work has in real life.

## **REFERENCE**

Getlein, M. (2010). *Living with Art*, ninth edition. New York: McGraw-Hill