

Realism

Realism, sometimes called **naturalism**, in the arts is generally the attempt to represent subject matter truthfully, without artificiality and avoiding speculative fiction and supernatural elements. Realism has been widespread in the arts at many periods, and can be in large part a matter of technique and training, and the avoidance of stylization.

In the visual arts, illusionistic realism is the accurate depiction of life forms, perspective, and the details of light and colour. But realist or naturalist works of art may, as well or instead of illusionist realism, be "realist" in their subject matter, and emphasize the mundane, ugly or sordid. This is typical of the 19th-century Realist movement that began in France in the 1850s, after the 1848 Revolution, and also social realism, regionalism, or kitchen sink realism. The Realist painters rejected Romanticism, which had come to dominate French literature and art, with roots in the late 18th century.

Realist movement and Literature

The Realist movement began in the mid-19th century as a reaction to Romanticism and History painting. In favor of depictions of 'real' life, the Realist painters used common laborers, and ordinary people in ordinary surroundings engaged in real activities as subjects for their works.

Realism as a literary movement is based on "objective reality." It focuses on showing everyday activities and life, primarily among the middle or lower class society, without romantic idealization or dramatization. According to Kornelije Kvas, "the realistic figuration and re-figuration of reality form logical constructs that are similar to our usual notion of reality, without violating the principle of three types of laws – those of natural sciences, psychological and social ones". It may be regarded as the general attempt to depict subjects as they are considered to exist in third person objective reality, without embellishment or interpretation and "in accordance with secular, empirical rules." As such, the approach inherently implies a belief that such reality is ontologically independent of human kind's conceptual schemes, linguistic practices and beliefs, and thus can be known (or knowable) to the artist, who can in turn represent this 'reality' faithfully. As Ian Watt states, modern realism "begins from the position that truth can be discovered by the individual through the senses".

While the preceding Romantic era was also a reaction against the values of the Industrial Revolution, realism was in its turn a reaction to Romanticism, and for this reason it is also commonly referred as "traditional" "bourgeois realism". Some writers of Victorian literature produced works of realism. The rigidities, conventions, and other limitations of "bourgeois realism" prompted in their turn the revolt later labeled as modernism; starting around 1900, the driving motive of modernist literature was the criticism of the 19th-century bourgeois social order and world view, which was countered with an anti-rationalist, anti-realist and anti-bourgeois program.

Theatre

Theatrical realism is said to have first emerged in European drama in the 19th century as an offshoot of the Industrial Revolution and the age of science. Some also specifically cited the invention of photography as the basis of the realist theater, while others view that the association between realism and drama is far older as demonstrated by the principles of dramatic forms such as the presentation of the physical world that closely matches reality.

The achievement of realism in the theatre was to direct attention to the social and psychological problems of ordinary life. In its dramas, people emerge as victims of forces larger than themselves, as individuals confronted with a rapidly accelerating world. These pioneering playwrights were unafraid to present their characters as ordinary, impotent, and unable to arrive at answers to their predicaments. This type of art represents what we see with our human eyes.

In the United States, realism in drama preceded fictional realism by about two decades as theater historians identified the first impetus toward realism during the late 1870s and early 1880s.