

<p>Gustave Courbet, <i>The Painter's Studio, Real Allegory, Determining a Phase of Seven Years in My Artistic Life,</i></p> <p>1854-55, oil on canvas, 361 x 598 cm (142 x 236")</p>	<p>initial analysis</p> <p>In the central section Gustave Courbet sits at large canvas on an easel painting a landscape. He is watched by a young boy and a naked female model. She holds a white sheet. On the floor other cloth and a wooden stall. Between them on the floor a white cat. Behind this scene a large wall painted with an indistinct landscape. Hanging on the wall a large circular gold medallion.</p> <p>The painting hangs in the Musée d'Orsay, Paris. The painting was restored in recent years. That work was completed in 2016.</p>	<p>The painting was refused by the Salon and was first shown in Courbet's own pavilion titled <i>RÉALISME</i>, erected as an alternative to the Salon. In the same space Courbet exhibited 40 paintings including many portraits which directly identify some of the people in the right hand section. After this showing the painting was not on public view until 1920 when it was acquired for the Louvre from one of Courbet's family.</p>
<p>In the left hand section a very varied group of figures and a dog, many can be named, all of them personify various political positions. On the floor a guitar and a dagger. Between the main group of figures and the canvas, a manikin hangs in the posture of a crucifixion and a human skull bone rests on a cloth on a stall.</p>		<p>In the right hand section a group of people. All of them have been identified. (See below.) On the floor a young boy is drawing. Behind the scene a window and light from outside and a curtained area, probably for the model to change clothing.</p>

The figures represented in the lefthand section are, according to Hélène Toussaint¹, (starting from the left foreground) Napoleon III (seated), with two of his ministers; the Finance Minister Fould; Courbet's 'Jew', holding the strongbox on the far left; and, seated to the emperor's right, the 'purveyor of cheap textiles', Minister of the Interior Persigny. Then come two loyalist newspapermen, next to Fould the 'priest' Veuillot, and opposite Persigny, a renegade republican, Emile de Girardin, to whom Courbet referred as 'the coroner'. Behind the emperor would be Lazarre Carnot (d. 1823), who voted for the execution of Louis XVI in 1792 and became minister of the interior under Napoleon I; next to him, in the white uniform of the Italian *chasseurs* with the red scarf of the revolutionary armies, Garibaldi, the first in a series of personifications of foreign countries. Then Kossuth, with bonnet, representing the Hungarian rebels, and Kościuszko (d. 1817), representing the Polish freedom fighters. The latter, in allusion to these fighters' nickname, 'faucheurs (*harvesters*), is holding a scythe. Between Persigny and Girardin appear a carnival strongman symbolising Turkey and a jester in Chinese costume symbolising European ties with the Far East. Behind Girardin, a young woman who may represent an allusion to Greece, and a labourer with the features of Herzen, the Russian socialist.² Beneath the life-size manikin a woman – to whom Courbet himself refers to as an Irish woman – dressed in rags and suckling her baby, an embodiment of abject poverty.

To the right of the central group appear the friends of art: the musician Promayert with violin under his arm; Courbet's patron, Bruyas; Proudhon, Cuenot, and Buchon; seated, Chamfleury, and behind a couple Klaus Herding thinks represent free love. In the foreground Apollonie Sabatier, and her escort, the Belgian banker Mosselman. Seated in the corner, engrossed in a book, is Baudelaire.³

¹ Hélène Toussaint in *Gustave Courbet (1819-1877)*. exhibition catalogue, Paris, Grand Palais, and London, Royal Academy of Arts, 1977-78.

² Reviewing the newspapers of the period we can note that as a result of the Crimean War (1853-56) and Anglo-French policy in the Far East, China, Russia, and Turkey were in the headlines everyday.

³ Many of these details are from Klaus Herding. *Courbet: To Venture Independence*, translated by John William Gabriel, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991.