



**ISABELLE DU TOIT (ROAUD)**  
*Chinese Gliding Tree Frogs*  
2006, Oil

Comparative label image:  
JOHN JAMES AUDUBON, 1785 – 1851, *Audubon Frog*

Historically, the subject matter was often dictated by the church or art patron who was commissioning the artwork. Nineteenth-century French artist Gustave Courbet (1819 – 1877) was one of the first to break with those rules. He insisted he wouldn't paint a picture with an angel in it until he was shown a real angel from which to work. The cry for more naturalism and reality in artwork was at odds with the traditional emphasis on religious subjects, mythology and historical scenes. The moment that line was crossed, Realism took hold as a genre of its own.

Realism has withstood challenges from photography, Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Modernism, Cubism, Abstract Expressionism, and other –isms that tried to



claim the death of Realism in their manifestos. But every generation or so, Realism makes an even stronger comeback as it is re-energized by the challenges of avoiding clichés and commercial appeal.

This current exhibition, *The New Reality: The Frontier of Realism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, is the first of this century to not only look at the state of Realism painting around the world, but to also compare those artworks with their historic predecessors.

Fifty-six artists are represented with sixty-five paintings from the United States, Canada, The Netherlands, Korea, Russia, France, Iceland, Romania, Norway and Finland in this juried show organized by the International Guild of Realism.

The exhibition looks at such media as oil, acrylic, egg tempera, graphite and colored pencil to give viewers a snapshot of how Realism artists are approaching their art form today.

Each artist was asked to identify one historical painting that can be used by museum visitors to compare and contrast today's work with the pioneers of this art technique. The artists cited such predecessors as Ingres, Da Vinci, Durer, Vermeer, Harnett, Constable, Memling and Dali as starting points for their current work as they explored still life, landscape, figurative and even trompe l'oeil art forms. In some cases, the contrast between the old and the new is startling; in other cases, one can almost see the apprentice soaking up the Old Master's techniques for modern visual impact.



**DAVID CAMP**  
*Contemplation*  
2006, Oil on Canvas

Comparative label image:  
DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI, 1828 – 1882, *Alexa Wilding*

### The International Guild of Realism

It's one thing to join a neighborhood painting club for the occasional group session, but when your organization's artists hail from twenty-six countries, it takes more than a passport to get everyone involved.

The International Guild of Realism is the first global organization to specialize in juried Realism gallery shows, museum exhibitions and workshops. With about two hundred current members, a typical exhibition will represent a snapshot of what's happening in the Realism genre in Iceland, Korea or France.

The International Guild of Realism was founded by eight museum-experienced charter members in 2002 with a mission to advance Realism as an art form. In this case, "Realism" ranges from classical realism (based upon the traditional, academic-style painting techniques) to contemporary realism (where cutting edge techniques and subject matter are used to comment on today's world). Trompe l'oeil, photorealism, surrealism, and super-realism are some of the genres included within the range of

Realism choices for modern artists, as well. The Guild has four goals: To recognize the best Realists working today, to create exhibition opportunities, to provide technical and promotional support, and to offer a bridge between art lovers and the highest-quality Realist art around the world.

By showcasing a panorama of international work in this field in one exhibition, the museum curators and art collectors can have a wider view of the art form and its evolution in styles.

While all the Guild members are Realists, the art forms are as varied as their nationalities. Still life, portraiture, landscapes and narrative works are equally represented in most of the Guild's shows in order to provide a better cross-section of the latest developments.

*More information about the International Guild of Realism can be found on the Internet at [www.RealismGuild.com](http://www.RealismGuild.com).*



International Guild of Realism  
4400 North Scottsdale Road, #9539  
Scottsdale, Arizona 85262  
[www.RealismGuild.com](http://www.RealismGuild.com)



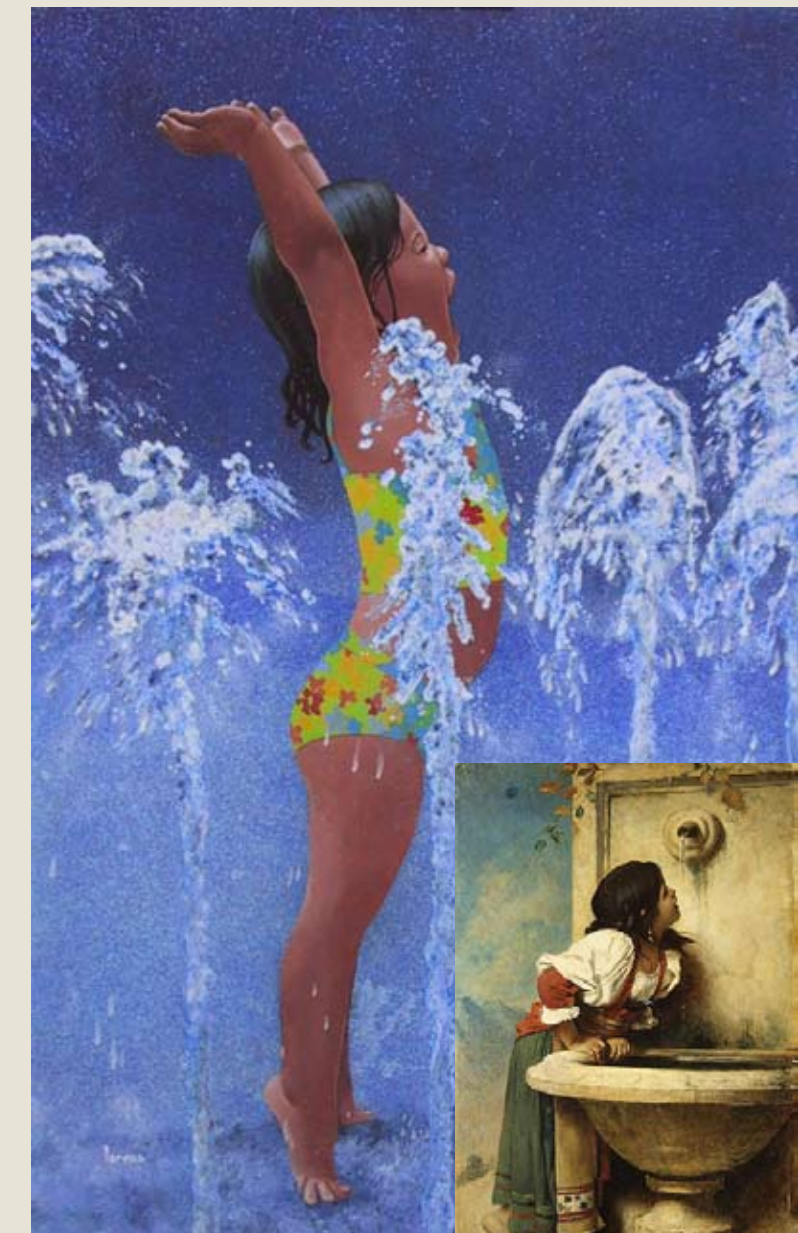
1622 Westport Road, Kansas City, Missouri 64111  
800-222-7522  
[www.smithkramer.com](http://www.smithkramer.com)

Cover Images:  
**LORENA KLOOSTERBOER**  
*Happiness (Gianna)*  
2006, Acrylic on Masonite

Comparative label image:  
LÉON BONNAT, 1875, *Roman Girl at a Fountain*

# The New Reality: The Frontier of Realism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

International Guild of Realism





**VÉRONIQUE MOLINIER**  
*Japanese Doll*  
2006, Oil on Canvas



Comparative label image:  
VINCENT VAN GOGH, 1887, *The Courtesan*

The second challenge is to present something new in an art form that has been around for centuries. This requires a creative viewpoint and a touch of irony, juxtapositioning or cinematic composition to avoid being labeled as derivative or clichéd.

What is “Realism”? It’s an artist’s term for a style of representational painting that attempts to capture a person, landscape or object so precisely that it can be independently identified.

Painting didn’t always include the Realism techniques and devices that artists use today. For example, it wasn’t until the 13<sup>th</sup> Century that realistic shadows were incorporated into artworks. It took about another two hundred years for geometric perspective to be fully understood.

The genre also had to wait for the invention of oil paint and watercolors in order to create certain effects. For instance, Jan van Eyck (1395 – 1441) of present day Belgium helped pioneer the use of oil paint as a glazing medium to create rich jewel tones and realistic modeling of his painted figures.

The Italian innovator Michelangelo Caravaggio (1573 – 1610) gave the Realism genre a boost when he introduced dramatic lighting effects and real people’s faces into his Biblical scenes. Today, his paintings look like a scene from a *film noir* movie.

The advent of photography in the mid-1800s was both a threat and a boon for Realists. It was a threat because artists feared that photography’s ability to perfectly capture a scene would put them out of business. But by using photography’s techniques in their artwork, the Realists actually achieved new heights of three-dimensionality, compositional ingenuity, and breakthroughs in freezing movement that hadn’t been possible before.



**CAMILLE ENGEL**  
*Sunflower at the Old Factory*  
2006, Oil on Canvas

Comparative label image:  
VINCENT VAN GOGH, 1888, *Sunflowers*

Today an artist has a full tool kit of techniques to call upon to achieve these super-realistic results.

For example, by switching from bristle brushes to sable brushes, the artist can minimize the appearance of visible brush strokes on the painting surface.

Modern electric lighting frees today’s artists from the restrictions of the traditional “north light” that the Old Masters had to rely on for consistent illumination.

And new art materials, from oil mediums to colored pencils, allow the contemporary artist to recreate visual effects that would not have been possible three hundred years ago.



**LARRY CHARLES**  
*Beige is Stress Management*  
2006, Oil on Panel

The real difference between 21<sup>st</sup> Century Realism artists and the historical predecessors is in the creative approach. Viewers today are so used to seeing close-cropped photos and the special effects in movies that the artist can add them to his or her tool kit without jeopardizing the need for familiarity and recognizable scenes that Realism demands. The more creative the approach, the less the resulting painting will be seen as derivative or old-fashioned.

The most obvious advancement in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Realism has been the use of modern technology as a subject matter. A cell phone’s video screen would never have been seen in artwork of the last few centuries, for instance.



Comparative label image:  
SIR EDWIN LANDSEER, 1841, *Eos*

To many viewers, the subject matter in a Realism painting is the center of focus when the artist hides his brush strokes and painting techniques. If done correctly, the viewer should not be aware of the painter’s methods at all.