# Naturalism, Idealism, and Realism

Throughout the history of art, a significant amount of different aesthetic styles has dominated particular periods of time. While naturalism, idealism, and realism have all been affiliated with specific artistic periods, these art styles additionally can be recognized as occurring in some form in nearly all non-abstract form or artistic reproduction. Through implementing these styles, artists have been able to provide powerful artistic messages about the people and environments that they capture through their work, as well as have this work function as a historical artifact. The present essay examines a work of art that implements naturalism, a work that implement realism, and a work that implements idealism.

Naturalism is an artistic style that attempts to produce nature to varying degrees of exactitude. Among the prominent examples of naturalism from the Roman period is the Statue of Augustus from Prima Porta, c. 20 BCE. This statue was made from marble and was constructed to celebrate the Roman victory over the Parthinians in 20 B.C. ("Augustus Of Prima Porta"). Although the statue contains a cupid riding a dolphin on his side, which clearly is a natural element, the statue itself is a stellar example of the naturalist form. In this respect, the Emperor Augustus is not featured in a way that would make him appear to be someone that his is not, as the physical form of the statue is extremely similar to how one would imagine Augustus being in stature in a real world context. Further, the facial features that are created in the statue operate in a way that exhibit what could conceivably Augustus’s natural reactions to the event that was taking place, and they also attempt to accurately portray his facial features rather than exhibit them in an idealized way. Specifically, the statue implements the contrapposto form, in which the weight of the shoulders and arms is set to balance against the weight of the lower body. While such form would seem to operate as a means of disrupting Augustus’s natural body frame, clearly examining the statue demonstrates that it does not, and that rather this approach is effective in displaying how he might naturally move in a real world ceremonial context.

Realism is highly similar in nature to naturalism, except it is more exacting in its approach to depicting reality. A characteristic example of realism can be seen in the Portrait bust of the emperor Marcus Aurelius, c. 170 CE. This bust was constructed in Greece, although the archetype was made in Rome (Marcus Aurelius, 2017). The dichotomy in its design and creation may have somewhat contributed to its more realist style, as one recognizes that Greek works implement a soberer style than the grandeur that one might find in Roman works, such as the naturalist account of the Statue of Augustus from Prima Porta. The bust of Marcus Aurelius particularly falls under a realist style because of these sober and somber qualities. That is, rather than depicting Aurelius in a specific type of form, he is instead depicted in a state that would not be particularly exciting to a passive observer if it were not for the notoriety of the person being depicted. Such a somber style attests to the realist style because it is in this approach that the artist is most closely working towards depicting the art work in its most natural form. Among particular examples of the way this bust exhibits a somber style is witnessed through a drill that was used to render Aurelius’s hair in a way that did not depict it to be particularly exiting of with flair (Marcus Aurelius, 2017). Such a style is similar to the Greek approach to statue construction rather than to the Roman approach. Other specific design elements of this piece that are important to consider include the emperor’s lowered face and meditative expression. Such factors attest to this statue functioning as something that more concerned with preserving the realistic, day-to-day features of how Marcus Aurelius would have lived rather than depicting him in a realistic, but out of the ordinary context that would not be in-line with pure naturalist intentions.

Finally, idealism constitutes a form of art in which the artist attempts to articulate an idealized form of reality. Among the prominent examples of idealism in literature exists in relation to the Winged ibex of gold and silver from the 6th and 5th centuries BCE. Such a work of art constitutes an idealized form of art because it combines one clearly recognizes the way it eschews traditional forms of naturalist expression through its golden wings. Although the basic form of the ibex can be argued to exhibit naturalism, its various features clearly bring it beyond anything that would have a direct correlation to the real world, and instead firmly situate it within in an idealized order. Other idealized components of this huge horns that one would not normally find in a natural setting. In addition to its fantastical structure, the statue resides on a figure that is associated with the cult of Dionysus, as well as wine-drinking (Vessel handle in the form of a winged ibex, 2017). Although it’s somewhat difficult to fully understand what the idealized intentions of this art work constitute, one recognizes that it functions as an aggrandized object that functions to recognize the occurrence of such ceremonial occasions. Additionally, this object adopts religious elements that further heightens its status as an item of idealization. In this respect, the object’s hind legs reside on a bearded old man with long ears, which is said to represent the god Bes and Greek Silenus (Vessel handle in the form of a winged ibex, 2017). Such features may operate to bring into focus the Persians intentions to raise awareness of these religious entities and the nature of their mythological heritage through their fantastical presentiment in this form. Ultimately, this statue constitutes a highly idealized form of art from the Persian culture.

In conclusion, this research has examined naturalism, realism, and idealism in individual art works. Within this spectrum of investigation, the research has attested to these different art forms taking shape within early Roman and Persian sculpture and statues. While naturalism and realism are similar, realism seeks to capture reality in greater exactitude, and idealism operates to present idealized accounts of existence. Even as all of these artistic styles implement different styles, they all seek to provide insights into the nature of reality through such approaches. As such, through examining this styles individually, it’s possible to gain a greater understanding of the historical, political, and religious elements that were taking place during this time period.

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