

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/becoming-modern/avant-garde-france/realism/v/millet-gleaners-1857>  
<http://artmarinagallery.blogspot.com/2013/03/millet-gleaners-1875-analysis.html#!/2013/03/millet-gleaners-1875-analysis.html>

Artist: Millet

Title: The Gleaners

Date: 1857

Location: France

The Gleaners is an example of Realism. It features three peasant women prominently in the foreground, stooping to glean the last scraps of a wheat harvest. Their gaze does not meet the viewer, and their faces are obscured. In the background, bountiful amounts of wheat are being stacked while a landlord overseer stands watch on the right. Millet has chosen to center the women and paint them with a greater contrast. The earthy figures blend into the color of the piece, ingraining them well into the scene. Millet conveys the message that while the lowest-class women occupy the same canvas as the abundance depicted in the background, they will never be a part of that actual physical abundance—they occupy their own space layered on top of another space, in both the painting and in real life. This is a commentary on the lower classes' inaccessibility to upward mobility. Millet first unveiled The Gleaners at the Salon in 1857. It immediately drew negative criticism from the middle and upper classes, who viewed the topic with suspicion: one art critic, speaking for other Parisians, perceived in it an alarming intimation of "the scaffolds of 1793." Having recently come out of the French Revolution of 1848, these prosperous classes saw the painting as glorifying the lower-class worker. To them, it was a reminder that French society was built upon the labor of the working masses, and landowners linked this working class with the growing movement of Socialism.

