

WHAT IS PHOTOREALISM

Let's define Photorealism

The Photorealism movement began as way to accurately render real life more precisely than previously attempted. Gone is the abstract expressionism of movements past but that doesn't mean there is no message behind the work. For more, check out our [index of art styles](#) covering more specific and noteworthy movements. Now, let's jump into the definition.

PHOTOREALISM DEFINITION

What is photorealism?

Photorealism is a style of art that attempts to achieve the same level of detail and realism as a photograph. Photorealistic paintings and drawings are often mistaken for photographs upon first glance. The labels “hyperrealism,” “new realism,” “verism,” “sharp-focus realism,” and “superrealism” are all used to describe photorealistic art.

As a movement, Photorealism began in the late '60s and reached its height in the '70s within the United States. The term was first coined for artists who projected actual photographs onto canvases in order to accurately match all of the little details. Photorealist works of art often center around banal or mundane places or objects. Airbrushing was often used by the first Photorealism artists, though other methods are also used.

Photorealism sometimes faces criticism by those who balk at its categorization as art and view it as nothing more than “mindless copying.”

Photorealism Characteristics:

Some debate that photorealism is art

Uses real photographs as a basis

Strives for utmost realism and detail

WHO STARTED PHOTOREALISM

History of the Photorealist Movement

At one point, abstract expressionism reigned as the predominant art style in the United States. The photorealism movement began as the direct antithesis of the high-profile abstract expressionist movement that for a number of years had ruled the art scene in the U.S.

A group of artists emerged in the tail end of the 1960s who struck back against the abstract expressionist movement by pivoting to the opposite end of the realism spectrum. The photorealist artists were a relatively small group in the beginning, but the style reached its peak popularity in the 1970s.

Photorealists challenged the long-held notion that the use of [photography in artwork](#) was “cheating” and they insisted that there was no inherent social commentary, [satire](#), or [deeper meaning](#) to their artwork beyond the simple matter of [aesthetics](#) and artistic skill.

PHOTOREALISM EXAMPLES

Photorealism in Video Games

Outside of traditional artwork, the term “photorealism” is most often used in the video game industry. With video game graphics, the goal is often to get as close to photorealistic as possible.

The video below shows a state-of-the-art technology offering a possible huge leap forward in terms of the level of photorealism possible in video games.

As industry technology continues to improve, video game graphics inch closer and closer to appearing photoreal.