



AUGUST 5, 2020

This is an image of a painting by Gustave Courbet (1819 France-1877 Switzerland), a still life of apples, although to me they look more like tomatoes, but they are apples. He painted many paintings in this period, 1871-1873 or so from his prison cell,

so they were painted from memory, and the canvas would be small.

Courbet was a realist, and in his early life he became famous for his self-portraits because he was an astonishingly handsome man, and he knew it. He came from a modestly wealthy family and became famous because his wealth allowed him to use huge canvases which could hold compositions of large numbers of people.

One of his most famous large paintings is "Burial at Ornans" in which he assembled many of the actual citizens of his birth town, Ornans, at the gravesite of a fellow citizen. The assembled crowd was almost life size. It is an awesome painting that puts the grave right down in your lap, and you cannot help but be drawn into the ceremony of sadness.

He got involved in French politics on the losing side of the story, told in the musical Les Miserable. He was held responsible for the destruction of a column Napoleon I had erected in the Place Vendome and was imprisoned and ordered to pay for it to be reassembled. He could not, and when he got out of prison, he exiled himself to Switzerland where he died.

My point is that even in the worst of times we can still "do" beauty, we can still create something that just is and is not, necessarily useful.

I like to arrange lemons and tomatoes. I place them in bowls, on plates, on my countertop, in the living room, my bathroom and bedroom, all over the place just to make things a little bit more interesting, colorful, and fun.

Courbet painted lots of apples in his prison, and in the sadness of exile. Google "Courbet apples images" and enjoy, or get some tomatoes and some garlic and basil and rip them all into pieces, pour some olive oil over that mix, squeeze a lemon half and a pinch of salt, do not refrigerate.

If you have some dry bread, throw that in with just about any other fresh vegetables, and you have Panzanella, or cook some spaghetti, add some cheese and toss the tomato mixture in and you have lunch or dinner.