

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910809577603321
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Titolo	Gustave Courbet / / George Riat
Pubbl/distr/stampa	New York, : Parkstone International, 2012
ISBN	1-283-95820-1 1-78042-990-8
Edizione	[1st ed.]
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (255 pages) : illustrations
Collana	Temporis
Disciplina	759.4
Soggetti	Painters - France
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Description based upon print version of record.
Nota di contenuto	Contents; Introduction: Childhood and Youth in Ornans and Besancon; I. The Beginnings; Paris and the First Salons; The First Exhibitions in Paris; The First Successes of Realism; Courbet's First Successes; Courbet as a Socialist Painter; The two others works went more or less unnoticed.; II. Glory; Courbet: the Centre of Controversy; The Controversy surrounding Realism; III. Decline; The Beginning of the End; The Case of The Woman with the Parrot; Courbet under the Commune; The Fall; The Arrest; Conclusion: Death of a Master; Chronology; List of Illustrations
Sommario/riassunto	Child of materialism and positivism, Courbet was without a doubt one of the most complex painters of the nineteenth century. Symbolising the rejection of traditions, Courbet did not hesitate to confront the public with the truth by liberating painting of conventional rules. He became from then on the leader of pictorial realism. This text on Courbet is the result of years of intensive research and traces with great care contradictory testimonies, the praises as well as the negative critics this controversial painter had during his times. By his precision as an art historian, Georges Riat sheds