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| Artist | Gervex |
| Title | Rolla |
| Date | 1878 |
| Medium | Oil on canvas |
| Scale | 175 x 220 cm |
| Scope | Female nude |
| Style | Academic |
| Patron | N/A |
| Location | France |
| Function |  |

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| Formal features | |
| Composition | She fills the centre of the composition. In the foreground there is a pile of their clothes. This was very controversial as it showed that she was a real woman and not a model. |
| Colour or texture | White is the key colour in this image. This reinforces the purity of Marie who is only age fifteen. A garment in the pile of their clothes is red, this is to draw the viewers attention to it. Natural skin tone is used on both figures, this is typical of the academic style. |
| Light & tone | There is shadow across Rolla’s face to show that his mind is clouded with dark thoughts and feelings. The light falling on the bed puts the focus on Marie and that’s what the viewers eye is drawn to. |
| Space & depth or relief | In the background there is the Paris skyline, by the window it seems very dark and crampt, surrounding Rolla suggesting that his character is bothered by dark thoughts. But by the bed there seems to be more space where Marie is spread out. |
| Line or brushwork | The brushwork is soft and blended, it is naturalistic and realistic. The line of the bed splits the composition in two from the foreground where Marie is lying and the background where Rolla is standing by the window. |

Influence from technological factors:

The lamp on the right-hand side of the composition. This is still burning showing that they’ve been up all night, this would have been gas as the lightbulb wouldn’t be invented until the next year.

Influence from cultural/social factors:

This painting is based on the poem called ‘Rolla’ by Alfred Musset. This poem follows Jaques Rolla who has wasted his fortune on partying. He brings a prostitute back home to his Parisian flat. The morning after (which is what we see in the painting) he realises the extent of his bankruptcy and how he cannot care for this young woman (she thinks he is the love of her life). She then wakes up and ties to dissuade him from killing himself by saying that she’d sell her necklace to settle his debts (seen on the bed side table) but it’s too late as he drinks poison and dies in her arms. The apartment is full of Roccoco revival furniture, this was popular with the bourgeoise at the time.

Image: 

Influence from political factors:

The young woman is a prostitute and is only fifteen years old. This is making a point that prostitution was so common in Paris at the time. There are a pile of clothes in the bottom right hand corner. This got the work banned from the first ever Paris Salon as it was too controversial as it showed that Marie was not a model or an imagined woman, but an actual woman.

Critical text quote: “While it might be expected that it was the beautiful nude figure of Marie which scandalised superintendent Turquet, in fact Marie herself would have looked at home among all the other academic depictions of the female form at the Salon. She is after all a direct quote of Cabanel’s Birth of Venus”

-Richard Lowkes (Sotheby’s)

Use or development of materials, techniques & processes:

All the brushstrokes are blended and oil on canvas was very common at the time. In this way this work is not unusual as it adheres to all of the academic conventions in the way it was painted.

Stylistic comment and artistic influence:

Marie’s pose is taken from Cabanel’s birth of venus. This may be because Gervex worked under Cabanel it may be that he influenced it.