Artists can find many subjects to paint and sculpt. A subject that is interesting to many artists is dance; dance has movements that artists can find quite intriguing. Many genres of dance can be depicted into all different types of art. Belly dancing is a dance of freedom and movement that comes from the Middle East and exotic countries such as Morocco and Egypt. A painter who has expressed the art of belly dancing so well is the French painter Jean-Leon Gerome (1824-1904) and is known as an orientalist. He has two works of art whose subject is belly dancing called "Dance of the Almeh", and "Almeh Performing the Sword Dance" (or, Sword Dancer). Both paintings express the same beautiful dance and its movements.

"Dance of the Almeh" by Gerome is located in the Daytona Art Institute. The painting was created in 1863 with oil on a wood panel. It is approximately 19 ¾ x 32 inches and it is open composition. (The Daytona Art Institute) The painting is set in Smyrna, Turkey in a building perhaps made of clay. There are about nine men sitting who have turbans. On the left side, the turbans and clothing are colorful, but on the right, their clothing has light colors such as white and creams. All the men are clapping and playing music for a beautiful belly dancer who is dancing front and center on a light brown and cream rug. She has on white harem pants with a light gold belt, and a light gold vest with mesh sleeves; the vest does not cover her chest and therefore her breast are bare for all the men to see. The dancer is the focal point, not only because she is in the front, but also because of the colors she has on, it stands out even with all the color in the room. She is captured dancing in place, swaying her hips, arms slightly raised in
the air, and head looking down to the direction that she will dance towards. The people around her laughing and playing music, her clothing, and her movements depict that she is in fact a belly dancer.

Another painting that Gerome also created is called "Almeh Performing the Sword Dance" located in the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at the Cornell University. The painting accession is 73.009. This painting was created in the 19th century with oil on a canvas and is 22 ¾ x 31 in. (Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art) This painting is very much alike as the "Dance of the Almeh". The moment captured in this painting is a group of people in a café that also looks like it is made out of clay. There are men with turbans playing music and there is a man entering from a door in the background, the viewer can barely make out his face, there is great depth in the painting when it comes to the man and the inside of the building that the subject is placed in. Right in the middle of the café, is a belly dancer dancing on top of a colorful mosaic style rug; she is the focal point. She is wearing beautiful dark but bold colors. Her skirt is a dark blue with trimmings of sparkly gold; she is wearing a coral top with only her stomach showing and a turquoise scarf around her head. Not only does her clothing set her apart from everyone, her jewelry and props set her apart. On her neck, she is wearing a gold coin necklace, the coins are typical for belly dancers to wear as a hip scarf or as jewelry, and she is dancing with swords, another typical thing for belly dancers. She is balancing a sword on her head and spinning another in her hand as she is dancing on her tippy toes. Light also causes this dancer to be the focal point. As she is dancing, some light from outside is slightly casted on top of her causing her necklace to shine more.

Gerome has created two beautiful paintings with the same subject, and that is belly dancers. He has expressed the dancer's movements and energy with the lines used in the dancers
arm as they dance. He has placed the dancers perfectly in the center and has made them the focal points with not only color but with light. Gerome has done a great job depicting the culture of the Middle East and other exotic countries with the dancers and the people in both paintings.
Works Cited
