



Jean-Eugène Buland

1852-1926

The Reading

Oil on canvas signed and dated 1901 lower right

Dimensions : 85 x 100 cm

Dimensions : 33.46 x 39.37 inch



Dimensions with frame : 106 x 122 cm  
Dimensions with frame : 41.73 x 48.03 inch

Firmly rooted in the Marne valley, it was in the area around Charly-sur-Marne, where he settled in 1886, that Buland found the models for his paintings, mainly among the peasants and workers he frequented.

As in the 1899 painting entitled "Procession", in which the interior of the church in Charly-sur-Marne is clearly recognizable (now in the Villa Médicis museum in Saint Maur des Fossés), and in "Offrande à la Vierge" (Offering to the Virgin) from 1879 (now in the Musée Malraux in Le Havre), the woman wears the headdress of her region. She has stopped her embroidery to listen to her daughter read to her.

Following the classical tradition, Eugène Buland plays on multiple contrasts to capture our attention: youth and maturity, pink dress and mourning dress, manual labor and intellectual work. The succession of horizontal and vertical planes lends an important dynamic to this representation, which also has a certain immobility that we find in his portraits from this period, often bringing them closer to photography.

But here, the woman and her daughter do not appear to be posing, as is sometimes the case in some of the

painter's paintings. Instead, they are captured on the spot, as if we were entering the intimacy of their home and becoming spectators of the moment.

In the background, we can make out a few glassware objects, arranged on the edge of the fireplace, including a footed vase also present in the 1898 painting "Une bonne trouvaille" (A Good Find), now in the Musée Unterlinden in Colmar.

Our painting is part of the evolution of Buland's painting at the dawn of the 20th century. The painter gradually abandoned the totally frontal vision found in "Le repas du jardinier" (The Gardener's Meal), moving towards a representation that was still extremely realistic, but softer, as in the portrait of his son Jean-Paul in 1902, also captured in a moment of reading.

## Biography

Son of an engraver, Jean-Eugène Buland started at the Fine Arts school of Paris in the studio of Alexandre Cabanel. He first met success with the representation of antique scenes. He gained the second Great Prize of Rome in 1878 and once again in 1879, allowing him to stay at the Villa Medici for five years. Back to France, Buland was confronted with Jules Bastien-Lepage's success and his realistic themes. Without delay, he gave up with symbolists and antique scenes to turn to the representation of everyday life. He joined the movement of naturalist painting with Bastien-Lepage. He frequently used photography to paint his models with the most precision.

From 1886, Buland left Paris to settle in Charly-sur-Marne, a little village in the French department of Aisne, near Château-Thierry. He took his inspiration from everyday life, that he painted with the greatest meticulousness. Jean-Eugène Buland obtained many public orders for great institutions, like the Luxembourg Museum in Paris and many museums in provinces. He made several paintings for the salon des Sciences in the Paris' City Hall and also decorated the ceiling of the City Hall of Château-Thierry.

He gained many rewards including a third class medal at the Universal Exhibition in Barcelona in 1888. In the 1889s Universal Exhibition in Paris, he was awarded a second class medal and was also awarded during the International Exhibition in London in 1890. Finally, he received the Legion of honor in 1894.

Eugène Buland was a meticulous painter who never forgot any details regarding the appearance and the costumes of his persons. Through the conscientious and careful light's treatment on his models and on the area, the artist reproduced perfectly well the impression of resemblance.

By representations as objective as possible, Buland tried to give us an account of the everyday life around him. This same momentum has been found in many naturalist artists of his generation. Nevertheless, his scenes were always deprived of judgement. Buland adopted the attitude of an ethnographer who showed his observations to the public. His paintings are like an everyday life chronicle, combining portraits and scenes of genre.

The Fine Arts Museum of Carcassonne, in which Buland's painting named "Innocent wedding" is now kept, dedicated him an important exhibition from October 2007 to January 2008 and published a catalog of his works for the occasion.

## Museums

Musée des Beaux-Arts, Bordeaux

Musée des Beaux-Arts, Caen

Musée des Beaux-Arts, Carcassonne

Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Musée des Beaux-Arts, Quimper

Stockholm, National museum

## Bibliography

Cathy Pays, "Eugène Buland 1852-1926 : Aux limites du réalisme", Éditions Panama Musées, octobre 2007

Noël Coret, "Autour de l'Impressionnisme : les peintres de la Vallée de la Marne", Ed. Casterman, 1996, réédité par La Renaissance du Livre