

CAMILLE CLAUDEL (1864 - 1943)

The Implorer

Bronze proof, with dark brown patina, #4
Sand cast, between 1904 and 1907
Eugène Blot stamp: EUG. BLOT. / 5 / BD DE LA MADELEINE
Signed and numbered: C. Claudel / 4
H. 28.7, W. 27.1, D. 16.8 cm

Acquired by the Nasjonalmuseet in Oslo

Provenance:

- Paris, private collection
- By descent (on two generations)
- 2024, Galerie Malaquais

Selective bibliography

- 1904 BERTHET : Émile Berthet, « Étrennes parisiennes. Eug. Blot 5 boulevard de la Madeleine », in *Le Gaulois*, 24 décembre 1904, p. 2.
- 1905 CATALOGUE EXPOSITION GALERIE PARIS : Louis Vauxcelles, *Exposition d'œuvres de Camille Claudel et de Bernard Hoetger*, catalogue d'exposition [Paris, Galerie Eugène Blot, 4 – 16 décembre 1905], Paris, Imp. A. Lainé, 1905.
- 1907 KAHN : Gustave Kahn, « Au jour le jour. Une nouvelle galerie d'art », in *Le Siècle*, n°26043, 16 avril 1907, p. 1.

- 1907 VAUXCELLES 1 : Louis Vauxcelles, « La Vie Artistique. Une nouvelle Galerie d'art », in *Gil Blas*, n°10043, 19 avril 1907, NP (p. 2).
- 2001 RIVIÈRE-GAUDICHON : Anne Rivière, Bruno Gaudichon, « Catalogue raisonné », in *Camille Claudel. Catalogue raisonné*, 3e éd., Paris, Adam Biro, 2001.
- 2001 BAUDRY : Marie-Thérèse Baudry, en collaboration avec Dominique Bozo, *Sculpture méthode et vocabulaire*, 4e ed., Paris, Éditions du patrimoine, 2000.
- 2001 RIVIÈRE-GAUDICHON : Anne Rivière, Bruno Gaudichon, « Catalogue raisonné », in *Camille Claudel. Catalogue raisonné*, 3e éd., Paris, Adam Biro, 2001.
- 2005 CHEVILLOT : Catherine Chevillot, « « Prenez la main que je vous tends » Eugène Blot, du milieu des fabricants de bronze à celui des galeries », in commissariat d'Yves Lacasse, Antoinette Le Normand-Romain, *Camille Claudel et Rodin. La Rencontre de deux destins*, catalogue d'exposition [Québec, musée national des beaux-arts, 26 mai – 11 septembre 2005, Detroit, Detroit Institute of Arts, 2 octobre 2005 – 5 février 2006, Martigny, Fondation Pierre Gianadda, 3 mars – 15 juin 2006], Paris, Hazan, 2005, p. 261-273.
- 2008 CORRESPONDANCE MAISON BARBEDIENNE : Florence Rionnet, *La maison Barbedienne Correspondance d'artistes*, Paris, Éditions du CTHS, 2008.
- 2014 RIVIÈRE : Anne Rivière, « Une frémissante amertume », in commissariat de Bruno Gaudichon, Anne Rivière, *Camille Claudel. Au miroir d'un art nouveau*, catalogue d'exposition [Roubaix, La Piscine - musée d'art et d'industrie André-Diligent, 8 novembre 2014 - 8 février 2015], Paris, Gallimard-Roubaix, La Piscine, 2014, p. 141-143.
- 2016 RIONNET : Florence RIONNET, *Les bronzes Barbedienne L'œuvre d'une dynastie de fondeurs (1834-1954)*, Paris, Arthena, 2016.
- 2020 TURBAT : Eve Turbat, *Camille Claudel Persée et la Gorgone 1898-1905*, Paris, galerie Malaquais, 2020.
- 2022 CATALOGUE EXPOSITION FONDATION PARIS : commissariat d'Anne Baldassari, *La collection Morozov., Icônes de l'art moderne*, catalogue d'exposition [Paris, Fondation Louis Vuitton, 22 septembre 2021 – 22 février 2022], Paris, Gallimard-Fondation Louis Vuitton, 2021.
- 2023 CATALOGUE EXPOSITION MUSÉE CHICAGO-LOS ANGELES : Emerson Bowyer, Anne-Lise Desmas (sous la direction de), *Camille Claudel*, catalogue d'exposition [Chicago, Art Institute, 7 octobre 2023 – 19 février 2024, Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, 2 avril – 21 juillet 2024], Los Angeles-Chicago, J. Paul Getty Museum-The Art Institute of Chicago, 2023.

Camille Claudel's emblematic work *The Implorer* exists in several versions. From 1904 on, it was made available in three s by the art dealer and editioner of sculptures, Eugène Blot (1857-1938). The smallest , which is the one that we're presenting here, was editioned in around sixty proofs, and the current locations of all of them are not known. Originally, *The Implorer* was part of the group *Maturity**[1]**, which Claudel had been working on since 1890.

***Maturity,* "Camille Claudel's most clearly autobiographical work"**[2]
This group, which was commissioned from the artist by the administration of the Beaux-Arts and shown as a plaster in the 1899 Salon, was composed of three figures arranged from right to left: a young woman on her knees (*The Implorer*), a man walking, and an old woman. These figures were readily identified by contemporaries as representations of, first, Camille Claudel herself as the beautiful, imploring woman, then Rodin as the mature man, and then Rose Beuret,[3]Rodin's faithful companion for more than thirty years, as the old woman. It was a work that drew its inspiration from the life of the sculptress, and, more precisely, from her decision to separate from Rodin.
In a 1951 text,[4] Paul Claudel confirmed the autobiographical interpretation of the group: "(…) that young woman, she's my sister! My sister Camille. Imploring, humiliated, on her knees, and naked! […] It's all over! That's the vision of herself that she left for us, forever! And do you know what it is that, before your very eyes, she's tearing out of herself? It's her soul! It's everything all at once – the genius, the reason, the beauty, the life, the very name." The rhythm of his prose captures, in a particularly moving way, the intensity of the group that his sister created. The highly personal nature of *Maturity's* subject matter was not well received by the State,[5] which did not follow through on the commission for a bronze version. The organizers of the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1900 were apparently also put off by the work, as they refused to include it.

The different versions of *The Implorer* and its edition in bronze by Eugène Blot
As she developed the *Maturity* group, Camille Claudel came up with various versions in plaster of the figure of *The Implorer*. There is still much that remains unknown about these variants and their chronology, as Anne Rivière and Bruno Gaudichon have shown with insight and discretion in their catalogue raisonné of the artist's works.[6] In reading the detailed study, it's interesting to note that the first casting of *The Implorer*, not connected to the *Maturity* group,[7] was done on a commission for a collector, Captain Louis Tissier, in 1899. That work, cast by Gruet, is currently held in a private collection.
After that first casting was done, Camille Claudel met Eugène Blot, an art dealer with a gallery in the Madeleine district. They immediately shared a sense of camaraderie and collaboration: "Taken by Gustave Geffroy to Claudel's

studio, Eugène Blot acquired on his first visit, the rights to reproduce *Fortune* and the kneeling figure from the *Maturity* group »[8]. Documents in the Barbedienne archives show that Eugène Blot editioned this imploring woman, then commonly named *Imploration*, in three s, giving them three numbers (No. 1 ; No 1 bis ; No. 2)[9]:

- “For the original , labeled No1, I limited the edition to 10 proofs”, Eugène Blot explained in a letter from 1936[10], contrary to what the 1905 galerie Blot catalogue indicates[11]. The original was 62cm high. Eugène Blot only sold 5 and proof #5 is held at the Camille Claudel Museum in Nogent-sur-Seine (2012.1.15).
- The intermediary , 33cm high was done in a edition limited to twenty proofs. Eugène Blot gave it No. 1 bis. He remembers its elaboration: “Since buying the entire group[12] and not being able to keep it in its original (it would have surpassed the tallest chimneys), I found myself the owner of an intermediary of the Imploration which I called No 1 bis et limited to 20 proofs”[13]. The only example of this known today is the bronze in the Ivan Morozov Collection, which is numbered 1 and is currently held at the Pushkin Museum in Moscow[14].
- Finally, for the small , 28.5cm high, labled No.2, Eugène Blot foresaw “a limited edition of a 100 proofs”[15]. If the edition was limited to a 100 proofs, the Barbedienne archives indicate it stopped at 59 proofs[16]. Among those, few are held in public collections: in France, they are found at the Albert André Museum in Bagnols-sur-Cèze (proof #32, inv. AA DGB 61), at the Rodin Museum in Paris (proof #14, S.01377) and at the Camille Claudel Museum in Nogent-sur-Seine (proof n°12, inv. 2010.1.14 ; proof #16, inv. 2007.3) ; abroad, at the Metropolitan Museum in New-York (proof #52, inv. 1990.171), at the Burell Collection of the Glasgow Museums (proof #36, inv. 7.21), and at the Alte Nationalgalerie in Berlin (proof #3, inv. 001).

A new element allows us to date the start of the *Implorer*’s casting more precisely, and place it confidently at the end of 1904[17]. An article in the December 24th, 1904 issue of *Le Gaulois* suggests a number of Eugène Blot bronzes for a Parisian New Year's gift, noting that some have limited editions, such as “L'*Imploration*, by Camille Claudel, [which] has only 20 proofs; La *Fortune*, by the same artist, has 50 proofs”.[18]

Characteristics of our proof

Our proof distinguishes itself with four noteworthy elements: its number, foundry mark, edition quality and provenance.

- It possesses one of the first numbers, #4. The Rodin Museum and Camille Claudel Museum do not have proofs with such numbers, as theirs are

comprised between numbers 10 and 20. The #4 indicates an early edition, corroborated by its stamp. The Alte Nationalgalerie in Berlin has just acquired cast #3, the first known number in the edition to date.

- This oval mark is also worthy of attention. In addition to the editioner's name "EUG. BLOT", it mentions the adress of the gallery: "5 / B^{D} DE LA MADELEINE". According to recent research, the Eugène Blot gallery was located there from 1902 to 1907. The move happened in 1902, following the sale of part of Eugène Blot's painting collection in 1900. However, this ended in 1907. At that time, Eugène Blot chose to move his shop in the same district, at 11 rue Richepanse[19], in order to sell more paintings, which was not facilitated in the other location. Thus, this large oval stamp bearing the boulevard de la Madeleine adress was used between 1902 and the end of 1906 or the beginning of 1907. As the *Implorer* is editioned by Eugène Blot from 1904 on, the proof hereby studied can be dated between 1904 and 1907. Two other bronzes editioned by Blot presenting this mark are known to this day[20] : Camille Claudel's *Persea and Gorgona*, which entered the National Museum of Western Art in Tokyo (purchase, S.2021.0001); Bernhard Hoetger *Human Machine*, held at the Musée d'Orsay (Ms. Marcel Duchamp 1977 donation, Inv. DO 1983 75, AM 1977 582)[21].
- The proof presents a refined and delicate chasing[22], which highlights the sophistication of the kneeling woman's hairstyle. The precision of the chasing is enhanced by the majestic brown and black patina.
- Our proof comes from a private French collection in which it has been held for three generations. Unfortunately, family memory has not preserved the exact date of acquisition. Nevertheless, it seems the proof to have entered the family between 1920 and 1940, and since the grandfather, the work has been passed down through two generations. It has never been exhibited.

Stylistic analysis

Today, a stylistic analysis of this work would focus on the force of its modeling, though at the time of its creation, the critical response was centered on its stylistic ties to Rodin's work. Rodin's imploring figure[23] and the figure created by Camille Claudel for *Maturity* are equally strongly expressive, but it is not the same emotion at play. Rodin's figure has a seductive, almost domineering, energy, while Claudel's is the epitome of grief, seemingly caught in a final, desperate plea. On the other hand, the similarity of the posture of Claudel's *The Implorer* and that of the small wax figure by Rupert Carabin, *Femme agenouillée sur un bûcher* or *Prière* (*Woman Kneeling on a Pyre* or *Prayer*), which was shown at the Salon des Indépendants in 1888, has received less attention.[24]

The intense emotion that emanates from *The Implorer* is clearly rooted in the artist's extraordinary aptitude for modeling, which is particularly noticeable in

the animation of the gaze, which she achieved through the relief lines that create the contours of the eyes. This upward gaze is related to that of the *Petite Châtelaine* (*The Little Lady*) and of *L'Aurore* (*The Dawn*). And the face of *The Implorer*, heavy with questions, strongly echoes the face of one of the *Causeuses* (*The Gossips*).[25] Transfigured by the grief of the moment in which the beloved turns and walks away, the piece illustrates Camille Claudel's "hope betrayed," as her brother Paul Claudel put it.[26]
Though Eugène Blot did not complete the full edition of 100 of the smaller *The Implorer*, he did, according to documents in the National Archives, do 59 proofs, making it "the largest edition of any work by Camille Claudel."[27] The resulting broad diffusion, unusual for Claudel's work, is perhaps best explained by the exceptional nature of the piece, in which the artist attained one of the highest points of her art.

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[1] For more on *Maturity*, see 2014 RIVIÈRE, p.141-143.
[2] *Ibid,* p.141.
[3] Rose Beuret (1844-1917) was Rodin's companion from 1864 to February 1917, when, a few weeks before her death, they married. In 1866, she gave birth to their son Auguste Beuret (1866-1934), who was never recognized by his father.
[4]1951 CLAUDEL, p. 3-12.
[5] Though a final model, dated June 16, 1899, was done for this commission, the commission was withdrawn six days later, without explanation, by the director of the Beaux-Arts, Henry Roujon. See 2001 RIVIÈRE-GAUDICHON, p. 149.
[6] Entry for *The Implorer* in *Ibid*, p. 138-144.
[7] This cast was made even though the sculpture *Maturity* had not, itself, been cast at that time. It was first cast in 1902.
[8] See 2001 RIVIÈRE-GAUDICHON, p. 144. Beware, this *Implorer* is different from the one editioned for Captain Tissier, specifically in the way the arms are positioned.
[9] These papers, dated between 1936 and 1939 (excepting a letter from 1955), for those referring to Camille Claudel, document the handover of fabrication rights that Eugène Blot gave to the Barbedienne House for his models. Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, Fonds Barbedienne, 368 AP.
[10] Letter from Eugène Blot to Barbedienne, December 17, 1936, Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, Fonds Barbedienne, 368 AP 3, transcribed in 2008 CORRESPONDANCE MAISON BARBEDIENNE, p.62-68.
[11] The 1905 Galerie Eugène Blot catalogue states a « limited edition of 20 proofs”. See 1905, CATALOGUE GALERIE n°1.
[12] He is referring to the *Maturity* group.
[13] Letter from Eugène Blot to Barbedienne, December 17, 1936, Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, Fonds Barbedienne, 368 AP3, transcribed in 2008 CORRESPONDANCE MAISON BARBEDIENNE, p.62-68.

[14] See 2022 CATALOGUE EXPOSITION FONDATION PARIS, p. 491.
[15] See 1905 CATALOGUE EXPOSITION GALERIE PARIS, n°2.
[16] See 2016 RIONNET, cat. 531, p. 288.
[17] See Catherine Chevillot's research on the casting's chronology in 2005 CHEVILLOT, p. 261-273.
[18] See 1904 BERTHET, p. 2.
[19] "Tomorrow is the inauguration of the galerie Eugène Blot, at 11 rue Richepanse". This took place on April 17, 1907. See 1907 KAHN, p. 1.
[20] For the first thoughts on this foundry mark, see 2020 TURBAT, p. 21.
[21] The small Berlin *Implorante* #3 must be added, but note that it has only the upper part of the stamp.
[22] This action is also known as *le réparage* or refining. For a definition see 2000 BAUDRY, p. 633.
[23] Rodin, *Grande Main crispée avec figure implorante* (*Large Clenched Hand with Imploring Figure*), 1906?, sand cast (1969), 44.5 x 33 x 27 cm, Paris, Rodin Museum, Inv. n° S.0079.
[24] This comparison was suggested by Anne Rivière and Bruno Gaudichon, see 2001 RIVIÈRE-GAUDICHON, p. 144. The piece is reproduced on p. 40 of this publication.
[25] This face was reproduced on the cover of the exhibition catalogue *Camille Claudel. Au miroir d'un art nouveau*, Roubaix, La Piscine-André Diligent Museum of Art and Industry, November 8, 2014 to February 8, 2015. It is from a plaster that belongs to La Piscine-André Diligent Museum of Art and Industry in Roubaix (Inv. 2005.61.1).
[26] 1951 CLAUDEL, p. 3-12.
[27] 2001 RIVIÈRE-GAUDICHON, p. 144.