



**Joan of Arc**

1879, oil,  
100 x 110.  
Collection The  
Metropolitan  
Museum of  
Art, New York,  
New York.

## JOAN OF ARC

by Jules Bastien-Lepage

**The meticulous draftsmanship of Frenchman Jules Bastien-Lepage** (1848–1884) could bring a contemporary painter to tears, and the artist’s iconic work *Joan of Arc* certainly does not disappoint in this department. The ambitious 100"-x-110" painting—which hangs in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York City—is a tour de force of drawing, composition, perspective, and atmosphere and is considered Bastien-Lepage’s greatest masterpiece.

The artist was just 31 years old when he completed this work, and he was heavily criticized for

both the painting’s subject matter and the manner in which he created the work. The woman pictured is the 15<sup>th</sup>-century martyr Joan of Arc, and Bastien-Lepage depicts her at the moment she is receiving divine revelation in her parents’ garden. Joan of Arc carried special significance to the French at the time of the painting’s creation: She was from the province of Lorraine, an area the French had lost to the Germans in the Franco-Prussian War in 1871. Salon critics felt the subject matter was overly topical, and they also criticized Lepage’s execution, claiming that the “broken brushwork” was too avant-garde and that the appearance of saints seemed contradictory to the naturalist milieu. Nevertheless, today *Joan of Arc* stands as one of the supreme achievements in 19<sup>th</sup>-century salon painting and continues to mesmerize museum visitors with its epic visual and spiritual impact. —A.M.