



Governor Russell Alger

Lewis Ives, Russell Alger

Governor

Date

c. 1887

Medium

oil paint

Dimensions

72 x 52 in. (182.9 x 132.1 cm)

Paintings

Object number

CA.2025.03.002

Michigan State Capitol Building (100 N. Capitol Ave), Floor 2, North Wing, NE/Rep. Caucus Room

This piece by Lewis T. Ives is a great example of a 19th-century American governmental portrait. The academic

characteristics of this work are reminiscent of artists like Bouguereau and Gérôme and point to a neoclassical heritage. This is most evident in the refined, smooth quality of the paint surface, as well as in the classical pose and content. For example, Governor Russell Alger is painted in a naturalistic, though idealized, fashion. His skin is bright and smooth, though faint crow's feet are present around his eyes. The heavy red curtain draped across the background and Alger's stiff, serious pose also exemplify Ives' academic tendencies. Alger's tightly buttoned, black jacket similarly contributes to this mood, while the pin on the jacket's lapel denotes his membership to the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States. Ives studied in Paris and Rome under the artist William Page, known as "the American Titian" for his appreciation of the Italian artist's work. Though there is little evidence of Page's influence in this work, the classical characteristics nod to Ives' time studying with him.