



## Governor Woodbridge N. Ferris

Percy Ives, Woodbridge N. Ferris

Governor

### Date

1914

### Medium

oil paint

### Dimensions

97 1/2 x 54 1/2 in. (247.7 x 138.4 cm)

Paintings

### Object number

CA.2025.03.026

Michigan State Capitol Building (100 N. Capitol Ave), Floor 2, North Wing, Corridor (House Lobby)

This portrait of Governor Woodbridge N. Ferris demonstrates the later style of artist Percy Ives. While Percy began his career painting in a more controlled, traditional fashion with tight, less visible brushstrokes, a gradual change in his artwork can be seen over time. His later work is more expressionistic, with looser, visible brushstrokes, though it remains more naturalistic and controlled than the majority of expressionist artwork due

to the constraints placed on Percy as a painter of formal government portraiture. Percy's move towards this more modern style of painting aligns with what was happening in the art world as a whole, as artists sought to communicate their feelings of unease with the world around them through their work. At the time this portrait was unveiled, the first World War was just beginning. The most expressive brushstrokes in this piece are found in the background, particularly around the left side of Ferris's body, though brushstrokes are also visible throughout his suit. His face is painted naturalistically, though the thick layering of paint around his eyes and temple provides a more painterly look. The paint is similarly applied on the governor's hands; the brushstrokes on Ferris's left fist, which rests on his hip, are particularly pronounced. Ferris's pose is relaxed, and though he looks ahead, his gaze is not focused on the viewer. Instead, he appears to be lost in thought, perhaps reflecting on Michigan's future. The prominent

placement of the books atop the desk behind the governor may relate to his passion for education, an interest that would lead him to found Ferris State University and help establish the federal Department of Education.