



U.S. Senator McMillan

Jean-Joseph Benjamin-Constant, James McMillan

Historical Figure

Date

1895

Medium

oil paint

Dimensions

99 x 68 in. (251.5 x 172.7 cm)

Paintings

Object number

CA.2025.03.040

Michigan State Capitol Building (100 N. Capitol Ave), Floor 4, East Wing

James McMillan was a U.S. Senator from 1889-1902 and a powerful political force in Michigan. In this portrait, he is

pictured standing in a relaxed pose, with one hand holding gloves and a top hat and the other looped in his vest pocket. McMillan looks at the viewer with a comfortable, confident gaze. His formal attire includes the chain of a gold pocket watch across his torso, and a golden ring can be seen on his left hand. This portrait was created by the French artist Jean-Joseph Benjamin-Constant. Benjamin-Constant was recognized in France and abroad for both his art and his teaching, but he became well-known by collectors in America following a visit to New York in 1887. Despite the rising popularity of Impressionism in France during the late 19th century, Benjamin-Constant remained committed to the classical style of the French Academy. This is evident in McMillan's portrait, which shows little evidence of the artist's hand, is rendered naturalistically, and includes classical background elements like the column and carved acanthus leaves in the woodwork behind the senator.