



Governor Frank Murphy

Roy Gamble, Frank Murphy

Governor

Date

c. 1943

Medium

oil paint

Dimensions

101 x 52 in. (256.5 x 132.1 cm)

Paintings

Object number

CA.2025.03.042

Michigan State Capitol Building (100 N. Capitol Ave), Floor 3, Rotunda, Southwest Quadrant

This portrait of Governor Frank Murphy highlights artist Roy Gamble's interest in illustration and commercial art. With a simple, flat background, Gamble places emphasis solely on the figure. Murphy faces the viewer straight on, though he turns his head slightly to gaze off to his right. His left hand holds a folder of documents, while his right one points at an open book - as if emphasizing an unwavering focus on his work. Murphy's face is painted with fine detail, particularly around the nose and eyes, though this is somewhat lost by the choice of background

color, which is quite similar to the color of the governor's hair and skin tones. Arguably the most eye-catching aspect of this artwork is Murphy's suit, which is surrounded by a thick black outline that causes it to pop off the canvas in an almost cartoon-like fashion. The suit is filled in with visible brushstrokes, including areas of brown that match the background color. The wrinkles and shading on the suit, also completed in black, are highly visible and add to the graphic, commercial feel of the painting. Though Gamble did not take commissions from the Works Progress Administration, his style is reminiscent of many WPA artists that worked contemporaneously. The immediacy of the brushstrokes throughout the piece, which create an unsettled feeling, reflect the unrest of the period in which he worked, as America emerged from the Great Depression and entered the second World War.