



Governor Epaphroditus Ransom

Joshua Risner, Epaphroditus Ransom

Governor

Date

2022

Medium

oil paint

Paintings

Object number

CA.2025.03.048

Michigan State Capitol Building (100 N. Capitol Ave), Floor 3, East Wing, Supreme Court Chamber

Epaphroditus Ransom was one of only four governors to serve in all three branches of Michigan's government. He joined the MI Supreme Court in 1836 and sat as the Chief Justice from 1843-1847, served as Governor 1848-1849, and was later in the House of Representatives 1853-1854. This portrait of Ransom, painted by Joshua Adam Risner, was completed in 2022. Inspired by a 19th century portrait in the Supreme Court's collection, this piece is painted in a historical style but retains small traces of the contemporary artist's touch. In this bust portrait, Ransom looks directly at the viewer. He is painted in a naturalistic fashion, with wrinkles visible across his face. In comparison to the earlier portrait, Risner has made small changes to give the sitter a more active appearance. His eyebrows and hooded eyes are lifted slightly, and his lips are parted just a bit. His mouth is also not as downturned as it was in the earlier rendering. While these changes seem minuscule, they are quite effective when added together. Though Risner's portrait retains an air of Ransom's seriousness and concentration, the man appears more alert in the newer painting, and his interaction with the viewer is more comfortable. Ransom's clothing, while still naturalistic, has a slightly graphic quality due to the shadowing used in it, which acts like an outline around the navy-blue fabric. This shows evidence of a more contemporary hand. Similarly, the orange highlights in the background surrounding the Governor, which add visual excitement to the piece, have a more modern feel than would have been used during the man's lifetime. In this way, Risner makes the portrait his own, drawing inspiration from an earlier piece without copying it faithfully.