



Governor Snyder

Joshua Risner, Rick Snyder

Governor

Date

2020

Medium

oil paint

Paintings

Object number

CA.2025.03.053

Michigan State Capitol Building (100 N. Capitol Ave), Floor 2, Rotunda, Southeast Quadrant

While this portrait of Governor Rick Snyder may appear straightforward at first glance, a closer study of the man and his surroundings reveals symbolism throughout the piece. Unlike many portraits in the collection that surround governors with visibly symbolic objects, this

portrait communicates with viewers more organically. Snyder stands outdoors, beside a lake and surrounded by tall autumn trees that have begun losing their leaves. He looks ahead, beyond the viewer, with an expression that appears confident and hopeful. Snyder's face is painted naturalistically, with visible imperfections such as wrinkles and under eye circles, and different tones are used throughout his skin to achieve an accurate likeness. In this piece, artist Joshua Risner strikes a careful balance between direct communication with the viewer and allowing the painting to speak for itself. He includes small symbols throughout the portrait, partially concealed so that they do not distract from the governor's figure. For example, a Petosky stone, Michigan's state stone, is tucked between leaves in the bottom left corner; similarly, a state police badge can be found amongst the leaves just above the stone. Due to their inconspicuous nature, these objects do not draw attention away from the governor at first glance; instead, the most prominent aspect of the piece is Snyder's likeness and Risner's ability to capture his identity and essence in paint. Aside from the literal symbolic objects in this portrait, the background itself can also be read metaphorically: the tall trees behind the governor suggest qualities such as strength, fortitude, and wisdom with age – all traits that make for a good leader.