Self Portrait in the Studio

Arthur Ambrose McEvoy A.R.A, A.R.W.S

£680



REF: 1098

Height: 28.5 cm (11.2")

Width: 25 cm (9.8")

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Framed Height: 53.5 cm (21.1")

Framed Width: 45.5 cm (17.9")

Description

This probable late self-portrait, one of a relatively small number McEvoy made over his short career, was made with his unmistakeable and complex pencil and watercolour technique. Unusually it does not show McEvoy close to, but rather from a small distance, surrounded by the accoutrements of an artist. He presumably sits in front of a full-length mirror, drawing or painting the present work, with a brush or pencil in his right hand. McEvoy seems to have painted right-handed, and if this scene was indeed observed in the mirror, he would have had to reverse the image, perhaps by working from - and reversing - an initial study, because in the mirror he would have appeared left-handed. In his pencil self-portrait of c.1912 in the National Portrait Gallery, the more youthful and vigorous McEvoy stares straight into the mirror and has not reversed the image, his hair apparently falling to the right and drawing with his left hand.A photograph of the artist taken in about 1925 similarly shows him with a mop of hair falling over his right eyebrow, holding a brush in his right hand and perhaps even wearing the same, or at least a similar, jacket. That photograph is reproduced on page 218 of 'Divine People: The Art & Life of Ambrose McEvoy 1877-1927', by Eric Alexander Akers-Douglas, edited by Lawrence Hendra (Paul Holberton Publishing 2019). On page 156 a wartime photograph (from 1918) shows him posing at work on a watercolour, holding the sheet and support on his knee in much the same way as he does in the present work.McEvoy wears spectacles on the bridge of his nose. In his later years (he died aged 49), McEvoy was in the habit of wearing reading glasses to draw, as can be seen in at least two self-portraits, one sold at auction on 22 March 1995, and the other sold at Christie's on 20 October 2005, lot 6. McEvoy’s studio at 107 Grosvenor Road, Pimlico, famously had a skylight, used by the artist in combination with electric lighting, as a light source for many of his best-known portraits, and we see a skylight in the upper right corner of the present work. Portfolios or watercolours on boards lean against the chair, and the picture on the wall, which might be a copy of McEvoy's early painting "The Engraving" (which itself features a painting on the wall - probably a print after Turner - and a print on the mantelpiece, a device seen in other early works), are further personal trappings of the artist in his place of work. It may be that in the present work McEvoy is echoing 'The Engraving', and also the room in Danvers Street where he had lived, before moving in 1906 to Grosvenor Road, where he lived for the rest of his life.Another watercolour by the artist with which the present work bears close comparison is his portrait of Sir Walter Russell in the collection of the Royal Academy of Arts. It is of course possible that the present work is indeed a study of another artist, but the resemblance to McEvoy, his working methods and own work and processes is striking.This would have been a study rather than a commissioned work, and as such typically does not carry a signature. It also does not have the studio stamp, so was presumably sold or given away by the artist in his lifetime.

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