

Célestin Paul-Rosemond Audra



Self-portrait of the artist with a large canvas

Reference: 10845

KAREN TAYLOR

FINE ART

Dimensions:

Height: 54.50 cm / 21½ in
Width: 45 cm / 17¾ in

Signed or inscribed with monogram twice l.r., oil on canvas, fragments of a label attached to reverse of frame

54.5 x 45 cm

Frame size 77 x 65 x 8 cm

The artistic tradition of painting a self-portrait with a mirror goes back self-consciously to Velazquez' Las Meninas and has been used by many artists to probe their artistic identity.

The artist stares out at the viewer with authority and proclaims self-confident virtuosity as he paints a reflection of himself standing in front of a large canvas (another reference to Las Meninas, although he has chosen the opposite side of the composition) within the large brown wooden mirror which frames his work. He adds another smaller arched wooden mirror to provide a reflection of the back of his head, a play on space and composition which takes our eye a moment or two to unravel. A gilt framed painting is leaning against the wall and a doorway to a sunlit garden can be seen in the distance introducing a light source in the same position as Velazquez chose in Las Meninas. A painter's rag can be seen wedged into the space between the top of the post and the mirror itself, an indication of work in progress.

An interesting account of the two most famous mirrors in the history of western art, the convex mirror in Van Eyck's Arnolfini Marriage and the rectangular mirror in Velazquez' Las Meninas can be found in the exhibition catalogue of Reflections- Van Eyck and the Pre-Raphaelites, A. Smith et al, National Gallery, 2018.

Paul Audra was the son of a painter from whom he learnt his craft. He studied at the École des Beaux-Arts in Lyon and then in 1888 at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris. In the atelier of Gustave Moreau, he worked alongside Matisse and Rouault. He returned home to Valence and became the teacher of drawing at the local school and set up his own atelier, moving in 1908 to Nice when he ran the École des Art Décoratifs from 1910. After serving in WWI he started painting again in 1917 and met Renoir and also became reacquainted with Matisse who he helped find a studio in Nice and with whom he occasionally collaborated. He is known to have enjoyed painting self-portraits.

Audra exhibited at the salon in Lyon in 1897 and at the Salons d'Automne from 1907-1920.