



Portrait of the Artist

Date

c. 1906

Primary Maker

Sir William Orpen

Medium

Oil on canvas

Dimensions

74.6 x 59.4 cm

Description

Throughout his life Orpen was keenly interested in questions of identity and painted a remarkable series of self-portraits in which parody is often the keynote. He

studied his own image many times, occasionally approaching caricature in his self-mocking studies of his own features. He had a remarkable facility for depicting textures and mirrors and his *Reflections: China and Japan* in this Collection is a virtuoso piece. Here Orpen uses to great effect the motifs of the mirror and a frame within a frame. The artists' materials on the mantelpiece also appear to extend beyond the picture into our own space. The statue of Venus also appears in his painting *Homage to Manet* (1909) which was painted in the artist's London home. William Orpen showed remarkable talent from a very early age, entering the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art at the age of eleven, where he later taught. Among his pupils were Séan Keating, James Sleator, Margaret Clarke and Patrick Tuohy, over all of whom he exerted a powerful influence. Through his teaching and regular exhibitions at the RHA, Orpen fathered a tradition in Irish art, based on an academic insistence on life drawing and craftsmanship which was still alive in the 1950s. Throughout his life Orpen was keenly interested in questions of identity, and painted a remarkable series of self-portraits in which parody is often the keynote. He studied his own image many times, occasionally approaching caricature in his self-mocking studies of his own features.