

Basic Detail Report



Title: Self-Portrait as Everything that Rises

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Medium: Oil on canvas

Description: Heffernan's "Self Portrait as Everything that Rises "depicts a fantastic moment of ordinarily inanimate objects coming to life. The Rococo interior is strongly reminiscent of the Nymphenburg Palace in Munich, Germany. The decoration includes elements, such as the scalloped windows along the top level and the multiple storey; and thin arched windows on the lower levels, which echo the design of the Stone Hall at Nymphenburg. The trompe l'oeil ceiling fresco, on the other hand, is more characteristic of the Italian Baroque tradition. In the eighteenth

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century, Italian artists, such as Giacompo Amigoni or Giambattista Tiepolo, were often commissioned to paint the interiors of these grand German structures. Heffernan's painting conveys a sense of baroque theatricality. This fresco depicts a bacchanal scene featuring cherubs and female figures. Bacchanalia were wild and magical festivals celebrating the Roman god of wine, Bacchus. Bacchanals were oftentimes held in secret and attended by women only. The cherubs' presence adds to the painting's surreal atmosphere. Women in the scene are depicted as interacting with these divine figures. Although these women are not identical, they all have red lips. The constantly visible red lips create continuity for the painting's narrative. Another possible link among these women with red lips is that they are representations of the artist at different stages of her life. Many of Heffernan's works are titled "Self Portrait" and include more than one image of the artist. The figures in the fresco as well as those used for architectural ornamentation, are brought to life by the sudden fire ascending from the chandelier's candles. The transformation of the fresco's wine grapes to orbs of fire, carried by the birds to the chandelier's crystal chain, is a fanciful concept. The fire rises in a natural spiral-like pattern, emphasizing the cyclical nature of both the fresco's narrative and human life. The fire may also stand for the artist's presence in a form other than her original, figural body. These scenes surround the main figures, creating an active dream-work of transformational processes within a landscape of Rococo exuberance.

Dimensions: 78 x 82 in.