



DETAIL: MATHIAS ALTEN, SELF-PORTRAIT, YOURS TRULY, 1921 / GIFT OF GEORGE H. AND BARBARA GORDON

## Mathias J. Alten (1871-1938)

Mathias J. Alten is often referred to as the Dean of Michigan Painters. Recent scholarship and continued exhibition of his art have resulted in increasing national acclaim. Mathias J. Alten is currently regarded as a celebrated American regionalist artist, known for producing more than twenty-five hundred works of art throughout his lifetime.

Alten immigrated to Grand Rapids, Michigan from his native Germany at age seventeen, initially working as a furniture decorator and later owning his own wallpaper, paint and artists' supply business. Feeling the need for greater professional artistic training, Alten left for Paris in 1889, returning to Michigan later that year. Alten would continue to travel abroad throughout his career, including extended stays in both The Netherlands and Spain.

His painting style evolved in accordance with both the tastes of the era and his own preferences. Alten began as a naturalistic scene painter, eventually transitioning from Barbizon and Tonalist traditions to an Impressionistic style. His devotion to rural and agrarian work themes continued throughout his career, and sets Alten's work apart from many of his peers.

Mathias Alten died at the age of 67 surrounded by his family at his Grand Rapids home.

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## GORDON GALLERY

The Richard M. DeVos Center  
401 Fulton Street West  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504  
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