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EST. 1817

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Michael Gilbery (London 1913 - 2000)

*Self Portrait of the artist wearing a Jewish prayer shawl
(Tallit) and a cap*

Oil on canvas

30.3 x 22.8 in. (77 x 58 cm)

Painted by 1934



Provenance

Sold at Richard Winterton Auctioneers, on behalf of a descendant, April 27 2020

Born in London, as Michael Goldberg, Gilbery's talent was first noticed as a 17-year-old when a portrait of his father was hung at the Royal Academy. He gained a scholarship to St Martin's and later the Royal College of Art, where he studied under tutors such as Roland Pitchforth, Sir William Rothenstein and Gilbert Spencer.

Another tutor, Percy Horton, wrote: "Mr Goldberg is an able draughtsman and a powerful and solid painter... perhaps Mr Goldberg's chief ability however lies in the direction of portraiture where he has shown real accomplishment – a facility for obtaining a likeness combined with a lively and sympathetic handling."

Gilbery made a living from portrait commissions, occasionally exhibiting at the Royal Academy, Royal Society of Portrait Painters and the New English Art Club.

He gained recognition for his scenes of London Jewish life, some of which were exhibited at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1932.

In the present self-portrait he chose to depict himself wearing a tallit, the Jewish prayer shawl, although he was not by nature a religious man. It is likely an early work, painted by 1934, when the artist was around 20 years old. This self-portrait was at one time wrapped around the canvas and stretcher of a portrait of an anonymous man (Fig 1.), which is signed "Gilbery" (top left) and signed or inscribed in red "Goldberg" on the reverse of the original canvas. *Goldberg* is the Germanic name that the artist chose to change by deed poll during the Second World War. These paintings have now been separated and can be sold separately.

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Photograph of Michael Gilbery, painting *Habam Dr Moses Gaster (1856-1939)*, 1933/34

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Fig. 1: Gilbery, *Portrait of a man*, Agnews