

**Self-Portrait as the
Savior of Painting**

1997, oil, 100 x 81. Courtesy
The Nerdrum Institute,
Disenå, Norway.

SELF-PORTRAIT AS THE SAVIOR OF PAINTING

by Odd Nerdrum



Odd Nerdrum (1944–) is one of the most influential artists working today, and his originality, skill, and intellect have been lauded by some of the greatest minds and talents in the industry.

This of course hasn't stopped the controversy that

has swirled around him for the better part of his career, the current tax-evasion scandal notwithstanding. Nonetheless, Nerdrum fights on, seeing himself as both a savior and martyr of contemporary painting.

In line with that mindset, one of the most important paintings Nerdrum has created is his 1997 *Self-Portrait as the Savior of Painting*. This large-scale work is both boldly presumptuous in its message and ironically prophetic in its foreshadowing, especially considering its future personal significance to the artist. It's also rich in symbolism and is one of few paintings in Nerdrum's oeuvre devoid of tension, angst, or torment. That is because the artist portrayed here is triumphant—he has overcome the accusations and criticism of his public and stands confidently poised to save art from its so-called imminent doom. Like many of his artistic heroes, such as Rembrandt and Titian, Nerdrum paints himself arrayed in a royal robe of golden brocade, further insinuating both his equal footing with the great artists of the past and his inextinguishable role in the art of the present. —A.M.