

MIXED CULTURAL COMMISSION
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY/CANADA

Secteur de coopération

Programme:
Visual Arts

Domaine d'activité

Field of Activity:
Exhibition

Description:

William Berczy (1774-1813) Retrospective Exhibition

Origine/Background:

For several years it has been increasingly evident that a scholarly review of the oeuvre of William Berczy has long been overdue. New scholarship by Beate Stock on Berczy's European activity as an artist has finally brought to light some of his important commissions for the Austrian and Swiss upper classes. A revision of Berczy's Canadian work has been undertaken by Mary Allodi of the Royal Ontario Museum.

The impetus for this exhibition has come from the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany who wish to promote this early Canadian artist of German extraction and therefore underline the importance of Germany to the cultural (and political) origins of Canada.

The National Gallery of Canada has accepted in principle this exhibition proposal. Work is presently underway to develop a budget and explore the scope and scheduling for this exhibition as well as the feasibility of loans from European and Canadian public and private collections.

Objectifs/Objectives:

William Berczy (1774-1813) is considered to be one of our finest pioneer artists. His major paintings The Woolsey Family (1808-09) and Portrait of Joseph Brant (1807) are among the best works of early Canadian art in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada. His work is much sought after and prized by every major art institution in Canada.

Although Berczy began his career as an artist in Vienna, Switzerland, Naples and Florence, in 1791 he joined the Genesee Company and undertook the supervision of German settlers to New York State. In 1794, at the invitation of Governor John Graves Simcoe, the settlers moved to and founded Markham Township near York (Toronto). The increasing debts incurred by Berczy forced him to return to his artistic talents and many portraits of important Canadians at York, Montreal and Quebec ensued. His commissions also included religious paintings and architectural designs (e.g. Christ Church, Montreal, 1805).

This exhibition would be the first major retrospective for this distinguished artist and the first thorough art historical examination of his work. The exhibition will be organized by Rosemarie Tovell for the National Gallery of Canada with Beate Stock and Mary Allodi providing the research on Berczy's European and Canadian oeuvre.

Décision et mise en oeuvre/Decision and Implementation:

Institutions et Organismes/Organizations and Institutions:

National Gallery of Canada

Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany

Royal Ontario Museum? (once a budget is developed, the NGC intends to invite the R.O.M. as a co-sponsor)

Financement

Financing:
To be determined

Calendrier, suivi

Schedule, follow-up:
Follow up submission will be presented when a budget has been developed
Exhibition dates tentatively set for 1991