



Re: Introduction and Inquiry - Martin Kret

Monika Jankiewicz-Brzostowska

to:

martin

02/04/2023 02:42 PM

Hide Details

From: "Monika Jankiewicz-Brzostowska" <sztuka1@nmm.pl>

To: <martin@steuart.com>,

History: This message has been replied to.

1 Attachment



Polscy-jeńcy.jpg

Dear Martin,

I am grateful that you are willing to help us with permissions for publication. It is however legal stuff and I cannot stress enough how foreign to me legal issues are. Therefore I need to consult our legal adviser in order to give you the correct specifics of what we need. I shall let you know as soon as I learn the specifics.

You sent me a very interesting drawing. The translation of the writing at its bottom could be: "Where is my family - he thought with a heavy heart - perhaps they lie here, killed." The drawing seems to allude to the events of German invasion of Poland in 1939. The man is sitting near the seashore, and yes, you are right, it looks like a place somewhere near Gdynia. I do not think though that the drawing can be directly autobiographical for two reasons:

1) Leszczyński was not from around Gdynia, he was born and raised near Gródek Jagielloński which is in the Lwów district of today's Ukraine. After Poland's rebirth in 1918 it was the south-eastern part of Poland. Leszczyński probably visited Gdynia for the first time when he started his training onboard of the "Lwów" and later he worked in Gdynia port as a pilot in 1930-ties.

2) The way the man in the drawing is dressed does not indicate a sailor. The cap he is wearing looks a lot like a Polish army cap from 1939 called "rogatywka". The shapeless coat reminds me of photographs of Polish soldiers in German captivity in 1939 wearing uniforms without insignia and "rogatywka" caps (I enclose an example). Therefore my theory is that it is a drawing, not necessarily a portrait, of a soldier who survived captivity, was released and now came home and is wandering about the fate of his loved ones.

Pondering over questions like this one is what makes our job really worthwhile.

With best regards

Monika J-B

Dr Monika Jankiewicz-Brzostowska
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W dniu 2023-02-02 18:16, Martin@steuart.com napisał(a):

> Dear Dr. Jankiewicz-Brzostowska,

>

> I am very glad you replied to my letter and I appreciate your
 > thoroughness in retrieving the information I requested. Likewise, I
 > will delve into the matters you have brought up. From my knowledge I
 > can answer several of your questions and I have already asked the
 > heirs of the Leszczyński estate to contact you regarding licensing
 > for exhibition and online publication. Just to be certain, what form
 > of permission are you seeking? I am happy to help with facilitating
 > such a request between you and the heirs. We have worked closely with
 > them in purchasing this recent acquisition and we are on good terms.

>

> In regards to how we will make this collection available to the
 > public, I see several different iterations of the collection, physical
 > and digital.

>

> First of all, the physical iteration is tied to the Half Moon Resort,
 > where a significant portion of Leszczyński's work is currently
 > hanging and available to be viewed in the common areas of the resort.
 > One does not have to stay at the hotel to view the works on display in
 > several different locations. Albeit the Half Moon is not a public
 > institution and does not have the wherewithal to form a museum, this
 > is not an impediment in my opinion. The Chairman of the board, Guy
 > Steuart, is very keen to make Lester's work more widely available to a
 > broader audience. There is even talk of creating a gallery, or even
 > several, featuring Leszczyński's work in a more public facing portion
 > of the property. All of this is to be determined and part of my job is
 > ensure that pieces are properly inventoried, handled, cared for, and
 > displayed in a respectful manner.

>

> This brings up the case of the pieces that were destroyed in a fire in
 > the mid-1990s... I hope to impart to the staff of the Half Moon my
 > expertise in museum facilities/collections care to avoid such a
 > catastrophe in the future. Fortunately, there has been great strides
 > in updating and renovating the hotel to international safety
 > standards. So I am not as worried about a fire but there are always
 > numerous dangers to an art collection, as you well know. I will look
 > into the specifics of which pieces were destroyed and subsequently
 > reproduced in Leszczyński's style (and yes, there is a list which I
 > will share with you once I track it down). I have seen several of the

> reproductions in person, and they are all very well done.
>
> Another idea is to one day organize a traveling exhibition. This is
> obviously a huge undertaking and will take some convincing of the
> board to provide funding for such an endeavor. But nonetheless, I
> think it is a worthwhile especially regarding the depth of the recent
> acquisition (which includes his personal letters to mid-century
> dignitaries, socialites, celebrities and the like) that greatly
> enhances the importance of his work and like you said, his flamboyant
> personality. I can also foresee some collaboration from your
> institution and we are absolutely open to suggestions and the Maritime
> Museum's assistance.
>
> We also have some fascinating examples of his earlier maritime and
> Jamaican-era works in graphite, ink, and watercolor that I think
> should be seen by a wider audience. I can share one image that we took
> for inventorying purposes that struck me in particular (higher quality
> images will be taken at a later date). It is untitled and undated,
> but I am aware that Leszczyński went back to Poland after WWII for a
> brief time. My thinking is that this piece is perhaps from that era. I
> understand, as I am still learning Polish, the inscription concerns
> where the subject of the drawing's family is located, and perhaps they
> lie dead nearby. The scenery also reminds me of the seaside near
> Gdynia, maybe this is an autobiographical drawing? But what brings to
> mind is what became of his family? I know he had two sisters, but I
> have found no correspondence or mention of them in his letters or
> notes.
>
> Such inquiries and questions are something we hope a digital or online
> presence could help elucidate. Since he was a very prolific artist his
> works are in private homes and collections worldwide, it would be
> interesting to see a digital map of where his pieces ended up. The
> more his works become available to the public I think the more we will
> find. I could see this be part of Half Moon's website or even a
> separate site dedicated to Leszczyński. There a plenty of
> possibilities.
>
> It is wonderful to learn about your museum's holdings, and I would
> love one day to plan a visit to see them if that is possible. I hope
> this email wasn't too long, please take your time to reply. At this
> point, we are in no rush as we continue with the accessioning process.
>
>
> All the best,
>
> Martin
>
> From: "Monika Jankiewicz-Brzostowska" <sztuka1@nmm.pl>
> To: <martin@steuart.com>
> Date: 02/01/2023 06:54 AM
> Subject: Re: Introduction and Inquiry - Martin Kret

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> -----
>
> Dear Mr Martin Kret,
> Thank You for your letter. I apologize for taking so long to answer,
> but I wanted to give you some concrete information, and it took me a
> while to gather it.
> First of all let me say that we are very pleased that the heritage of
> Michał Leszczyński-Lester will be secured and promoted. His art (and
> dare I say his flamboyant personality) certainly deserves to be widely
> admired. I would very much like to know more about how the collection
> you acquired will be made available to the public.
> Our museum holds quite a diverse collection of artworks, manuscripts
> and documents related directly to Michael Leszczyński. In the
> Maritime Art Department there are two oil paintings (one pre-war, one
> from Jamaican period), two watercolours and three drawings depicting
> sailing ships. The Scientific Documentation Department of our museum
> holds a few drawings, personal photographs and documents related to
> Leszczyński's life and his activities in the Union of Polish Merchant
> Navy Officers in London, press articles from Poland UK, USA and
> elsewhere, as well as several manuscripts devoted to sailing, his
> personal experiences as a sailor or technical questions related to
> aesthetics and optics - some of them with numerous illustrations by
> Leszczyński. Among the manuscripts there are two versions of the book
> "Steamboat", both handwritten in pencil and with many illustrations,
> also in pencil. The two versions differ in size and so do the
> illustrations, but other than that they are virtually identical -
> despite having been done by hand!
> We would very much like to make our collection of Leszczyński's
> artwork and manuscripts available to the general public via Internet,
> however in case of Internet publications copyright laws in Poland
> require that we obtain licence from the author or his heirs - even in
> case of museum exhibits. Therefore we would very much appreciate any
> contact details to the person or persons who are legally authorized to
> give such a licence.
> I also would like to ask about the paintings from the Half Moon Hotel
> in Montego Bay. I seem to recall having seen some mention of a fire
> there that apparently destroyed some of the paintings which were
> subsequently replaced by copies. Can you confirm this information? Is
> the specific list of destroyed paintings known?
> Finally, yes, you are correct, I had a pleasure and an enormous fun of
> translating the book by K. J. Jones into Polish.
> Please, let me know, if you have any further questions or proposals
> for us.
> With best regards
> Monika J-B
> --
> Dr Monika Jankiewicz-Brzostowska
> Head of Maritime Art Department NMM
> Ołowianka St 9-13
> 80-751 Gdańsk, Poland

> phone: +48 58 301 86 11, ext.: 421
> e-mail: sztukal@nmm.pl
> W dniu 11.01.2023 o 15:36, Martin@steuart.com pisze:
> Dear Dr. Monika Jankiewicz-Brzostowska,
> It is with great delight that I can make official contact with you and
> the National Maritime Museum in Gdańsk. I believe you have spoken
> with my contact in Poland who visited your museum early this winter.
> Thank you for passing on your information to her.
> The reason I am establishing correspondence, is that I represent
> Steuart Investment Company, and its affiliate, Garlandstone Arts, LLC.
> The story of the company's connection with artist/sea-captain
> Michał Leszczyński (Michael Lester) is a long and fruitful one,
> which we are seeking to reinvigorate.
> In hopes of preserving Lester's legacy, and to showcase his artistic
> endeavors to a wider audience, a recent purchase was made of his
> estate from the family that inherited it. In the acquisition there
> are: 40 of his paintings, 400+ works on paper, his writings,
> correspondence, and personal effects. In addition, the rights to the
> book, Michael Lester, His Life and Works, accompanied the purchase.
> From what I understand, you were the translator of this book for the
> Polish language version.
> One of the several reasons we have committed ourselves to preserving
> Lester's legacy is to add to the collection of his work already
> owned by another subsidiary of Steuart Investment Company, the Half
> Moon Hotel in Montego Bay, Jamaica. As you may know, Lester's
> commissioned works for Half Moon brought him financial success and
> elevated his career as a working artist. His artwork, totalling a
> similar amount as the recent acquisition, has graced the lobby, bars,
> and rooms of the hotel for over half a century. Guests, staff, and
> visitors have continued to enjoy the aesthetics of his artistic
> prowess.
> The hotel has recently undergone a significant renovation which has
> served as an impetus to once again tell the story of Lester and
> feature his artistic achievements. We can imagine many opportunities
> to showcase this collection and shine a wider light on his life and
> works. Perhaps even revisit the idea of an exhibition one day with
> other collections spanning the globe.
> As the collections manager, I am directly involved in the supervision
> of the collection here in Maryland where the recent acquisition has
> been relocated to the offices of Steuart Investment Company. Utilizing
> my degree in Museum Studies from George Washington University and
> experience that I have gathered over the years working for museums in
> Washington, D.C., I am properly accessioning this collection, while
> adhering to museum standard practices, as well as designing long term
> storage and procuring conservation care.
> In the coming months, as the accessioning and inventorying of the
> collection continues, I think it would be very valuable to share with
> you and your institution what we find in his personal writings and the
> trove of pre-Jamaican era sketches, watercolors, and drawings. We are
> creating a database and digitizing the collection, which will become
> more available as we enter it into a CMS.

> Part of the broader perspective of this endeavor is to rediscover
> where his pieces have ended up. We know that he was very prolific, and
> many pieces were bought by individuals living in the Americas and
> Europe. But what interests us, and me personally, is his life and
> story before his time in Jamaica. Especially as a young painter and
> mariner in the inter-war period in Gdynia and his adopted country of
> England during the war.
> Therefore, we are interested in what your institution has in its
> archives, collections, or other sources relating to Lester. As we
> delve into the more detailed cataloguing of the collection, I hope
> that we can make use of the Maritime Museum's holdings as a resource
> to better understand and preserve this collection.
> If you would like to talk sometime over the phone or videocall, I
> would be happy to hear more from your perspective and expertise. I
> hope this email finds you well and I look forward to meeting you.
> Sincerely,
> Martin Kret
> Art Collections Manager,
> Garlandstone Arts, LLC

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To: martin@stewart.com

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From: sztuka1@nmm.pl

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