John Constable ‘comes home’ to Hampstead

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Burgh House and Hampstead Museum will be marking the event this year with a major six-month exhibition of some of Constable’s original works on display just a few steps from the views that inspired them. Burgh House has submitted a formal loan request for the paintings to the Victoria and Albert Museum.

The exhibition will also draw from Burgh House’s existing collection including works by CRW Nevinson, Donald Towner and Duncan Grant to reflect the development of village and Heath through the artworks of those it has inspired.

Constable first came to Hampstead in 1812 to walk and ride over the Heath as an escape from London city life. His visit made a strong impression on him and he returned many times before finally moving there with his family in 1820. At the time he wrote: “I have settled my wife and children comfortably in Hampstead. I am glad to get them out of London for every reason.”

The Constables lived at a number of different addresses including some directly opposite Burgh House. In addition to his painting he became actively involved in local life and lectured on painting and the study of clouds and the sky to the Hampstead Literary and Scientific Society. It was while living in the village that he developed his technique for capturing these elements on canvas; he also represented a number of local houses and streets in his work.

The artist died in 1837 and is buried in Hampstead parish churchyard next to his wife and six of their seven children. His grave and commemorative plaques on the homes in which he lived are the only official memorial to his life and work in the village.

Now, with the support of the HLF, Burgh House’s major exhibition will explore the heritage of the area using its own collections combined with various loaned artworks.

Sue Bowers, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund London, said: “Constable developed a passion for Hampstead and the Heath which had a positive and enduring influence on his work. This project will give full expression to this connection and the fact that some of his paintings will be on display close to where they were created is an exciting prospect.”

Rebecca Lodge, Curator at Burgh House, said: “We are very excited at the prospect of being able to show these wonderful works of art in their natural home. It will be a real treat for the local community and a fantastic resource for schools in Camden. We are enormously grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund for making this 100-year anniversary celebration possible.”

Further information

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