

Berlin is about to get a taste of the Canadian arts scene

JOHN BENTLEY MAYS

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BY JOHN BENTLEY MAYS

CANADA'S HISTORIC and contemporary arts go to Germany in December, when OKanada, the most ambitious show of Canadian cultural accomplishment ever mounted outside the country, opens at Berlin's Akademie der Künste. After OKanada closes in January, a second major festival of Canadian culture will be launched in Stuttgart, using some of the Berlin displays and adding others.

But a group of Toronto artists, up in arms about the exclusion of contemporary Canadian painting and sculpture from the festival, is planning a *râlon de refus* to coincide with the big event in Berlin.

The announcement of the Akademie's show was made yesterday in Montreal and Toronto by Nele Hertling, programming co-ordinator for the Akademie, one of Europe's most influential cultural organizations.

Scheduled to run Dec. 5-Jan. 30, OKanada will feature a show of Canadian painting from Paul Kane through Jack Bush, installations by contemporary artists Max Dean, Betty Goodwin and John Massey, 22 hours of artists' videotapes, and seven artists' performance works.

There will also be an exhibit on Canadian architecture since 1950, screenings of some 50 films, readings by six writers, and performances by dance companies and musical groups, ranging from the Glass Orchestra and the CCMC jazz ensemble to Inuit throat singers and Cape Breton fiddlers.

OKanada will be documented in a 400-page catalogue containing essays on all aspects of Canadian culture by 40 scholars, curators, editors and art-



Nele Hertling



Geoffrey James

ists from across the country. A bookshop, organized by Montreal's Artex Information Centre, will sell titles by Canadians and about Canadian arts, literature, history and geography.

The Canada Council, which worked with the Germans on the project, was represented yesterday by OKanada co-ordinator Mela Constandinidi and visual arts section head Geoffrey James. Also on hand in Toronto were Jacques Montpetit, cultural affairs director in the Department of External Affairs, and curators Dennis Reid, Pierre Théberge, Bruce Ferguson, Bruce Elder and George Kapelos. According to Montpetit, the project will cost \$1-million, split three ways among the Akademie, the Canada Council and External Affairs.

Five years in planning, OKanada

ing to us? It was the missing context of Canada."

Mrs. Hertling admits that Berliners don't know much about Canada now. But she was surprised to find that, at a February press conference announcing a wide range of Akademie projects, "we just mentioned the Canadian event, and all the questions coming from the press were about it."

The Stuttgart festival will take place from Feb. 8 to March 20, and will feature the architecture and historical painting components from Berlin. In addition, the Wurtembergische Kunstverein, a Stuttgart museum of contemporary art, will exhibit works by a number of younger Canadian artists.

In a related development, ChromaZone, the Toronto artist-run centre, yesterday announced plans for "a secession show to coincide with the official exhibition." According to spokesman Oliver Girling, the artists object to the exclusion of advanced figurative painting and sculpture by contemporary art curator Pierre Théberge. ChromaZone member Hans-Peter Marti is now in Berlin, negotiating for a counter-show at Art-X, an artists' co-operative.



Danny Grossman: dance troupe will be part of OKanada.