

Docent Handbook - Artist Fact Sheet

Artist Name: FRERICHS, WILLIAM CHARLES ANTHONY

Date: 1829-1905

Nationality: American, born in Belgium

Title/Date: *Nature's Rushing Force*, circa 1865-1880

Size: 58 x 91 ½ inches

Medium: oil on canvas

Gallery Location: 3

Salient Characteristics of this Work:

- Dark, velvety colors
- Wilds of North Carolina
- Busy, energy-filled composition

Salient Characteristics of the Artist/Anecdotal Information:

- Training as a painter in the Netherlands
- America in 1850
- Teacher at Greensboro (Female) College, 1855-1865
- One of the first artists to explore the North Carolina wilderness
- On more than one occasion, his painting supplies were stolen by marauding Indians while he painted in the wilderness
- Studio at Greensboro College where many paintings were destroyed by fire during the American Civil War, in 1863

Information Narrative:

Frerichs was trained as a painter at the Royal Academy at The Hague in his native country. In 1850, having heard of the many prospects in the Americas, he set sail for New York. For a time he was in the company of some of the Hudson River School landscape painters and became known as the "Professor" among them. In 1854 he accepted a professorship at Greensboro Female College in North Carolina to teach painting, drawing, and French. During his tenure there, which lasted until 1865, Frerichs often explored the wilds of the Carolina hills and documented their beauty.

On more than one occasion, his easel, canvases, and paints were stolen by marauding Indians. In 1863, at the peak of the Civil War, his studio was destroyed by a fire that swept through Greensboro Female College. Many of his paintings were lost.

Frustrated with the difficulties he had encountered, he moved back to New York City in 1865. There Frerichs produced from memory and sketches some of his most vivid surviving works which depict the North Carolina countryside. Among them is the velvety, violent, *Nature's Rushing Force*, which fearfully depicts the awesome beauty and rage of nature, perhaps reflecting Frerichs' own views of the North Carolina wilds that had at once unkind as well as the wellspring source of his work.