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Thomas Cole National Historic Site Announces May 2017 Re-Opening of the Artist's Home with a New Immersive Installation Combining Technology and Meticulous Historic Restoration

Visitors Will Be the First in Almost 200 years to See Cole's Newly Uncovered Interior Designs with the Earliest-Known, Interior Decorative Painting by an American Artist

Catskill, NY – The Thomas Cole National Historic Site announced today the re-opening in May 2017 of the artist's home with a new immersive installation that combines technology and meticulous historic restoration, featuring the earliest-known, interior decorative painting by an American artist. Through hidden



Artist's rendering of the West Parlor by MK.Tan

audio and moving-graphics presentations, visitors will be able to hear the thoughts of Thomas Cole (1801-1848) and the historic conversations that took place in the parlors of his 1815 home, where America's first major art movement, the Hudson River School of painting, was founded.

The carefully researched restoration has transformed the first floor of Cole's home to his original design, as visitors in his day would have experienced it. It extends from carpets and other floor coverings to wall colors to newly uncovered, elaborately painted borders in both parlors. Those painted borders were designed and painted by Cole himself – revealing another "first" in American art history – and had been hidden for more than a century under layer upon layer of modern paint.



The restoration is combined with the latest techniques in immersive storytelling developed in partnership with some of the leading experts in the nation. The multimedia installation will be the first of its kind in the restored rooms of an historic home and will feature the artist's own words and artworks. Instead of viewing period rooms from behind velvet ropes, visitors will enter the rooms and participate in the events that took place there.

Over a decade in the making, the installation is informed by research conducted by the Cole site staff with distinguished art historians and other experts. They include Elizabeth Kornhauser, Alice Pratt Brown Curator of American Paintings and Sculpture at The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Nancy Siegel, author, curator and professor of American art; and Alan Wallach, considered the foremost Cole scholar in the world. The restoration has been directed by leading historic interiors experts Jean Dunbar and Carrie Feder and implemented by historic paint specialist Matthew Mosca and acclaimed conservator Margaret Saliske. The multimedia installation, including the audio and moving graphics, has been designed and implemented by the nationally renowned design firm Second Story with the acclaimed theater director Warner Shook, also a Cole Site trustee.

"This re-opening positions the Thomas Cole Site at the forefront of 21st-century presentations of historic properties," said Elizabeth B. Jacks, Executive Director of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. "It combines meticulous scholarship with immersive storytelling to bring history to life for contemporary audiences."

The installation has been made possible in part by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities: Exploring the human endeavor. It was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services MA-10-15-0116-15. The project is supported by a grant from Empire State Development's Market NY program, and was recently announced by Governor Andrew Cuomo in the latest round of Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) awards. The project is also sponsored in part by Hudson River Valley Greenway. The historic paint finishes are sponsored by Herzog's of Kingston. Eli Wilner & Company of New York City is a historic framing sponsor of the installation and the art printing sponsor is Geoff Howell Studio.

The installation will dramatically enhance the experience of visiting Cole's Main House and will augment the other offerings at the Site. They include Cole's 1839 "Old Studio" building and his majestic 1846 "New Studio" building, which was recently reconstructed, and related displays of



Cole's art and that of his many followers who comprise the art movement now known as the Hudson River School.

The Thomas Cole Site also provides a starting point for the innovative walking-and-driving experience called the Hudson River School Art Trail (www.hudsonriverschool.org), which reveals nearby settings in the Hudson Valley where visitors can experience the same views that appear in 19th-century paintings by Cole and other Hudson River School artists.

Additionally, the State of New York recently approved funding for "Skywalk", an enhanced pedestrian walkway on the Rip Van Winkle Bridge that will soon connect the Site with the Bridge, enabling visitors to walk directly from the Cole Site and across the Hudson River. A second phase of the "Skywalk" will connect the Cole Site with the Olana State Historic Site, home of Cole's most famous student, Frederic Church. The "Skywalk" funding was also part of the latest round of New York State's REDC awards.

About the Thomas Cole National Historic Site

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site preserves and interprets the home and studios of Thomas Cole, the founder of the Hudson River School of painting, the nation's first major art movement. Located on 6 acres in the Hudson Valley, the site includes the 1815 Main House, 1839 Old Studio, the newly reconstructed 1846 New Studio, and several other buildings. It is a National Historic Landmark and an affiliated area of the National Park System. Following a restoration of the Main House, the Cole Site opened to the public in 2001. The site's activities include guided tours, exhibitions, printed publications, extensive online programs, activities for school groups, free community events, lectures, and innovative public programs such as the Hudson River School Art Trail—a map and website that enables visitors to see the nearby views that Cole painted. Each year, the Cole Site organizes a loan exhibition of Hudson River School paintings, providing a first-hand experience with the art movement that Cole founded. The goal of all programs at the Cole Site is to enable visitors to find meaning and inspiration in Thomas Cole's life and work. The themes that Cole explored in his art and writings—such as landscape preservation and our conception of nature as a restorative power—are both historic and timely, providing the opportunity to connect to audiences with insights that are highly relevant to their own lives.

THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



Visit the Thomas Cole National Historic Site

Thomas Cole's home, studios, special exhibitions, and grounds are open May – October, Tuesday – Sunday, 9:30 am – 5:00 pm. For details, visit: www.thomascole.org. For upcoming events, visit: thomascole.org/events.

National Endowment for the Humanities Policy Statement

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