

THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



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Thomas Cole Site Announces the Exhibition “Contemporary Vistas - Cynthia Daignault: *Light Atlas*,” an Epic, Immersive, Landscape Painting Installation Inspired by Thomas Cole

The Exhibition Composed of 360 Landscape Paintings, 8x10 Inches Each, Emerged from a Road Trip by the Artist Across the United States

Catskill, NY – May 27, 2026 – [Updated June 18, 2026] The Thomas Cole National Historic Site announced today the exhibition “Contemporary Vistas - Cynthia Daignault: *Light Atlas*,” an immersive installation by award-winning artist Cynthia Daignault, inspired by Thomas Cole (1801-1848), of 360 landscape paintings, 8x10 inches each, created on a road trip across the United States. The exhibition, which will run from June 20 through November 1, 2026, will be presented in the reconstructed 1846 New Studio building, designed by Thomas Cole. The artwork is being loaned by the Art Bridges Collection.



Cynthia Daignault, *Light Atlas*, 2014-2017, oil on linen, 360 canvases, each 8 x 10 in. Art Bridges Collection. Photography Edward C. Robinson III.

Light Atlas functions as a portrait of the land that Cynthia Daignault encountered on a nine-month road trip in 2014, following the outer perimeter of the contiguous United States. Reflecting on the numerous male artists that had famously taken cross-country trips in the 19th and 20th centuries in the name of their art, she questioned the relative absence of women undertaking similar creative adventures from dominant historical narratives. She stopped about every 25 miles, capturing the view from her truck window with a sketch or a photograph.

She used those images to create the 360 canvases of *Light Atlas*, which reference the 360 degrees of a complete circle. The paintings all depict scenes of the landscape awakening

from winter in order to establish a sense of new life. This consistent tone allows the work to present the factories, farms, rivers, deserts, cities, and forests of the United States in a unified and hopeful light.

“Thomas Cole painted the nature of America, and in this exhibition Cynthia Daignault is inspired by his legacy to depict 360 instances of America’s landscape, as she crossed the country,” said Maura O’Shea, Executive Director of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. “We’re excited to be able to present this exhibition in the reconstructed studio that Thomas Cole designed for himself and in which he created that legacy in the latter years of his life.”

“Cynthia Daignault’s *Light Atlas* is an extraordinary and evocative artwork, one that places viewers at the center of an immersive portrait of the nation’s diverse landscape,” said Amanda Malmstrom, Associate Curator of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. “Inspired by Thomas Cole’s legacy, Daignault expands the story of American landscape painting by placing a woman’s journey at its center, inviting us to reconsider whose perspectives and whose stories have been traditionally included in the history of American art.”

Cynthia Daignault is the recipient of numerous awards, including a 2019 Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant, a 2011 Rema Hort Foundation Award, and a 2010 MacDowell Artist Fellowship. Her work has been featured in recent institutional exhibitions including *The Living End: Painting and Other Technologies, 1970-2020* at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, IL; *Ordinary People: Photorealism and the Work of Art since 1968* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; and *Soft Water Hard Stone*, the 2021 New Museum Triennial, NY. ICA Boston, MA, will present a major solo museum exhibition, debuting a new monumental work by Cynthia Daignault on the Valley of Yosemite, from August 27, 2026, to January 18, 2027.

Cynthia Daignault’s work is in numerous public collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Walker Art Center, the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Dallas Museum of Art, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. She has presented solo exhibitions and projects at many major museums and galleries, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, MASS MoCA, the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, the Brooklyn Museum of Art, and White Columns.

This exhibition “Contemporary Vistas - Cynthia Daignault: *Light Atlas*” is part of a broader initiative of the Thomas Cole Site titled “Thomas Cole: Painting the Nature of America.” This year, the 250th anniversary of the nation’s birth, is an appropriate time to recall the pivotal role that Cole played in creating the visual identity of the young nation. From October 26 to November 4, 1825, the display of three paintings by Cole – in the windows of Colman’s bookstore on Broadway near Fulton Street in Manhattan – changed the course of American art. The three paintings became an immediate success when purchased by renowned painters John Trumbull and William Dunlap and engraver Asher

Durand. The display launched Cole's career and gave birth to what is now known as the Hudson River School of landscape painting. Cole's work gave America a visual identity reflected in the still-vibrant concept "America the Beautiful."

Thomas Cole: Painting the Nature of America at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site is supported by The National Endowment for the Humanities: Democracy demands wisdom. Made possible in part by Hickory Foundation; With public funds from the Greene County Legislature through the Greene County Cultural Fund, administered in Greene County by CREATE Council on the Arts; New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature; Jennifer Krieger and Eric Siegel; National Trust Insurance, LLC; Art Bridges; Maurice D. Hinchey Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area; The Tryon Family Foundation; Anne and Fred Osborn III / The EASTER Foundation; Bank of Greene County Charitable Fund; Columbia Memorial Health; BST & Co. CPAs, LLP; and Eli Wilner & Company.



Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this exhibition do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Thomas Cole National Historic Site

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site showcases the life and work of Thomas Cole (1801-1848), whose American landscape painting defines an enduring visual identity for the nation. Inspired by the natural beauty that surrounds the site, Cole founded the influential Hudson River School art movement. The site's six-acre campus in Catskill, NY, includes Cole's home and two studio buildings; the Cole Center, a new visitor center designed by Architectural Digest 100 Stephen Shadley; gardens and grounds with panoramic views of the Catskill Mountains; and a scenic walkway over the Hudson River connecting the site with Olana, the historic home of artist and Cole student Frederic Church. The Thomas Cole Site hosts exhibitions as well as art-making activities and innovative school and public programs. Visitors experience first-hand the themes that Cole explored, from the power of art to landscape preservation to the restorative properties of nature. The Thomas Cole Site is a National Historic Landmark and an affiliated area of the National Park System, and it operates as an independent 501c3 nonprofit organization.

Visitor Information

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site is open year-round, and hours vary by season. For details see: thomascole.org/visit. The grounds are open every day for free from dawn to dusk. Keep in touch on Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube at [@thomascolesite](https://www.instagram.com/thomascolesite).