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Leading Thomas Cole Scholar Alan Wallach, Ph.D., Will Deliver the 14th Annual Raymond Beecher Lecture Hosted by the Thomas Cole National Historic Site.

Dr. Wallach Will Explore Cole's *Course of Empire* Series and How it Embodies the Artist's Concern for the Future of the United States.

Catskill, NY – November 5, 2019 – The Thomas Cole National Historic Site announced today that its 14th Annual Raymond Beecher Lecture will be delivered by Alan Wallach, Ph.D, Ralph H. Wark Professor of Art and Art History and Professor of American Studies Emeritus, College of William & Mary. The lecture entitled, "What's In a Name? Interpreting Thomas Cole's *Course of Empire*," will explore Cole's epic series of paintings *The Course of Empire*, 1835-1836, and how it embodies the artist's concern for the future of the United States. The lecture will take place on Sunday, November 24 at 2 pm in Thomas Cole's New Studio at the Thomas Cole Site in Catskill, New York.



Thomas Cole, *The Course of Empire: Destruction*, 1836, 33 ¼ x 63 ¼ in.
New-York Historical Society, Gift of The New-York Gallery of the Fine Arts.

The Course of Empire is a series of five large-scale paintings in which Cole depicted the rise and fall of a civilization. The paintings are: *The Savage State*, *The Arcadian State*, *The Consummation of Empire*, *Destruction* and *Desolation*. The series is in the collection of The New-York Historical Society, which notes that Thomas Cole's distinctly pessimistic vision differed from that of many of his American peers, who thought that the future of the United States was limitless.

Scholars have long puzzled over the series, but in recent decades much has been learned about what motivated Cole and how he was influenced by the British poet Lord Byron (1788-1824) and British artist J. M. W. Turner (1775-1851), who like Cole were fascinated by the theme of the rise and fall of empire. Dr. Wallach will illuminate what Cole intended the series to mean at a time when the United States was still a young nation facing tumultuous times not unlike today. Tickets can be purchased in advance at thomascole.org/events and as available at the lecture for \$10 for members and \$12 general admission.

Dr. Wallach is a specialist in the art of Thomas Cole and the Hudson River School. Dr. Wallach received his doctorate in art history from Columbia University, New York. He co-curated the major exhibition "Thomas Cole: Landscape into History" (1994-95) that was presented at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Wadsworth Atheneum, and the Brooklyn Museum. Dr. Wallach was author of the principal essay in the accompanying book published by Yale University Press and the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Dr. Wallach is the author of *Exhibiting Contradiction: Essays on the Art Museum in the United States* (1998), co-editor of *Transatlantic Romanticism* (2015), and his writing has appeared in *The Art Bulletin*, *American Art*, *Art History*, *Art in America*, *Artforum*, *Harvard Design Magazine*, etc.

Ongoing Exhibitions in the Thomas Cole Site's 1815 Main House

- + *The Parlors*, an immersive experience with the artist's own decorative painting on the walls and multimedia installations that convey his passionate concern for the environment.
- + *Mind Upon Nature: Thomas Cole's Creative Process*, an exhibition featuring Cole's original paintings, sketches, palettes, and other unique objects.

Special Exhibition in the Thomas Cole Site's 1815 Main House

- + *SHI GUORUI: Ab/Sense-Pre-Sense* (through December 1), a contemporary exhibition of large-scale landscape photographs inspired by Thomas Cole and created using the camera obscura process by international artist Shi Guorui.

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site is an international destination presenting the original home and studios of Thomas Cole, the founder of the nation's first major art movement, now known as the Hudson River School of painting. Located in the Hudson Valley, the site includes the 1815 Main House; Cole's 1839 Old Studio; the recently reconstructed New Studio building; and panoramic views of the Catskill Mountains. It is a National Historic Landmark and an affiliated area of the National Park System. The Thomas Cole Site's activities include guided and self-guided tours, special exhibitions of both 19th-century and contemporary art, printed publications, lectures, extensive online programs, activities for school groups, the Cole Fellowship program, free community events, and innovative public programs such as the Hudson River School Art Trail—a map and website that enable people to visit the places in nature that Cole painted – and the Hudson River Skywalk – a new walkway connecting the Thomas Cole Site with Frederic Church's Olana over the Hudson River. The goal of all programs at the Thomas 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.

Visitor Information

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site is open Friday through Sunday from November 8 through December 15 for guided tours offered on the hour from 11 am through 3 pm. Hours vary by season. For details see: www.thomascole.org/visit. Keep in touch on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter at @thomascolesite.