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The Thomas Cole National Historic Site Announces the Gift of a Thomas Cole Masterpiece from Susan Warner, Chairman of the Board of the Warner Foundation

The Painting – One of Thomas Cole’s Earliest – Will be the Focus of an October 20 Virtual Lecture by the Director of the Birmingham Museum of Art

Catskill, NY – October 8, 2020 – The Thomas Cole National Historic Site announced today the gift of a Thomas Cole masterpiece from Susan Warner, Chairman of the Board of the Warner Foundation, founded by the late, legendary art collector Jack Warner. The painting, *Hunters in a Landscape*, 1824-25, is a gift from her personal collection and is one of Thomas Cole’s earliest works. The painting dates from the period of time when his paintings were first displayed on Lower Broadway in Manhattan, launching his career and the style of painting now known as the Hudson River School, which became the nation’s first major art movement.



Thomas Cole, *Hunters in a Landscape*, 1824-25, 28 1/4" x 35 1/2", Oil on canvas, Thomas Cole National Historic Site, Gift of Dr. Susan Gates Austin Warner

The Warner Foundation and Susan Warner have loaned two additional Thomas Cole paintings to the historic site: *Autumn Landscape (View of Chocorua Peak)*, 1827-28, and *Catskill Mountain House*, 1845-48. Dr. Warner joined the Board of Directors of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site in July 2020.

Hunters in a Landscape will be the focus of a virtual lecture on Tuesday, October 20, by Dr. Graham C. Boettcher, the R. Hugh Daniel Director of the Birmingham Museum of Art in Birmingham, Alabama. Dr. Boettcher has held fellowships at the Yale University Art Gallery, Amon Carter Museum of American Art, and Terra Foundation Summer Residency in Giverny. A native of Bellingham, Washington, he received his B.A. and

Ph.D. from Yale University, and an M.A. from the University of Washington. The event is free, but reservations are required. Information is available at www.thomascole.org/events.

Hunters in a Landscape depicts two figures in a landscape with a lake in the background and a gnarled tree illuminated in the foreground. Cole frequently painted a dramatic dead tree in the foreground of his major works, including one of his best-known paintings, *The Oxbow*, 1836, and it has been interpreted by scholars as a reference to the destruction of the landscape that Cole witnessed and advocated strongly against. *Hunters in a Landscape* – at nearly three feet wide – is now the largest Thomas Cole painting owned by the Thomas Cole National Historic Site.

Another Cole painting that is notable for its size is *Autumn Landscape*, one of the largest paintings that Thomas Cole made in the 1820s. The work is also regarded as an early self-portrait, as it includes a young man with similar characteristics to Cole's self-portrait in *The Oxbow*. In *Autumn Landscape*, the figure reclines beside a stream in a contemplative position with a large book or painter's box. New Hampshire's Mount Chocorua is in the distance, and Cole divides the composition into distinct zones, as he would in later works.

Catskill Mountain House features an iconic image of the Hudson River Valley in the mid-19th century – that of the Catskill Mountain House hotel. Thomas Cole created the painting for the Beach family, who owned the large and luxurious Catskills hotel, which stood on Table Rock, offering visitors a spectacular panoramic vista of the Hudson River and Valley. Cole had mixed views about the hotel's success, however. On the one hand, he considered it a "place where nature offers a feast of higher holier enjoyment." On the other hand, he lamented the tourism, writing, "There was much company & as usual in such places few that enjoyed the magnificence that nature spread around them."

"The staff and trustees at the Thomas Cole Site are thrilled with Susan Warner's extraordinary commitment to our organization through this magnificent gift, the accompanying loaned paintings, and – most of all – her personal involvement," said Elizabeth B. Jacks, Executive Director of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. "Together they constitute a spectacular contribution for which we are extremely grateful. *Hunters in a Landscape* is of enormous importance, as one of Thomas Cole's earliest paintings. When displayed with *Autumn Landscape* and *Catskill Mountain House*, as it will be when our 1815 Main House re-opens in the Spring, the resulting assemblage of masterpieces should not be missed."

The 1815 Main House is currently being reinterpreted and reinstalled through a major grant from the Henry Luce Foundation, which is making possible a completely new presentation of the second floor of the artist's home as well as the restoration of Thomas Cole's art gallery on the first floor. The newly reinstalled collection-based exhibition, *Thomas Cole's Creative Process*, will prominently feature the three paintings from Susan Warner and the Warner Foundation. The 1815 Main House represents the

only surviving interior decoration by the artist and his life-long passion for design, born of experiences in England and Italy. Its ensemble of restored, decorated rooms is a previously unknown work by the artist – one of both national and international importance. The project is made possible by the Henry Luce Foundation, Institute of Museum and Library Services, National Park Service, Gerry Charitable Trust, and the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area and the Hudson River Valley Greenway.

Susan Warner became involved with the Thomas Cole Site when her painting *Autumn Landscape* was included in the site's 2019 exhibition titled *Thomas Cole's Refrain: The Paintings of Catskill Creek*. Later that year, the Warner Foundation announced a partnership with the Thomas Cole Site to create a digital learning experience that will continue Jack Warner's passion for fostering an appreciation of early American history through American art. The multi-year project is a collaboration between a team of scholars and digital experts and the Thomas Cole Site's Education Committee. A study conducted prior to the pandemic found that 80 percent of teachers wish it were easier to find digital games that align to curriculum standards – a need that has increased dramatically since that time. The project will address this pressing need by creating an engaging online experience that can be used by teachers in classrooms and by children in their homes across the country.

Jack and Susan Warner have played a pivotal role in collecting and appreciating Hudson River School landscape paintings. Among their many honors and achievements, they were given the Frederic Church Award in 2010 and recognized by the naming of the Jack and Susan Warner Gallery of Hudson River School paintings in the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of American Art.

Susan Warner's gift of *Hunters in a Landscape* is the latest in a series of major gifts of artwork to the Thomas Cole Site's permanent collection. The gifts include, among others, the following (in reverse chronological order): Sarah Cole oil painting *Voyage of Life: Old Age, after Thomas Cole*, 2018 gift of E. W. Doucet and Mary Hallock; original drop-leaf table from Thomas Cole's residency, 2018 gift of Stuart P. and Sue Feld; Thomas Cole oil painting *Tower by Moonlight*, 2014 gift of David and Laura Grey; Thomas Cole watercolor *Ruined Castle on a Rock*, Thomas Cole oil sketch *Reflection*, and Thomas Cole oil painting *Catskill Mountain Landscape*, all 2014 gifts of Richard Sharp; original painted door thought to have been used in Cole's Old Studio, 2012 Gift of Alexander Gallery; Thomas Cole oil sketch *Catskill Landscape*, 2011 gift of the Seattle Art Museum; Thomas Cole original guitar and case, 2010 gift of Richard Sharp; Thomas Cole original paint brushes, 2008 gift of St. Julian Fishburne and Arthur Anderson; Thomas Cole oil sketch *Study of a Man's Head*, 2007 gift of Irwin and Susan Richman; and Thomas Doughty oil painting and Albert Bierstadt oil painting, facilitated by Cynthia S.H. Bowers.

ONGOING EXHIBITION at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site

+ *The Pollinator Pavilion*: A new walk-in public artwork created by Mark Dion and Dana

Sherwood that offers visitors an opportunity to encounter hummingbirds and other local pollinators. The outdoor sculpture is free and open daily from dawn to dusk.

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 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; 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 and others painted, and the Hudson River Skywalk, a scenic 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, the need for public art museums, and our conception of nature as a restorative power—are historic and timely, providing the opportunity to connect to audiences with insights that are highly relevant to their own lives.

VISITOR INFORMATION:

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