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SENATOR CHARLES SCHUMER VISITS THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE TO UNVEIL NEWLY DISCOVERED DECORATIVE PAINTING BY COLE

The Thomas Cole Site Has Applied For Federal Funding to Restore the East and West Parlors Where the Wall Painting Has Been Discovered

Catskill, NY – July 1, 2015 – Senator Charles Schumer today visited the Thomas Cole National Historic Site to unveil newly discovered decorative painting by Thomas Cole, the seminal 19th-century artist who is considered the founder of the Hudson River School of landscape painting, the nation's first major art movement. The decorative painting adorning the walls of the East and West Parlors was discovered during a paint analysis of the walls of the 1815 Main House that was Thomas Cole's home.

The painting was executed by Thomas Cole in approximately 1836 when he was engaged with redecorating the Parlours with new carpeting, furnishings, and painted finishes. Around the year 1900, the painted areas were covered up with common wall paint and forgotten. It was a dramatic surprise when the internationally renowned paint analyst Matthew Mosca, under the direction of the historic interiors specialist Jean Dunbar, discovered the hand-painted details in October 2014. Expecting to find a solid color, Mosca instead painstakingly uncovered a fragment of approximately 12 inches square in each Parlour, revealing details such as folds of drapery, a thorny branch, and geometric elements such as a Greek Key. The painting is believed to continue around the entire perimeter of each room, up near the ceiling, as a frieze.

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site has applied for two federal grants to restore the entire first floor including both the East and West Parlors. The grants would support the overall restoration, the restoration and reconstruction of the decorative painting throughout the rooms, and the creation of an interactive multimedia exhibition to enhance the visitor experience. A grant request of \$460,000 has been made to the National Endowment for the Humanities; a separate grant request of \$150,000 has been made to the Institute for Museum and Library Services. Funding announcements will be in August and September, respectively.

This project continues and expands on 10 years of interpretation at the Historic Site focusing on Cole's

creative process – from the exploration and sketching that took place outdoors in nature to the composition and execution that took place indoors in the studio. The new exhibits will explore the personal and societal influences on Cole’s art-making, providing the context for understanding the art and this formative period in American culture.

“We are thrilled that Senator Schumer could join us in unveiling this newly discovered work by Thomas Cole,” said Betsy Jacks, Director of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. “Thomas Cole’s home has always been a magical place, but our recent discovery of Cole’s own hand-painted designs on the walls turns this 1815 house into a work of art by an American master. The painstaking work of the paint analyst has so far revealed a few tantalizing fragments, and immediately we made it a priority to find the funds to reveal the full design. We are so grateful to Senator Schumer for his support for this exciting project.”

In 2014 the TCNHS was awarded an NEH Planning Grant to work with scholars, designers and stakeholders to map out a new visitor experience at the historic site. The resulting plans call for not only restoring the original 1836 interiors with the correct wall coverings, floor coverings, etc., but also allowing visitors to enter them and participate in the engaging narrative of the artist’s life. For the last five years, the TCNHS has been working with the historic interiors consultant Jean Dunbar to research and write a Furnishings & Finishes Plan for the Main House. During 2014, Ms. Dunbar supervised a paint analysis of the interior walls and trim and compiled cost estimates for the manufacture and installation of wall coverings and floor coverings.

The pending federal funding would pay for the complete restoration of the East Parlour and West Parlour of the 1815 Main House and, at the same time, remove the velvet ropes that separate visitors from the spaces and the story, infuse the rooms with interactive exhibits, and transform the visitor experience. The restoration will include a return visit from Matthew Mosca to reveal a much larger area of the decorative painting in both the East and West Parlours, restoration and preservation of the revealed areas, a multi-media presentation in the East Parlour to show how the room would have looked in Cole’s time, and a recreation of the entire painted frieze in the West Parlour.

Senator Schumer’s visit coincided with a current landmark exhibition that the Thomas Cole Site is co-hosting (through November 1st) with Olana, the nearby historic home and landscape of Frederic Church, Cole’s student and the Hudson River School’s leading practitioner. That exhibition, “River Crossings: Contemporary Art Comes Home,” presents contemporary art to highlight the pivotal role that the two historic properties – and the artists who lived and worked there – played in shaping American culture. It represents the first time since the 19th century that contemporary artists have been invited to present work in the context of the historic rooms and the landscapes of the two properties. It is also the first time that these two sites have collaborated on such a major scale to present a two-venue exhibition that crosses the Hudson River.

The “River Crossings” exhibition is curated by Stephen Hannock, the celebrated painter, and Jason Rosenfeld, PhD, the art historian who recently curated two enormously popular exhibitions at Tate Britain in London and the National Gallery in Washington, DC. The artists whose work is included in the exhibition are Romare Bearden, Elijah Burgher, Chuck Close, Will Cotton, Gregory Crewdson, Lynn Davis, Jerry Gretzinger, Don Gummer, Duncan Hannah, Stephen Hannock, Valerie Hegarty, Angie Keefer, Kara Hamilton, Kianja Strobert, Charles LeDray, Maya Lin, Frank Moore, Elizabeth

Murray, Rashaad Newsome, Thomas Nozkowski, Stephen Petegorsky, Martin Puryear, Cindy Sherman, Sienna Shields, Kiki Smith, Joel Sternfeld, Letha Wilson, and Elyn Zimmerman, in addition to selected complementary work by Thomas Cole and Frederic Church from the permanent collections.

More information on the “River Crossings” exhibition is available at www.rivercrossings.org. Major funding for “River Crossings” was provided by The Moore Charitable Foundation, the New York State Council on the Arts, New York State’s Empire State Development and the I♥NY Division of Tourism under Governor Andrew Cuomo’s Regional Economic Development Council Initiative, Tiger and Caroline Williams and The Bay & Paul Foundations. Additional support is provided by Ed Herrington, Inc., the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, the Village of Catskill, the County Initiative Program of the Greene County Legislature administered by the Greene County Council on the Arts, the Columbia County Tourism Department, Jennifer Krieger, and Chas Miller. The companion book and related public programs were funded by Tiger and Caroline Williams, Furthermore: a program of the J. M. Kaplan Fund, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

About the Thomas Cole National Historic Site

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site is the place where American art began, as it is the home of Thomas Cole (1801-1848), the founder of the Hudson River School – the first major art movement of the United States. Cole’s landscape paintings encompassed a new-found awe for the majesty of the American landscape, and they sparked the longest-running art movement in American history, including more than 100 artists in the period between 1825 and about 1870. Today, the National Historic Site welcomes thousands of visitors each year. Thomas Cole’s original easels and art-making tools are on view in his “Old Studio”, and a film about Cole and the Hudson River School can be seen in the visitor center. Visitors especially enjoy the panoramic view from the west porch to the Catskill Mountains, which remains strikingly similar to Thomas Cole’s paintings of the same view. Current programs and events can be found on the website, www.thomascole.org.

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