

## New Exhibition: Thomas Cole's "Sketch" Paintings STUDIES IN OIL ILLUSTRATE THE ARTIST'S CREATIVE PROCESS



Thomas Cole, *Indians Viewing Landscape*, 1827. Private collection



Thomas Cole, *Kaaterskill Falls*.  
Graham Williford Foundation for American Art, TX

CATSKILL, NY - The Thomas Cole National Historic Site will launch the 2008 season with an exhibition of rarely seen "oil sketches" by Thomas Cole featuring studies for several well known Cole paintings including the study for his iconic painting of Kaaterskill Falls. This exhibition is the first to concentrate on the oil sketch aspect of Thomas Cole's work and will include over twenty artworks, as well as evocative instruments of his craft including his paint brushes, traveling sketch box, and palettes still covered with paint. In addition, the exhibition will feature oil sketches by several of Cole's best known contemporaries and followers including Sanford Gifford and Frederic Church. Many of the artworks are on loan from private collections and therefore have rarely been seen by the public.

The opening event on May 4th will feature a talk by the Chief Curator of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Eleanor Jones Harvey, at 2 pm. The talk, \$7 for non-members and \$5 for members, will be preceded by a free viewing of the exhibition from 10 am to 2 pm. Dr. Harvey was the curator of the acclaimed exhibition "The Painted Sketch: American Impressions from Nature, 1830-1880" and author of the accompanying catalogue that is now out of print and highly sought. This event and exhibition offers a grand homecoming of works by Thomas Cole, and rare opportunity to see the artist's paintings in his home.

"What a joy to see so many Thomas Cole paintings at the Thomas Cole Historic Site! We are delighted to be able to explore this fascinating and less-known aspect of the artist's creative process," said Elizabeth Jacks, the historic site's executive director.

The sketch paintings included in the show are relatively quick studies in oil, either completed outdoors (often called "en plein air") or in the studio, to work out composition or detail. Most of the paintings were not intended by the artist to be displayed publicly, but were instead used to record a view or explore ideas that could be incorporated into a larger painting. Thus they provide a fascinating window into the artist's thoughts and creative process.

The exhibition is part of a larger project to explore Thomas Cole's creative process through a site-wide interpretive exhibition that is funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The installation, which includes a short film for the site's visitor center as well as educational computer programs, will open in phases. A portion of the computer programs will be available in the visitor center starting in May 2008, and the film will premiere in May 2009. This project will advance the public's knowledge of the origins of the Hudson River School, an art movement that dominated American visual arts for the 50 years, between 1825 and 1875.

After opening day, through from October 26th, the exhibition will be on view as part of the regular guided tour of Cedar Grove. Tickets for the tour are \$7 per person. Tours are offered on the hour from Thursday through Sunday, 10 am to 4 pm, with the last tour departing at 3 pm. Tickets can be purchased in the Visitor Center at Cedar Grove, also open Thursday through Sunday. Each tour is limited to 12 people, and admission is first-come-first-served.

**Directions:**

Cedar Grove is located at 218 Spring Street in Catskill, New York, near the western entrance to the Rip Van Winkle Bridge, with easy access from the New York State Thruway, Exit 21.

**About Thomas Cole**

Long regarded as the founder of America's first art movement, known as the Hudson River School, Thomas Cole (1801-1848) is a central figure in the development of American culture. When Cole made his first trip up the Hudson River in 1825, American cultural leaders were searching for something distinctly American to establish the nation's own culture as separate from that of Europe. Thomas Cole found it in the Catskill Mountain wilderness, which came to symbolize the unspoiled character of the new nation. Lionized during his lifetime and celebrated by a generation of artists who followed in his footsteps, Cole is now widely regarded as the father of American landscape painting.

**About Cedar Grove**

Cedar Grove is the site where the artist Thomas Cole lived, worked, was married, and where he died at the age of 47. Today the site consists of the Federal style brick home (c. 1815) in which Thomas Cole resided with his family, as well as the artist's original studio building, on five landscaped acres with a magnificent view of the Catskill Mountains.

The exhibition is made possible with public funds from the Greene County Legislature through the Greene County Cultural Fund, administered in Greene County by the Greene County Council on the Arts; The New York State Council on the Arts, a State Agency; The Bank of Greene County Charitable Foundation; and the Bender Family Foundation. For more information, call (518) 943-7465 ext.3 or visit [www.thomascole.org](http://www.thomascole.org).