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The Thomas Cole National Historic Site Announces Exhibition of Paintings by 19th-Century Landscape Painter Sanford Gifford, Whose Work Was Inspired by Cole

The Exhibition Will Focus On His Paintings of the Catskills – With Works Loaned by Harvard, Yale, and Other Leading Institutions; It Is Curated by Dr. Kevin Avery, Senior Research Scholar at The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Sanford Gifford, *Ledge on South Mountain, in the Catskills*, ca. 1861-62. Oil on canvas, 12 7/8 x 10 3/4 in. Framed: 17 1/4 x 15 x 2 1/4 in. Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Gift of Sanford Gifford, M.D, 2006.1. Photo © Imaging Department, president and Fellows of Harvard College

Catskill, NY – The Thomas Cole National Historic Site announced today its upcoming exhibition *Sanford R. Gifford in the Catskills*, which will open to the public on Tuesday, May 2, in the gallery of Cole's 1846 "New Studio" and run through Sunday, October 29. Sanford Robinson Gifford (1823-1880) was an American landscape painter and one of the leading members of the Hudson River School, the first major art movement in America, which was founded by Thomas Cole (1801-1848). Gifford credited Cole's works with stimulating his interest in landscape painting.

The exhibition is curated by Kevin J. Avery, Senior Research Scholar at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and will be the first of this magnitude to be held so close to Gifford's childhood home in Hudson, NY, directly across the Hudson River from Catskill. The exhibition will consist of about 20 paintings, which are being loaned by such renowned institutions as the Yale University Art Gallery, Harvard University Art Museums, Portland Museum of Art, and Albany Institute of History and Art, as well as private collections, including those of the artist's descendants. The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue and is made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and the support of Michael Altman Fine Art & Advisory Services.

In 2003, Dr. Avery co-organized the major retrospective *Hudson River School Visions: The Landscapes of Sanford R. Gifford* for The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the National Gallery of Art. In the upcoming exhibition, he sharpens his focus on Gifford's paintings of the Catskills, the mountains and valleys near Catskill that so inspired Cole. Gifford's enchanting, seductive – sometimes even stark – interpretations of Kaaterskill Clove and Falls, High Peak and Round Top, as well as Hunter Mountain and the Hudson Valley prospect will be richly represented.

THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

“This exhibition brings to Catskill a remarkable set of paintings that were created by one of the leaders of the Hudson River School and that depict nearby views that can be visited today on the Hudson River School Art Trail,” said Elizabeth B. Jacks, Executive Director of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. “The reconstruction of Cole’s ‘New Studio’ unveiled last year, with its climate-controlled environment, made it possible for distinguished curator Dr. Kevin Avery to assemble these works and for the Site to secure their loan for this exquisite exhibition.”

Six of the views depicted in the Gifford paintings in the exhibition can be visited on the innovative walking-and-driving experience called the Hudson River School Art Trail (www.hudsonriverschool.org), which reveals nearby settings in the Hudson Valley where visitors can experience the same views that appear in 19th-century paintings by Hudson River School artists. Those six views are located in Greene and Ulster counties and are represented in 10 of the Gifford paintings in the exhibition.

The opening of the exhibition will coincide with the recently announced opening of a new immersive installation that combines technology and the meticulous historic restoration of the parlors in Cole’s 1815 Main House, just yards from the “New Studio.” The meticulous restoration has transformed the first floor of Cole’s home to his original design, as visitors in his day would have experienced it, and reveals the earliest-known interior decorative painting by an American artist. The technology will enable visitors to join the historic conversations that took place in the parlors of the home that so influenced the course of art in America.

VISIT:

Thomas Cole’s home, studios, and special exhibitions are open April 30 – October 29, 2017, Tues-Sun, 10-5pm.

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 visitors can tour his 19th-century home and grounds, and watch a film about Cole and the Hudson River School in the visitor center. Guests 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. The site is located at 218 Spring Street in Catskill, New York. Current programs and events can be found on the website, www.thomascole.org.

