

THOMAS COLE

NATIONAL
HISTORIC
SITE



2017 ANNUAL REPORT



Where American Art Was Born

VISION STATEMENT

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site will be the leading source for education and scholarship that inspires cultural and environmental awareness of the American landscape and the continuing impact of Thomas Cole and the Hudson River School.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site preserves and interprets the home and studios of Thomas Cole, the founder of the Hudson River School of painting, the nation's first art movement. Cole's profound influence on America's cultural landscape inspires us to engage broad audiences through innovative educational programs that are relevant today.



East Parlor in the Main House

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Betsy Jacks on Opening Day

Photo by Veronica Chewens

Dear Friends,

This year was a big chapter in our story to regenerate Thomas Cole's revolutionary creativity at the place where American art was born. As *The New York Times* observed, we are "not your mother's house tour." Thank you for being a part of this forward-thinking community.

The historic campus was buzzing all season long with the grand opening of new digital story-telling installations hidden within Thomas Cole's newly restored interior designs in the Main House; the second annual Hudson River School exhibition presented in the New Studio and curated by Kevin Avery, Senior Research Scholar at The Met; and a solo exhibition with world-renowned contemporary artist Kiki Smith as part of our annual exhibition series OPEN HOUSE: Contemporary Art in Conversation with Cole.

After nearly a decade of research, we unveiled The Parlors, an immersive experience that offers a new model for historic house museums. The installation in the first floor Parlors restores Cole's interior designs, including his own original decorative wall paintings that had previously been hidden beneath layers of modern paint, and employs technology to bring the artist's words to life.

In the recently reconstructed New Studio building, we presented the exhibition, *Sanford R. Gifford in the Catskills* that brought a curated selection of Gifford's masterful 19th-century landscape paintings back to the region that inspired them.

Together, we've accomplished so much. Thank you for supporting this organization in becoming a leading source for education and scholarship on American art.

Elizabeth B. Jacks
 Executive Director



Aerial view of the historic site



Thomas Cole Site Trustees and Staff

Photo by Veronica Chewens



Curator Kate Menconeri with Kiki Smith



School prog



Photo by Devin Pickering

THE THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE marks the birthplace of American art, as it was the home of the founder of the nation's first major art movement, now known as the Hudson River School. Located in the Hudson River Valley, the site includes Thomas Cole's 1815 home, his 1839 studio, and the recently reconstructed 1846 New Studio, with gardens and grounds overlooking a sweeping view of the Catskill Mountains. The site is an affiliate of the National Park Service and operates as a forward-thinking, independent nonprofit organization. Our vision is to be the leading source for education and scholarship on Thomas Cole and inspire cultural and environmental awareness of the American landscape.



A group of Thomas Cole Site Trustees at the Summer Party

Photo by Rob Shannon



2017-2018 Cole Fellows Madeline Conley, Michael Quitulsaca, Rowanne Dean & Adam Grimes



Installation view of Sanford R. Gifford in the Catskills

Photo © Peter Aaron/OTTO

EXHIBITIONS AND INSPIRATION

We presented two major exhibitions at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site in 2017 featuring 19th-century Hudson River School masterpieces and acclaimed contemporary art. Presented in the recently reconstructed New Studio building, our 19th-century exhibition series continued to grow with the exhibition *Sanford R. Gifford in the Catskills*. The show was curated by Kevin Avery, a Senior Research Scholar at The

Metropolitan Museum of Art and member of our National Council. Our exhibition was accompanied by a print publication authored by Dr. Avery, who also co-organized the 2003 major retrospective exhibition *Hudson River School Visions: The Landscapes of Sanford R. Gifford* for The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the National Gallery of Art. Our exhibition was the first to bring Gifford's paintings of the Catskills back to the region

that inspired them. Sanford R. Gifford (1823-1880) is from Hudson, NY, just across the river from the Thomas Cole Historic Site, and credits Cole's work as sparking his interest in landscape painting. The exhibition was made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts as well as Michael Altman Fine Art & Advisory Services, the Bank of Greene County, the Greene County Legislature through the County



Guests at opening of Kiki Smith: *From the Creek*



Kiki Smith with curator
Kate Menconeri at opening

Photo by Jennifer Morse



Installation view of Kiki Smith: *From the Creek*

Photo © Peter Aaron/OTTO

Initiative Program of the Greene County Council on the Arts and the Kindred Spirits Society of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. The accompanying catalogue was supported by the Barrie A. and Deedee Wigmore Foundation.

The second installment in our annual series OPEN HOUSE: Contemporary Art in Conversation with Cole featured a solo exhibition with the world-renowned artist Kiki Smith. *KIKI SMITH: From*

the Creek opened to exuberant crowds and was lauded in *The New York Times*. Smith's artwork in the exhibition was largely inspired by her experiences along Catskill Creek, Thomas Cole's favorite "haunt" and life-long muse. Noted American art critic Nancy Princenthal declared in *The New York Times* that none of the artwork "has been shown to better advantage." Smith worked with Exhibition Curator, Kate

Menconeri, to site over 25 artworks for the installation, which included a ten-foot tall jacquard tapestry, recent prints, and sculptures of bronze, aluminum and glass. The exhibition catalogue featured an essay by the curator and an exclusive interview with the artist.



Detail of East Parlor decorative painting by Thomas Cole



Associated Press filming conservator Margaret Saliske working in the West Parlor



West Parlor in the Main House

INTERPRETATION AND PRESERVATION

In 2017 we unveiled a project that was over a decade in the making. The Parlors is an immersive installation combining digital storytelling with the historic restoration of Thomas Cole's own interior designs throughout the first floor of the artist's home. Thomas Cole's interior designs include

newly discovered decorative paintings by Cole on the walls of his home, and the project is one of the first in the nation to create digital installations within the authentic historic spaces, not segmented off in a modern visitor center. The experience includes Cole's images and writings that

seem to come to life and immersive audio of the artists own words, given voice by the acclaimed actor Jamie Bell, pro bono, with thanks to Brian Swardstrom for introducing us to Jamie. The installation has captivated visitors of all ages and exposes both the driving force behind Cole's revolutionary



Photo © Peter Aaron/OTTO

creativity as well as the realities he faced as a professional artist with patrons to please.

The Parlors was developed with a team of scholars and specialists in the fields of art history, historic interiors, education and theatrical production including Jean Dunbar, Carrie Feder, Lisa Fox

Martin, Kate Menconeri, Warner Shook, Nancy Siegel, and Alan Wallach, led by the project manager Heather Paroubek and directed by Betsy Jacks. The digital installations were executed by Second Story, Inc. Jean Dunbar and Carrie Feder directed the historic restoration, which was implemented by historic

paint specialist Matthew Mosca and acclaimed conservator Margaret Saliske.

Major funding for The Parlors was provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities: Exploring the human endeavor, the Institute of Museum and Library Services MA-10-15- 0116-15, and by Empire State Development's I LOVE NEW YORK program under the Market NY initiative. Additional support provided by the Hudson River Valley Greenway, Herzog's of Kingston, Eli Wilner & Company of New York City, and Geoff Howell Studio.



Cole Fellow Madeline Conley with visitors on Community Day

EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY

2017 was the year we extended the annual Cole Fellowship Program from a six-month residency to a full year. We welcomed four talented rising scholars who all proceeded on to graduate programs in the arts: Madeline Conley, Rowanne Dean, Adam Grimes, and Michael Quituisaca. Madeline specialized in education at the historic site. Building on research by 2016 Cole Fellow Kathleen Brousseau

that was done in partnership with local school teachers and supported by The Bay & Paul Foundations, Madeline created engaging programs using American art and creative activities to teach core curriculum themes, such as American history and the Industrial Revolution. The programs were piloted in regional classrooms and at the historic site, doubling the number of school children that

we serve. Rowanne conducted extensive research on Thomas Cole's sister, Sarah Cole, and his daughter, Emily Cole, that will support future exhibitions and programs featuring the work of these artists from the collection. Adam gathered Cole's notes and sketches and studied them together with the finished paintings to illuminate Cole's creative process and artistic decisions. Michael



Photo by Jennifer Morse



Kevin Avery delivering Curator's Talk on *Sanford R. Gifford in the Catskills*



Cole Fellows with Annette Blaugrund at the New-York Historical Society



School programming at the historic site

gathered primary sources and conducted interviews to write a recent history of the historic site from when the Cole family sold the property in the 1970s through its transformation into a museum and historic site that opened to the public in 2001.

As part of the annual Sunday Salons lecture series, we invited scholars at the top of their fields to the historic site to present new

research on American art and landscape. The Sunday Salons featured Alan Wallach, Professor Emeritus at William & Mary; Lloyd DeWitt, Chief Curator of the Chrysler Museum of Art; Jean Dunbar, historic interiors expert; Matthew Mosca, historic paint specialist; and John F. McGuigan, Jr., independent scholar. Topics included the significance of Cole's interior designs, the

reinterpretation of the Main House, the Dutch influence on Cole and the Hudson River School, and Cole's transformative trip to Florence in 1831. In the spring, Dr. Kevin Avery delivered a Curator's Talk on our exhibition *Sanford R. Gifford in the Catskills* to a sold-out audience in Catskill, New York.



Guests under the tent at the Summer Party

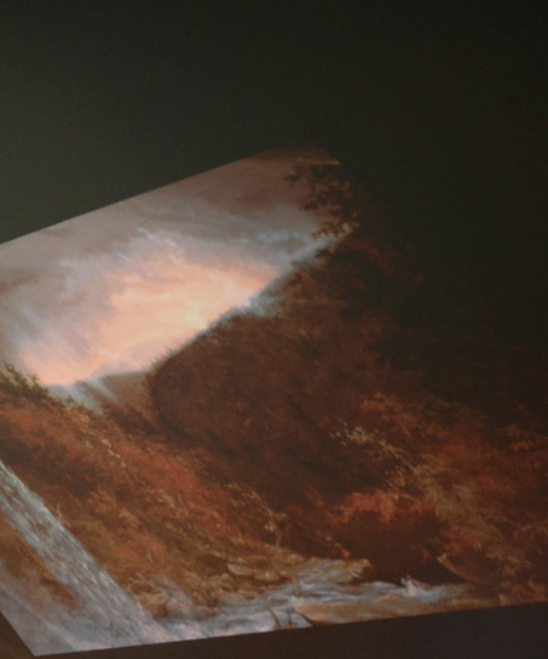
DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH

Our events really shone this year thanks to our community of supporters. Event sponsors, tickets and donations for the year totaled over \$190,000, a 38% increase from the previous year. Our Chairman Lisa Fox Martin hosted the annual Summer Party in June with her renowned gusto and grace at her home on the banks of the Hudson River, and Geoff Howell designed the stunning dinner tent décor

with Cole paintings floating above us. The holiday party was a night to remember with festive libations in the New Studio bedecked with holiday cheer by trustee Carrie Feder, followed by private dinner parties at the nearby homes of dear friends and neighbors.

This year with over \$600,000 in lead funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Institute of Museum and

Library Services, we completed the new digital installations and historic restoration of The Parlors in Thomas Cole's Historic Main House. We were also awarded a \$165,000 marketing grant from Empire State Development's I LOVE NEW YORK program under the Market NY initiative to get the word out about the new experience and drive tourism dollars to the region. Empire State

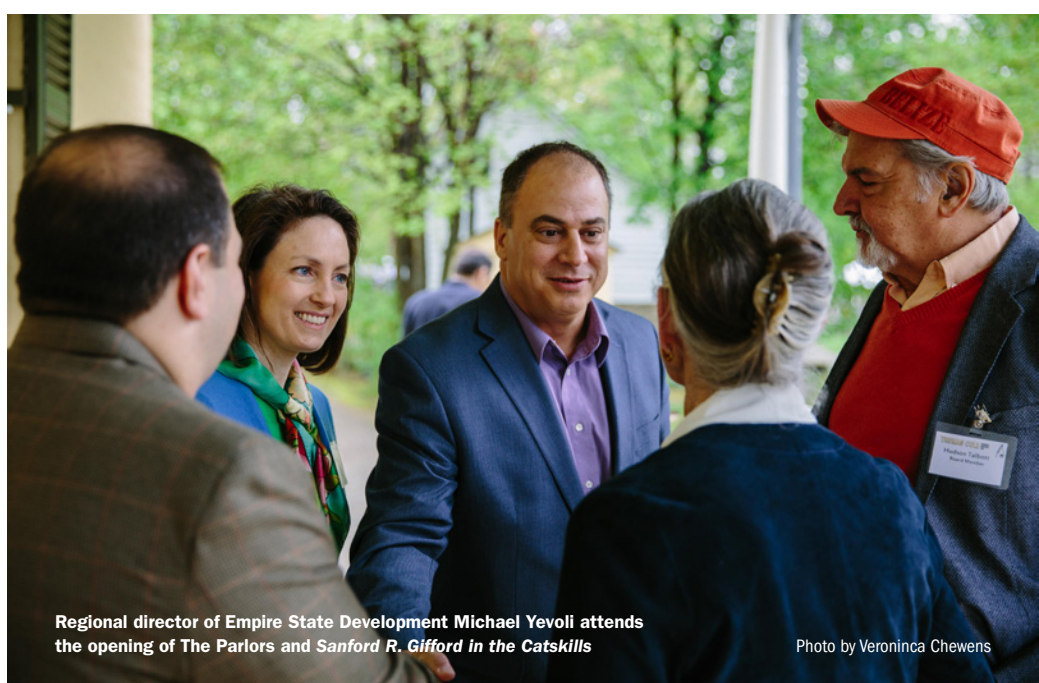


Guests at opening of Kiki Smith: *From the Creek*

Photo by Jennifer Morse



Photo by Rob Shannon



Regional director of Empire State Development Michael Yevoli attends the opening of *The Parlors* and *Sanford R. Gifford in the Catskills*

Photo by Veronica Chewens

Development also provided half a million dollars in support of the New Studio building, and we were thrilled to welcome Michael Yevoli, Capital Region Director of Empire State Development, to the grand opening of *The Parlors* and the opening of the second annual New Studio exhibition. The visitor response to our expanded programming was resoundingly positive: admissions increased by

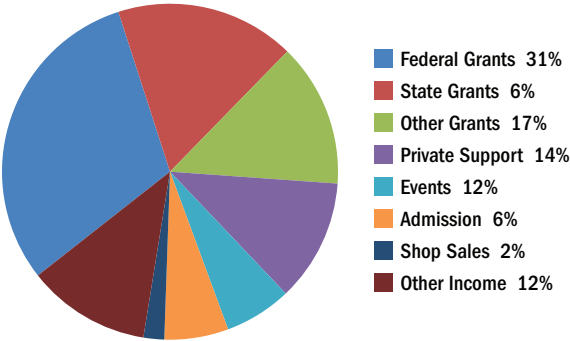
50% in just one year!

As previously announced, in 2014 we received a challenge grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to establish a \$1.2 million Program Endowment for educational programming in perpetuity. We are thrilled to share that we have secured over \$915,000 to date through fundraising and matching NEH funds, and met the matching deadline for the first three

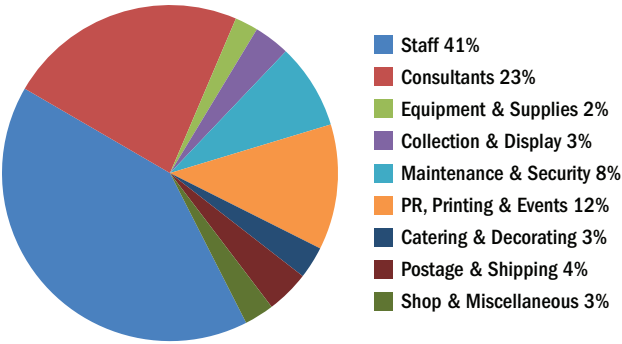
years of the five-year grant period. We reached this year's hurdle of raising \$300,000 — the largest of the challenges — with significant support from the Willow Springs Charitable Trust, the Walton Family Foundation, and an outpouring of donations pledged at the annual Summer Party to bring us over the finish line.

2017 SOURCES & USES OF FUNDS

Total Income \$1,794,813



Total Expenses \$1,211,315



Total income does not include unrealized market gains/losses. Excess of income over expenses reflects the establishment of a Program Endowment.



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Chairman Lisa Fox Martin on Opening Day

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James & Micaela Bulich & Hudson Talbott & friends at the Summer Party

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Nancey Rosensweig & Dan Arshack
at the Holiday Gathering

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Holiday Gathering

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 Geraldine & Oskar Weidel
 Joyce Weinstein
 Lois Whealey
 Jean Williams
 Cynthia Willis
 Barbara & Robert Willner
 Anna Winand
 Linda Wright
 Joan W. Young
 Judith Zink
 Joyce Zucker

“If the imagination is shackled, and nothing is described but what we see, seldom will anything truly great be produced.”

—THOMAS COLE

