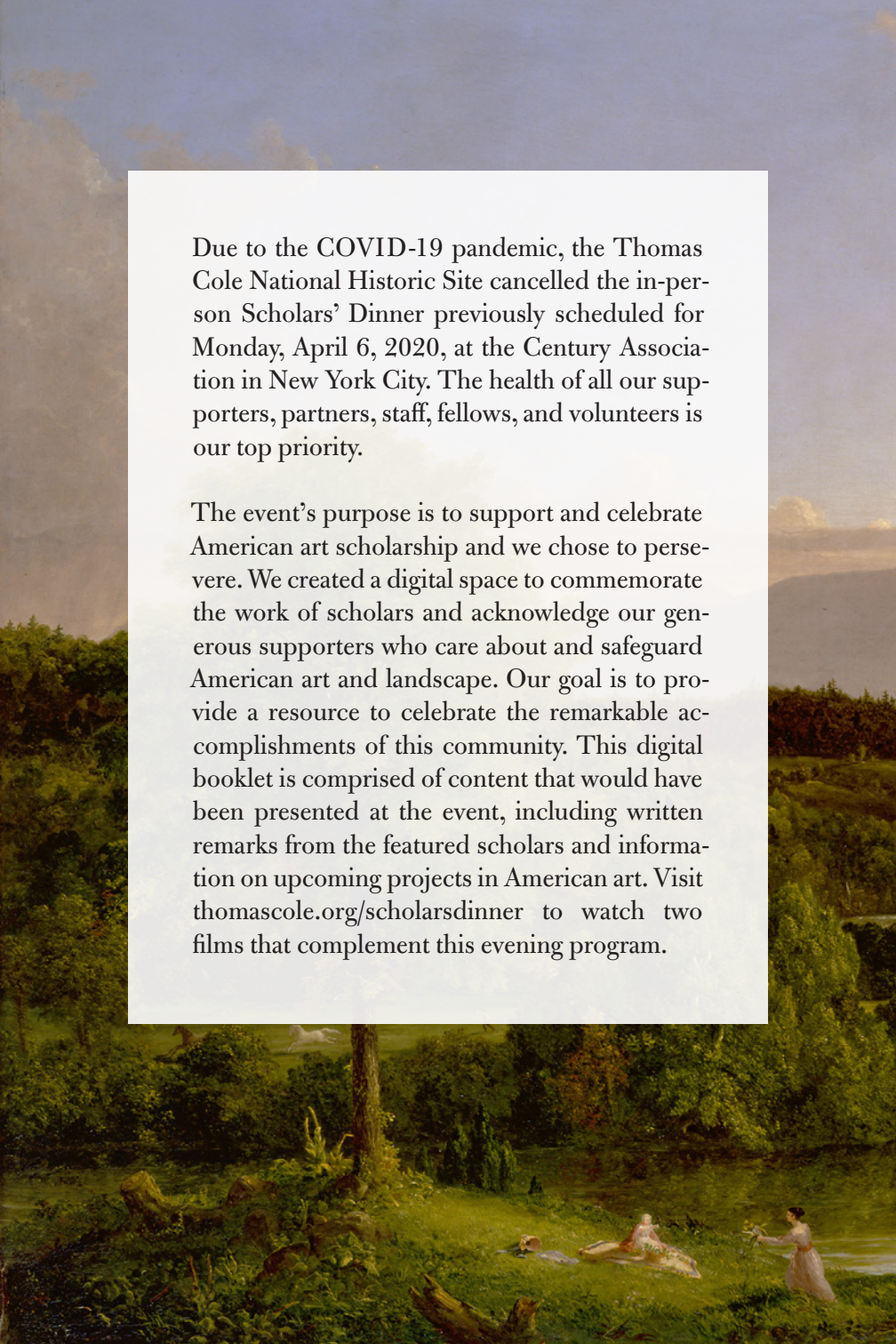


THE 2020  
SCHOLARS' DINNER  
DIGITAL PROGRAM




THOMAS COLE NATIONAL  
HISTORIC  
SITE

The background of the page is a Romantic-style landscape painting. It depicts a lush, green river valley. In the foreground, a woman in a light-colored dress stands on the right, looking towards the water. Further down the river, two other figures are visible, one sitting and one standing. The river flows through the center of the scene, surrounded by dense foliage and trees. In the distance, a white horse is visible on a path. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds, and the overall atmosphere is peaceful and idyllic.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Thomas Cole National Historic Site cancelled the in-person Scholars' Dinner previously scheduled for Monday, April 6, 2020, at the Century Association in New York City. The health of all our supporters, partners, staff, fellows, and volunteers is our top priority.

The event's purpose is to support and celebrate American art scholarship and we chose to persevere. We created a digital space to commemorate the work of scholars and acknowledge our generous supporters who care about and safeguard American art and landscape. Our goal is to provide a resource to celebrate the remarkable accomplishments of this community. This digital booklet is comprised of content that would have been presented at the event, including written remarks from the featured scholars and information on upcoming projects in American art. Visit [thomascole.org/scholarsdinner](http://thomascole.org/scholarsdinner) to watch two films that complement this evening program.





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# FEATURED SCHOLARS



## Morrison H. Heckscher

CURATOR EMERITUS OF THE AMERICAN WING  
THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

Morrison H. Heckscher joined The Metropolitan Museum in 1966 as a Chester Dale Fellow in the Prints Department. From 1968 to 1978, he was an Assistant Curator, Associate Curator, and Curator in The American Wing; from 1978 to 1998, he was Curator of American Decorative Arts. In 1998, he was appointed the Anthony W. and Lulu C. Wang Curator of American Decorative Arts. He assumed the Lawrence A. Fleischman Chairmanship of The American Wing in 2001, and held that position until his retirement in 2014.



## Graham C. Boettcher

R. HUGH DANIEL DIRECTOR  
BIRMINGHAM MUSEUM OF ART

Arriving at the Birmingham Museum in 2006, Graham Boettcher served variously as a postdoctoral fellow, curator of American art, chief curator, and deputy director prior to his appointment as director in 2017. Boettcher has held fellowships at the Yale University Art Gallery, Amon Carter Museum of American Art, and Terra Foundation Summer Residency in Giverny.



## Shannon Vittoria

RESEARCH ASSOCIATE IN THE AMERICAN WING  
THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

Shannon Vittoria received her Ph.D. in art history from the CUNY Graduate Center. Since joining the American Wing staff in 2015, she has contributed to several exhibitions, including *Thomas Cole's Journey: Atlantic Crossings*. She is co-curator of the forthcoming exhibition *Jules Tavernier and the Pomo Peoples* (fall 2021) and is currently developing a show on artists and the Arctic.

# 2 0 2 0 C O L E F E L L O W S



## Anne Comer

Anne received her B.A. from Bard College. Anne is researching digital education games. Her project will build on the site's education initiative using American art to teach American history in classrooms and homes across the country.



## Hampton Des Smith

Hampton received his B.A. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Hampton is researching the complex portrayal of Native Americans in Thomas Cole's paintings.



## Marissa Hamm

Marissa received her B.A. from The College of Wooster. Marissa is researching life at the Thomas Cole Site in the decades following Cole's death in 1848. Her project will inform future on-site interpretation of Thomas Cole's legacy.



## Alex McCarty

Alex McCarty received his B.A. from Santa Clara University. Alex is researching Thomas Cole's legacy as a proto-environmentalist and how to make the organization's operations more environmentally sustainable.

# R E M A R K S

BY MORRISON H. HECKSCHER

Thank you, Betsy. What wonderful work you and Lisa and everybody involved with Cedar Grove are doing! I am particularly pleased to participate in this (sadly only virtual) Scholars' Dinner because its purpose, to raise funds for the resident Cole Fellowship, is so closely aligned with my belief in the over-arching importance of mentoring the next generation. How else are the values we hold dear as curators, art historians, and preservationists to endure?

Betsy suggested that I begin by describing the defining moment when I knew that American art was to be my career. I can't do that. There was no eureka moment, just a gradual evolution. When I started out, "museum profession" was an oxymoron. It was still a field for amateurs. What I can say is that nobody has ever been more blessed with fine teachers and wise mentors than me. I owe my every success to them! Let me mention a few.

At Wesleyan, I first experienced the visceral thrill of direct contact with original works of art. There was an unforgettable year-long, hands-on, tutorial in the connoisseurship of old master prints with Heinrich Schwarz. A curator from the Albertina in Vienna, Heinrich was the first of many eminent European émigré scholars that I would be privileged to know. Then there were memorable madcap field trips around New England looking at American art and architecture with Professor Samuel Green. It was Sam who, at just the right moment, suggested that I apply for graduate study at Winterthur. That sounded intriguing, and it would allow me to put off the vexing question of a serious career in the real world! But I had not reckoned on the persuasive powers of Charles Montgomery, the charismatic head of the program there. It was he who in-

roduced me to the delightful mysteries of American furniture, and then insisted that I go on for a Ph.D. I chose Columbia to study under the mighty Rudolf Wittkower, but it was Adolf Placzek, beloved head of the famous Avery Architectural Library there, who became my true mentor and lifelong friend. A refugee from war-torn Vienna, he credited his management success to an insight learned as a private in the United States Army: "The troops can screw you." Before beginning my wonderful, fifty-year long sojourn in the American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum, I shared office space in the Print Department with retired curator A. Hyatt Mayor. I saw this brilliant, unfailingly generous and modest man as role model rather than mentor. Once I self-importantly offered to share a cab with him to an opening downtown. His reply: "I thought I'd take the bus." Ever since my preference has been public transportation.

Let me close with the most important mentors of all, my always supportive parents. When it appeared that I was heading toward a museum career, my father said I needed to talk to somebody "in the business." He arranged for me to meet Louis Madeira, Assistant Curator of Decorative Arts at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. I remember the gravel crunching as I drove into the courtyard in front of his house. The butler escorted me to a large drawing room, its walls lined with oils by the great impressionists. When Mr. Madeira appeared he said: "Well, young man, the one thing you need to know is that none of this – his arms circled the room – is from my five thousand a year at the PMA." Lots has changed since then, but the need to mentor the next generation of art museum professionals has never been greater. Carry on!



# REMARKS

BY GRAHAM C. BOETTCHER

It is an honor to be included in this year's Scholars' Dinner, and though we will not get to enjoy a delicious repast at The Century in the company of dear friends and colleagues until next year, I want to thank Betsy Jacks, as well as the trustees and National Council of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, for their tireless efforts to preserve the legacy of Thomas Cole and the Hudson River School, and to promote thriving scholarship in the field of American art. I am greatly encouraged by the roster of Cole Fellows, and look forward to celebrating their achievements at this dinner in the years to come.

As a German Studies major, I came to the study of American art somewhat late in the game: the final semester of my senior year at Yale, to be precise. Having exhausted all of the History of Art Department's offerings in German, Dutch, and Flemish art, I decided to join a friend in taking Jules Prown's survey of American art. With apologies to Elizabeth Eggington and Margaret Gibbs, despite Professor Prown's engaging lectures, the early limners didn't excite me much. By the time we got to Copley—the subject for which Prown is best known—I was completely enthralled, captivated by the sheen of the mahogany tabletops and blue silk dresses and the erudition that brought each work to life. However, it wasn't until we reached the nineteenth century that my interests were piqued beyond compare.

Having spent a semester studying Caspar David Friedrich and the previous summer on a travel fellowship visiting the locales he painted in Northern Germany, I couldn't help but notice the striking similarities between the landscapes of the German Romantics and the Hudson River School. Why did Cole's depictions of the Catskills look so much like Friedrich's

views of the Sächsische Schweiz? Could Church have known Friedrich's *Eismeer* when he painted *The Icebergs*? Professor Prown encouraged me to combine my background in German art and language with my newfound interest in American art and probe further. This good advice was ultimately heeded in the form of my master's thesis "God's First Temples: Pantheistic Constructions in Nineteenth-Century German and American Landscape," which I completed at the University of Washington in 1996.

Returning to Yale for my doctorate the following year, though Jules (grad students got the privilege of calling faculty by their first names!) had retired and his successor had not been named, he encouraged me to expand my horizons into American decorative arts with Ned Cooke. It was Tim Barringer who gave me my first taste of museum work, bringing me on as his research assistant for the Tate Britain exhibition *American Sublime: Landscape Painting in the United States, 1820-1880*. I was thrilled when Tim invited me to write the artist biographies for the catalogue, which remain to this day, the most English biographies of American artists ever written, recording each meeting with Ruskin, audience with Queen Victoria, and encounter with the work of Constable and Turner. This first foray into museum work proved intoxicating, and I shortly thereafter began working in the Yale Gallery, where I enjoyed the friend- and mentorship of Helen Cooper, Pat Kane, Robin Jaffee Frank, and Lisa Hodermarsky. Alas, I couldn't fully escape my German roots, like Jules, his successor Alex Nemerov encouraged me to capitalize upon my unconventional background, leading me to write my doctoral thesis in large part on the German-born American painter Emanuel Leutze. Today, I'm that guy the auction houses call when a Leutze surfaces,

and though I've been part of some exciting discoveries, I've also seen my fair share of clumsy replicas of *Washington Crossing the Delaware*.

Each of the individuals I've named—and many more that I haven't in the interest of brevity—encouraged my growth as an emerging scholar and museum professional, something which I've never forgotten and have tried to pay forward in supporting the next generation. I am in constant awe of the new and exciting directions our field is taking thanks to the influx of new voices and interdisciplinary approaches. What I've always cherished most about our little corner of the field, is the total collegiality, generosity of spirit, and collaborative nature of Americanists. We genuinely like one another and always have a good time when we're together. I sincerely look forward to when that will be possible.

# R E M A R K S

BY SHANNON VITTORIA

It is an honor to have been selected alongside my esteemed colleagues Morrison Heckscher and Graham Boettcher as a featured scholar in this year's program. Although we cannot be together today to celebrate the amazing work of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, this virtual program is a testament to their staff's commitment to fostering a community of American art scholars – a community that has helped to shape my own professional development and, thanks to all of your generous support, will continue to do so for the next generation.

Like Morrie, I never had a single “aha” moment and my path to American art was somewhat circuitous. Although I grew up visiting art museums in Los Angeles, I only began seriously studying art history as an undergraduate at New York University, where I benefited from the mentorship of several professors, notably Kenneth Silver, who encouraged me to pursue a Ph.D. in the field. At the time my interests were, to put it mildly, diverse: I wrote my senior honors thesis on Los Angeles-based feminist artists of the 1980s while applying to graduate school to study French Revolutionary painting. I was already well into my graduate studies at the City University of New York when I came to recognize my true passion for nineteenth-century American art, specifically landscape painting. With the incredible support of my advisor Katherine Manthorne, I decided to shift my focus across the Atlantic, leaving behind the cool classicism of David for the warm light of Cole and Church, Kensett and Moran.

Looking back on this decision, I realize now that it was driven as much by my interest in American art as it was by the community of scholars and curators I met along the way – individuals such as National Council members Elizabeth Korn-



REMARKS BY SHANNON VITTORIA

hauser and Tim Barringer, whose mentorship and encouragement of young scholars, including myself, provides a model for how we can support the next generation of American art historians. The Thomas Cole National Historic Site is similarly engaged in this important work and for this we can all be incredibly grateful.

## SCHOLARS WHO PLANNED TO JOIN US

**Susan Ball, Ph.D.**

FORMER DEPUTY DIRECTOR, THE BRUCE MUSEUM

FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, COLLEGE ART ASSOCIATION

Turning a paper given at the Law and Humanities conference at Stanford into an article, "Politicalizing Pride: Aesop and 17th Century European Politics."

**Tim Barringer, Ph.D.**

PAUL MELLON PROFESSOR IN THE HISTORY OF ART

YALE UNIVERSITY

Finishing a book *Broken Pastoral: Art and Music in Britain, Gothic Revival to Punk Rock* and his exhibition *Victorian Radicals* is on view at the Yale Center for British Art until May 10th.

**Annette Blaugrund, Ph.D.**

CONSULTING CURATOR THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE;

FORMER DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY MUSEUM

Published articles about Martin Johnson Heade and William Merritt Chase in *Fine Art Connoisseur* magazine (2019 & 2020); working with Franklin Kelly on an exhibition and catalogue for the Thomas Cole Site, forthcoming.

**Katelyn Crawford, Ph.D.**

THE WILLIAM CARY HULSEY CURATOR OF AMERICAN ART

BIRMINGHAM MUSEUM OF ART

Working on the exhibition *Caribbean Bound: American Colonial Painters in the Atlantic World*.

**Linda S. Ferber, Ph.D.**

SENIOR ART HISTORIAN & MUSEUM DIRECTOR EMERITA

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Serving as volume editor for the publication of papers given at the symposium organized by the Frick Center for the History of Collecting: *Made in the USA: Collecting American Art during the Long Nineteenth Century*.

## SCHOLARS WHO PLANNED TO JOIN US

### Margaret K. Hofer

VICE PRESIDENT & MUSEUM DIRECTOR  
NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Co-curating the exhibition *Black Dolls*, featuring the collection of Deborah Neff, and directing upcoming New-York Historical Society exhibitions including *Winold Reiss in New York* and *John Quidor: New York Stories*.

### Min Jung Kim, Ph.D.

DIRECTOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
NEW BRITAIN MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Leading the New Britain Museum of American Art since 2015, she continues to develop exhibition and programmatic frameworks that address an expanded definition of American art.

### Elizabeth Kornhauser, Ph.D.

ALICE PRATT BROWN CURATOR OF AMERICAN PAINTINGS & SCULPTURE  
THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

Working on two exhibition projects: The San Francisco based landscape painter: *Jules Tavernier and the Pomo Peoples*, and the leading Boston portrait miniature painter *Sarah Goodridge: The Self-Fashioning of an American Artist*.

### Lynn Marsden-Atlass

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ARTHUR ROSS GALLERY  
UNIVERSITY CURATOR, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Curated the exhibition *Frankenthaler on Paper* and exhibition catalogue, which was presented at the Arthur Ross Gallery, and currently organizing the exhibition *David Driskell: Drawing on Life* for 2021.

### Kenneth J. Myers, Ph.D.

CURATOR OF AMERICAN ART & HEAD, DEPARTMENT OF AMERICAN ART  
DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS

Developing an exhibition to be titled *Masterpieces of American Sculpture from the DIA* and completing essays on Whistler's prints, on the critical writings of Eugene Benson, and on landscape painting in the Catskills.



## SCHOLARS WHO PLANNED TO JOIN US

**Paul D. Schweizer, Ph.D.**

MUSEUM DIRECTOR EMERITUS

MUNSON-WILLIAMS-PROCTOR ARTS INSTITUTE

Curating the exhibition *Reinventing Thomas Cole: The Legacy of The Voyage of Life in American Culture, 1849-1927*, opening at the Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute in the summer of 2022.

**Kenneth Silver, Ph.D.**

PROFESSOR OF ART HISTORY

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

Contributing Editor to *Art in America*, member of *French Politics, Culture, and Society's* editorial board, lecturer for Christie's New York Art Program; curated *Chaos and Classicism: Art in France, Italy, and Germany, 1918-1936* at the Guggenheim Museum (2010-11).

**Alan Wallach, Ph.D.**

RALPH H. WARK PROFESSOR OF ART & ART HISTORY

PROFESSOR OF AMERICAN STUDIES EMERITUS

COLLEGE OF WILLIAM & MARY

Co-editor of the essay collection *Transatlantic Romanticism* (University of Massachusetts Press), which contains three essays on Thomas Cole; currently working on a critical history of the Hudson River School.

**Adam D. Weinberg**

ALICE PRATT BROWN DIRECTOR

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Under his leadership, the Whitney opened a 220,000-square-foot Renzo Piano-designed building in 2015. He has curated a wide range of exhibitions, written numerous exhibition catalogues, and is a regular panelist for public and private institutions.



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.



# THOMAS COLE

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

COVER: Asher B. Durand, *Portrait of Thomas Cole*, 1838, Berkshire Museum

DETAILS: Thomas Cole, *View on the Catskill—Early Autumn* (detail), 1836-37, The Metropolitan Museum of Art