

# THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jennifer Greim, [jgreim@thomascole.org](mailto:jgreim@thomascole.org)  
Director of Advancement and External Affairs

### The Thomas Cole National Historic Site Announces the Opening of “ALAN MICHELSON: Prophetstown” – A Site-Responsive Solo Exhibition of Work by Internationally Recognized Mohawk Artist Alan Michelson

The exhibition includes a quartet of representative works spanning 25 years of the artist’s influential practice, and features a rare room-size display of *Prophetstown* (2012), a multilayered engagement with American culture and history through the medium of architectural models.

*ALAN MICHELSON: Prophetstown*

July 20–December 1, 2024: Thomas Cole National Historic Site, Catskill, NY

**Catskill, NY – July 23, 2024** – The Thomas Cole National Historic Site announced today that a new exhibition titled “ALAN MICHELSON: Prophetstown” – a solo exhibition of work by the acclaimed artist **Alan Michelson** (Mohawk member of Six Nations of the Grand River) – has opened and will run through December 1, 2024, at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site in Catskill, NY.

“ALAN MICHELSON: Prophetstown” is a site-responsive solo exhibition presented throughout Thomas Cole’s 19<sup>th</sup>-century home and grounds. Addressing, from an Indigenous perspective, history, landscape, ecology and their many intersections, the exhibition includes a room-size installation of *Prophetstown* (2012) as well as other video and mixed media works installed in conversation with the historic house, collections, and landscape.



*Installation pictures by Adam T. Deen.*

Titled after the community on the Wabash founded in 1808 by Tecumseh and his brother Tenskwatawa (aka the “Prophet”), *Prophetstown* is both an homage to their movement to unite the tribes against settler encroachment, and a critical engagement with American culture and history. Featuring paper models overlaid with texts or other treatments, *Prophetstown* mixes fictional references – the log

cabin in Thomas Cole's 1847 painting *Home in the Woods*, for example – with historical ones like a facsimile of the illicit 1809 Treaty of Fort Wayne.

Other works in the exhibition include the New York debut of the multimedia installation *Hanödaga:yas (Town Destroyer)*; the nocturnal Hudson video panorama *Shattemuc; No York*, a classroom map of New York State overpainted to eliminate non-Indigenous place names; and *The Ratio of Art to Nature*, four black mirrors installed on the grounds reflecting discrete views of the landscape. In ensemble, these works reframe the American landscape by tracing the violent and unethical means by which it was appropriated, “settled”, and exploited, history mostly absent from the scenic landscapes of Thomas Cole and his followers, as well as from cultural memory.

Alan Michelson is an internationally recognized New York-based artist, curator, writer, and lecturer. For more than 30 years, he has been a leading practitioner of a socially engaged, critically aware, site-specific art grounded in local context and informed by the retrieval of suppressed histories. Recent exhibitions include the 14<sup>th</sup> Gwangju Biennale, *Enmeshed* at the Tate Modern, *Greater New York 2021* at MoMA/PS1, and *Alan Michelson: Wolf Nation* at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Michelson's work is represented in such prominent collections as the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, the National Gallery of Canada, and the Art Gallery of Ontario. His varied practice includes award-winning public art, and *The Knowledge Keepers*, his inaugural Huntington Avenue Entrance Commission for the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, will open on November 14, 2024.



Installation pictures by Adam T. Deen

“Thomas Cole and followers responded to the beauty of Turtle Island (North America) with beautiful paintings that at the same time hid the ugliness of colonization and its brutal effects, not only on the Indigenous landscape, but on all of the life it supported, human and other-than-human,” said Alan Michelson. “As a maker of site-specific work that connects history to landscape, having my work exhibited at the site where Cole created his is extraordinary.”

“For nearly three decades, Alan Michelson has been bringing repressed histories to light, centering the important themes of land and place,” said Elizabeth B. Jacks, Executive Director of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. “We are excited and honored to share this extraordinary artist's work here at Thomas Cole's home.”

"Alan is a visionary artist whose important, poetic, and captivating work has transformed how we understand the history of the United States, landscape, and the deep interconnections between industrial development and ecological crisis," said Kate Menconeri, Chief Curator of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. "These are topics that the 19<sup>th</sup>-century artist Thomas Cole wrestled with in his own work, so it is a long-time dream to bring Michelson's work here, in this unprecedented site-responsive exhibition that meaningfully centers Indigenous histories and critical perspectives."

“ALAN MICHELSON: Prophetstown” is part of the annual exhibition series *OPEN HOUSE: Contemporary Art in Conversation with Cole*, a program that activates the legacy of the historic artist’s home and studios by inviting contemporary artists to create unique site-responsive exhibitions across the site. The exhibition is curated in collaboration with the artist by Kate Menconeri, Chief Curator, and Amanda Malmstrom, Associate Curator.

“ALAN MICHELSON: Prophetstown” extends from and is presented in conversation with the concurrent exhibition “Native Prospects: Indigeneity and Landscape” – curated by Scott Manning Stevens, PhD / Karoniaktatsie (Akwesasne Mohawk) – which opened on May 4 and runs through October 27, 2024, at the Thomas Cole Site. “Native Prospects” juxtaposes an Indigenous approach to the articulation of their homelands and the environment with the American landscape paintings of Thomas Cole, which are rooted in European tradition. Cole’s influence led him to be recognized as founder of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century American art movement now known as the Hudson River School of landscape painting.

“Native Prospects” presents 19<sup>th</sup>-century paintings by Thomas Cole featuring Native figures, in context with Indigenous works of historic and cultural value, and artworks by five contemporary Indigenous artists, including **Alan Michelson**, **Teresa Baker** (Mandan/Hidatsa), **Brandon Lazore** (Onondaga, Snipe Clan), **Truman T. Lowe** (Ho-Chunk), and **Kay WalkingStick** (Cherokee).

Bringing the 19<sup>th</sup> century into conversation with our present moment, this cross-cultural exhibition offers profound interpretations of American art and land, expands conventional definitions of “land” and “landscape,” and highlights Indigenous artistic creation. More information on “Native Prospects” is available [here](#).

“ALAN MICHELSON: Prophetstown” is supported by David Bury & The Bay and Paul Foundations.

This exhibition is supported by a Market New York grant from Empire State Development and I LOVE NY/New York State's Division of Tourism through the Regional Economic Development Council initiative. Additional support is provided by New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature, Becky Gochman, Kristin Gamble, Patti Hanson, and the Kindred Spirits Society.



### **Thomas Cole National Historic Site**

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site is an international destination presenting the original home and studios of the artist and early environmentalist Thomas Cole (1801-1848). Cole founded the influential art movement of the United States, now known as the Hudson River School of American landscape painting. Located on 6 acres in the Hudson Valley, the site includes the 1815 Main House; Cole’s 1839 Old Studio; the reconstructed 1846 New Studio building; and panoramic views of the Catskill Mountains. It is a National Historic Landmark and an affiliated area of the National Park System. Activities include special exhibitions of both 19<sup>th</sup>-century and contemporary art, print publications, lectures, extensive online programs, school programs, the Cole Fellowship, free community events, and innovative public programs such as

the Hudson River School Art Trail—a map and website that enable people to visit the places in nature that Cole painted—and the Hudson River Skywalk, a new scenic walkway connecting the Thomas Cole Site with Frederic Church’s Olana over the Hudson River. The goal of all programs at the Thomas Cole Site is to enable visitors to find meaning and inspiration in Thomas Cole’s life and work. The themes that Cole explored in his art and writings—such as landscape preservation and our conception of nature as a restorative power—are both historic and timely, providing the opportunity to connect to audiences with insights that are highly relevant to their own lives.

### **Visitor Information**

The hours of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site vary by season. For details see: [thomascole.org/visit](https://thomascole.org/visit). The grounds are open every day for free from dawn to dusk. Keep in touch on Facebook, Instagram, and X at [@thomascolesite](https://twitter.com/thomascolesite).