



THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



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ALBANY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AND THE THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE PRESENT A NEW MULTIDISCIPLINARY EXHIBITION: LANDMARK

Landmark, at the Albany International Airport Gallery, features 10 contemporary visual artists and seven writers whose works explore our relationship to the natural world, and share common ground with Thomas Cole's greatest written work, *Essay on American Scenery*, 1836, which is among the most influential proto-environmentalist essays in America.

On view at the Albany International Airport Gallery September 29, 2018 – February 25, 2019.
Opening reception: Friday, October 5, 2018, 5:30-7:30 pm.

Albany, NY (September 17, 2018) – The Albany International Airport Gallery will host the upcoming exhibition *Landmark* from September 29, 2018 to February 25, 2019. Developed through a partnership between the Airport's Art & Culture Program and the Thomas Cole National Historic Site in Catskill, NY, *Landmark* considers the legacy of Thomas Cole's paintings and advocacy for environmental stewardship as they echo the concerns of artists and writers today. A public reception to celebrate the launch of *Landmark* will be held on Friday, October 5, 2018 from 5:30 to 7:30 pm in the Albany International Airport Gallery.

Thomas Cole (1801-1848) is recognized as the founder of America's first major art movement, the Hudson River School of landscape painting, and a proto-environmentalist who advocated for the appreciation and preservation of America's landscapes. Kathy Greenwood, Director of the Airport's Art & Culture Program, and Kate Menconeri, Curator at the Thomas Cole Site, invited 10 contemporary visual artists to participate in this exhibition, whose work has compelling connections to Cole's, and engages the persisting resonance of the same issues and ideas from a 21st-century vantage point.

The 10 visual artists are Ellen Driscoll, Valerie Hammond, William Lamson, Portia Munson, Kenneth Ragsdale, Anne Roecklein, Lisa Sanditz, Kiki Smith, Darren Waterston and Susan Wides. The exhibiting artists have international careers and also maintain deep local ties to the Hudson River Valley, as did Cole. Artworks include works on canvas and paper, video, photography, new site-specific installations and sculpture, as well as woven jacquard tapestry.

“This exhibition is the perfect complement to this landmark year, as the Art & Culture Program celebrates its 20th Anniversary, which coincides with the 200th Anniversary of Thomas Cole’s arrival in America,” said Kathy Greenwood, Program Director and *Landmark* co-curator. “At its core, this Program seeks to showcase the outstanding cultural institutions and artists that populate this region, and it’s exciting and satisfying when we can accomplish that within a single exhibition.”

“We’re excited at the Thomas Cole Site to have this opportunity to work with the Albany Airport to create such an extensive project,” said Kate Menconeri, curator at the Thomas Cole Site and *Landmark* co-curator. “Thomas Cole was an advocate for living in harmony with the natural world and thoughtful development. What he saw happening to the landscape in the 19th century – new train tracks and industries expanding along the Hudson River – resonates with what artists and writers are responding to now. The project bridges art and ideas past and present but also inevitably is building new connections and conversations about how we might navigate today.”

Thomas Cole expressed his concern and regard for the American landscape through writing as well as painting and addressed the environmental impact of industrialization in his *Essay on American Scenery*, published in 1836. In the spring of 2018, the Thomas Cole Site launched its first call for writing and invited writers to respond to Cole’s *Essay* with their own writing and asked them to consider not only how the American landscape has changed but what should be preserved. The occasion sparked conversations between Greenwood and Menconeri that gave rise to the *Landmark* exhibition.

Among the contemporary visual artwork presented will be a selection of Ellen Driscoll’s large-scale works on paper from her recent *Thicket* series; Valerie Hammond will develop an iteration of her lyrical *Forest* installation; an immersive projection of William Lamson’s *Infinity Camera* will allow visitors a journey along New York waterways that defies a single viewpoint. Portia Munson’s *Future Fossils* will consist of an encased arrangement of common green plastic objects that both reflect and reject notions about ecology, resource consumption, and the persistence of plastics in the environment. Kenneth Ragsdale has produced a new site-specific installation for *Landmark*, titled *Course of Empire*. This work shares its title with Thomas Cole’s iconic 1836 painting series and expresses metaphorical cautionary concerns about the inevitable collision of expansion and consumption. Anne Roecklein’s panoramic vintage travel postcard collages are spliced-together landscapes both real and imagined; Lisa Sanditz’s vibrantly-hued paintings describe places in America that are both revered for their beauty and imperiled by human reach. In Kiki Smith’s 10-foot-high tapestry *Harbor* - jacquard-woven by Magnolia Editions - birds circle a rocky island amid star-studded sky and sea. A selection of Darren Waterston’s *Ecstatic Landscape* paintings reveals places habitable more by the spiritual than the corporeal form, and in Susan Wides’ *I Kaaterskill* series of photographs, relationships are drawn between Thomas Cole’s paintings of the Hudson Valley and those locations as they appear today.

The Essay contest, which was organized by 2017-2018 Cole Fellow Madeline Conley, received many outstanding responses. They were whittled down by a group of distinguished jurors: J. Jeffrey Anzevino, Land Use Advocacy Director, Scenic Hudson; Kathy Greenwood, Director, Art & Culture Program, Albany International Airport; W. Douglas McCombs, Chief Curator, Albany Institute of History and Art; Kate Menconeri, Curator, Thomas Cole National Historic Site; Nancy Siegel, Professor of Art History, Towson University; and Alan Wallach, Ralph H. Wark Professor of Art and Art History and Professor of American Studies Emeritus, Professorial Lecturer in Art History, George Washington University.

The seven writers whose work was selected for the exhibition are as follows: Sandra Dutton, author of six books for young readers, who resides in Catskill and teaches creative writing at Southern New Hampshire University; William Jaeger, a photographer and writer who lives in the Catskills and teaches photography and art criticism at the University at Albany; Jennifer Kabat, who lives in the

western Catskills and teaches at The New School and whose essay “Rain Like Cotton” is in *Best American Essays 2018*; Herbert Nichols, a resident of Hudson, for whom this is his first published writing; Stephanie Nikolopoulos, a writer, editor, and writing instructor based in New York City; Justin Nobel, a magazine writer on science and the environment, who lives in Germantown and whose writing is in *Best American Science and Nature Writing 2014* and *Best American Travel Writing 2016*; and Sara Pruiksma, a resident of Albany County with a visual studio practice, who revisits her early passion of writing to further her creative voice. Their writings, alongside Cole’s original words, are a crucial component of the *Landmark* exhibition.

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THE ALBANY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT’S ART & CULTURE PROGRAM: Since 1998, the Albany International Airport’s Art & Culture Program has sought to showcase the cultural vitality of New York’s Capital Region through exhibitions and installations throughout the Airport’s terminal. Such presentations enhance the experience of airport travelers and foster the advancement of a thriving creative community. The Art & Culture Program has become a cornerstone for demonstrating the breadth and quality of the arts throughout the Region as well as a resource for learning about local culture. Through exhibitions presented in the Albany International Airport Gallery and the Concourse Galleries, the Exhibition Case Program, free public programs and group tours, the Art & Culture Program has extended the reach of area artists and museums to an audience of more than 3 million people each year. Additionally, DEPARTURE, The Shop of Capital Region Museums – the retail arm of the Program – has become an important community service and a unique shopping venue lauded nationally and prized locally.

THE THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE is an international destination presenting the original home and studios of Thomas Cole, the founder of the Hudson River School of painting, the nation’s first major art movement. Located on 6 acres in the Hudson Valley, the site includes the 1815 Main House; Cole’s 1839 Old Studio; the recently reconstructed 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. The Thomas Cole Site’s activities include guided tours, special exhibitions of both 19th-century and contemporary art, printed publications, extensive online programs, activities for school groups, free community events, lectures, and innovative public programs such as the Hudson River School Art Trail—a map and website that enable visitors to visit the places that Cole painted. 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.