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The Thomas Cole National Historic Site Announces the Exhibition *Thomas Cole's Refrain: The Paintings of Catskill Creek* Featuring Masterworks by Cole from Major Museums as well as Rarely Seen Paintings from Private Collections

The Exhibition will Reveal the Deeper Meanings of Cole's Catskill Creek Paintings, Considered for the First Time as An Integral Series

Thomas Cole's Refrain: The Paintings of Catskill Creek

May 4-November 3, 2019

Preview Party: Saturday, April 27, 4-6 pm

Curator's Talk: Sunday May 19, 2 pm

Catskill, NY – January 29, 2019 – The Thomas Cole National Historic Site announced today that the exhibition *Thomas Cole's Refrain: The Paintings of Catskill Creek* will open on May 4 in collaboration with Cornell University Press and the Hudson River Museum, with related programming in partnership with Scenic Hudson and Greene Land Trust. The exhibition, curated by H. Daniel Peck, John Guy Vassar, Jr., Professor Emeritus of English at Vassar College, reveals new scholarship on Thomas Cole, scholarship explored in Professor Peck's forthcoming book of the same title, published with Cornell University Press. Created during the eighteen-year period between 1827 and 1845, which spans Thomas Cole's mature career, the artist's completed paintings of Catskill Creek constitute the most sustained sequence of landscape paintings he ever made.

The views in the paintings were all anchored along one short stretch of Catskill Creek near the Village of Catskill, where Thomas Cole lived and worked. The exhibition considers these paintings as a series for the first time, unified by place as well as their stable composition and recurring motifs, even as they exhibit variations reflecting the changes in the artist's life and times. Cole's repeated attention to the landscape of Catskill Creek signifies his deep attachment to it, and illustrates his development of a profound sense of place. Cole's view of the Catskill Mountains that frames Catskill Creek can still be enjoyed from the porch of the Main House at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site today.

The exhibition tells the story of Cole's discovery of Catskill Creek, with its Catskill Mountain background, and his ever deepening attachment to it over the course of eighteen years. The paintings contain mysteries— enigmatic figures, evocative human structures, and symbolic landforms – that tell stories of their own.

– H. Daniel Peck, Exhibition Curator and John Guy Vassar, Jr., Professor Emeritus of English at Vassar College

This is a unique opportunity to immerse yourself in Cole's stunning paintings of Catskill Creek and to visit the very place along Catskill Creek that Cole fell in love with nearly 200 years ago. The stretch of land depicted in the paintings has been preserved as a public park that is located just a few miles from the historic site.

- Elizabeth Jacks, Executive Director of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site



Exhibition Overview

The exhibition follows Cole’s Catskill Creek paintings from the 1820s through the 1840s--almost the full course of his career--and includes twelve original oil paintings by the artist. Represented, as well, are paintings of the Catskill Creek scene by leading nineteenth-century artists who were inspired by Cole: Asher B. Durand, Frederic Edwin Church, and Charles Herbert Moore. The exhibition features Thomas Cole paintings from private collections that have rarely been seen in public: *View Near Catskill*, 1828-29, and *Settler’s Home in the Catskills*, 1842, as well as major works from the collections of the New-York Historical Society, Yale University Art Gallery, The National Gallery of Art, Albany Institute of History and Art, Olana State Historic Site, the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center at Vassar College, Detroit Institute of Art, and The Currier Museum of Art.

Thomas Cole’s Refrain: The Paintings of Catskill Creek will be presented in the Thomas Cole Site’s reconstructed “New Studio,” a building designed by Thomas Cole at his home in Catskill, New York. After the debut at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, the exhibition will travel to the Hudson River Museum in Yonkers, New York, where it will be on view from November 21, 2019, to February 28, 2020.

Catalogue and Programs

The exhibition will be accompanied by a 186-page publication written by H. Daniel Peck, John Guy Vassar, Jr., Professor Emeritus of English at Vassar College, with forewords by Elizabeth Jacks, Executive Director of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, and Masha Turchinsky, Director of the Hudson River Museum. With new scholarship and interpretations of both Cole’s major and little-known works, the publication will also feature maps identifying the locations where Cole sketched. Professor Peck is the author of books about writers Henry David Thoreau and James Fenimore Cooper, and has published on painters Asher B. Durand and Georgia O’Keeffe. His work on this project was supported by an Andrew W. Mellon Emeritus Fellowship. The recipient of several NEH and ACLS fellowships, Professor Peck has chaired the Modern Language Association’s Division on Nineteenth-Century American Literature, and has served as director of Vassar College’s American Studies Program.

Thomas Cole’s Refrain: The Paintings of Catskill Creek will be published by Cornell University Press and will be available for purchase at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site and online at thomascole.org for \$34.95.

A series of education programs will complement the exhibition. Today, one of the places along Catskill Creek from which Cole sketched has been preserved as a public park by Scenic Hudson and the Greene Land Trust, and is located less than a mile and a half from the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, where the exhibition will be presented. A series of educational activities exploring the landscape will be announced in partnership with Scenic Hudson and the Greene Land Trust.

On May 19 at 2 pm, Professor Peck will deliver a Curator’s Talk in Catskill, New York. Tickets will be available for purchase at thomascole.org/events.

The exhibition will be featured on the Thomas Cole Site’s [website](#), as well as on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).



The exhibition is curated by H. Daniel Peck, John Guy Vassar, Jr., Professor Emeritus of English at Vassar College, with the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. Supported by the Wyeth Foundation for American Art, Marshall Field V, the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, Empire State Development's I LOVE NEW YORK program under the Market NY initiative, The Bay & Paul Foundations, the Enoch Foundation, The Educational Foundation of America, Joan K. Davidson through the J. M. Kaplan Fund, and the Kindred Spirits Society of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site.

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 Cole Site's activities include guided and self-guided tours, special exhibitions of both 19th-century and contemporary art, printed publications, lectures, extensive online programs, activities for school groups, the Cole Fellowship program, free community events, and innovative public programs such as the Hudson River School Art Trail—a map and website that enables people to visit the places in nature 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.

On VIEW in Thomas Cole's New Studio from May 4 through November 3, 2019

- *Thomas Cole's Refrain: The Paintings of Catskill Creek*, an exhibition revealing new research on Thomas Cole's Catskill Creek paintings, considering them as an integral series for the very first time.

Ongoing Exhibitions in the 1815 Main House

- *The Parlors*, an immersive experience combining technology and meticulous restoration of Cole's interior designs in his 1815 home, including the earliest-known interior decorative painting by an American artist. Integrated projections enable paintings to "come to life" and letters to "magically appear" on tables to tell a story.
- *Mind Upon Nature: Thomas Cole's Creative Process*, an exhibition in the Main House featuring Cole's paintings, sketches, palettes, and other unique objects.

VISITOR INFORMATION: The hours for Thomas Cole's home, studios and special exhibitions vary by season. For details see: www.thomascole.org/visit.

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