



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE UNVEILS DIGITAL EDUCATION PACKAGE COINCIDING WITH THE LAUNCH OF NEW CLASSROOM LESSON PLANS

**The Package is Designed to Make Accessible 19<sup>TH</sup>-Century American History and Illuminate its Contemporary Implications Through the Perspective of a Transformative Artist**

**The Free Educational Resource is Available Digitally to Teachers, Parents, and People of All Ages Throughout the Nation at [www.thomascole.org](http://www.thomascole.org)**

**Catskill, NY – August 15, 2018** – The [Thomas Cole National Historic Site](http://www.thomascole.org) unveiled today a new education package on its website, whose launch coincides with the Thomas Cole Site’s release of innovative classroom lesson plans designed to engage students in exploring key concepts in the first half of 19<sup>th</sup>-century American history. The new package explores such concepts as the Industrial Revolution, empire, and environmental conservation through the lens of Thomas Cole, founder of America’s first major art movement, the Hudson River School of landscape painting. The lesson plans have been piloted this year with more than 900 students – 500 in eight schools in the Hudson River Valley and New York Metropolitan Area and 400 at the historic Site.

The complete education package, which is now available free and online for the first time, is designed to be used widely – in schools and homes throughout the nation and in educational programming at the Thomas Cole Site. One fourth-grade teacher in Hudson, NY – Marlene Parmentier at M.C. Smith Intermediate School – gave the package’s lesson plans perhaps the highest compliment, when she said, “I love the conversations I heard from the students.”

The digital education package includes:

- **Lesson Plans** – The plans focus on seeing, making, and talking about art and build upon Cole’s role as a painter, writer, and advocate. The plans are designed for grade levels of 3-5 and 6-12 but can be adjusted to fit the needs of specific students. For schools nearby, arrangements can be made for a Thomas Cole Site educator to visit the school. More than 200 students have already signed up for in-classroom workshops and on-site visits, starting this Fall.

- **Free Digital Picture Book** – Beloved children’s book author and illustrator Hudson Talbott (author of *We’re Back! A Dinosaur’s Story*, among other renowned books) has teamed up with the Thomas Cole Site to present Thomas Cole’s story online for free to children of all ages. The [digital picture book](#) is a 14-page excerpt from the forthcoming print publication *Picturing America: Thomas Cole And The Birth of American Art* with select content exclusive to the online publication. *Picturing America* will be published by Penguin Random House in the Fall of 2018.
- **Virtual Gallery of Thomas Cole’s Art** – A virtual gallery of Thomas Cole’s paintings enables viewers to scroll and zoom in on details. In doing so, viewers can learn about the history of each work, decode hidden meanings, explore the artist’s creative process, compare his work with paintings by his contemporaries, and read relevant passages from Cole’s essays, poems, and letters.
- **Videos** – Featuring 24 videos (and counting) from artists’ talks to short films on Thomas Cole, this section includes 14 lectures hosted by the Thomas Cole Site as part of its annual Sunday Salon series, Beecher Lectures, and Curator’s Talks. The lectures provide a deep-dive into the continuing impact of the Hudson River School and make accessible cutting-edge cultural content from leading scholars, curators and artists including contemporary artist Stephen Hannock, Senior Research Scholar at The Metropolitan Museum of Art Kevin Avery, and Associate Professor in the History of Art at Yale University Jennifer Raab.
- **Information on School Visits to the Thomas Cole Site** – Visits focus on how Thomas Cole created art – closely observing and sketching nature, deciding on what to leave in and take out, mixing his own paints, and creating his compositions. Visits are student-centered, incorporating group discussion, movement, inquiry, and optional hands-on activities. Students learn about Cole’s life, the Hudson Valley in the 1800s, the Industrial Revolution, the Hudson River School of art, and tour the historic house and painting studios. Students can also create sketches based on their experiences and turn the sketches into paintings.

The education package builds on new digitally-driven story-telling installations in Thomas Cole’s historic home and grew out of research by 2016 Cole Fellow Kathleen Brousseau that was supported by The Bay & Paul Foundations. The lesson plans were created, piloted, and refined by Madeline Conley, a 2017-18 Thomas Cole Fellow who is pursuing an M.A. in Art and Design Education at Rhode Island School of Design this fall.

The Cole Fellowship is an annual full-year residency program for four young adults, providing hands-on training and real-life experience in museum operations, including curation, art handling, program design, primary research, marketing, grant-writing, event production and more. The participants not only experience skills-based learning in a professional environment, but also the opportunity to see what it means to create and to lead. They are provided with

career guidance, resumé-writing, field trips, and networking with leading professionals at major institutions. By joining an active team at the Thomas Cole Site, their work is rewarded and rewarding, and they emerge with an appreciation of the extraordinary potential of a career in the arts.

“These educational materials are a remarkable resource, providing a unique opportunity to explore 19<sup>th</sup>-century America through the eyes of Thomas Cole,” said Elizabeth Jacks, Executive Director of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. “Cole was a transformative artist whose influence continues to be felt today. He not only founded America’s first major art movement, he also initiated a national conversation about what we preserve and what we lose as progress unfolds. His influence on art and on that national conversation is as vital today as ever.”

**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 19<sup>th</sup>-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 enables visitors to visit the places that Cole painted. The goal of all programs at the 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 through November 4, 2018**

+ *Picturesque and Sublime: Thomas Cole’s Trans-Atlantic Inheritance*. The exhibition is presented in partnership with the Yale Center for British Art and members of the Yale History of Art Department and features works of art by Thomas Cole, J. M. W. Turner, and John Constable.

**On VIEW throughout the Thomas Cole Site through November 18, 2018**

+ *SPECTRUM*, the latest installment in *OPEN HOUSE: Contemporary Art in Conversation with Cole*. The exhibition grew out of conversations between the Thomas Cole Site curator Kate Menconeri, the artist Kiki Smith, and the exhibiting artists.

**Ongoing Exhibitions in the 1815 Main House**

+ *The Parlors*, an immersive experience combining story-telling technology and historic 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](http://www.thomascole.org/visit). Keep in touch on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter at @thomascolesite.

### **HUDSON RIVER SKYWALK REGION**

This year, the Thomas Cole National Historic Site and Olana – across the Hudson River in Hudson, NY – have joined forces with New York State to launch a new initiative, with the leadership of Governor Andrew Cuomo, to promote the region as an epicenter of American art where the nation’s first major art movement began. The project – titled the Hudson River Skywalk Region – weaves together the home and studios of Thomas Cole at the Thomas Cole Site and those of his legendary student Frederic Church at Olana with the landscape that inspired it all to create one seamless experience. With support from New York State, a continuous pedestrian walkway – the Skywalk – will connect the historic sites across the Rip Van Winkle Bridge over the Hudson River by late 2018. The Region also includes the City of Hudson and the Village of Catskill.