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WMHT Launches Multiplatform Series Exploring the History of New York and the Nation During the Lifespan of Thomas Cole

Reframing an Empire acknowledges Cole's paintings as a timeless treasure of the Catskills, and explores the people and context that extend beyond his canvas

Albany, NY – WMHT Public Media, a multichannel public communications organization serving Eastern New York and Western New England, today announced the launch of its latest multiplatform project, [Reframing an Empire](#), which explores the history of New York state and the nation during the lifespan of noted landscape painter [Thomas Cole](#).

Founder of the nation's first major art movement, now known as the [Hudson River School](#) of landscape painting, and subject of the [Thomas Cole National Historic Site](#) in Catskill, NY, Cole's life and work coincide with a pivotal period in American history.

Before Cole's eyes and on his canvas, the newly formed nation would find a vision of its identity born and its future questioned. American history fixates on 1776 and 1865, but in the period between lies a rich and under-explored territory. *Reframing an Empire* acknowledges Cole's paintings as a timeless treasure of the Catskills, and explores the people and context that extends beyond his canvas.

The 10-part digital and on-air series examines the history and significance of New York state between the Revolutionary War and Civil War – a time that saw the abolition of slavery, the active possession of indigenous lands, major events around women's suffrage, and the construction of engineering feats such as the Erie Canal.

"While folks may be familiar with Thomas Cole's work and the Hudson River School, *Reframing an Empire* explores the voices of artists and people also actively shaping the nation during this period of extreme transformation," said Will Pedigo, Vice President and Chief Content & Engagement Officer at WMHT Public Media.

"This production explores a critical period in our history that helps us understand who we are today," said Betsy Jacks, Executive Director of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. "In pulling apart the details that Thomas Cole painted into his iconic Hudson River School landscape paintings, and considering what he left out, a fuller picture of America comes into focus."

Episodes in *Reframing an Empire* will explore the artistic contributions of Sarah Cole and notable landscape artist Susie Barstow, and focus on the lived experiences of Indigenous people, Black New Yorkers, and women as they actively sought the freedom and liberty promised in the creation of the United States.

Two episodes of *Reframing an Empire* are now available online. The first looks at the creation of the American identity, specifically New York: The Empire State; the second delves into Cole's life, exploring the influences behind his work and the lasting impact of his legacy. Additional episodes will premiere through the spring and summer, both on-air and online.

To watch episodes, and for more information on *Reframing an Empire*, use the hashtag #ReframinganEmpire and visit wmht.org/reframinganempire.

The series coincides with the opening of a new exhibition at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. "[Women Reframe American Landscape: Susie Barstow & Her Circle/Contemporary Practices](#)" is a two-part exhibition and accompanying publication illuminating the artistic contributions and perspectives of women. The public opening will be held on Saturday, May 6 from 5 to 7 p.m.

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About WMHT Public Media

Serving Eastern New York and Western New England, WMHT Public Media is the only locally owned, nonprofit, multichannel public communications organization that reaches beyond the traditional broadcasting model to act as a leader by convening arts, culture, learning and civic interests. WMHT focuses on Community, Culture and Connections by providing entertainment, enrichment and engagement through television, radio, digital media, and educational services. Services include WMHT-DT (17.1), WMHT-Create (17.2), WMHT-World (17.3), WMHT PBS Kids (17.4), WMHT-FM 89.1 & WRHV-FM 88.7 (classical public radio), and WEXT Radio 97.7/106.1 (AAA public radio). WMHT also operates RISE, a radio reading service for the blind and print disabled.

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