



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Acclaimed Artist Shi Guorui Will Present an Artist Talk in His Studio in Catskill, NY, on Sunday, October 27**

**He Will Discuss the Making of New Giant Photographs for the Solo Exhibition “SHI GUORUI: Ab/Sense-Pre/Sense” on View Now at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site in Catskill**

**The Exhibition Unveils his Large-Scale Landscape Camera Obscura Photographs, Which Pay Homage to Thomas Cole (1801-1848), Founder of American Landscape Painting**



*Shi Guorui in his dark room, Catskill, NY. Photo by Felix Chan*

Catskill, NY – September 30, 2019 – Acclaimed artist Shi Guorui will present an Artist Talk organized by the Thomas Cole National Historic Site at his studio in Catskill, NY, on Sunday, October 27. The talk accompanies the solo exhibition “SHI GUORUI: Ab/Sense-Pre/Sense,” now on view at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site in Catskill. The exhibition presents giant landscape photographs installed throughout the 1815 Main House at the historic site, where artist Thomas Cole (1801-1848) lived and worked. Shi Guorui created the new works using hand-built camera obscuras. The series pays homage to the landscapes and legacy of Thomas Cole, founder of America’s first major art movement, now known as the Hudson River School. The exhibition will be on view through Sunday, December 1, 2019.

The Artist Talk will focus on Shi Guorui’s conceptual approach and photographic process. At the event, he will debut a new work — a fall landscape made in honor of

Cole’s painting *Lake with Dead Trees* — the latest in the series. With the new work, Shi Guorui’s series includes landscapes captured over four seasons, a theme that Cole explored in his paintings. The event will include a short preview of a new film on Shi Guorui by local filmmaker Niva Dorell. The talk will take place at 2:00 pm at Shi Guorui’s private studio at 57 Hill Street, Catskill, NY 12414. Space is limited. Tickets are available for purchase at [www.thomascole.org/events](http://www.thomascole.org/events), and at the door as available, at \$10 for Members and \$12 for General Admission. The Artist Talk will be preceded at 1:00 pm by

a free tour of the studio with the artist for Members of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. Tour space is limited, and free reservations must be made in advance at [www.thomascole.org/events](http://www.thomascole.org/events). Those wishing to join the tour can become a Member at <http://www.thomascole.org/membership>.

Shi Guorui is internationally recognized for his giant camera obscura photographs. His projects have included panoramic images of the Great Wall of China, Shanghai, Mount Everest, Donner Pass, New York's Times Square, and Hong Kong. His work has been featured in exhibitions at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the de Young Museum in San Francisco, The Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, TX, and the Museum of Contemporary Photography in Chicago, among other museums in North America, Europe, and Asia. He is represented by 10 Chancery Lane Gallery in Hong Kong. Originally based in Beijing, China, Shi Guorui now has a studio and home in Catskill, New York.

To create the artwork for the exhibition at the Thomas Cole Site, Shi Guorui visited the places in nature that Cole painted, and he built camera obscuras on location in order to make direct, extended, time-lapse exposures of these landscapes today. For the project, Shi Guorui converted a 20-foot box truck into a camera obscura and built 25-foot-wide camera tents within the landscape to photograph iconic sites in New York's Catskill Mountains and Hudson Valley, such as Kaaterskill Falls and Catskill Creek. These sites are made accessible through the Hudson River School Art Trail, an innovative outdoor program created by the Thomas Cole Site that connects visitors with the places in nature that Thomas Cole painted.

The box truck and tent camera obscuras (Latin for "dark room") that Shi Guorui constructs operate as giant cameras. Light enters into the enclosed space through a small hole that projects a direct image onto light-sensitive photographic paper. Shi Guorui remains inside the camera during the entire exposure, which lasts hours or even days. The resulting unique gelatin silver print has a depth of field that the human eye could not otherwise register and see on its own. Shi Guorui is interested in how they are "faithful portraits of pure light and time" and emphasize the timelessness and sweeping expanse of each place. His contemporary images draw upon both ancient Chinese traditions and American landscape painting traditions, reflecting Cole's legacy and the natural landscape today.

Thomas Cole owned a small camera obscura, and one is on view in the artist's 1839 Old Studio. Cole used a small camera obscura as a tool to frame the landscape and define the composition for his paintings. Shi Guorui uses this ancient optical device to create monumental landscape panoramas. He chose this process to slow down time as a direct response to the frenetic pace of contemporary China and in contrast to our digital moment, where hundreds of millions of images are instantly uploaded to social media every day. In his slowed-down technique, only that which is not fleeting, that which endures over time, can be seen.

The exhibition "SHI GUORUI: Ab/Sense-Pre/Sense" is curated by Kate Menconeri, Director of Exhibitions & Collections and Curator at the Thomas Cole National Historic

Site. Shi Guorui's photographs are sited within Thomas Cole's nineteenth century home in conversation with Cole's paintings. This is the fourth exhibition in the annual series "OPEN HOUSE: Contemporary Art in Conversation with Cole." As part of the exhibition, Shi Guorui has converted one of the rooms in the historic house into a walk-in camera obscura. A full-color print catalogue accompanies the exhibition and includes an exclusive interview with the artist. It is available for purchase both at the historic site and at [www.thomascole.org](http://www.thomascole.org).

### **Additional Ongoing Exhibitions in the Thomas Cole Site's 1815 Main House**

- + *The Parlors*, an immersive experience with the artist's own decorative painting on the walls and multimedia installations that convey his passionate concern for the environment.
- + *Mind Upon Nature: Thomas Cole's Creative Process*, an exhibition featuring Cole's original paintings, sketches, palettes, and other unique objects.

### **Ongoing Exhibition in the Thomas Cole-designed New Studio**

- + *Thomas Cole's Refrain: The Paintings of Catskill Creek* (through November 3), an exhibition exploring, for the first time as a series, Cole's iconic Catskill Creek landscapes, which were painted from 1827 to 1845 and are the most sustained sequence of landscapes he ever made.

### **Visitor Information**

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site is open Tuesday through Sunday from June to November 3, and Friday through Sunday from November 8 through December 15. Hours 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.

### **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 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 and self-guided tours, special exhibitions of both 19<sup>th</sup>-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 enable people to visit the places in nature that Cole painted – and the Hudson River Skywalk – a new 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.