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**Announcing Premier Virtual Screening of Short Film Interviewing Acclaimed Contemporary Artist Shi Guorui. The Event Will Include a Live Q & A with the Artist and Thomas Cole Site Curator Kate Menconeri.**

**The Virtual Screening Will Take Place on Tuesday, September 22, on the One Year Anniversary of the Opening of Shi Guorui’s Solo Exhibition at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site and his Performance Artwork “1.7 Mile Lights.”**

**Shi Guorui is Internationally Celebrated for his Large-Scale Camera Obscura Photographs. He Created a New Body of Work for his 2019 Solo Exhibition at the Thomas Cole Site That Pays Homage to Thomas Cole (1801-1848), Founder of American Landscape Painting.**

Catskill, NY – September 10, 2020 – The Thomas Cole National Historic Site announced today a premier virtual screening event for a short film interviewing the acclaimed contemporary artist Shi Guorui. The virtual event will include a live Q & A with the artist and Thomas Cole Site Curator Kate Menconeri. The screening will take place at 5:30 pm on Tuesday, September 22, on the one-year anniversary of the opening of Shi Guorui’s solo exhibition at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site and his performance artwork “1.7 Mile Lights.” The exclusive interview short film was a collaboration between the artist and the Class of 2020 Cole Fellows Marissa Hamm and Anne Comer with assistance from Kate Menconeri, 2021 Cole Fellow Oriana Tang, and the artist Corrina Gross.

In the film, Shi Guorui speaks movingly about his connection across centuries to Thomas Cole and their shared appreciation for the natural world. The artist reveals his reasons for exploring Cole’s creative process. Shi Guorui visited the places in nature that Cole painted in the nineteenth century and built walk-in camera obscuras on location to make new giant photographs of the landscapes as they appear today. The resulting artworks, some as large as ten feet wide, debuted in the solo exhibition, “SHI GUORUI: Ab/Sense-Pre/Sense” at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site in 2019. The series pays homage to the landscapes and legacy of Thomas Cole (1801-1848), founder of this nation’s first major art movement, now known as the Hudson River School. In conjunction with the exhibition opening, Shi Guorui enacted a performance artwork, “1.7 Mile Lights,” that connected Thomas Cole’s home with the home of his student Frederic Church across the Hudson River using refracted beams of light.

The virtual screening will be held on Zoom at 5:30 pm on Tuesday, September 22. The film is approximately nine minutes long and will be followed by a live Q & A with Shi Guorui and Thomas Cole Site Curator Kate Menconeri. The event is free but advance reservations are required at [thomascole.org/premierscreening](https://thomascole.org/premierscreening).

Shi Guorui is internationally recognized for his giant camera obscura photographs. His projects have included panoramic images of the Great Wall of China, Shanghai, Hong Kong, New York's Times Square, and Mount Everest. 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 National Historic Site, Shi Guorui traced Cole's own footsteps into the landscape and built walk-in camera obscuras on location in order to make direct, extended, time-lapse exposures of these places in nature today. For the project, Shi Guorui converted a 20-foot box truck into a camera obscura and built 20-foot-wide pinhole camera tents within the landscape to photograph iconic sites in New York's Catskill Mountains, such as Catskill Creek and Kaaterskill Falls. These sites are made accessible through the Hudson River School Art Trail at [hudsonriverschool.org](https://hudsonriverschool.org), an innovative outdoor program created by the Thomas Cole Site that connects visitors with the places in nature that Thomas Cole and other 19<sup>th</sup> century artists painted. The exhibition and film are part of the annual series "OPEN HOUSE: Contemporary Art in Conversation with Cole," which has also featured the artist Kiki Smith, Jason Middlebrook, and others.

Shi Guorui, who established his own studio in Catskill, NY, is inspired not only by Cole's paintings but also by Cole's writing, including his proto-environmentalist work, *Essay on American Scenery* (1836). The photographic interpretations respond as much to the literal light, landscapes, and objects refracted through the lens as they do to memory and the passage of time.

"Time flies and things change," said Shi Guorui. "All the way through history natural scenery and constructions remain, while relevant people disappear. . . . Living in the present, how can we recapture and reproduce historical thoughts, opinions, feelings, or memories by means of photography? And what new experiences and feelings can we come up with during the process of recapture and reproduction?"

"The artwork that Guorui created for the exhibition explores landscape, history, and art in a cross-cultural exchange," said Kate Menconeri, Curator of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. "It was the first time an artist from China presented work within the American artist's home. In doing so, Shi Guorui connected two landscape traditions that each redefined how a nation was seen and offered a chance to consider our relationship to the natural world today."

**ONGOING EXHIBITION at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site**

+ *The Pollinator Pavilion*: A new walk-in public artwork created by Mark Dion and Dana Sherwood offers visitors an opportunity to encounter hummingbirds and other local pollinators. The outdoor sculpture is free and open daily from dawn to dusk.

**THE THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE** is an international destination presenting the original home and studios of Thomas Cole (1801-1848), 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 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 19th-century and contemporary art, print 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 the public to visit the places that Cole and others 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, the need for public art museums, and our conception of nature as a restorative power—are historic and timely, providing the opportunity to connect to audiences with insights that are highly relevant to their own lives.

**Thomas Cole VISITOR INFORMATION:** Visit [thomascole.org/events](http://thomascole.org/events) for programming available now. Keep in touch on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter at [@thomascolesite](https://www.instagram.com/thomascolesite).

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