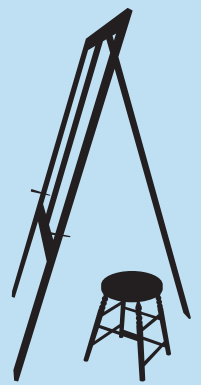


# THOMAS COLE

NATIONAL  
HISTORIC  
SITE

2015 ANNUAL REPORT



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*Where American Art Was Born*



# VISION STATEMENT

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site will be the leading source for education and scholarship that inspires cultural and environmental awareness of the American landscape and the continuing impact of Thomas Cole and the Hudson River School.

# MISSION STATEMENT

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site preserves and interprets the home and studios of Thomas Cole, the founder of the Hudson River School of painting, the nation's first art movement. Cole's profound influence on America's cultural landscape inspires us to engage broad audiences through innovative educational programs that are relevant today.

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Betsy Jacks and Kate Menconeri  
Photo by Thatcher Keats

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**Elena Ostock**, Cole Fellow

### Dear Friends,

In 2015, the Thomas Cole National Historic Site catapulted to new levels and it is all thanks to each and every one of you who make up our wonderful community.

This year we presented the inaugural contemporary exhibition *River Crossings: Contemporary Art Comes Home* in partnership with Olana, we completed the reconstruction of Thomas Cole's New Studio building transforming our long-time goal into a reality, and we made a remarkable discovery: original decorative paintings by Thomas Cole on the walls of his home. *River Crossings*, which spanned both historic sites and was featured in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and on *CBS Sunday Morning*, was a terrific success and brought over 15,000 diverse visitors to our site, increasing attendance by 25% in just one year. The reconstruction of the New Studio building not only restores the heart of the historic campus, but also creates a museum-quality gallery and lecture space that will greatly expand our exhibition and education programs. We have dreamed about this moment for so long and we could not be more thrilled to see Cole's own architectural design come to life in its original footprint.

Another major event this year was the truly astounding discovery of original decorative paintings by Thomas Cole on the walls of his home that were hidden beneath layers of modern paint. The decorative painting was discovered during ongoing research to restore the interiors of the Main House, and we will continue working to fully uncover this unique work of art in the coming years.

This year our staff grew to a total of twelve, allowing us to better serve growing audiences. Due to popular demand, we are now open six days a week!

With such a big year behind us, we are energized and ready to continue revitalizing Cole's revolutionary creativity here at the birthplace of American art. We hope to see you soon for a visit.

**Elizabeth Jacks**  
Executive Director





**Senator Chuck Schumer visits  
the Thomas Cole Site**



**Hudson Talbott and Asli Ay  
Photo by Thatcher Keats**



**Chairman Lisa Fox Martin  
Photo by Thatcher Keats**



**River Crossings opening reception  
Photo by Thatcher Keats**





Trustee Warner Shook, Frank Swim,  
Chairman Lisa Fox Martin, and  
Trustee Marianne Lockwood

# THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



**The Thomas Cole National Historic Site** is the place where American art was born in the early 19th century; as it was the home and workplace of Thomas Cole, founder of America's first major art movement, now known as the Hudson River School. The board, staff, supporters and volunteers comprise a rapidly growing organization that embraces change and continually pursues excellence. At its core, the organization's purpose is to facilitate the connection between Cole's vision and the people and ideas of our own time. We pursue this purpose by breathing new life into the historic site where such pioneering events took place, regenerating Cole's revolutionary creativity so that it touches people's lives in the present, and providing an opportunity for the public to engage with a story that sheds light on both our personal and national identity.

As the birthplace of American art, the Thomas Cole National Historic Site has the potential to serve as the first stop and primary source for the exploration of American visual culture. In the coming decade, we imagine moving toward a fuller realization of that vision by pursuing the following:

**1. Historic Restoration and Preservation:**

recreating to the greatest possible extent the physical setting where the groundbreaking and remarkable historic events took place.

**2. Exhibitions:**

mounting exhibitions on American landscape painting that travel the country and open the eyes of ever-growing audiences to the startlingly beautiful paintings that launched our nation's first art movement.

**3. Publications:**

producing publications—both printed and online—that can grow to serve as the worldwide source for information and inspiration on the Hudson River School.

**4. Education:**

launching local and regional education programming that nurtures awareness and appreciation for the Hudson River School with children and adults alike.

**5. Scholarship:**

supporting new research about the Hudson River School and the next generation of professors and curators in the field through initiatives such as the Cole Fellows program as well as a study center with a complete archive of digitally accessible research materials on Thomas Cole and the art movement that he founded.

**6. Audiences:**

increasing the number of people who are touched annually by the organization from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands.



Installation view from  
*River Crossings: Contemporary Art Comes Home*

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## EDUCATION AND INSPIRATION

The 2015 exhibition, *River Crossings: Contemporary Art Comes Home*, was presented in partnership with Olana and curated by the artist Stephen Hannock and art historian Jason Rosenfeld, and broke all attendance records at both sites. The exhibition featured 28 contemporary artists and illuminated the pivotal roles that the Hudson River School artists Thomas Cole and Frederic Church play in

shaping American art. Exhibiting artists included: Romare Bearden, Elijah Burgher, Chuck Close, Will Cotton, Gregory Crewdson, Lynn Davis, Jerry Gretzinger, Don Gummer, Kara Hamilton, Duncan Hannah, Stephen Hannock, Valerie Hegarty, Angie Keefer, Charles LeDray, Maya Lin, Frank Moore, Elizabeth Murray, Rashaad Newsome, Thomas Nozkowski,

Stephen Petegorsky, Martin Puryear, Cindy Sherman, Sienna Shields, Kiki Smith, Joel Sternfeld, Kianja Strobert, Letha Wilson And Elyn Zimmerman. The exhibition was installed throughout the homes, studios, and surrounding landscapes at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site and the Olana State Historic Site, the home of Cole's student and renowned Hudson River School artist Frederic Church. The two historic sites are located directly across the Hudson





School children at the historic site.



Kiki Smith and Martin Puryear  
Photo by Thatcher Keats

River from each other and less than two miles apart.

In conjunction with the exhibition, we presented the 12th annual *Sunday Salons* lecture series featuring the acclaimed artists Stephen Hannock, Thomas Nozkowski, and Elyn Zimmerman, and historic house expert and renegade Frank Vagnone. The annual *Beecher Lecture* was presented by Professor Tim Barringer, Paul Mellon Professor in

the History of Art at Yale University. Professor Barringer illuminated the implications of the groundbreaking *River Crossings* exhibition. Additionally, we served over 300 local school children with customized programming on-site and led guided hikes on the Hudson River School Art Trail, connecting visitors with the places in nature that Cole painted.

Major funding for *River Crossings* was provided by The Moore Charitable Foundation, the New

York State Council on the Arts, New York State's Empire State Development and the I Love NY Division of Tourism under Governor Andrew Cuomo's Regional Economic Development Council Initiative, Tiger and Caroline Williams and The Bay & Paul Foundations. Additional support was provided by Ed Herrington, Inc., the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, the Village of Catskill, the County Initiative Program of the Greene County Legislature administered by the Greene County Council on the Arts, the Columbia County Tourism Department, Jennifer Krieger, and Chas Miller. The exhibition catalogue and related public programs were funded by Tiger and Caroline Williams. Furthermore: a program of the J. M. Kaplan Fund, and the National Endowment for the Arts.





New Studio 2015 © Peter Aaron/OTTO

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## DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH

Forty-two years after it was tragically torn down and one hundred and sixty-nine years after it was originally built, Thomas Cole's New Studio has been reconstructed in its original footprint at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site and will open to the public with a new landmark exhibition in the spring of 2016. Our trustees, Stephen Dunn, Carrie Feder and Stephen Shadley, took the lead on

this transformative project bringing an unparalleled level of expertise. The reconstruction of the building originally designed by Thomas Cole himself was the dream of many Cole enthusiasts from the "Save the Cole House Committee" of the 1990s to the Greene County Historian, Raymond Beecher, to our many wonderful supporters today. Raymond Beecher left a legacy in his will that

became the cornerstone of the New Studio capital campaign, allowing this dream to become a reality. The campaign was led by Anne Miller, and major support was provided by Market NY through I LOVE NY/ New York State's Division of Tourism as a part of the Regional Economic Development Council awards as well as Lisa Fox Martin & Dick May, The May Family Foundation, Kathy Klingenstein & Robert Miller, Nina Matis & Alan Gosule, Anne Miller &





**Executive Director Betsy Jacks  
and Senator Chuck Schumer**



**Historic paint specialist Matthew Mosca revealing original decorative  
paintings by Thomas Cole hidden beneath layers of paint.**

Stuart Breslow, Richard Sharp, Robert Appel, Marianne Lockwood & David Bury, Betsy Scott & Alfred Scott, Warner Shook & Frank Swim, Asli & Evren Ay, David Barnes & Jill Taylor, The Bay and Paul Foundations, Inc., Matthew & Maria Brown, The Enoch Foundation, Barry & Gloria Garfinkel, Michel Goldberg & Frances Spark, Hudson River Foundation, Johnnie Moore & Ashton Hawkins, Maynard & Kay Toll, Evelyn D. Trebilcock & Douglas Hammond, and Alice Walton.

The 2015 Summer Party hosted by Lisa Fox Martin was a great success as usual but this year exceeded expectations with a rise in sponsorships. 2015 will go down in history as the year we discovered original decorative paintings by Thomas Cole on the walls of his home. The discovery led to a visit from Senator Chuck Schumer who called for federal support to expose the paintings from beneath layers of modern paint and restore

the interiors of the Main House. Within the year we received a total of \$610,000 in federal grants which included \$460,000 from the National Endowment for the Humanities and \$150,000 from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The funding will allow us to restore Cole's original interior designs throughout the first floor of his home and infuse the spaces with interactive digital installations.





School children at the historic site

## OUTREACH AND COMMUNITY

In the Village of Catskill, the Thomas Cole National Historic Site is an integral part of our growing community. This year we held the first *Cocktails with Cole* event in celebration of local businesses. We celebrated with seasonal punch and snacks on the porch and offered free admission throughout the historic site to everyone in the community. The Outreach Committee also

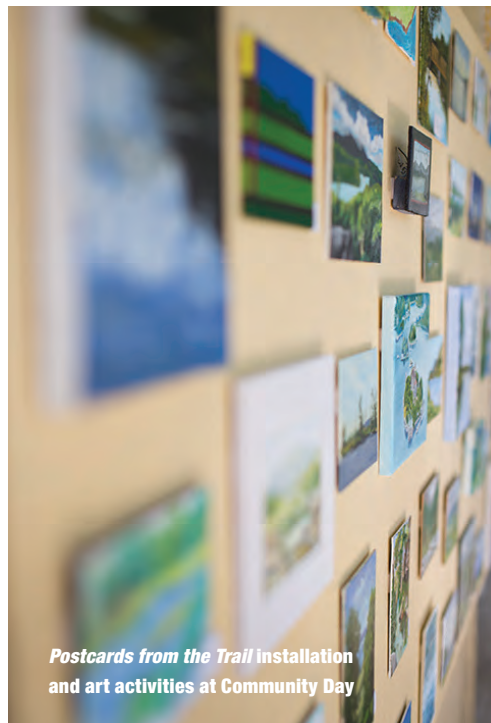
held a special group tour for our neighbors at Temple Israel. Led by our trustees Hudson Talbott, Linda Gentalen, and MaryEllen Gallagher, the gatherings were widely attended and a whole lot of fun. We hosted our annual Community Day with free admission as well as art-making activities and games for the whole family. Working with over 100 artists, we presented the annual

open-call exhibition, *Postcards from the Trail*, in conjunction with Community Day. The exhibition showcased the sites on the Hudson River School Art Trail, an innovative program with a website, maps and directions to connect visitors to the places in nature that Cole painted. The sweeping views were captured by local artists and the paintings in the exhibition were for sale to benefit the Thomas Cole Historic Site.





2015 Cole Fellows Elena Ostock,  
Amy LeFebvre, Keith Lebel



Postcards from the Trail installation  
and art activities at Community Day



The collaborative exhibition with Olana, *River Crossings*, laid the groundwork for our two historic sites, which anchor the Hudson River School art movement, to continue working together more closely and integrate our communities across the Hudson River.

This year, we welcomed three new Cole Fellows for the fifth annual residency program that invites recent college graduates and

graduate students to become part of the museum staff. Each Cole Fellow completes a major research project and directly applies their learning to important projects at the historic site. The 2015 Cole Fellows completed extensive research that will inform the future restoration and digital story-telling in the Main House. The projects were presented to the community at a public event. Research included the influence of Cole's friends and patrons on the

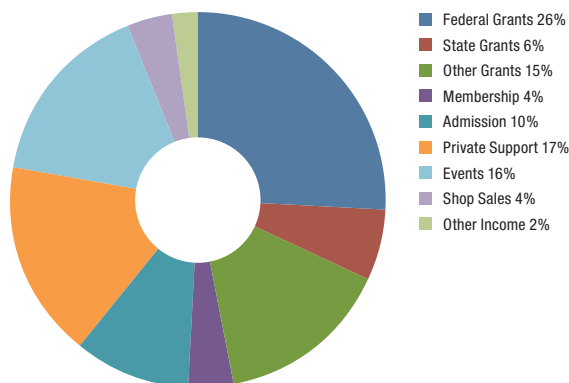
artist, the social significance of the parlors of Cole's homes, and how to use engaging web experiences to connect visitors with these seminal moments in history.

We are excited to see how our fellows build on their experience here and contribute to the next generation of American art scholarship.

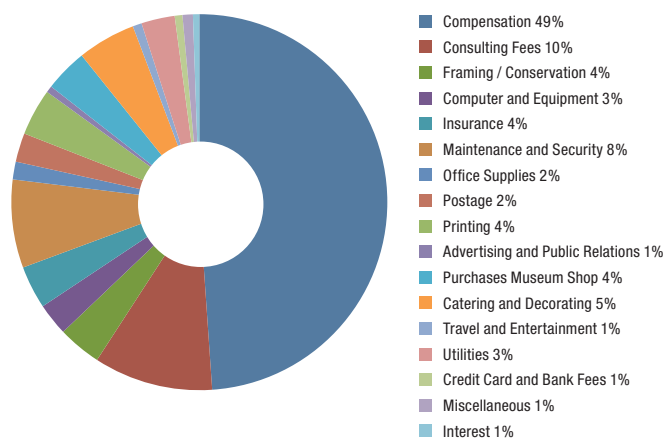


# 2015 SOURCES AND USES OF FUNDS

Total Income: \$937,542



Total Expenses: \$817,019



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Cole Fellow Elena Ostock leads tour for girl scouts



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New Studio c. 1900 with  
 Cole's daughter Emily



**"I AM NOW SITTING IN MY NEW STUDIO  
WHICH IS ABOUT COMPLETED  
THOUGH THE WALLS ARE NOT YET DRY."**

**—THOMAS COLE**