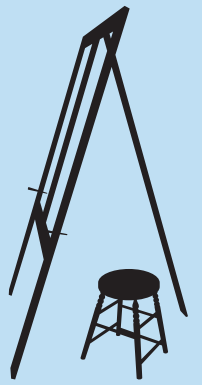


# THOMAS COLE

NATIONAL  
HISTORIC  
SITE

2016 ANNUAL REPORT



Thomas Cole's New Studio  
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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.

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# 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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Trustee and New Studio campaign leader Anne Miller, Chairman Lisa Fox Martin, Senator George Amedore, Executive Director Betsy Jacks, and Architect John I. Mesick at the ribbon cutting for the New Studio

**Dear Friends,**

Can you believe it? After decades of persistent vision and hard work, together we celebrated the opening of Thomas Cole’s reconstructed New Studio; a building originally designed by Cole and built in 1846. Thank you to all of the generous people who made this dream come true! The New Studio now features a museum-quality gallery, and this year we presented the inaugural exhibition, *Thomas Cole: The Artist as Architect*, curated by Annette Blaugrund, former director of the National Academy Museum. The exhibition was the first to explore Cole’s architectural interests and was accompanied by a major publication. Following its presentation here in Catskill, the exhibition traveled to the Columbus Museum of Art in Columbus, Ohio, where it was on view just a few blocks from the Ohio Statehouse that was built from Cole’s architectural design.

This year we launched a new contemporary art series *OPEN HOUSE: Contemporary Art in Conversation with Cole* spearheaded by the Thomas Cole Site Curator, Kate Menconeri. The series grew out of the 2015 exhibition *River Crossings: Contemporary Art Comes Home*. The inaugural exhibition featured sculptures and works on paper by the artist Jason Middlebrook. In November, we were thrilled to welcome back Senator Chuck Schumer to unveil Thomas Cole’s decorative painted borders on the walls of his home. The borders were recently discovered and exposed from beneath layers of modern paint as part of an ongoing restoration project.

We’ve accomplished so many things together. Thank you for bringing new life and energy to this special place, and supporting us as we grow.

**Elizabeth Jacks**  
Executive Director

# STAFF

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Trustees Hudson Talbott, Carrie Feder, and Warner Shook, Executive Director Betsy Jacks, Chairman Lisa Fox Martin, and Trustees MaryEllen Gallagher and Stephen Dunn at Community Day



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Curator Annette Blaugrund and guests at the opening of *Thomas Cole: The Artist as Architect*



Met Curator Betsy Kornhauser at The Met with the 2016 Cole Fellows



# 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.



Senator Chuck Schumer and Executive Director Betsy Jacks at the Thomas Cole Site



Installation view of  
*Thomas Cole: The Artist as Architect*  
© Peter Aaron/OTTO

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## EXHIBITIONS AND INSPIRATION

Curated by Annette Blaugrund, the inaugural exhibition in the New Studio was a dramatic step forward for this organization. It was truly remarkable to have so many of Cole's masterpieces on view here where he lived and worked. *Thomas Cole: The Artist as Architect* focused on Cole's little-known architectural achievements and was presented in the New Studio building that Cole

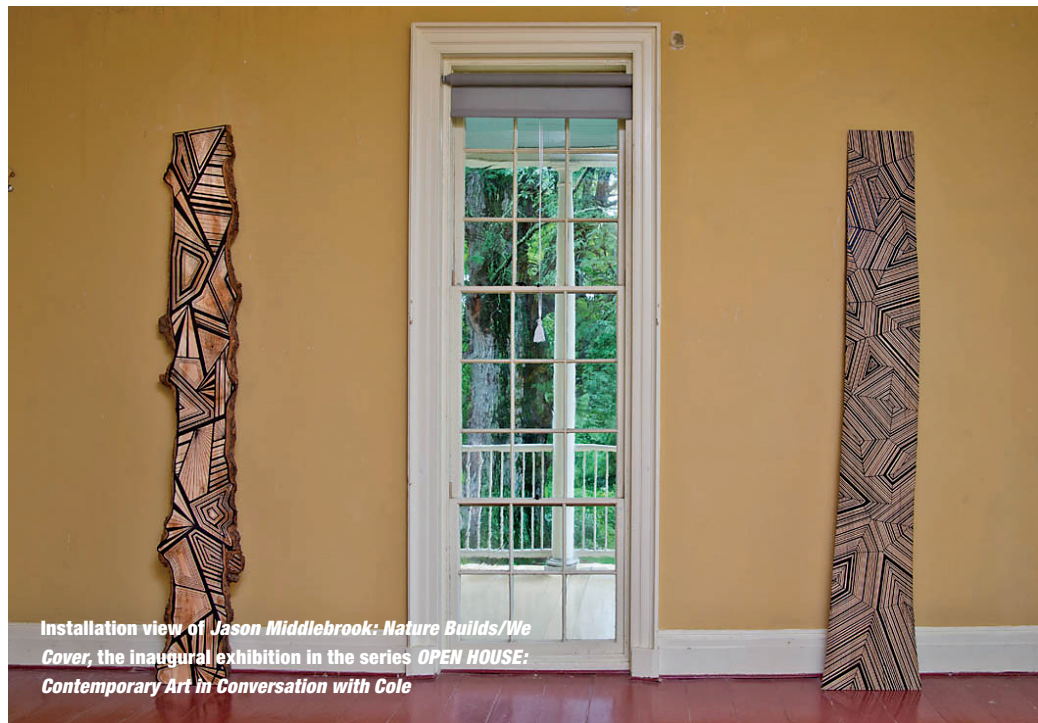
himself designed. *Artist as Architect* featured Cole's stunning seven foot painting, *The Architect's Dream*, on loan from the Toledo Museum of Art, as well as paintings from The Metropolitan Museum of Art and The Columbus Museum of Art among others. The *New York Times* declared the exhibition "a gem of a show." The accompanying book by the same name revealed a new dimension to

scholarship on Thomas Cole and included essays by Dr. Blaugrund and Franklin Kelly, Deputy Director and Chief Curator of the National Gallery of Art. The book was published by The Monticelli Press and was distributed nationally.

Also in 2016, we presented the inaugural exhibition in our contemporary art series *OPEN HOUSE: Contemporary Art in Conversation with Cole* entitled



Cole Site curator Kate Menconeri and guests at the opening of *Thomas Cole: The Artist as Architect*



Installation view of *Jason Middlebrook: Nature Builds/We Cover*, the inaugural exhibition in the series *OPEN HOUSE: Contemporary Art in Conversation with Cole*

*JASON MIDDLEBROOK: Nature Builds / We Cover.* The series explores the continued influence of Thomas Cole’s art and ideas and activates conversations between artists across centuries. Middlebrook created a site-specific installation throughout Cole’s historic home and grounds in collaboration with the Thomas Cole Site’s curator Kate Menconeri.

The solo project featured a selection of Middlebrook’s signature hardwood

plank paintings and debuted new works on paper that were inspired by Cole’s sketches from nature. Middlebrook lives in the Hudson Valley and has had solo shows at MASS MoCA and the New Museum in NYC, among other national and international venues.

Building on different ways of looking and considering the impact of the Hudson River School, our annual Raymond Beecher lecture celebrated

the *Landscape Films of Peter Hutton.* Hutton is considered the foremost Hudson River School film artist. The lecture was delivered by Scott Macdonald, Chair, Cinema and Media Studies and Professor of Art History at Hamilton College and was accompanied by a screening of select films by Hutton.



The New Studio c. 1900



The New Studio in 2016

## DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH

Bringing back Thomas Cole's New Studio building greatly expanded the historic campus which now includes the 1815 Main House, the 1839 Old Studio, and the 1846 New Studio. The New Studio, which was originally designed by Cole and built in 1846, was reconstructed in its original footprint here at Thomas Cole's home and now features a museum-quality interior

gallery. The reconstruction was led by architect John I. Mesick and the Construction Committee Stephen Dunn and Carrie Feder.

Major support for the New Studio 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, Raymond Beecher, Kathy Klingenstein & Robert Miller, Nina Matis & Alan Gosule, Anne Miller & 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,





Summer Party dinner tent



Senator Chuck Schumer and Executive Director Betsy Jacks on the porch of the Main House.

Barry & Gloria Garfinkel, Michel Goldberg & Frances Spark, Hudson River Foundation, Johnnie Moore & Ashton Hawkins, Maynard & Kay Toll, Evelyn D. Trebilcock & Douglas Hammond, Alice Walton and many others.

The annual Summer Party was hosted by our Chairman Lisa Fox Martin at her home on the banks of the Hudson River. It was a beautiful evening with dear friends.

The event raised a record total of nearly \$100,000 in support of this historic place. In 2015, we received a five-year “Challenge Grant” from the National Endowment for the Humanities for \$300,000 that we must match with \$900,000, to establish a \$1.2 million Program Endowment to support educational programming into the future. We are thrilled to share that we continued the momentum this year and met our second fundraising

challenge to unlock matching NEH funds. In 2016, we received several large grants from New York State, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute for Museum and Library Services for specific projects in the works in Thomas Cole’s Main House. We cannot wait to share these exciting projects with you in 2017. Thank you to our inspiring community of supporters who make all these accomplishments possible.



Local school children visiting Cole's Old Studio

## OUTREACH AND COMMUNITY

The sixth year of our Cole Fellows Program continued to bring new perspectives and boundless inspiration to our organization. This year, we expanded the annual program developing future leaders in American Art from three to four participants: Kathleen Brousseau, Leila Farrer, Casey Monroe and Claire Pohl. Each year, we welcome recent college graduates to live and

work at the site for six months, become part of the museum staff, and conduct in-depth research projects with a direct impact on the museum. The 2016 Cole Fellows conducted extensive research on topics including new media and audience engagement, incorporating Thomas Cole's story into school curriculums, expanding the Hudson River School Art Trail, and shaping

interactive visitor experiences at historic houses. Their projects expand on existing research from previous Cole Fellows, and are informing new interactive digital exhibits opening here in 2017.

Cole Fellow Kathleen Brousseau's work set in motion the expansion of our education initiative which is supported by The Bay & Paul Foundations. She researched state curriculum requirements and



From left to right: The 2016 Cole Fellows, Leila Farer and Kathleen Brousseau, Education Manager Heather Paroubek, Cole Fellow Claire Poh, Curator Kate Menconeri and Cole Fellow Casey Monroe.



2016 Sunday Salon

prototyped lesson plans using Thomas Cole's story to teach enduring themes such as the Industrial Revolution.

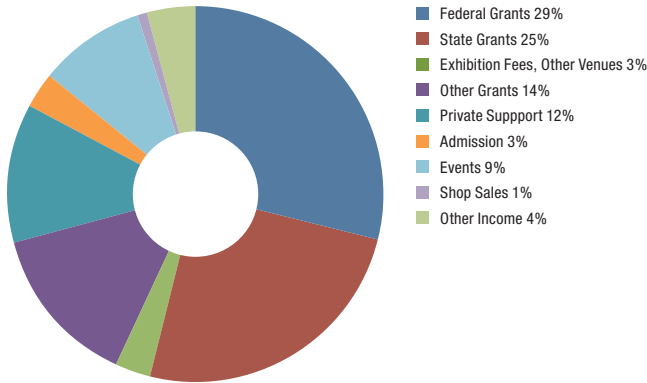
The annual *Sunday Salons* lecture series brought leading scholars to Thomas Cole's New Studio once a month from January through April. The *Salons* explored different aspects of Cole's architectural interests from his designs for the Ohio State House to his paintings of his patron's country houses.

Located in the Village of Catskill, the Thomas Cole National Historic Site is part of a vibrant local community, and each year we host an annual Community Day in September. The event includes free admission throughout the historic site, music, food trucks, and creative activities for visitors of all ages. As part of this celebration, we presented the fourth annual open call exhibition, *Postcards from the Trail*, in collaboration with over 100 artists who submitted

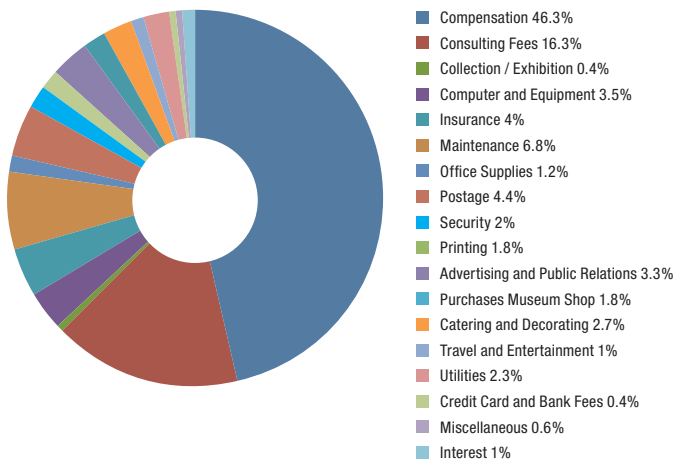
original works of art inspired by the places on the Hudson River School Art Trail. The Art Trail ([hudsonriverschool.org](http://hudsonriverschool.org)) is a program with maps and directions allowing people to visit the very same places in nature that Cole and his fellow Hudson River School artists painted nearly 200 years ago.

# 2016 SOURCES AND USES OF FUNDS

**Total Income: \$2,218,916**



**Total Expenses: \$1,089,688**



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2016 Summer Party

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Vice Chairman Steve Dunn and guests at the Summer Party

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David R. Seamon  
Elizabeth and Stephen Shafer  
Patrick J. Shelley and Patricia Pindar  
Cynthia L. Sherwood-Judd  
Ave Siecinski  
Nancy J. Siegel  
Nina Sklansky  
Eldon Slocum  
Robert H. and Sharon W. Smith  
Joan M. Starr  
Anne P. Strain  
Karen and Richard Streifeneder  
Tara and Edward Sullivan  
Gwen Swertfager  
Carol F. and William Tabler  
Edwina Thorn  
Alice Timothy  
Frank Tosto  
Lois Vendon  
Harry O. Vincent  
John Vlad  
George Wachtel  
Timothy Watkins and Carol S. May  
Geraldine and Oskar Weidel  
Lois Whealey  
Jean Williams  
Barbara and Robert Willner  
Gunnar Wordon  
Joan W. Young  
Joyce Zucker



School children visiting the Main House



**“DO YOU KNOW THAT I AM  
SOMETHING OF AN ARCHITECT?”  
—THOMAS COLE**