

# THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



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## The Thomas Cole National Historic Site Announces the Opening of the Two-Part Exhibition “Women Reframe American Landscape”

**The Show Reinserts 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Artist Susie Barstow into the History of Landscape Painting and Presents Contemporary Artists Who Expand and Challenge “Land” And “Landscape” Today**

*Women Reframe American Landscape:  
Susie Barstow & Her Circle  
Contemporary Practices*

May 6–October 29, 2023: Thomas Cole National Historic Site, Catskill, NY

November 16, 2023–March 31, 2024: New Britain Museum of American Art, New Britain, CT

**Catskill, NY – May 10, 2023** – The Thomas Cole National Historic Site announced today the opening of the two-part exhibition *Women Reframe American Landscape: Susie Barstow & Her Circle/ Contemporary Practices*, which will run through October 29, 2023. It will subsequently travel to the New Britain Museum of American Art in New Britain, CT, from November 16, 2023 to March 31, 2024.



Installation view of "Susie Barstow & Her Circle" in Thomas Cole's New Studio © Peter Aaron/OTTO

This exhibition is the first retrospective of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century American landscape paintings of Susie Barstow, despite the fact that she was highly acclaimed during her lifetime. *Women Reframe American Landscape: Susie Barstow & Her Circle/ Contemporary Practices* is a two-part exhibition and publication that reinserts the accomplished 19<sup>th</sup>-century American artist Susie Barstow (1836-1923) into the story of the Hudson River School of landscape painting and presents work by contemporary artists who expand and challenge how we think about “land” and “landscape” today. The internationally acclaimed contemporary artists include: Teresita Fernández, Guerrilla Girls, Marie Lorenz, Tanya Marcuse, Mary Mattingly, Ebony G. Patterson, Anna Plesset, Jean Shin, Wendy Red Star, Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, Cecilia Vicuña, Kay WalkingStick, and Saya Woolfalk.

The exhibition is curated by Dr. Nancy Siegel, Professor of Art History at Towson University; Kate Menconeri, Chief Curator and Director of Curatorial Affairs, Contemporary Art, and Fellowship at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, and Amanda Malmstrom, Associate Curator at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. Featuring over 70 objects including never-before-seen works from Barstow's archive and major new artworks and site-specific installations by contemporary artists, *Susie Barstow & Her Circle* and *Contemporary Practices* are described further below.

### *Susie Barstow & Her Circle*



Installation view of "Susie Barstow & Her Circle" in Thomas Cole's New Studio © Peter Aaron/OTTO

The 19<sup>th</sup>-century portion of the exhibition features the first major retrospective and deep dive into the work and life of Susie Barstow (1836-1923) and also includes the accomplished artists in her circle – Julie Hart Beers, Fidelia Bridges, Charlotte Buell Coman, Eliza Greathouse, Mary Josephine Walters, and Laura Woodward. In her lifetime, Barstow exhibited and sold her work alongside Asher B. Durand, Albert Bierstadt, Robert Duncanson, and Sanford Gifford, as well as the

other women artists in this exhibition. The exhibition makes the case that it is long past due to bring forward this accomplished artist and to

question the prevailing narrative that it was a male-only art movement. Barstow was an extraordinarily talented professional artist, and more than 100 of her paintings have been documented. In addition to hiking and painting the White Mountains, Catskill Mountains, and Adirondack Mountains, she embarked on multiple trips around the world.

### *Contemporary Practices*

In conversation with Susie Barstow's historic work, *Contemporary Practices* presents works by contemporary artists who move beyond conventional landscape painting and open up an exploration of land through expansive perspectives and art practices. The featured artists are internationally acclaimed and include Teresita Fernández, Guerrilla Girls, Marie Lorenz, Tanya Marcuse, Mary Mattingly, Ebony G. Patterson, Anna Plesset, Jean Shin, Wendy Red Star, Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, Cecilia Vicuña, Kay WalkingStick, and Saya Woolfalk.

The contemporary artists expand and challenge how we think about "land" and "landscape" today. At the Thomas Cole Site,



Installation view of Jaune Quick-to-See Smith's "Unhinged (Map)" above Thomas Cole's desk in the Main House © Peter Aaron/OTTO



Installation view of "Guerrilla Girls Reality Check: The Hudson River School" in the Main House Entrance Hall © Peter Aaron/OTTO

these works are sited within and in response to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century artist's artwork, home, studios, and grounds. The exhibition includes a new work by the Guerrilla Girls, a new outdoor sculpture by Jean Shin, an interactive Ecotopian Library by Mary Mattingly, works on canvas by Jaune Quick-to-See Smith and Kay WalkingStick, and special site-specific installations by Teresita Fernández, Marie Lorenz, Ebony G. Patterson, and Saya Woolfalk. It also brings together Anna Plesset's work about Sarah Cole (1805-1857) with the original paintings by the 19<sup>th</sup>-century artist who called this site home.

The project's exploration of land takes place in the context of the home and studios of Thomas Cole, the artist best known today as the founder of the influential art movement of the United States, now known as the Hudson River School of landscape painting. Cole was an early environmentalist who advocated for balance between the built and natural worlds. He used his paintbrush and his pen to speak out against escalating development and deforestation that was clearing the way for railroads and expanding industries, such as the tanneries, iron foundries, and mills that were proliferating throughout the Catskill Mountains in the 1830s and 40s.

Coinciding with the opening of the exhibition, two renowned art book publishing houses – one in Germany and one in England – have released three books related to the exhibition:

- Hirmer Publishers in Munich has published a fully illustrated 128-page book titled *Women Reframe American Landscape*. It includes original essays by the exhibition's curators, texts and plates by the artists, including "Artist as Arsonist: Burning Down the Myth of the American Landscape" by Teresita Fernández, and a discussion with Candice Hopkins (Carcross/Tagish First Nation), Executive Director and Chief Curator at Forge Project, and Jolene Rickard (Tuscarora Nation (Turtle Clan), Hodinöhsö:ni Confederacy), Associate Professor in the Department of Art and Department of History of Art and Visual Studies at Cornell University, titled "Upturning the Map: Native Women and Representations of Land and Landscape", and a timeline created by Sofia Thieu D'Amico, Class of 2023 Cole Fellow, and Heather Bruegl (Oneida/ Stockbridge-Munsee), a public historian, activist, and decolonial education consultant, with Amanda Malmstrom.
- Lund Humphries in London has issued a companion monograph, *Susie M. Barstow: Redefining the Hudson River School* by co-curator Nancy Siegel. This is the first monographic study of the artist and one of the very few to focus exclusively on an American woman landscape painter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The publication coincides with the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Susie Barstow's death.

- Lund Humphries has also issued *Fidelia Bridges: Nature into Art*, the first comprehensive biography of this best-selling female artist in post-Civil War America. The book is by Katherine Manthorne, a member of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site National Council and Professor of Modern Art of the Americas at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

All three books are available at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site and wherever books are sold.

“This exhibition represents the growing interest in, and need for, greater inclusivity and diverse voices when telling the story of the American landscape movement,” said Dr. Nancy Siegel, co-curator of the exhibition and Professor of Art History at Towson University. “From the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present moment, the works by these artists will visually dazzle and enthrall viewers while questioning our assumptions and relationships to the land itself.”

“It has been an incredible honor to be in conversation with these visionary artists, past and present,” said Kate Menconeri, co-curator of the exhibition and Chief Curator and Director of Curatorial Affairs, Contemporary Art, and Fellowship at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. “This project is not meant as a survey but as an exhibition that illuminates specific, dynamic, and multifaceted perspectives. Together these artists complicate, challenge, and transform the way we think about art history, landscape, and our critical relationship with land today.”

“This exhibition was born from a passionate engagement with the ongoing and critical feminist work happening in our communities and within American Art,” said Amanda Malmstrom, co-curator of the exhibition and Associate Curator at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. “Museums have extensively studied and presented landscapes pictured by men, and this exhibition recognizes that we lose out on a richer and more accurate history when we only see art from a narrow canon. An especially powerful project sited at the historic home of the artist often called the “father of the Hudson River School,” this exhibition celebrates the myriad generative ways that women have artistically interpreted land.”

The project is presented at the Thomas Cole Site as the cornerstone of the year-long “Women, Land, + Art” initiative across exhibitions, programs, collections and interpretation. More information is available [here](#).

*Women Reframe American Landscape: Susie Barstow & Her Circle / Contemporary Practices* is made possible by the **Warner Foundation**.

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The exhibition and publication are also supported by Jennifer Krieger and Eric Siegel, Maurice D. Hinchey Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, The Coby Foundation, Ltd., Rick and Candace Beinecke, Marshall Field V., Allan E. Bulley, Jr., Greene County Legislature through the Greene County Cultural Fund, National Trust Insurance Services, LLC, Suncommon, The Bank of Greene County Charitable Foundation, New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature, and the Kindred Spirits Society of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site.

#### **The Thomas Cole National Historic Site**

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site is an international destination presenting the original home and studios of the artist and early environmentalist Thomas Cole (1801-1848). Cole founded the first major art movement of the United States, now known as the Hudson River School of landscape painting. Located on 6 acres in the Hudson Valley, the site includes the 1815 Main House; Cole's 1839 Old Studio; the reconstructed 1846 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, print publications, lectures, extensive online programs, school programs, the Cole Fellowship, 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 scenic 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.

#### **Visitor Information**

The hours of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site vary by season. For details see: [www.thomascole.org/visit](http://www.thomascole.org/visit). The grounds are open every day for free from dawn to dusk. Keep in touch on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter at [@thomascolesite](https://twitter.com/thomascolesite).



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