



Thomas Cole's Historic Home Inspires Contemporary Artists

CATSKILL, N.Y. — A new contemporary art exhibition, "Spectrum," has opened at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, revealing a visual dialogue about color between 11 contemporary artists and Thomas Cole (1801–1848), founder of America's first major art movement, the Hudson River School of landscape painting. The contemporary art is installed throughout Cole's historic home, studios and grounds.

The project is inspired by and in dialogue with Thomas Cole's artistry, spanning his paintings and drawings, the interior colors he carefully chose for the house, his own color wheel painting titled "Diagram of Contrasts," and his extensive writing on the topic of color, which details his desire to invent an instrument that could play the sound of color. The historic site's 1815 Main House also contains the earliest-known interior decorative painting by an American artist, and its bold features reveal an added dimension to Cole's use of, and thinking about, color.

"Spectrum" features more than 30 new and existing artworks and installations, alongside Cole's work, that are made by 11 contemporary artists: Polly Apfelbaum, Elizaville, N.Y., and New York City; Ann Veronica Janssens, Brussels, Belgium; Anne Lindberg, Ancramdale, N.Y.; Valerie Hammond, New York City; Laura Moriarty, Rosendale, N.Y.; Portia Munson, Catskill, N.Y.; Jackie Saccoccio, West Cornwall, Conn.; Lisa Sanditz, Tivoli, N.Y.; Julianne Swartz, Stone Ridge, N.Y., and New York City; Mildred Thompson (deceased) Atlanta, Ga.; and Linda Weintraub, Rhinebeck, N.Y. Many of the exhibiting artists have international careers and also maintain deep local ties to the Hudson River Valley, as did Cole.

All works are presented in a new, site-specific context, in which they have never before been shown, and carefully placed to be in conversation with Cole and the unique historic rooms and grounds of the Nineteenth Century artist's home and studios. The diverse projects on view examine color in relation to smell,

sight and taste as well as music, emotion, science, abstraction and the natural world.

The contemporary artworks include an immersive, site-specific light installation by Ann Veronica Janssens, a garden designed by Portia Munson, woodblock prints by Polly Apfelbaum, Camera-Less-Videos by Julianne Swartz, an outdoor rainbow by Valerie Hammond, vibrant Radiation Explorations by Mildred Thompson, and monumental scaled works on linen by Jackie Saccoccio.

The artist Lisa Sanditz created for the occasion an installation of sculpture and painting combined with works from the Thomas Cole Site's collection by Emily Cole (Thomas Cole's daughter), and Anne Lindberg presents a new, site-specific thread installation and works on paper that respond to Thomas Cole's periwinkle wall-color choice. Laura Moriarty created a "Tableau for Thomas Cole" with pigmented beeswax, and Linda Weintraub presents an installation of home-preserved food in the order of the color spectrum.

"Thomas Cole was fascinated by how color connects to music, to emotion and the natural world," said Kate Menconeri, curator. "This exhibition explores that fascination through contemporary eyes — those of artists who are expanding our experience and understanding of color two centuries later. Simultaneously, they, like Cole, explore color at the intersection of art and science and as both light and pigment."

The exhibition grew out of conversations between Thomas Cole Site curator Kate Menconeri and artist Kiki Smith while working on Smith's 2017 solo exhibition "From the Creek" at the Thomas Cole Site. This exhibition dives into a subject that was of great interest to Thomas Cole, color, and brings it forward to our present moment through the work of 11 contemporary artists," said Elizabeth Jacks, executive director of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site.

"Spectrum" is the third annual exhibition in this series, which is an annual presentation of curat-

ed contemporary art installations that are sited within and around the historic home of the artist Thomas Cole. Operating from the concept that all art is contemporary, the program activates conversations between artists across the centuries and is collaborative by nature. Each year, the Thomas Cole Site invites one or more contemporary artists to create a site-specific project that engages with the art, writings, home and story of Thomas Cole. Projects may take the shape of an installation, a performance, a guided walk, or other format reflecting the artist's practice and ideas.

This program seeks art and ideas of the highest artistic merit, drawn from newly created or relevant pre-existing works that shed light on the connections between Nineteenth Century American art and contemporary times and that specifically speak to the historic environments in which they are presented. The program grew out of the 2015 exhibition "River Crossings: Contemporary Art Comes Home," curated by Stephen Hannock and Jason Rosenfeld, which was presented jointly with Olana.

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 on 6 acres 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 Cole Site's activities include guided tours, special exhibitions of both Nineteenth Century and contemporary art, printed 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 enables visitors to visit the places that Cole painted. The goal of all programs at



Exterior, Main House, Thomas Cole National Historic Site. Escape Brooklyn photo.

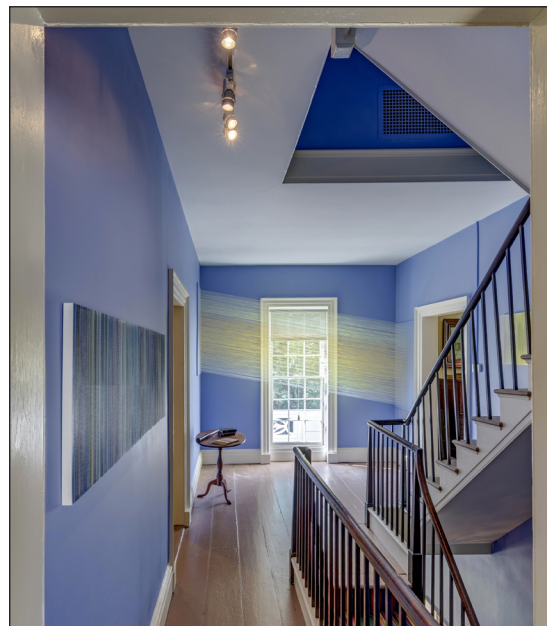


"Let us Eat the Colors of Nature's Spectrum" by Linda Weintraub, 2014-ongoing, Glass quart jars of home-preserved food arranged according to color spectrum. © Peter Aaron/OTTO photo, courtesy the artist.

the 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.

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site is at 218 Spring Street. For information, 518-943-7465 or www.thomascole.org.



"Sun come purple" by Anne Lindberg, 2018, Thread and staples, 60 by 120 by 24 inches. © Peter Aaron/OTTO photo, courtesy the artist.

"Camera-Less-Video (multi-cylinder)" by Julianne Swartz, 2011, Plexi-glass, lenses, found objects and view, © Peter Aaron/OTTO photo, courtesy the artist.

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