

Major Collaborative Exhibition to Open in May at Olana State Historic Site and the Thomas Cole National Historic Site

February 28, 2020 14:30



Martin Johnson Heade (1819 - 1904) Hooded Visorbearer, ca. 1863-1864. Oil on canvas, 12 1/4 x 10 in.
Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonv...

Exhibit Explores the Theme of “Cross Pollination” in Art and the Environment from the 19th Century to the Contemporary Moment

The National Project Stems from the Artist Martin Johnson Heade’s 19th-Century Series of Hummingbird and Habitat Paintings, *The Gems of Brazil*, and their Unique Relationship to the Epic Landscapes of Hudson River School Artists Thomas Cole and Frederic Church, as well as their Continued Significance to Contemporary Artists Working Today.

Co-Organized by the Two Historic Sites in New York and Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Arkansas, the Major Exhibition Will Also Feature Work by Contemporary Artists Including

Nick Cave, Mark Dion, Jeffrey Gibson, Paula

Hayes, Patrick Jacobs, Maya Lin, Dana Sherwood, Rachel Sussman, and Vik Muniz.

Cross Pollination: Heade, Cole, Church, and Our Contemporary Moment

May 9 - November 1, 2020

Olana State Historic Site and Thomas Cole National Historic Site

Catskill and Hudson, NY: Olana and the Thomas Cole National Historic Site has announced that they will co-host a major exhibition, “Cross Pollination: Heade, Cole, Church, and Our Contemporary Moment,” opening at the two sites in May. For the first time in over two decades, 16 paintings from the influential series of hummingbirds and habitats – *The Gems of Brazil* (1863-64) – by Martin Johnson Heade (1819-1904) will be on tour in New York for public audiences. The project uses the metaphor of cross-pollination inspired by Heade’s paintings to explore interconnections in art and science, between artists, and across the 19th and 21st centuries. Paintings, sketches, sculpture and natural history specimens will be displayed in provocative juxtapositions within the historic spaces. After the exhibition’s debut in New York, the show will travel to three additional museums, ending at Crystal Bridges Museum in Bentonville, Arkansas.



Patrick Jacobs, *Pink Forest with Stump*, 2016. Styrene, acrylic, cast neoprene, paper, hair, polyurethane foam, ash, talc, starch, acrylite, vinyl film, copper, wood, steel, lighting, and BK7 glass.

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Artist Martin Johnson Heade has long been associated with the Hudson River School of landscape painting that is characterized by the epic landscapes of the artists Thomas Cole (1801-1848) and Frederic Church (1826-1900). Heade, though, was making a different kind of “landscape” that magnified the intricate operations within nature itself. Heade traveled to Brazil in 1863, so that he could study the hummingbirds in their natural habitat. Heade’s focus in *The Gems of Brazil* and his related writing, which decries the overhunting of bird species, aligns with the proto-environmentalism of Thomas Cole, who wrote against deforestation in his own time. Heade’s own Brazilian journey was inspired by Frederic Church’s travels in Latin America. The ecological awareness and advocacy of these 19th-century artists connect thought and conversation taking place today

as concern for preservation and protection of the environment has reached a new urgency.

The exhibition will also include paintings by Thomas Cole and Frederic Church, as well as botanical works on paper by Cole’s daughter, Emily Cole, and Church’s daughter, Isabel Charlotte Church, shown together here for the first time. The exhibition highlights natural specimen collections amassed by Thomas Cole and Frederic Church, including Cole’s never-before-exhibited herbariums and a sampling of the Church family’s extensive collection of bird eggs.

“Cross Pollination” positions these 19th-century artists in a call and response with 21st-century American artists, whose works engage current issues related to biodiversity, habitat protection, and environmental sustainability. The contemporary artists are Rachel Berwick, Nick Cave, Mark Dion, Richard Estes, Juan Fontanive, Jeffrey Gibson, Paula Hayes, Patrick Jacobs, Maya Lin, Flora C. Mace, Vik Muniz, Portia Munson, Lisa Sanditz, Sayler/Morris, Dana Sherwood, Rachel Sussman, and Jeff Whetstone. Thematically resonant projects include works in the Crystal Bridges Collection by **Jeff Whetstone**, **Flora C. Mace**, **Richard Estes**, and **Patrick Jacobs**. Additional work by contemporary artists includes **Mark Dion and Dana Sherwood’s** outdoor pollinator pavilion designed to attract ruby-throated hummingbirds, **Rachel Sussman’s** series *The Oldest Living Things in the World*, **Maya Lin’s** interactive site *What is Missing*, and **Sayler/Morris’** *Eclipse*, among others.



Martin Johnson Heade (1819 - 1904) Brazilian Ruby, ca. 1864. Oil on canvas, 12 1.4 x 10 in.
Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville...

The joint project will be presented simultaneously as one exhibition at both the Olana State Historic Site in Hudson, NY, and the Thomas Cole National Historic Site in Catskill, NY, from May 9 to November 1, 2020. The two historic sites are connected by the Hudson River Skywalk, a scenic walkway across the Hudson River – with sweeping views of the Hudson Valley and the Catskill Mountains – that opened in June 2019. “Cross Pollination” is the second major collaborative project between Olana and the Cole Site and builds upon the success of the inaugural “River Crossings: Contemporary Art Comes Home” exhibition which took place in 2015.

The “Cross Pollination” exhibition was created by The Olana Partnership at Olana State Historic Site, Thomas Cole National Historic Site, and Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville,

Arkansas. The exhibition tour is organized by Crystal Bridges. The project will subsequently travel to The Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens in Jacksonville, FL, Reynolda House Museum of American Art in Winston-Salem, NC, and the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, AR.

“Martin Johnson Heade’s delicate hummingbird and habitat paintings are absolutely enthralling to see in person, particularly alongside landscape paintings by Thomas Cole and Frederic Church,” said Elizabeth B. Jacks, Executive Director of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. “The exhibition’s theme, ‘Cross Pollination,’ presents an important and positive vision, that by interacting with diverse factions and welcoming diverse viewpoints we are strengthened. It is our hope that this ambitious project will contribute to a renewed openness to unexpected sources of ideas and inspiration.”

“Following the success of ‘River Crossings’ in 2015, The Olana Partnership is thrilled to once again partner with the Thomas Cole National Historic Site on a joint exhibition that links these two founding sites of American Art,” said Sean Sawyer, President of The Olana Partnership. “Cross Pollination will encourage visitors to move back and forth along the new Hudson River Skywalk to immerse themselves in the landscapes and art of Cole and Church, which influenced colleagues like Heade and which continue to inspire the leading contemporary artists represented in our exhibition.”

“This exhibition ties together two important historic sites linked by the Hudson River Skywalk and celebrates the vibrant cultural heritage of this region,” said Amy Hausmann, Director, Olana State Historic Site. “Artists of the 19th century, just like contemporary artists working today, often serve as advocates and instigators, inspired to protect, preserve, and understand the world that surrounds them. ‘Cross Pollination’ offers us the opportunity to explore these timeless ideas of art and ecology and highlights our connection to one another.”

“Integral to the exhibition is an exploration of how ideas in science and art cross-pollinate and the importance of both in our contemporary moment,” said two of the co-curators, Kate Menconeri, Curator & Director of Exhibitions and Collections at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, and Julia B. Rosenbaum, Associate Professor of Art History and Visual Culture, Bard College; former Director of Research and Publications at The Olana Partnership. “With *The Gems of Brazil*, Heade was inspired by the symbiotic relationships he witnessed within nature. New ideas and issues in science continue to change the way we understand ecological systems today, and artists continue to wrestle with what is at stake, from the impact of pollinator loss to imagining new strategies for resiliency in the 21st century.”

William L. Coleman, Director of Collections & Exhibitions at The Olana Partnership, said, “The works in this exhibition, historic and contemporary, show the fraught transmission of ideas between artists and the unexpected afterlives of 19th-century American landscape art. Visitors will see masterworks from around the country on view in the family homes of Frederic Church and Thomas Cole, unique contexts that were once and still remain vital sites of contemporary creativity, where new forms and ideas encourage a reckoning with the fragile rhythms of the natural world.”

“It is remarkable to see how one series of paintings, *The Gems of Brazil*, can inspire cross-disciplinary dialogue and thinking more than 150 years after their creation,” said Mindy N. Besaw, Curator, American Art, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art. “Further, all the partner and venue museums hosting the exhibition are uniquely positioned within landscape. Through new ideas on historic and contemporary art, viewed while nestled within the natural environment, we hope all are called to be good stewards of nature.”

“Cross Pollination” is curated by Kate Menconeri, Curator & Director of Exhibitions and Collections at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site; Julia B. Rosenbaum, Associate Professor of Art History and Visual Culture, Bard College; former Director of Research and Publications at The Olana Partnership; William L. Coleman, Director of Collections & Exhibitions at The Olana Partnership; and Mindy N. Besaw, Curator, American Art, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art. “Cross Pollination” was developed collaboratively between the partner museums and in conversations with leading American artists, scholars, scientists, and historians. The project is accompanied by a full-color catalogue with essays by the curators.

Support for this exhibition and its national tour is provided by Art Bridges. Additional major support is provided by the Henry Luce Foundation.

The exhibition is supported in New York in part by The National Endowment for the Arts, and Market New York through I LOVE NY/New York State’s Division of Tourism as part of the Regional Economic Development Council awards, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, and the New York State Legislature; the Robert Lehman Foundation; The Bank of Greene County Charitable Foundation; Greene County Legislature through the County Initiative Program of the Greene County Council on the Arts; The Olana Partnership’s Novak-Ferber Exhibitions Fund, and the Kindred Spirits Society of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site.

Support for the catalogue is provided by Furthermore: a program of the J. M. Kaplan Fund