

ALBANY INSTITUTE OF HISTORY & ART

Albany Institute of History & Art

125 Washington Avenue Albany, NY 12210

T: (518) 463-4478; F: (518) 462-1522

www.albanyinstitute.org

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NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday January 22, 2013

CONTACT:

W. Douglas McCombs,
Curator of History and Material Culture
mccombsd@albanyinstitute.org
(518) 463-4478 ext 428

Elizabeth Reiss,
Director of Development
reisse@albanyinstitute.org
(518) 463-4478 ext 402

The Making of the Hudson River School: More than the Eye Beholds

Albany, NY— Albany Institute of History & Art opens a new exhibition, *The Making of the Hudson River School: More than the Eye Beholds*, which will be on view from January 26 through August 18, 2013. At 2:00 pm, on January 26, Curator of History and Material Culture, W. Douglas McCombs, will share his insights about the planning and organization of this exciting new exhibition featuring works from the Albany Institute and private collections. *Free with museum admission.*

Recognized as America's first distinctive school of art, the Hudson River School of landscape painting emerged, evolved, and declined during a period between 1825 and about 1875. Although not a formal school, the Hudson River School consisted of closely connected artists who lived and worked in the Hudson Valley and who turned to the American landscape as a source of inspiration and subject matter.

The Albany Institute's new exhibition on the Hudson River School brings together 120 works from private collections and the museum's holdings. On view in this exhibition will be one of Thomas Cole's early works, *View of Featherstonhaugh Estate Near Duanesburg*, which has rarely been exhibited in public venues. Other rarely seen paintings from private collections include works by Christopher Pearse Cranch, Alfred Thompson Bricher, Ernest Parton, and John Frederick Kensett.

Paintings and drawings by well-known artists such as Thomas Cole, Frederic Edwin Church, Asher B. Durand, and William Hart will accompany examples of early landscape art by lesser known followers of the Hudson River School.

Prints, photographs, published books, and hand-written correspondence from the period will broaden the historical narrative, adding the influence of tourism, geology, and popular culture to the discussion of the Hudson River School.

The exhibition is organized around eleven themes, which answer questions about the Hudson River School, its origins, and the forces that shaped its distinctive character.

- *Landscaping People*: Throughout history, artists have used landscapes in portraiture to experiment with mood and feeling, and to provide information about those portrayed.
- *The Early Topographical Tradition*: Before photography, engineers, surveyors, and others who wanted a truthful likeness of the landscape relied on topographical drawings and paintings. The tools of the surveyor rather than the expressiveness of the artist structured the view.
- *The Improved Landscape*: The fashion for carefully landscaped scenery arrived in America from England during the late eighteenth century. Gentlemen's estates, pastoral scenes, and picturesque views appeared in paintings, drawings, and prints that helped foster a broader interest in landscape art.
- *Something Truly American*: Paintings of America's waterfalls, gorges, and mountains captivated art buyers who saw for the first time the grandeur of American nature. Hudson River School artists found in the landscape something identifiable with the nation.
- *The Geologic Revolution*: During the early nineteenth century, new theories about geology led to scientific surveys, public lectures, and countless rock and mineral collections. The influence of geology in Hudson River School paintings and drawings reveals connections between art and science.
- *Truth in Nature*: In 1843, the British art critic John Ruskin advocated "truth to nature." Ruskin's influence encouraged many American artists to sketch and paint the landscape in detail with hopes of capturing nature's fundamental essence in the process.
- *Landscape and Transcendence*: The Hudson River School thrived at a time when European romanticism influenced American thought and the arts. Reflective introspection and a sentimental observation of the world directly influenced the way Americans viewed the landscape.
- *Between Man and Nature*: Hudson River School artists occasionally marveled at industrial settings. Manufacturing facilities, mining operations, and wonders of human engineering were rapidly transforming the American landscape during the years when Hudson River School artists were most active.
- *The Popular Appeal of Landscape*: As landscape painting grew in popularity, Americans desired to own and display works of landscape art in their homes. The popular appeal led to the increased production of prints and photographs, and cultivated a desire to see America's scenery in person.
- *The Tourists' Gaze*: A transportation network that developed across the United States during the nineteenth century gave Americans greater access to their native scenery. American tourism directly influenced Hudson River School artists and their work.
- *European Sojourns*: Hudson River School artists found their most refreshing subject in the American landscape, but many did travel abroad to study and paint the time-

honored sites of Europe. They returned home with new techniques and new ideas for representing the landscape around them.

This exhibition is generously funded by Trudeau Architects, PLLC; Keeler Motor Car Company; Morgan Stanley Smith Barney; Austin & Co; the McLaughlin Family; CSArch Architecture-Engineering-Construction Management

The Making of the Hudson River School exhibit will be displayed at the Albany Institute of History & Art, located at 125 Washington Avenue, Albany. For more information about this event, visit www.albanyinstitute.org.

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The Albany Institute's distinguished collections and acclaimed exhibitions comprise the definitive expression of the cultural, historical, and artistic heritage of Albany and the upper Hudson Valley. From its world-renowned Hudson River School collection, to the famous Albany Mummies, to the wide range of performances, lectures, and festivals, to its outstanding educational and family programming, this distinctive and engaging institution provides visitors of all ages and interests with a splendid museum experience. One of America's oldest museums, the Albany Institute of History & Art was founded in 1791, during the presidency of George Washington, making it older than the Louvre, the Smithsonian, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Visit www.albanyinstitute.org for more information, and be sure to follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/albanyinstitute) and Twitter (www.twitter.com/albanyinstitute).

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Media inquiries: W. Douglas McCombs, Curator of History & Material Culture & Exhibition Curator, mccombsd@albanyinstitute.org (518) 463-4478 ext 428

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