

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

Thomas Cole
(American, b. England, 1801–1848)

Aqueduct near Rome, 1832
Oil on canvas, 44 1/2 x 67 5/16"

University purchase, Bixby Fund,
by exchange, 1987

Edward S. Curtis
(American, 1868–1952)

A Piegan Home, 1910
Facing page 30 from *The North American Indian*, vol. 6, *The Piegan. The Cheyenne. The Arapaho.*, 1911
Photogravure on Van Gelder paper,
9 1/2 x 12 3/8"

Author's Camp Among the Spokane, 1910
Facing page 154 from *The North American Indian*, vol. 7, *The Yakima. The Klickitat. Salishan Tribes of the Interior. The Kutenai.*, 1911
Photogravure on vellum, 9 9/16 x 12 1/4"

Laguna Architecture, 1925
Facing page 238 from *The North American Indian*, vol. 16, *The Tiwa. The Keres.*, 1926
Photogravure on vellum, 9 1/2 x 12 7/16"

Noatak Village, 1928
Facing page 194 from *The North American Indian*, vol. 20, *The Alaskan Eskimo. The Nunivak. The Eskimo of Hooper Bay. The Eskimo of King Island. The Eskimo of Little Diomed Island. The Eskimo of Cape Prince of Wales. The Kotzebue Eskimo. The Noatak. The Kobuk. The Selawik.*, 1930
Photogravure on Van Gelder paper,
9 3/16 x 12 5/16"
Published by the artist and The University Press, Cambridge, MA
Gifts of Stephen Bunyard in honor of Megan D. Swider, 2005

Asher Brown Durand
(American, 1796–1886)

A New England Landscape, 1870
Oil on canvas, 14 1/4 x 24 1/8"
Bequest of Charles Parsons, 1905

Fenner, Sears & Co. (Engraver)
After Thomas Cole (American,
b. England, 1801–1848)

Monte Video, the Residence of D. Wadsworth, Esq., c. 1830
Facing page 481 from *The History and Topography of the United States of North America*, vol. 2, edited by John Howard Hinton, 1832
Steel engraving, 5 3/16 x 8 5/16"

Published by Simpkin & Marshall, London,
and Thomas Wardle, Philadelphia
Private collection

William Felt
(American, 1918–2006)

Landscape with Trees, 1944
Watercolor on paper, 25 7/8 x 19"

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Grodsky, 1977

Maurice Freedman
(American, 1904–1985)

Monhegan Evening, c. 1940–70
Gouache on paper, 36 3/4 x 28 7/8 x 1 1/2"
(framed)

Gift of Morton D. May, 1971

Sanford Robinson Gifford
(American, 1823–1880)

Rheinstein, 1872–74
Oil on canvas, 31 3/8 x 27 1/4"

Bequest of Charles Parsons, 1905

Edward Hopper
(American, 1882–1967)

American Landscape, 1920
Etching, ed. 100, 7 3/8 x 12 3/8"

University purchase, 1938

George Inness
(American, 1825–1894)

New England Village (Catskill Cove), 1866
Oil on canvas, 16 3/8 x 24 5/8"

Bequest of Charles Parsons, 1905

John Frederick Kensett
(American, 1816–1872)

Landscape, 1848
Oil on canvas, 12 1/8 x 10 1/8"

Bequest of Charles Parsons, 1905

Daniel Lang
(American, 1935–2013)

Raining Landscape, 1982
Oil on canvas, 48 1/8 x 76 1/4"

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Harold J. Joseph, 1985

Theodore Robinson
(American, 1852–1896)

Twachtman's House, 1892
Oil on canvas, 18 x 22"

Long-term loan from John S. Ford, Jr., 2001

Brockie Stevenson
(American, 1919–2009)

Landscape with Farm Complex, 1961
Watercolor on paper, 18 1/8 x 30 1/2"

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Grodsky, 1977

John Henry Twachtman
(American, 1853–1902)

House in Landscape, c. 1890
Oil on canvas, 22 3/16 x 24"

University purchase, Yeatman Fund, 1936

James McNeill Whistler
(American, 1834–1903)

Nocturne: Palaces, 1879–80, from
the *Second Venice Set*, 1886
Etching and drypoint, state 11/12, 11 7/8 x 7 7/8"

Gift of Dr. Malvern B. Clopton, 1930

William Adams & Sons (Potter)
After Thomas Cole (American,
b. England, 1801–1848)

Monte Video, Connecticut, U.S., c. 1835
Transferware, 6 7/8 x 1 1/2"

Private collection

TEACHING GALLERY

Spring 2016

ABODES OF PLENTY: AMERICAN ART OF THE INHABITED LANDSCAPE

American scenes are not destitute of historical and legendary associations—the great struggle for freedom has sanctified many a spot, and many a mountain, stream, and rock has its legend, worthy of poet’s pen or the painter’s pencil. But American associations are not so much of the past as of the present and the future. Seated on a pleasant knoll, look down into the bosom of that secluded valley, begin with wooded hills—through those enamelled meadows and wide waving fields of grain, a silver stream winds lingeringly along—here, seeking the green shade of trees—there, glancing in the sunshine: on its banks are rural dwellings shaded by elms and garlanded by flowers—from yonder dark mass of foliage the village spire beams like a star. You see no ruined tower to tell of outrage—no gorgeous temple to speak of ostentation; but freedom’s offspring—peace, security, and happiness, dwell there, the spirits of the scene. On the margin of that gentle river...those neat dwellings, unpretending to magnificence, are the **abodes of plenty**, virtue, and refinement.

—Thomas Cole, “Essay on American Scenery,” 1836

This Teaching Gallery exhibition—on view January 29 to April 24, 2016—is curated by William L. Coleman, postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Art History & Archaeology in Arts & Sciences, in conjunction with his course “‘The Hudson River School’: Landscape and Ideology,” offered in spring 2016.

ABODES OF PLENTY: AMERICAN ART OF THE INHABITED LANDSCAPE

The British-born American landscape painter Thomas Cole's influential 1836 "Essay on American Scenery" proposed a solution to a problem that faced would-be practitioners of landscape art in the early United States.¹ While the painters of Europe could make satisfying and marketable canvases by depicting the remains of Greek and Roman antiquity, in addition to more recent structures, that inscribed the natural world with human history and poetic possibility, the American landscape suffered, in the minds of many, from what Cole called "the want of associations." In its seeming newness and wildness and its relative lack of built evidence of earlier peoples, the American landscape struck early European visitors as a place of terror and chaos rather than of pleasant nostalgia and romance. Of course, as we who visit art galleries in the shadow of the imposing mounds of Cahokia know, this was a landscape long inhabited and modified to suit the requirements of native peoples, but the writers and artists of the period largely overlooked or denied this part of the story. While others might have suggested that there could not be an intellectually sophisticated art of landscape in the United States, rich in narrative and allegory, until hundreds of years of civilizing efforts by peoples of European descent had transpired, Cole offered a way forward. According to him, the fact that the American landscape lacks the architectural remains of feudal decadence should be a cause for celebration rather than lament. Instead of ruined castles and towers, an American artist could depict the far superior subject matter of ordinary houses already rising in the landscape and inscribing it with new associations of democratic citizenship and Christian morality.

In his call for the depiction of the "neat dwellings" that were "the abodes of plenty, virtue, and refinement," Cole not only lends this exhibition its title but establishes its scope. *Abodes of Plenty: American Art of the Inhabited Landscape* brings together artworks in a range of media and techniques that show how American artists have responded to the subject of the house in the landscape from Cole's time to the present day. In addition, it shows the response

of American artists to the contrasting inhabited landscape of Europe, with Cole's iconic *Aqueduct near Rome*, a classic image of the evocative possibility of ruins, as the focal point. Native American domestic practices are also represented, countering the notion, latent in Cole's words, that the continent was empty of habitation and waiting to be inscribed with European civilization.

The selected objects participate in a broader discourse of domesticity that has imbued houses with particular political and social significance in the United States. Andrew Jackson Downing, perhaps the most influential writer on houses, landscape, and gardens of the nineteenth century, wrote in 1850 that "a good house...is a powerful means of civilization" and claimed "the individual home has a great social value for a people."² Recent work in literary studies and architectural history has established how widespread notions like Downing's were. As W. Barksdale Maynard has written, "To an extent that is difficult to appreciate, development, then called 'improvement,' seemed a matter of tremendous collective urgency, given the vastness of the landscape to be tamed and made habitable and fruitful. House building played a key role in this national drama."³ Adam Sweeting has categorized this national attention to houses in the United States as "the cult of domesticity, the broad cultural program which helped direct the nation's moral and aesthetic energies toward the home."⁴ Moreover, Duncan Faherty has persuasively argued that "the design and construction of houses became a locus for debating broadly shared concerns about cultural development.... The house is not a realm removed from a larger public world, but the lens through which Americans of both genders and from a variety of different political and social orientations, a host of counterpublics, sought to examine the state of the Republic."⁵

The visibility of architecture in general as a medium made it the basis of a vibrant discourse about taste, class, and progress, able to generate conversations and reach a broader audience than painting alone could do. Houses in particular served as sites of

eager public spectatorship before widespread access to art in museums and as places for the formation and discussion of ideas of cultural nationalism. When the artists in this exhibition represented the inhabited landscape, they contributed to a longer dialogue about the meanings of house and home in the United States.

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Notes

- 1 Thomas Cole, "Essay on American Scenery," *The American Monthly Magazine* 1 (January 1836): 1–12.
- 2 Andrew Jackson Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses* (New York: D. Appleton, 1850), xix.
- 3 W. Barksdale Maynard, *Architecture in the United States, 1800–1850* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 9.
- 4 Adam W. Sweeting, "'A Very Pleasant Patriarchal Life': Professional Authors and Amateur Architects in the Hudson Valley, 1835–1870," *Journal of American Studies* 29, no. 1 (April 1995): 34.
- 5 Duncan Faherty, *Remodeling the Nation: The Architecture of American Identity, 1776–1858* (Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire Press, 2007), 7.