



*Historic Bridges of  
the Hudson Valley*



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NYS Bridge Authority Chief of Staff, Thomas Scaglione, (845) 691-7245

Thomas Cole Site, Director of External Relations, Jennifer Greim, [JGreim@thomascole.org](mailto:JGreim@thomascole.org)

The Olana Partnership, Development & Marketing Communications Manager, Melanie Hasbrook, [mhasbrook@olana.org](mailto:mhasbrook@olana.org)

***The Second Annual Hudson River Skywalk Arts Festival Will Take Place on September 30 at Three Locations: the Rip Van Winkle Bridge, Thomas Cole National Historic Site, and Olana State Historic Site***

**The Hudson River Skywalk Arts Festival is Presented by Historic Bridges of the Hudson Valley, in Conjunction with the New York State Bridge Authority and the Two Historic Sites, and Celebrates the Art of the Hudson Valley and the Hudson River Skywalk Initiative, Which Will Physically Link the Thomas Cole Site and Frederic Church's Olana across the Hudson River**

**The Festival includes free special events at all three locations in the Hudson River Skywalk Region.**

**Catskill, NY:** Historic Bridges of the Hudson Valley, the New York State Bridge Authority, Olana State Historic Site, and Thomas Cole National Historic Site announced today the second annual Hudson River Skywalk Arts Festival spanning Columbia and Greene Counties. The Festival will take place on the afternoon of Sunday, September 30.

The Festival celebrates the art of the Hudson River Valley and the upcoming completion of the Hudson River Skywalk, which will provide a pedestrian pathway connecting the Rip Van Winkle Bridge – with its stunning new viewing platforms – to the Thomas Cole National Historic Site and Olana State Historic Site, on either side of the river. The experience will weave together the historic homes and studios of Thomas Cole (1801-1848) and Frederic Church (1826-1900) with the Hudson River Valley views that inspired them. Cole was the founder of America's first major art movement, the Hudson River School of landscape painting, while Church was Cole's legendary student and America's first international art star. The new pedestrian walkway on the bridge is complete; the pathway to Olana is under construction and scheduled to be finished next month; the pathway to the Thomas Cole Site will be substantially complete in October.

The Festival is a celebration of the transformative impact that the Hudson River Valley has had – and continues to have – on American art. The Festival invites the public to come to the park next to the Rip Van Winkle Bridge's toll plaza in Catskill to view and buy the work of more than 15 artists, observe *plein air* painters along the Hudson River Skywalk, hear a performance by classical guitarist David Temple, and participate in hands-on art lessons with instructor Stasia Fernandez – all in a beautiful setting overlooking the Hudson River. Activities at the bridge will take place between noon and 4:00 pm. Parking is available at the toll plaza parking lot.

The Olana Partnership and Olana State Historic Site in Hudson, NY, will celebrate the Skywalk Festival by working collaboratively with the innovative Ancram Opera House, which will produce a "happening"



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Authority**



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with David Lane of New England Puppet Arts on the bridge. **ANCRAM OPERA HOUSE HAS INVITED LANE TO CONSTRUCT HEAD PUPPETS THAT WILL CREATE** larger-than-life representations of Thomas Cole and Frederic Church. **THE COLE AND CHURCH PUPPETS** will be walking the Rip Van Winkle Bridge conversing about the environment, the picturesque, and the futuristic steel artifice that now crosses the Hudson River. **PUPPETS** will interact with audiences on the bridge and even awe drivers as they cross the Hudson River. To see this exciting happening, plan to cross the bridge between 2:00 and 4:00 pm on September 30.

The Festival includes special events at both historic sites as well. Temporary signs will direct guests between the bridge and the Thomas Cole Site, which is within walking distance. Due to construction of the roundabout on the East approach to the bridge, the public is encouraged to drive to Olana.

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site in Catskill, NY, will present its annual Community Day and open-call pop-up exhibition entitled *7<sup>th</sup> Annual Postcards from the Trail*. For Community Day, which will be held from 1:00 pm until 4:00 pm, the historic site and its special exhibitions will be open without charge, and the occasion will include art-making activities for the whole family, live music provided by the Coxsackie-Athens Community Band and The Colonie Brass, and refreshments available for purchase from Verdigris Tea. The pop-up exhibition features original 5" x 7" works of art by artists who responded to an open call to walk in the footsteps of Thomas Cole and visit one of the 23 sites along the Hudson River School Art Trail to make their own postcard-size artwork of the same views. The Art Trail includes a website and guidebook with maps and directions connecting visitors with the places in nature that Cole and the Hudson River School artists painted nearly 200 years ago.

In addition, acclaimed author and illustrator Hudson Talbott, renowned for his award-winning children's books, will sign copies of his new book, *Picturing America: Thomas Cole and the Birth of American Art*, which is the first children's book on Thomas Cole. The book introduces children to Cole's life and work, his love of the Hudson Valley and Catskills, his passion for painting and his pioneering proto-environmentalism. On view at the Thomas Cole Site are two major exhibitions: *SPECTRUM*, an exhibition of contemporary artworks exploring Cole's use of color, featuring the work of 11 contemporary artists, and *Picturesque and Sublime: Thomas Cole's Trans-Atlantic Inheritance* presented in partnership with the Yale Center for British Art and members of the Yale History of Art Department, featuring works of art by Thomas Cole, J. M. W. Turner, and John Constable.

Olana is activating a free horse-and-wagon ride from the main house/Visitor Center on Ridge Road to the picnic area that overlooks the Rip Van Winkle Bridge, the mighty Hudson River, and the expanse of the Catskill Mountain range. These rides will be first-come-first-serve 20-minute loops designed to travel the landscape as Church and Cole did. The wagon rides will be free and will run from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm to maximize the potential for the twilight and sunset. The wagon rides are provided at Olana by Saratoga Horse and Carriage.

In addition to wagon rides and tours of the Main House, there are landscape tours on Frederic Church's carriage roads. Whether you choose to experience Olana on foot or in an electric vehicle, guided or self-guided, there are new things to experience and learn at Olana, if you make time. Suggestions include downloading the Middle Eastern Adventures audio tour to listen to the Churches' letters and diaries from their Middle Eastern trip in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century or purchasing the new map and exploration guide



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designed by Germantown, NY artist Dawn Breeze. Keri Smith’s Wander Society Adventure Tent can be your base camp for hours of painting with the rentable *plein air* painting kit, reading, pondering the prompts that the artist has created for visitors, or just staring out upon the landscape. Go to [OLANA.org](http://OLANA.org) to learn more.

The Festival is supported by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the State of New York through Empire State Development’s I LOVE NEW YORK program under the Market NY Initiative.

**HUDSON RIVER SKYWALK REGION:** This year, the Thomas Cole National Historic Site in Catskill, NY and Olana – across the Hudson River in Hudson, NY – have joined forces with New York State to launch a new initiative to promote the region as an epicenter of American art where the nation’s first major art movement began. The project – titled the Hudson River Skywalk Region – weaves together the home and studios of Thomas Cole at the Thomas Cole Site and those of his legendary student Frederic Church at Olana with the landscape that inspired it all to create one seamless experience. With support from New York State, a continuous pedestrian walkway – the Hudson River Skywalk – will connect the historic sites across the Rip Van Winkle Bridge over the Hudson River by the end of October 2018. The Region also includes the City of Hudson and the Town of Catskill.

#### **HISTORIC BRIDGES OF THE HUDSON VALLEY**

Historic Bridges of the Hudson Valley is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the history and general knowledge of the region’s bridges and their role and contribution to shaping the economy, as well as the continued importance of the bridges to sustain the vitality of the Hudson Valley region and the Northeastern transportation corridor.

#### **NYS BRIDGE AUTHORITY**

The NYS Bridge Authority operates five vehicular crossings over the Hudson River, including the Rip Van Winkle Bridge, for the economic and social benefit of the people of the State of New York. Established in 1932, the Authority is a public benefit corporation which does not receive state or federal funding and is financed primarily through its tolls, which are among the lowest in the Northeast.

**THE THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE** is an international destination presenting the original home and studios of Thomas Cole (1801-1848), 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 Thomas Cole Site’s activities include guided tours, special exhibitions of both 19<sup>th</sup>-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 enable visitors to visit the places that Cole painted. 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 historic and timely, providing the opportunity to connect to audiences with insights that are highly relevant to their own lives.



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**About Olana and The Olana Partnership:** Olana is the greatest masterpiece of Frederic Edwin Church (1826-1900), the preeminent American artist of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, and the most important artist's home, studio and designed landscape in the United States. Church designed Olana as a holistic environment integrating his advanced ideas about art, architecture, landscape design and environmental conservation. Olana's 250-acre artist-designed landscape with a Persian-inspired house at its summit embraces unrivaled panoramic views of the Hudson Valley and Catskill Mountains and, today, welcomes more than 170,000 visitors annually.

Olana State Historic Site, a historic site administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Taconic Region, is a designated National Historic Landmark and one of the most visited sites in the state. The Olana Partnership, a private not-for-profit education corporation, works cooperatively with New York State to support the restoration, conservation and interpretation of Olana State Historic Site. To learn more about Olana and The Olana Partnership, please visit [www.olana.org](http://www.olana.org).

**Olana VISITOR INFORMATION:** The landscape is free and open daily 8am to sunset. For a current list of tours of the main house and artist-designed landscape, visit: [www.olana.org/hours-and-admission](http://www.olana.org/hours-and-admission).

**Thomas Cole VISITOR INFORMATION:** The hours for Thomas Cole's home, studios and special exhibitions vary by season. For details see: [www.thomascole.org/visit](http://www.thomascole.org/visit). Keep in touch on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter at @thomascolesite.