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Acclaimed French Conceptual Artist Laurent Grasso's Work on View in Historic Artist Homes of Frederic Church and Thomas Cole

The Joint Exhibition Will Accompany *Laurent Grasso: Metaphysical Maze* at MASS MoCA, the Largest Solo Exhibition to Date in the United States Devoted to the Artist

Laurent Grasso, *Orchid Island*, 2023. Film HR, 20:01 © Laurent Grasso / ADAGP, Paris, 2026, Courtesy of the artist, Perrotin and Sean Kelly

Catskill and Hudson, NY – September 23, 2026 – The Olana Partnership, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, and the Thomas Cole National Historic Site announced today a joint exhibition of work by acclaimed French conceptual artist Laurent Grasso in the historic artist homes of Frederic Church and Thomas Cole. *Metaphysical Maze: Laurent Grasso at Frederic Church's Olana and the*

Thomas Cole Site will open on November 22, 2026, and run through March 28, 2027. This exhibition is a capstone celebration of Frederic Church 200, a year celebrating the bicentennial of Church's birth.

The exhibition will accompany a primary exhibition of Laurent Grasso's work at MASS MoCA in North Adams, MA: *Metaphysical Maze*, the largest solo exhibition to date in the United States devoted to the artist. *Metaphysical Maze* at MASS MoCA is curated by Denise Markonish. It opens November 7, 2026 and runs through January 16, 2028. Laurent Grasso calls these exhibitions as well as a related presentation at Burlington City Arts in Burlington, VT, "a constellation." He notes that each location develops a different aspect of his practice while extending the conceptual environment of the project beyond the boundaries of a single institution.

Metaphysical Maze: Laurent Grasso at Frederic Church's Olana and the Thomas Cole Site engages with the histories of both sites by introducing contemporary works into spaces shaped by other periods, creating an encounter between different temporalities. Each work evokes a sense of chronological strangeness, making it difficult to situate precisely in time. Across this dual exhibition, Laurent Grasso examines the way we represent the natural world today, between nostalgia, fascination, and anxiety. This reflection is informed by his recent interest in the Hudson River School, which has become a source of inspiration for several of his new paintings. Together, these two presentations bring past, present, and future into encounter, placing Grasso's work in a sensitive dialogue with two of the major figures of American landscape painting.

<u>Laurent Grasso at Olana</u>

The exhibition at Olana will be within the spaces of the historic house and include a presentation of Grasso's film *Orchid Island* (2023), filmed off the coast of Taiwan, which deconstructs idealized representations of pristine and untouched nature by introducing an enigmatic black rectangle into the landscape. The exhibition also includes never-before-exhibited oil paintings from the artist's ongoing series *Studies into the Past*, a long-term conceptual project consisting of paintings whose style and method of execution draw direct inspiration from art of past centuries. The new paintings displayed at Olana will draw direct visual quotations from landscape paintings by Church and will be placed in direct conversation within the historic spaces.

Laurent Grasso says that at Olana his paintings, "each directly inspired by landscapes painted by Church, occupy available spaces within the house and, in selected instances, temporarily replace works already on view. This process of infiltration creates a new experience, while remaining attentive to the density and character of its original hanging." Grasso has engaged in multiple past projects that intervene within existing museum and historic spaces, inserting his own works into these contexts in ways that challenge conventional museum practice and blur boundaries between past and present.

Laurent Grasso's strange celestial, geological, and atmospheric phenomena merge almost imperceptibly with Church's landscapes. "Considered as a whole," he continues, "the installation creates moments of uncertainty in which historical and contemporary images become difficult to distinguish."

"In a year that has already seen an unprecedented surge of interest in Frederic Church's artwork and legacy, as we celebrate the bicentennial of his birth in 1826, The Olana Partnership is honored to collaborate with Laurent Grasso on this unique installation that speaks to the continued relevance of artists who urge us to examine our role in the natural world, and inspire critical conversations about human-made threats to our environment," said Maggie Dimock, Associate Curator for The Olana Partnership. She went on to say, "Grasso's work follows in the footsteps of Church and Cole, who both employed awe and mystery to inspire reflection. We are delighted to collaborate with the Thomas Cole Site and MASS MoCA in bringing his probing and urgent work to audiences here in the Hudson Valley."

Laurent Grasso (b. 1972), *Anima*, 2022, film, 18 ft. 14 in. Courtesy the artist.

Laurent Grasso at the Thomas Cole Site

The exhibition at the Thomas Cole Site will include Thomas Cole's oil painting *Landscape with Clouds* (1846-47), which is juxtaposed with Laurent Grasso's film *Anima (2022)*, his neon *Projection* and *Eternal Flame (2024)*, his red marble sculpture *Panoptes (2019)*,

and a new never-before-seen painting, inspired by Thomas Cole, in the series *Studies into the Past*.

Laurent Grasso selected the works presented at the Thomas Cole Site based on their relationship to Cole's work and in particular: *Landscape with Clouds*. As Grasso states, “This selection of works for the Thomas Cole National Historic Site reflects an inquiry into how the perception of landscape has shaped our relationship to the world—between contemplation, exploration, and the power of representation. Cole’s legacy, at the intersection of art, science, and a spiritual vision of nature, resonates with my own research into the zones of ambiguity between reality and fiction, observation and mental projection. By revisiting this foundational site of the American gaze upon the landscape, I intend to explore the enduring tension between nature and artifice, between a romantic vision and contemporary technologies of perception.”

“We are thrilled to be able to present with Olana this extraordinary joint exhibition of the work of Laurent Grasso in our historic artist homes and landscapes,” said Maura O’Shea, Executive Director of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. “Laurent Grasso has a unique and fascinating way of exploring the timelessness of the paintings of Thomas Cole and his student Frederic Church, two foundational American artists whose work resonates through centuries and around the world. Grasso makes clear through his own work that landscape transcends time periods and is a subject more relevant today than ever. Our historic sites will be enriched and empowered by this site-specific exploration.”

About Laurent Grasso

Born in France in 1972, Laurent Grasso has developed a fascination with the visual possibilities related to the science of electromagnetic energy, radio waves, and naturally occurring phenomena. His projects attempt to capture and restore phenomena invisible to the human eye and mind. Combining the most prospective theories and scientific tools with the oldest beliefs, Grasso’s works invite us to travel through time and into a collision of worlds.

Laurent Grasso is the recipient of the Meru Art*Science Award in Bergamo, Italy; the Chevalier de l’ordre des Arts et des Lettres; and the Marcel Duchamp Prize. He is the subject of a major monograph, *Time Travel*, published by Rizzoli in 2024. His work has been shown in solo exhibitions at international institutions including the Abbaye of Jumièges, in France, Tao Art in Taiwan, the Collège des Bernardins and the Musée d’Orsay in Paris, the Centre Pompidou x West Bund Museum in Shanghai, the Jeonnam Museum of Art in Gwangyang, South Korea, the Palais Fesch, Musée des Beaux-Arts in Ajaccio, France, the Hermès Foundation in Tokyo, the Kunsthaus Baselland in Switzerland, the Musée d’Art Contemporain in Montréal, the Jeu de Paume and Palais de Tokyo in Paris, the Bass Museum of Art in Miami, and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington D.C. amongst others.

More Information

Metaphysical Maze at MASS MoCA will be on view in the museum's iconic Building 5. There it will take the form of an immersive installation bringing together, for the first time, the artist's most emblematic films, along with a new commission, *Cosmic Drive*, produced during his research residency at the SETI Institute in Mountain View, California.

Metaphysical Maze: Laurent Grasso at Frederic Church's Olana and the Thomas Cole Site at Olana comes from generous donors to The Olana Partnership's Frederic Church 200 Fund. The exhibition is made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature.

More information on Olana is available at www.olana.org. More information on the Thomas Cole Site is available at www.thomascole.org.

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More information on *Metaphysical Maze* at MASS MoCA is available at www.massmoca.org, or contact press@massmoca.org.

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The Olana Partnership
The Olana Partnership is the primary programming entity at Olana State Historic Site responsible for all public and educational programs including comprehensive tours of the historic landscape and architecture, preservation and viewshed protection advocacy. The Olana Partnership's mission is to restore and enhance Frederic Church's Olana, elevate its significance, and welcome diverse, contemporary audiences for learning and enjoyment. The Olana Partnership is a cooperative nonprofit partner of New York State Parks at Olana State Historic Site, a National Historic Landmark and a public work of art, architecture, and landscape.

Visitor Information
The landscape and house are open for guided touring, and reservations are highly recommended. The park is open daily 8:00 A.M. - sunset. To learn more visit, OLANA.org.

Thomas Cole National Historic Site
The Thomas Cole National Historic Site showcases the life and work of Thomas Cole (1801-1848), whose American landscape painting defines an enduring visual identity for

the nation. Inspired by the natural beauty that surrounds the site, Cole founded the influential Hudson River School art movement. The site's six-acre campus in Catskill, NY, includes Cole's home and two studio buildings; the Cole Center, a new visitor center designed by Architectural Digest 100 Stephen Shadley; gardens and grounds with panoramic views of the Catskill Mountains; and a scenic walkway over the Hudson River connecting the site with Olana, the historic home of artist and Cole student Frederic Church. The Thomas Cole Site hosts exhibitions as well as art-making activities and innovative school and public programs. Visitors experience first-hand the themes that Cole explored, from the power of art to landscape preservation to the restorative properties of nature. The Thomas Cole Site is a National Historic Landmark and an affiliated area of the National Park System, and it operates as an independent 501c3 nonprofit organization.

Visitor Information
The Thomas Cole National Historic Site is open year-round, and hours vary by season. For details see: thomascole.org/visit. The grounds are open every day for free from dawn to dusk. Keep in touch on Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube at @thomascolesite.

Hudson River Skywalk
The Hudson River Skywalk is a scenic walkway over the Hudson River at the epicenter of American art. The Skywalk connects the historic homes, studios and landscapes of the 19th-century artists Thomas Cole and Frederic Church, whose landscape paintings launched the art movement now known as the Hudson River School. The six-mile out-and-back pedestrian walkway connects the two national historic landmarks, the Thomas Cole National Historic Site and Frederic Church's Olana, via the Rip Van Winkle Bridge. Offering sweeping views of the Hudson River Valley and the Catskill Mountains, the Skywalk brings visitors into the natural landscapes that inspired Cole and Church's iconic American landscape paintings.

Visitor Information
The Hudson River Skywalk Region includes the City of Hudson and the Village of Catskill, which both offer historic main streets with restaurants, shopping and accommodations. For details see: https://www.hudsonriverskywalk.org/.