

A PEDAGOGICAL SUMMARY OF THE HUDSON RIVER SCHOOL PROJECT.

(Not for circulation. A report for Gerry Rose, Leesburg, Va. 10/12/2008)

by Pierre Beaudry

INTRODUCTION: THE INSIGHT PRINCIPLE.

“{True genius accepts its duty, and will not rest short of the highest truth of his age.}” Theodore Winthrop.



Frederic Edwin Church, Heart of the Andes, 1859.

During a period of about fifty years (1826-1876) the Hudson River School of landscape painting had the purpose of initiating an American Renaissance in art and of establishing a cultural revolution in the American social fabric as a whole. If it did not succeed, it was not because its landscape artists did not have the required genius to do it,

but because the American population did not have the required *{insight principle}* to discover it for what it was when it came, and was unable to nurture it and fight back when it came under systematic attacks by the British Empire. This raises the question: how can an artistic renaissance be made successful in America and how can it be made to last? It is not the object of this report to answer this question, per se, but merely to force awareness of the question with respect to what Lyn identified as the *{insight Principle.}* (Appropriate quote needed)

For example, the truth that was conveyed by the first exhibitions of *The Course of Empire* (1836) by Thomas Cole, or the *Heart of the Andes* (1859) by Frederic Church was not seized because the population was not ready to fight public opinion and be truthful as was required of a people that had just fought and won its independence against British imperialism. No one, except a few writers of the school, like Theodore Winthrop or William Dunlap, dared denounce the filth of British imperialism and the evil of Pre-Raphaelite operations against the arts of design being born in the United States during the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

Now, it is time for the American population to go back to the universal physical principle that founded their nation and to rediscover, through the pains of paradoxes and anomalies, the great mastery of artistic composition that extended such principles into our society and was generated by the Hudson River School.

The artists of the Hudson River School were very conscious that they had the responsibility of creating a cultural form of self-government in the domain of classical artistic composition. However, the spectator also had his duty to perform in that social compact. The difficulty for both the artist and the spectator was to avoid the two most deadly dangers facing a new renaissance: the Charybde of public opinion, and the Scylla of didactic moralization. What was required of the artist was to create a social climate of principle by impacting the spectator with the power of true sublime beauty. The writer friend of James Fenimore Cooper, Theodore Winthrop, made this conscious objective quite explicit in his extraordinary publicity pamphlet for the first exhibition of Church's *Heart of the Andes*, in 1859. In this very polemical pamphlet, Winthrop made clear what the responsibilities of the artist and of the viewer were:

“{A great work of art is a delight and a lesson. A great artist owes a mighty debt to mankind for their labor and thought, since thought and toil began. He must give token that he is no thankless heritor of the sum of human knowledge, no selfish or indolent possessor of man's purest ideals of beauty. The world is very tender, but very exacting with genius. True genius accepts its duty, and will not rest short of the highest truth of his age. A master artist works his way to the core of Nature, because he demands not husks nor pith, but kernel. The inmost spirit of beauty is not to be discerned by dodging about and waiting until the door of her enchanted castle stand ajar. The true knight must will the horn of challenge, chop down the ogre, garrote the griffon, hoist the portcullis with a petard, and pierce to the shrine, deaf to the blandishments of the sirens. Then, when he has won his bride, the queen, he must lead her beauty forth for the

world's wonderment, to dazzle and inspire.}” (Theodore Winthrop, *A Companion to The Heart of the Andes*, Reprinted from D. Appleton and Company by Olana Gallery, New York, 1977, p. 4)

Winthrop, then, described the different steps the viewer must go through in order to qualify himself as a true lover of artistic composition. The reader should note how Winthrop is not avoiding navigating between the two deadly reefs of Charybde and Scylla by educating the spectator against public opinion and launching a deadly attack against the British pre-Raphaelites, notably against their leading artist, Sir John Millais, who had lent a perfect flank by painting a dolt peasant, *Cymon and Iphigenia* in 1848. Winthrop wrote:

“{Recipients of the boons of art have their duty coordinated with the artist's. Art gives bounty or a pittance, as we have the will or the capacity to receive – copper to the blind – silver to the fond – red gold to the passionate – dense light of diamond to the faithful lover. We gain from a noble picture according to our serenity, our pureness, our docility, and our elevation of mind. Dolts, fools, and triflers do not get much from Art, unless Art may perchance seize the moment to illuminate them through and through, and pierce their pachyderms with thrills of indignant self-contempt and awakening love. For divine Art has power to confound conceit into humility, and shame the unwashed into purifying their hearts. Clown Cymon saw Iphigenia, and presently the clown was a gentleman [British pre-Raphaelite, Sir John Everett Millais]. Even if we have a neat love for the beautiful and call ourselves by the pretty, modest title of amateurs, we have a large choice of degrees of benefit. We may see the first picture of our cycle, and receive a butterfly pleasure, a sniff of half-sensual emotion; or we may transmute our butterfly into a bird of paradise, may educate our slight pleasure into a permanent joy, and sweetly discipline our passion of the finer senses into a love and worship. We can be vulgar admirers of novelty with no pains, or refined lovers of the beautiful with moderate pains. Let no one be diffident. Eyes are twice as numerous as men; and if we look we must see, unless we are timid and blink. We must outgrow childish fancies – we must banish to the garret the pre-Praxitelite clay-josses, and dismiss our pre-Giotesque ligneous daubs to the flames. We may safely let ourselves grow, and never fear overgrowth. Why should not men become too large for “creeds outworn.”

“The Heart of the Andes” demands far more than a vague confidence that we can safely admire without committing ourselves. It is not enough to look awhile and like a little, and evade discrimination with easy commonplaces. Here is a strange picture evidently believing itself to be good; if not so, it must be elaborately bad, and should be massacred. If good and great, let it have the crown of unfading bays; but the world cannot toss its laurels lightly about to bristle on every ambitious pate. If we want noble pictures and progress to nobler, let us recognize them heartily when they come. An artist feels the warmth of intelligent sympathy, as a peach feels sunshine. The applause of a mob has a noisy charm, like the flapping of wings in an army of wild pigeons, but the tidal sympathy of a

throng of brother men stirs the life-blood. When a man of genius asks if he speaks the truth, and the world responds with a magnificent “Aye!” thenceforth, his impulse move with the momentum of mankind. Appreciation is the consequence of excellence.”}” (Theodore Winthrop, Op. Cit., pp. 5-6)

This is how to treat artistic composition with total truthfulness. Winthrop had a very healthy polemical approach to art in general, and especially relative to the role of the American spectator as compared to the European spectator, and he made that clear to the American spectators who came to see the exhibition of *The Heart of the Andes*. As a spectator, Winthrop rejected the idea of being entertained and, to the contrary, accepted the role of participating in the discovery of the creative process of the artist. That is why Winthrop was able to sense every nuance of thought that Church distilled into the *Heart of the Andes*. A discussion of his evaluation will be studied in due course. However, on the subject of the difference between American art and European art, more generally, Winthrop said:

“{Before proceeding to the direct analysis, let us notice the strength of our position as American thinkers on Art. Generally with the boons of the past, we have to accept the burdens of the past. But only a withered incubus, moribund with atrophy, squats about our healthy growth in Art. We may have much to learn, but we have little to unlearn. Young artists, errant with Nature, are not caught and cuffed by the despotism of effete schools, nor sneered down into insanity by conservative dilettantism. Superstition for the past is feeble here, today. We might tend to irreverence, but irreverence is soon scourged out of every sincere life. We have a nearly clear field for Art, and no rubbish to be burned. Europe has been wretchedly impeded and futilized in Art by worshipping men rather than God, finite works rather than infinite Nature, and is now at pains to raze and reconstruct its theories. Our business is simpler, and this picture is a token of inevitable success – a proof and a promise, a lesson and a standard. The American landscape artist marches at Nature with immense civilization to back him. The trophies of old triumph are not disdained, but they are behind him. He is not compelled to serve apprenticeship in the world’s garrets of trash for inspiration, nor to kowtow to any fetish, whether set up on the Acropolis, or the Capitoline, in the Court of the Louvre, or under the pepper boxes in Trafalgar Square.

“No lover of Art should be bullied out of his faith in his own instincts and independent culture by impertinencies about old masters and antique schools. Remember that Nature is the mistress of all masters, and founder of all schools. Nature makes Art possible straightway, everywhere, always.}” (Theodore Winthrop, *A Companion to The Heart of the Andes*, Reprinted from D. Appleton and Company by Olana Gallery, New York, 1977, pp. 7-8)

This is the clearest and most truthful exposition of the matter of American artistic appreciation ever stated by anyone during the middle of the nineteenth century. And, it must be added that such a polemical approach as that of Winthrop is also necessary for

approaching the works of Thomas Cole, Samuel Morse, Asher Durand, Worthington Whittredge, Albert Bierstadt, Robert Duncanson, Sanford Gifford, and many others that will be discussed in the following report. Unfortunately, Winthrop was killed while serving his country as a Union officer during the Civil War and very few art critics of the period had the courage of following in his footsteps by so clearly internalizing the enemies of creativity in art. A few more Winthrops might have gone a long way into preventing the Hudson River School from failing in its patriotic mission.

THE ACTUAL UNIVERSAL MISSION OF THE HUDSON RIVER SCHOOL.

I think the main idea to get across in our project is to show that the Hudson River School of painting strove to pursue the great works of Western Civilization by bringing out of Europe and into the American wilderness the hope of liberating all of the peoples of the world from the cultural shackles that prevented Europeans from freeing themselves with a new and more advanced form of art. In that sense, the Cultural Renaissance of the Hudson River School was not a homegrown American culture, but an extension and outgrowth of European cultures. Therefore, I think we should look at the Hudson River School as a continuation of the European project of Cusa and Christopher Columbus as Lyn put it on October 8, 2008, in *How the Human Mind Works (The Sight and Sound of Science)*. "...the best among the settlers brought with them a devotion to the greatest achievements of European civilization, but achievements largely freed from the oligarchical legacy's grip on the nations and culture of Old Europe."

The Hudson River School project, therefore, was not an American apple pie project. This is why I have omitted so many other paintings from my selection, because they did not cut the mustard. This was a project for European minded Americans or immigrants who were willing to fight for all of the freedom loving people of the world. Remember that Cole, for example, was not an American-born citizen, and his only student, Church, created works that were cultural extensions of the Monroe Doctrine. This implies that we should avoid saying that the Hudson River School was an American school that was influenced by Europeans. That would be wrong. It was a Western European project to start with. Thus, it is in that sense that the Hudson River School was the American extension of the Greek classics of the Pythagorean-Socratic Academy of Pheidias, an extension of the Italian Renaissance school of Cusa, Leonardo, and Raphael, as well as an extension of the German Renaissance of Mendelssohn, Lessing, Schiller, Humboldt, and the Dusseldorf Academy.

Following Lyn's idea that tradition always leads to tragedy, the main tenants of the Hudson River School were therefore determined to break with the tragic oligarchical form of art of entertainment coming out of Europe, but also break from the banalities of localist home on the farm or home on the range type of American populism, in order to created unique types of landscapes that included ironic "inroads of civilization" following James Fenimore Cooper and John Quincy Adams's idea of Manifest Destiny. By organizing Russia, China, and India, today, we are not only pursuing the same mission

initiated by the Hudson River School in bringing civilization westward, but we are also giving the direction of where Western civilization has to go to worldwide for the next few hundred years.

I think we have to be very clear about the fact that this school had that explicit mission of reviving the European Renaissance movement in a classical artistic form of composition and, in so doing, provided the foundation for the birth of a genuine American Renaissance. So, from that general intention and purpose the school had the design of creating a new form of cultural taste based on truthfulness and morality. This motivation was exemplified in Pheidias' creation of the frieze of Athen's Parthenon as well as in West's historical paintings. As I mentioned to you before, Pheidias had broken with the traditional archaic way of creating relief sculptures and had introduced non-linear ironies that broke with sense-certainty in the construction of the Parthenon. Thus, Pheidias set the moral conditions that forced the spectator into taking some pains in discovering a new physical principle.

So, in order to convey this unity of purpose in the movement of the Hudson River School as a whole, I would suggest the following three parts:

I. THE UNIVERSAL MISSION OF MANIFEST DESTINY.

The first thing is to identify the main works that reflect the central intention of pursuing the continuity of Western civilization through the European extensions of the Pheidias classical artistic composition of the "simultaneity of eternity" in the Parthenon of Athens, the classical revival by Benjamin West in England, the European classics of the Louvre by Morse, the sublime of Schiller, the "heroic painting" idea of Alexander von Humboldt, and the discipline of beauty in landscape painting from the Westphalia Dusseldorf Academy of Lessing, including European scenes by Whittredge, Bierstadt, and a masterful painting of the Parthenon by Church. By 1859, this project intersected the scope and purpose of the Lander expedition for the creation of a railroad to the Pacific Ocean and adopted the George Washington peace policy for integrating Indian society into American culture. So I consider 1859 as a *punctum saliens* for the second generation of Hudson River School artists. This section would include the following "heroic paintings":

- 1- Samuel F. B. Morse, *The Gallery of the Louvre*, 1831-33.
- 2- Thomas Cole, *The Course of Empire*, 1833-36.
- 3- Emmanuel Leutz, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, 1851.
- 4- Frederic Church, *The Heart of the Andes*, 1859.
- 5- Robert S. Duncanson, *Land of the Lotus Eaters*, 1861.
- 6- Albert Bierstadt, *The Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak*, 1865.
- 7- Albert Bierstadt, *The Last of the Buffalo*, 1888.

Also, by accomplishing this moral purpose, American artistic composition became the generator of ironies set on a dramatic stage that provoked the viewer to break the axioms of “going along to get along” with merely sensuous fads and forced them to think in terms of creativity.

II- THE COOPER METHOD OF DRAMATIZATION APPLIED TO LANDSCAPE PAINTING

The second part would identify the Cooper method of using the natural landscape as a receptacle for “inroads of civilization” in the form identified by him in *The Last of the Mohicans*, that is: “As if art had attempted an effect, which had been thus produced by chance.” I would also emphasize the Cooper metaphor of the waterfall (Kaaterskill Falls especially) as the expression of the paradox of freedom and necessity, which is reflected in Cole, Durand, and Gifford and most dramatically in Church’s *Niagara*. Bierstadt has also made a very small copy of Church’s *Niagara* called *The Home of the Rainbow*, 1869 (22” x 16”), which is a beautiful irony on the paradox of the sublime. The title could have been: *Think twice before you go chasing rainbows!* I have inserted the illustration in an attachment.

The Catskill region was apparently also the favorite region of Washington Irving: “the Kaatskill Mountains had the most witching effect on my boyish imagination,” wrote Irving. You should find out why it had such an effect. This section would include primarily the following paintings:

- 1- Thomas Cole, *The Clove, Catskills*, ca. 1827.
- 2- Asher B. Durand, *Kindred Spirits*, 1849.
- 3- Frederic Church, *Niagara*, 1857.
- 4- Albert Bierstadt, *The Home of the Rainbow*, 1869.
- 5- Sanford R. Gifford, *Kauterskill Falls*, 1871.
- 5- Worthington Whittredge, *The Old Hunting Grounds*, 1864.

III- HOW BRITISH FREE TRADE AND FRENCH BARBIZON DESTROYED THE HUDSON RIVER SCHOOL.

The third part would cover the British-run free trade destruction of the Hudson River School: the case of the Pinchot graveyard. The French Barbizon infection inside of the Hudson River School. The systematic attacks by the critics against Bierstadt and the Dusseldorf Academy. The demise of the school at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Celebration.

- 1- George Inness, *Gray, Lowery Day*, c. 1877.
- 2- Sanford R. Gifford, *A gorge in the Mountains (Kauterskill Clove)*, 1862.
- 3- Sanford R. Gifford, *Hunter Mountain Twilight*, 1866.
- 4- Worthington Whittredge, *Hunter Mountain*, 1866.

Why that choice of paintings? The reason is that all of those paintings were, by contrasts, paradigms of the tragic opposition to Humboldt’s idea of “heroic paintings” and to Schiller’s idea of “sublime.” Each one also reflected the undermining of the idea that American landscape was the receptacle for moral civilized ideas, as Cooper understood them and described them in the *Leatherstocking Tales*.

&&&&&&&&&&

Thus, the means of breaking with the European oligarchical tradition of art as entertainment was very strong in that movement and it had established a new classical art form of Promethean standard with Cole (*Prometheus*, 1846) and with Church (*Heart of the Andes*, 1859) in the spirit of changing mankind for the better. But that meant the viewer had to accept to share a certain amount of pain and effort in the process of creativity as was made clear by the poet friend of Cooper and of Church, Theodore Winthrop.

Pedagogically, I think we should proceed in accordance with that state of mind of Winthrop and follow the chronological historical development of the school during a period of 50 years (1826-1876) with appropriate literary connections and the appropriate Universal History references. We must be mind-full of the idea of putting down the crucial stepping-stones for the reader to make the discovery of how the Hudson River School revived the universal physical principle of classical artistic composition as Lyn defined it in my piece on Leonardo’s *Virgin of the Rocks*, and find the corresponding echoes in the writings of Cooper and Irving. These writings are my blind side because I have not read them as much as you have. So, you must tell me if you have found any “heroic passages” and in which book. I don’t know yet how we should deal with that step-by-step discovery process. I have to think more about it and we should further discuss the matter. If you have any suggestions, please send me a note.

Lastly, there is a new aspect of this Cultural Revolution that I have just recently discovered, and that is the very important question of the responsibility of the artist in shaping public taste and morality. I think the question of morality is central to this entire endeavor. This was Morse’s way of returning to the Platonic rule of artistic morality in the city. I think this is a very important point that should be emphasized in the introduction of the project. This is what I have been able to glean, so far, on this matter of moral principle. I will simply dish this out as it comes to mind.

SHAPING PUBLIC MORALITY WITH THE TASTE OF TRUTH

The grand father of the Hudson River School, the Benjamin Franklin of artistic composition, was Benjamin West (1738-1820), the American Prometheus of historical painting, who had been a personal friend of Benjamin Franklin, and who was, paradoxically, the favorite artist of George III. That, by itself, is quite a paradox. Benjamin West was the creator of the British Academy of Arts, in 1768. Since the elderly West and the young Cooper were both living in London in 1820, it is possible that they met or communicated with each other when Cole and Morse visited them, but I cannot confirm this.

After the American victories of the Revolutionary War and of the War of 1812, West expressed his acute sense of irony in artistic composition by showing how the scientific children of Benjamin Franklin were able to deal with a stormy sky. This had greatly influenced both Cole and Morse and had given them a sense that there was something unique about being an American artist. The point West was making was that the American genius in science and art represented a superior culture than that provided by European oligarchies, because it stood on universal principles as opposed to tradition. He also had made a beautiful painting of William Penn's Treaty with the Indians that demonstrated that and would have greatly pleased Cooper.

At any rate, West used the powerful principle of the sublime to create the first Academy of Design in England and to force a change in the artistic taste of Great Britain. West approached George III and the artists of his court with the devastatingly beautiful historical painting of *The Departure of Regulus*, 1769, depicting the moment when Regulus kept his word and gave himself up to his enemies knowing that he would be tortured and killed. You should know that Moses Mendelssohn had a beautiful insight into the same subject when he wrote: "Regulus' resolve to return to Carthage, while aware of the torture that awaited the likes of him, is sublime and awe inspiring because we would not have believed that duty, the duty to keep a promise even to an enemy, could have had so much power over a human heart." The treatment of this subject by West had such an inspiring effect on the young King (I think they were both in their early thirties) that he gave his assent for the creation of his Academy of Design that became the British Royal Academy of Arts.

This is the same thing that Lyn said about the division between two English-speaking peoples, the United States and Britain: "It's built into the history of civilization, like an organic quality: That we in the United States have adopted, and been given the destiny, of creating the leadership, to assist the rest of the world in becoming free, of the British, Anglo-Dutch Liberal Empire, and its practices." (Lyndon H. LaRouche Jr., *Program for World Economic Recovery*, LaRouchePAC, October, 2008, p. 12) West decided to go into the eagle's nest to do it.

The point I want to make is that Benjamin West was the first history painter to break with the idle tradition of the British Dilettanti Society (founded in 1734) and became the teacher of the initial leaders of both the National Academy of Design and the Hudson River School, most notably, the two close and personal friends of James Fenimore Cooper, Thomas Cole, and Samuel F. B. Morse. I already told you about the first meeting Morse had with West. That is the clincher.



Figure 1. Benjamin West, *Benjamin Franklin Drawing Electricity from the Sky*, c. 1816. Note the two adult babies conducting a scientific experiment!! That was West's idea of Prometheus.

The Hudson River School came out of the founding moment of the National Academy of Design in 1826, and the Academy of Design was, itself modeled explicitly, and by name reference “a Society for promoting the Arts of Design,” on Benjamin West's creation of the Royal Academy of Arts of 1768, which, itself was founded, as I will show you in a moment, on the same principle of the sublime.

The Academy of Design was the actual name that West used in his petition to the king (with his associates, George Michael Moser, Francis Cotes and William Chambers); and the principles of the Hudson River School can be found in the historical founding documents of the American National Academy of Design which was established explicitly as an *anti-shareholder value* institution in New York City on January 19, 1826 by Morse (and his associates, Thomas Cole, William Dunlap, Charles Ingham, and

Charles C. Wright). Those principles were made public in a presentation to the Academy of Design by its first president, Samuel F. B. Morse, a year later, in 1827. The main principle established by Morse was based on the rejection of the romantic liberal tendency and on shaping public opinion by means of the two fundamental weapons of the Weimar German Renaissance of Moses Mendelssohn, Frederick Schiller, and Alexander von Humboldt: *Truthfulness and Morality*. Morse ended his discourse to the students of the new Academy with this Schiller inspired principle of the beautiful soul:

“{One word, before closing, on our responsibility to the public. We hold a station in which we cannot be neutral. Our Academy of Arts must have some influence upon public morals: we may be of essential aid to the cause of morality, or we may be an efficient instrument in destroying it; we may help to elevate and purify the public mind by the dissemination of purity of taste, and raise our art to its natural dignity as the handmade of Truth and Virtue, or we may assist to degrade it to the menial office of pandering for the sensualist. The authority of great names in art must not here be our guide, for, alas! we may cite great names among those who have debased themselves and their art in the service of licentious patrons. You will not deem these remarks foreign from this occasion. The public has a right to a pledge from us; and happy we are to give it, knowing as we do that Vice in all its forms is not more an enemy to religion and morality than it is to genuine taste. ‘There is an intimate connexion,’ says a judicious writer (in *Preston’s Essay*, Vol. 10?), ‘between purity of morals, and a true and refined taste, which must be accompanied by purity of mind, dignity and elevation of sentiment, love of decorum, symmetry, grace, beauty, and good order.’}” (Samuel F. B. Morse, *A Discourse*, delivered on Thursday, May 3, 1827, in the Chapel of Columbia College, before The National Academy of Design, on its first anniversary, G and C. Carvill, New York, 1827, p.26.)

The ideas of an American revolution in taste can also be found in Cooper’s *Gleanings in Europe* and, I am sure, *elsewhere* (?) in his writings. The matter is not simply “etiquette” and “manners,” but an actual disposition in which “*public taste*” must be considered as much an expression of true feelings as it is of a true principle of justice in the sense of Schiller. Truthfulness must replace etiquette. This is the organic quality that Europeans are almost incapable of adopting, and that Americans have been created to lead the world with. We should dig out what Schiller, Cooper, and others have said about “taste.” Morse stressed that in his Discourse at Plymouth, in commemoration of the 200-year arrival of the pilgrims, Hon. Daniel Webster, the former Secretary of State, had made the same connection by saying “truth in taste is allied to truth in morality.” (Morse, *Op. Cit.*, p. 58) And, then Morse added this extraordinary statement that I was able to dig out from under a long footnote:

“This course would give direct encouragement to our own artists, rendering their profession less precarious, rousing their emulation, giving them the most efficacious means of improving themselves, and eventually enabling them to compete with the best of ancient masters. Is not American genius equal to this effort? What says experience in every art and science? What says it especially

in *Painting*? I may be deemed enthusiastic, but I will hazard the prediction, that the most transcendent efforts of European Genius, *ancient* or modern, will be equaled, if not surpassed, by American artists. The time will surely come, but it will not be until our national *taste* shall have strangled the serpents that lurk around its cradle.” (Morse, Op. Cit., p. 50)

That is absolutely right and crucial to internalize into what we are doing with this anti-oligarchical project. After thinking it through, I am sure you will find that such artistic manifestation of “*public taste*” is best exemplified by Morse’s truthful treatment of the standing portrait of *Marquis de Lafayette*, 1825. That was a point that I should have included in my report on Morse earlier. The Morse-Trumbull debate over the issue of principle versus stocks should also be considered as an important piece of evidence of this question of truth in taste. We should let Trumbull’s bloody nose hang out quite prominently for his lying bad taste. This is a very important question for the LYM today, because this entire youth generation is horribly crippled with bad taste, especially in their jokes. And we should find a way to bring this out in our report.

THE TIMELINE OF THE HUDSON RIVER SCHOOL.

1826- Thomas Cole was the actual founder of the Hudson River School, who first started to paint landscapes of the Kaatskill region, some of which related to James Fenimore Cooper’s books on *The Leather-Stocking Tales* and the five fictions of Natty Bumppo. In this respect, I recommend a special attention to Cole’s *Falls of Kaaterskill*, 1826, and *The Clove, Catskills*, ca. 1827 with the idea of the disappearing of Chingachgook into the woodworks of the forest. Cole has other paintings directly referencing *The Last of the Mohicans*. For the first time, the Cooper method of creating “inroads of civilization” is expressed in a landscape painting form, that is, “as if art had attempted an effect, which had been thus produced by chance.” (The last of the Mohicans, New American Library, New York, 1980. p. 20) If you know of any other sections of Cooper’s works, where this question of method is raised, please let me know. This is pure gold even though it only glitters in a golden soul!

For artists like Gifford who had more difficulty in accepting the mission of the school, even though he had also been educated in Dusseldorf, the subject of Kaaterskill Falls had become a sort of in-house metaphor for resolving the Cooper paradox of freedom and necessity that was used as a pedagogical device for “headstrong” artists of their movement. But Gifford chose to draw a mist over the issue. Gifford clearly reacted to this very strongly as he painted five or more times the same subject of the Kaatskill Falls to make the point that he was hiding the issue with his Barbizon luminism. That was Gifford’s “damned spot.”

Then, I propose that we give a special treatment to Cole’s devastating attack against imperialism with his five masterpieces of *The Course of Empire*, 1833-36. I have

found that the less self-evident they are, the more they are powerful, because all of them are axiom busting.

1830- We should also expose prominently Morse's great painting of *The Gallery of the Louvre*, 1831-33 as a true expression of classical artistic composition in which he has prominently Leonardo and Raphael. K. K. gave a pretty incompetent evaluation of Morse's *Gallery of the Louvre* in the box of the *Fidelio* of Summer 2006. This must be corrected. It would be important to highlight the political work that Morse and Cooper did together with Lafayette around the July Revolution of 1830 and the "necessity" question that Cooper wrote about the result of the tragic event to his wife in Germany, in mid-August. Morse's close examination of Lafayette in his French oligarchical setting of that time must have confirmed the understanding that he had when he painted his standing portrait. This would also include some of the topics that Cooper raised in his *Gleanings in Europe*.

1847- Cole paints his *Prometheus* as a sort of recall of the theme of the Rock as the constant theme of the five paintings of *The Course of Empire*.

1849- In connection with Cole and Cooper, I also recommend a special attention to Asher B. Durand's *Kindred Spirits*, 1849, which is a commemorative for Cole's death in June of 1849; and which singles out the poet friend of Cole, William Cullen Bryant, who later became the main speaker of honor at the Schiller the New York celebrations of 1859 (See Dean Andromidas's report on the event). Durand's painting is also a direct echo of Cooper's paradox of freedom and necessity expressed in all of the versions of the Kaaterskill Falls theme, and the theme of the waterfall in *The Last of the Mohicans*. Durand was also a founder of the National Academy of Design with Cole and Morse. In fact, every time you find a painting of the Kaaterskill Falls of Cove, it is a direct or indirect reference to Cooper. This is the *motive fuerung* of freedom and necessity. The same theme will reemerge as the nightmare of Gifford in the 1860's and 1870's, that is 45 years later.

1857- Frederick Edwin Church, the only student of Thomas Cole, exhibits his first great painting, *Niagara*, 1857 in New York City. It is a crucial breakthrough beyond what Cole had already accomplished in the early 1830's and Church becomes immediately a national success. There have been more than 250 reported existing paintings of Niagara Falls produced by renowned artists in the United States since about 1700, and a dozen or more produced by artists of the Hudson River School alone, but there never was one that would grip the spectator as the *Niagara* of Church. It was acclaimed in the same enthusiastic manner in America as everywhere else around the world, because it naturally embodied the unbelievable power of nature and of artistic creativity at the same time. This is a true mastery of modern landscape painting representing the highest form of dramatic expression of dialogue between the spectator and the author of the creative process. This is the most effective transformation of the social character of a society since the interventions of Leonardo da Vinci with the *Last Supper* and the *Virgin of the Rocks*. The spectator is riveted and trapped into having to discover the sublime power of creativity. He has no choice. He has to wet his feet!

1859- The high point of Church's creativity, however comes with *Heart of the Andes*. This represents in artistic form the Humboldt idea of the Cosmos as it is compressed by nature in the region of Ecuador. "This portion of the surface of the globe affords in the smallest space the greatest possible variety of impressions from the contemplation of nature." (Humboldt, *Cosmos* Vol. I, p. 33.) The central idea, here, is to capture a universal idea and make the spectator discover the latitude/altitude anomaly of the Andes, that is to say, the 50 miles distance of altitude in the field of observation of Mount Chimborazo represented by Church. With this "heroic painting" the spectator is witnessing the condensation of the growth of life and geological formation; which is otherwise spread out in the 5,000 miles from the equator to one of the poles.

This is a *punctum saliens* for the Hudson River School. The breakthrough of the *Heart of the Andes* being the core of it. However, Bierstadt has his first exhibition of his European works, *Brunnen*, *Lac Lucerne*, and *Autumn in Westphalia*, presented At the Washington Art Association. Secretary of War, John B. Floyd, gives Bierstadt a letter of recommendation for him to join the wagon train expedition of Colonel Frederick West Lander for the trip in the Rocky Mountains. In the same year, Whittredge and Leutze have opened the first studio of the school at the Tenth Street Building in New York City where Bierstadt will join them after his return from the West.

1861- Duncanson's paradisiacal paradox should be one of the principle features of this report. As far as I know, Duncanson's *Land of the Lotus Eaters* is unique in the entire history of painting. Robert Scott Duncanson discovered Church's *Heart of the Andes* at the Opera House of Cincinnati and decided to compose a "heroic painting." That was quite courageous of him, considering his social handicap. Duncanson was so enthusiastic about his discovery that by the end of the same year, he has produced his greatest masterpiece: *Land of the Lotus Eaters*. With his keen insight into the universal discovery of Church about the *Cosmos* of Humboldt, Duncanson had reached a new level of generating ironies into a landscape by representing the finest example of the polemical power of classical artistic composition ever displayed in this manner. Duncanson was able to socially neutralize the racism of Lord Tennyson's poem on the subject in the most powerful paradoxical manner. Duncanson is the only artist I know who succeeded in breaking with the didactic form of allegorical moralizing in the manner of Cole, and replacing it with the allegorical irony of the sublime. Duncanson's discovery of how to use the classical Greek story of Ulysses of Homer's *Odyssey*, in order to address the burning issue of slavery at the beginning of the civil war in the United states, is a most excellent way of changing society by means of what LaRouche had identified as the causal function of time reversal in *Universal History*. This is the proof that Church's *Heart of the Andes* represented the best example of how a "heroic painting" could transform the social behavior of not only other artists but of an entire country in its appreciation of artistic beauty.

During the same year, 1861, General Winfield Scott granted a five-day pass for Leutze and Bierstadt to visit the Union troops and sketch the soldiers for future patriotic paintings. This was the second time in only a few years that Bierstadt was deployed by

the American military. I think we should stress the role that the military played in using painters for the mission of integrating the Indian population into American society. This question which turned into a real tragedy is a good example of what Lyn identified when he said that “tradition leads to tragedy.” Although this is not an easy subject to address, the Indian question is very much part of the sublime issue of Manifest Destiny. I recall to your attention that in April of 1862, Bierstadt was to be accompanied by President Lincoln’s Assistant Secretary, John Hay, in order to “study the manner and customs of the Indians as well as the scenery.” (Bierstadt letter to the Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, April 8, 1862) This trip was cancelled because of Indian uprisings.

1863. Albert Bierstadt produces one of his most sublime paintings, *The Rocky Mountains, Lander’s peak*, which introduced the tragic moment of a paradox in the simultaneity of eternity. Bierstadt had no illusions about the soon to disappear centuries old Indian customs of hunting and gathering of the Shoshone people captured for immortality in the foreground against the eternal snows of the Rocky Mountain in the background. Bierstadt immortalized that fleeting moment of an ideal Indian camping ground with the knowledge that the great grand children of Chief Washakie represented in this scene would not hunt in those mountains in the future; because, if the time and place of the “heroic painting” is immortal, the reality was immediately subject to change by the introduction of the railroad across the Rockies to the Pacific.

1864- Worthington Whittredge, *The Old Hunting Grounds*. Whittredge found a way to make a pact with nature in which he developed this beautiful idea that nature could let itself be used discreetly as a receptacle of human memories, provided that the human intention was able to enhance the beauty of its wilderness by making the civilized appear natural and untamed. This is completely in keeping with Cooper’s idea of “inroads of civilization.”

1865. When Bierstadt painted *Looking up the Yosemite Valley*, he created the most optimistic tendencies in colonizing the western part of the United States and in uniting the great nation from sea to sea, as formulated by John Quincy Adams. During the same year, Bierstadt did *A storm in the Rocky Mountains, Mount Rosalie*. Here, there were ironies at play between Bierstadt and Church’s *Rainy Season in the Tropics* around the subject of the double rainbow and the highest snowy summits. So, Bierstadt later responded to Church with *Home of the Rainbow*, in 1869. To prove that there was never any competitive rivalry between the two artists, as the art critics always played up, and that they used each other for the purpose of reaching new heights. The joke was that Bierstadt cautioned Church with a tiny little picture of Niagara Falls (16 x 22 inches) against the danger of going too far in chasing after rainbows. The point was that Bierstadt had discovered that the *Home of the Rainbow* was at the bottom of the Horseshoe Fall.



Albert Bierstadt, *The Home of the Rainbow*, 1869 (16 x 22 inches)

1868. The British launch a major attack against Bierstadt after Lander's Peak is presented to Queen Victoria in 1867. The Morning Post sounds the alarm with the Headline of January 16, 1868: "IT IS FENIMORE COOPER UPON CANVAS." The Manchester Guardian follows up with an attack on April 7, 1868. Then, it's the turn of the Saturday Review, etc. The same attacks continued inside the United States.

1869. The first transcontinental railroad line is finished and the entire nation is celebrating this great victory of Manifest Destiny. This is already the beginning of the period of decline for the Hudson River School. The school has already been invaded by the French Barbizon infection since the early 1860's. Of course George Inness should be identified as the pig that he was in this operation, but Gifford must be treated as a victim that he was. At least Gifford had a great talent.

1871. With *Kauterskill Falls*, 1871, it was the sign that Sanford Gifford had decided to leave the mission of Manifest Destiny for good. The artists of the school suffered a terrible crash of 1871 and the market value of their works was down to a pittance. Worthington was bankrupt, Mc Entee was going bankrupt, and Gifford was probably heading for the same tragic end. As Dunlap had said of Cole, for an artist, the money situation is always a test for the sublime to emerge. Church had no financial problems and was in Greece painting the most beautiful copy of *The Parthenon*.



Frederic Church, *The Parthenon*, 1871.

1876. For a period of 10 years, 1866-1876, the most solid artists like Bierstadt and Church pursued their efforts, simply ignoring the nasty British and French political operations against the school, which culminated in the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition. The other artists caved in, one after the other, under either depression or some other causes. The story of Whittredge and Gifford in relationship with the pig Pinchot is an important marker in the demise of the school. There may be other stories, but I could not find them. The fight over the American Barbizon representation at the Centennial basically represented the end of the Hudson River School, and the exhibition of George Inness, *Gray Lowery Day*, 1877 was like a funeral lid put on the casket of the school, because this painting represented exactly the opposite of what the Hudson River School was fighting for. Inness was the explicit negation of the truthful and moral principles established by Morse in his first year anniversary speech before the National Academy of Design, in 1827. Inness was the utter rejection of the sublime as a principle of civilizing action. The Court of History will demonstrate that Inness was one of worst poisons that destroyed the cultural renaissance of the Hudson River School.

In spite of that, the key, as Lyn put it, is the matter of leadership in giving direction to Western civilization, as Church showed in giving the cultural direction of Manifest Destiny and by rejuvenating his golden soul in the sweet milk of Greek culture. Thus, like the jewel of the Parthenon in Athens, the ruins of a beautiful movement fighting for the taste of truth will forever beacon in the hearts of courageous men.

FIN

