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ASHER B. DURAND'S "KINDRED SPIRITS" GOES ON VIEW JULY 1, 2005, ON LOAN TO NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, FROM WALTON FAMILY FOUNDATION



Asher B. Durand

Kindred Spirits, 1849

oil on canvas

Courtesy of the Walton Family Foundation, Inc.

Washington, DC — Asher B. Durand's *Kindred Spirits* (1849) will go on public view in

the National Gallery of Art's West Building, main floor American galleries, gallery C, from July 1, 2005, until early February 2007. On loan from the Walton Family Foundation, this masterpiece of American landscape painting depicts American artist Thomas Cole and American poet William Cullen Bryant engulfed by the wilderness of the Catskill Mountains of New York. The work was recently purchased by the Walton Family Foundation in a silent bid auction from its former owner, the New York Public Library. After Washington, the painting will travel to the Brooklyn Museum, New York, to be part of an exhibition, **Kindred Spirits: Asher B. Durand and American Landscape Painting**, April 6 through August 12, 2007.

"We are indebted to Alice Walton and the Walton Family Foundation, whose generosity will enable visitors to the nation's capital to view and contemplate Durand's monumental tribute to America's natural landscape and the "kindred spirits" it inspired—namely, Thomas Cole, America's first important landscape painter, and William Cullen Bryant, the nation's premier nature poet, who were close friends of Durand," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art.

In appreciation of Bryant's eulogy of Cole, who died an untimely death from pneumonia in 1848, New York dry-goods merchant and art collector Jonathan Sturges commissioned Durand to capture the friendship of the painter and poet. The painting remained in the Bryant family until Bryant's daughter, Julia, donated it to the New York Public Library in early 1904. Sturges' request that Cole and Bryant be shown as "kindred spirits" was inspired by the English poet John Keats' "Sonnet to Solitude," which celebrates the ameliorative aspects of nature and concludes:

"Yet the sweet converse of an innocent mind,
Those words are images of thoughts refin'd,
Is my soul's a pleasure; and sure it must be
Almost the highest bliss of human-kind,
When to thy haunts two kindred spirits flee."

Kindred Spirits is regarded as a defining work of the Hudson River School. Although executed in the detailed and realistic style that Durand championed for the American landscape school, the painting's idealized composition brings together several sites—

including the Clove of the Catskills and Kaaterskill Falls—in a way that is not geographically possible. It was intended as a tribute to American nature and to the two men who had celebrated its special beauties.

Kindred Spirits embodies the intimate connection of Durand, Bryant, and Cole. Durand (1796-1886), several years older than Cole and a successful engraver, had been inspired by Cole in the 1830s to take up landscape painting, and was soon a leading practitioner in his own right. Durand's *Kindred Spirits* paid homage first and foremost to Cole's ability as a painter of American wild scenery, as typified by Cole's *A View of the Mountain Pass Called the Notch of the White Mountains* (1839), on view in the National Gallery's American collection. The three men had collaborated on **The American Landscape**, a collection of vignettes published in 1830 by the New York-based Sketch Club, based in New York.

The influence of both Cole and Durand bore fruit in the works of the generation of painters that matured in the 1850s, particularly John F. Kensett and Jasper Francis Cropsey. The importance of the Hudson River School waned after the Civil War and its leading practitioners looked to the exotic beauty of foreign lands for inspiration. After the 1870s most of the artists associated with the Hudson River School were deemed old fashioned. It was only with the revival of interest in the School during the 1930s and 1940s that works like *Kindred Spirits* would once again resume their central importance as key monuments in the history of American art.

The Gallery, which has rich holdings of works by Hudson River School artists Cole (the School's founder), Durand, Kensett, Cropsey, George Inness, Frederic Edwin Church, Albert Bierstadt, and William Trost Richards, had joined with the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, in a collaborative bid for *Kindred Spirits*. Ms. Walton became a member of the Gallery's Trustees' Council in March 2005 and is widely recognized as an important and knowledgeable collector of American paintings.

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General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets along Constitution Avenue NW and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will be closing gradually beginning in July 2013 and will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit www.nga.gov/renovation (<http://www.nga.gov/renovation>) .

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's website at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on Twitter at twitter.com/ngadc.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

Press Office

National Gallery of Art

2000B South Club Drive

Landover, MD 20785

phone: (202) 842-6353 e-mail: pressinfo@nga.gov

Deborah Ziska

Chief of Press and Public Information

(202) 842-6353

ds-ziska@nga.gov