



November 2006

**Brooklyn Museum Presents First Major Retrospective in Thirty-Five Years  
Devoted to Asher B. Durand's Career**

***Kindred Spirits: Asher B. Durand and the American Landscape*  
On View March 30 through July 29, 2007**

Nearly sixty works, including some of the most beautiful and well-known American landscape paintings of the nineteenth century, are presented in *Kindred Spirits: Asher B. Durand and the American Landscape* at the Brooklyn Museum from March 30 through July 29, 2007, the first major retrospective in thirty-five years devoted to Durand's career. Works from every aspect of Durand's long career as a major engraver, portrait painter, and landscape painter will be displayed. These include the iconic *Kindred Spirits* (1849), and *The First Harvest in the Wilderness* (1855), as well as a generous selection of his famous plein air paintings, the *Studies from Nature*.

Organized by the Brooklyn Museum, the exhibition will travel to the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; and the San Diego Museum of Art.

Asher B. Durand (American, 1796-1886), the acknowledged dean of the American landscape school from his election as President of the National Academy of Design in 1845 until his death at the age of ninety, was a figure of central importance in American art. He began his career as an engraver in 1821, receiving wide acclaim in 1823 for an engraving after John Trumbull's *The Declaration of Independence* and firmly establishing his reputation as the finest engraver in the United States. In the 1830s Durand ended his engraving business and entered into a short, successful period as a portrait painter. In 1837, a sketching expedition to the Adirondacks with his close friend and mentor Thomas Cole led to Durand's decision to concentrate on landscape painting. Durand's annual summer trips to the Catskill, Adirondack, and White mountains yielded hundreds of drawings and oil sketches that he later incorporated into finished paintings.

*Kindred Spirits: Asher B. Durand and the American Landscape* is organized in a chronological and thematic manner that reflects the stages of Durand's career, with emphasis given to the landscape paintings for which he is best known today. His multifaceted six-decade career spanned the period from the earliest efforts of artists and writers to create a national cultural identity by means of scenery on through the mid-century triumph and subsequent eclipse of the Hudson River School.

**Brooklyn Museum**

200 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11238-6052  
T (718) 638-5000 F (718) 501-6134  
[www.brooklynmuseum.org](http://www.brooklynmuseum.org)

Among the highlights of the exhibition is Durand's major work *The First Harvest in the Wilderness* (1855), the cornerstone of the Brooklyn Museum's American painting collection and one of the first two works of art commissioned by the Brooklyn Institute, forerunner of the Brooklyn Museum, to inaugurate a permanent collection. Offering an insight into the status of the fine arts in the United States (and the booming city of Brooklyn) at mid-century, Durand's landscape was imagined as a powerful allegory for the founding of the collection as a cultural oasis in Brooklyn's wilderness. It was a fitting image to symbolize an event with both local and national significance, since Brooklyn was the only institution of its time to commission works by living artists to build a permanent collection.

*Kindred Spirits* (1849), whose title is derived from a sonnet by John Keats, was commissioned by New York businessman and arts patron Jonathan Sturges as a gift for William Cullen Bryant, who had delivered the poet's eulogy to Thomas Cole before the National Academy of Design the previous year. The painting depicts Bryant and Cole in the wilderness of the Catskill Mountains in New York and was intended not only as an homage to Cole but also as a demonstration of Durand's position as leader of the landscape school.

Other works on view include *Thomas Cole* (circa 1837), a sensitive portrayal of Cole painted at the peak of Durand's powers as a portraitist; *In the Woods* (1855), a landmark painting composed from oil studies made in the Shokan region of the Catskills that was intended to evoke the primeval North American forest and represents one of Durand's most important contributions to the American landscape vocabulary; *Dover Plains, Dutchess County, New York* (1848), one of Durand's best-known images because an engraving after the work was distributed to the members of the American Art-Union; *White Mountain Scenery, Franconia Notch, New Hampshire* (1857), a classic panoramic view of the White Mountains of New Hampshire that was commissioned by the prominent New York collector Robert L. Stuart; and *Kaaterskill Clove* (1866), Durand's final majestic treatment of this hallowed landmark, painted for the Century Association, of which he was a founder.

*Kindred Spirits: Asher B. Durand and the American Landscape* is organized for the Brooklyn Museum by Dr. Linda S. Ferber, Vice President and Director of the Museum Division of the New-York Historical Society and former Andrew W. Mellon Curator and Chair of American Art at the Brooklyn Museum.

A full-color catalogue published by the Brooklyn Museum in association with D. Giles, Ltd., will accompany the exhibition with essays contributed by Dr. Ferber; Dr. Barbara Dayer Gallati, Curator Emerita of American Art, Brooklyn Museum; and Kenneth T. Jackson, Jacques Barzun Professor of History at Columbia University.

This exhibition is made possible by The Henry Luce Foundation. An endowment established at the Museum by the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation helped support the publication.

**Press Contact:**

Sally Williams, Public Information Officer (718) 501-6330, [sally.williams@brooklynmuseum.org](mailto:sally.williams@brooklynmuseum.org)

**Adam Husted, Media Relations Manager (718) 501-6331, [adam.husted@brooklynmuseum.org](mailto:adam.husted@brooklynmuseum.org)**

Marcus Romero, Public Information Assistant (718) 501-6354, [marcus.romero@brooklynmuseum.org](mailto:marcus.romero@brooklynmuseum.org)