

GREENPORT

Olana Partnership hires its first landscape curator

The Olana Partnership announced the appointment of Kate Kerin as its first landscape curator. Kerin will be responsible for providing leadership and vision to restore and preserve the designed landscape of and world-renowned views from Olana State Historic Site, home of 19th century landscape painter Frederic Edwin Church.

A key responsibility of the position will be to help the public gain critical understanding of the importance of what many describe as Church's last and greatest work of art, Olana. "Kate's background in landscape architecture, with a strong focus on historic landscapes, will position her well as we devote more of our attention to this incredibly important part of the Olana story," said Sara Griffen, president of The Olana Partnership.

Most recently, as principal of Arkadia design, Kerin has spearheaded numerous public landscape design projects, ranging from the Senator Robert S. Kerr garden at the FDR Presidential Library, to Juliet Gate at Vassar College and the Jane Colden Native Plant Sanctuary, as well as many private landscape projects. Her previous experience includes serving as executive director of Hudson River Heritage, providing technical assistance to the Garden Conservancy on projects throughout the country and serving as vice president and project coordinator for the Beatrix Farrand Garden Association at Bellafield in Hyde Park.

Kerin received her graduate degree in landscape architecture from Cornell University and her B.A. from Wellesley College.

While many people know that Olana is a National Historic Landmark, fewer people know that its landscape has specifically been designated by the U.S. Department of the



Contributed photo

Kate Kerin

Interior as a "designed historic landscape." The 250-acre property was designed by Church in its entirety in the Picturesque mode, melding woodland and pastoral elements to create a natural-appearing composition.

Views from Olana, like Church's painted views, are comprised of near foregrounds, plunging middle grounds and vast panoramic backgrounds. A five-mile carriage drive system that Church created reveals those views — at times intimate and other times sweeping, taking in the Catskills and the Berkshire and Taconic ranges.

Despite recent progress by The Olana Partnership, in conjunction with New York state, Olana's landscape is still in need of much restoration. Second growth woods dominate the landscape that Church created and block many of the vistas which were key components of his design. Portions of the property that served as a working farm — including pastures, gardens and orchards —

are overgrown. In other areas, disease and weather have taken their toll on intended woodlands and forests.

"Olana and Church had clear connections to New York's Central Park and its creators," said Mark Prezorski, trustee for The Olana Partnership. "We in the Hudson Valley have a significant American landscape in our midst and, similar to Central Park, its full restoration will directly benefit the communities which surround it."

Linda McLean, director of Olana State Historic Site, said, "All of us at Olana, State and Partnership, look forward to having Kate join the Olana team. Not only will the addition of a landscape curator to the Olana staff support the restoration of the property, her work and research will greatly enhance public knowledge and awareness of the significance of Olana's landscape in the tradition of 19th century planned landscapes and American landscape gardening."