

Olana and Thomas Cole House to host joint exhibit 'River Crossings'

Featuring contemporary art by 30 world-renowned artists

The Olana Partnership/Olana State Historic Site and The Thomas Cole National Historic Site will co-host a landmark exhibition of contemporary art to highlight the pivotal role that the two historic properties — and the artists who lived and worked there — played in shaping America's culture of contemporary art. The exhibition, "River Crossings: Contemporary Art Comes Home," will open May 3 and run through Nov. 1. It will provide an unprecedented opportunity for visitors to consider these historic spaces from a completely new vantage point — experiencing contemporary art in these iconic settings.

The exhibition is curated by Stephen Hannock, the celebrated painter, and Jason Rosenfeld, PhD, an art historian who recently curated two enormously popular exhibitions at Tate Britain in London and the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. A fully-illustrated companion book will be published by The Artist Book Foundation and will include entries by Rosenfeld on all the artists and works and reflections by such preeminent writers and historians as Maurice Berger, Ken Burns, Adam Gopnik and Marvin Heiferman.

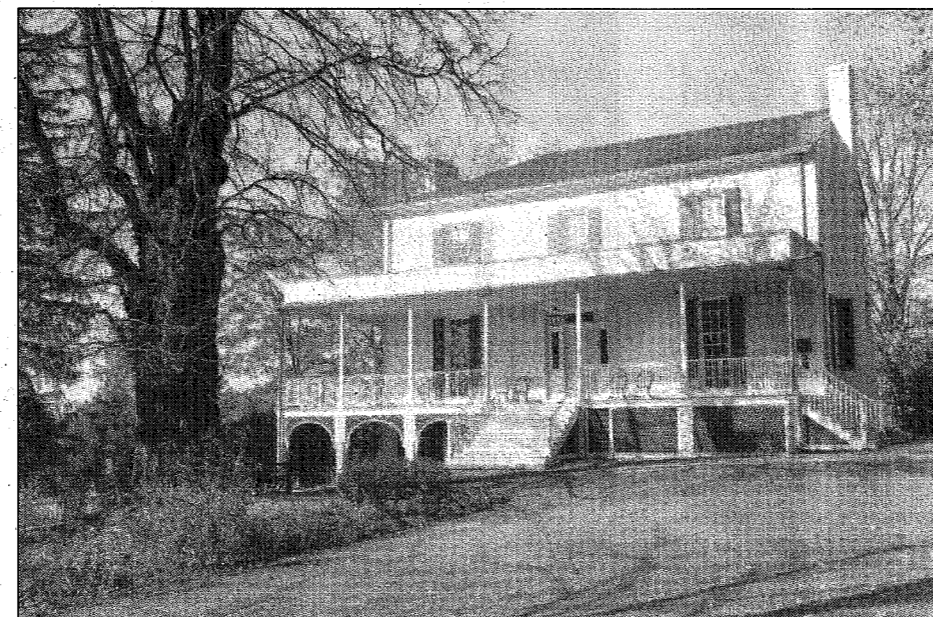
The exhibition will take place in the residences and surrounding landscapes of the Thomas Cole Historic Site — home of Thomas Cole (1801-1848), founder of the Hudson River School of art, the first distinctly American art movement — and Olana, the 250-acre home and landscape created by Frederic Edwin Church (1826-1900), Cole's student, who became world-renowned as the school's leading practitioner. The properties lie 2 miles apart, directly across the Hudson River from each other and connected by a bridge.

The artists whose work is included in the exhibition include: Romare Bearden, Elijah Burgher, Chuck Close, Will Cotton, Gregory Crewdson, Lynn Davis, Jerry Gretzinger, Don Gummer, Duncan Hannah, Stephen Hannock, Valerie Hegarty, Angie Keefer with Kara Hamilton and Kianja Strobert, Charles LeDray, Maya Lin, Frank Moore, Elizabeth Murray, Rashaad Newsome,

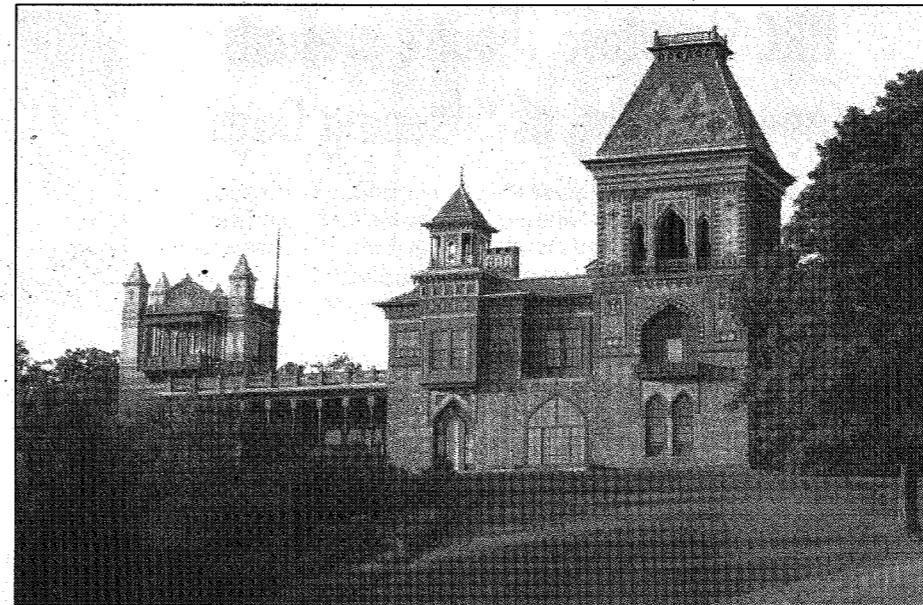
Thomas Nozkowski, Stephen Petegorsky, Martin Puryear, Cindy Sherman, Sienna Shields, Kiki Smith, Joel Sternfeld, Letha Wilson and Elyn Zimmerman, in addition to selected complementary work by Cole and Church from the permanent collections.

In describing the show, Hannock explained that artists have visual conversations with their predecessors across time and that he, in particular, has long been influenced by Cole and Church and in conversation with them through his art. This exhibition continues that dialogue by bringing works of contemporary artists into the homes of these two historic figures.

The works in the exhibition represent a wide range of styles and a broad diversity of artists, but the artists all have a connection to the region that Cole and Church helped ignite as a hotbed of innovative contemporary American art: from Greater New York City to Lake George and from Niagara Falls to Massachusetts. The exhibition reflects the co-curators' choice of art and



The Thomas Cole House home of Thomas Cole (1801-1848), founder of the Hudson River School of art.



Stan Reis Photography, 2009

South façade of the main house at Olana State Historic Site, the 250-acre home and landscape created by Frederic Edwin Church.

artists to participate in that continuing conversation.

Contemporary art is not new to the homes of Cole and Church. Cole placed his own work, likely still wet from the studio, onto the walls of his west parlor, and Church frequently displayed his work and that of friends on the walls at Olana in curated arrangements. Both homes were alive with visitors coming to see the artists and the latest in contemporary painting. This is the first time since the 19th century that contemporary artists have been invited to present work in the context of the historic rooms and the landscapes of the two properties. It is also the first time that these two sites have formally collaborated on such a major scale to present a two-venue

exhibition that crosses the Hudson River.

The exhibition's hardcover companion book, also titled "River Crossings: Contemporary Art Comes Home," will include a foreword by historian Burns on the Hudson River Valley as an ongoing inspiration to artists, essays on the exhibition by both curators as well as cultural historian Berger and cultural writer Heiferman and an afterword by essayist Gopnik. Together, the exhibition and the book explore the relationship between past and present and consider new ideas about the meaning of the art and history of the mid-19th century and its resonance today.

"This exhibition provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see these magnificent recent works in a unique visual conversation with Cole, Church and the sites that inspired so much early American art," said Hannock. "It's a conversation that I've wanted to experience and extend to other artists for some time now."

"The show aims to highlight the continued vitality of the Hudson River Valley as an important site of contemporary artistic production," said Rosenfeld. "Hudson, NY, for example, has become a hotbed for artists, both established and new, all of whom, like Cole and Church, sought a place to practice their craft within easy striking distance of New York City, the metropolis that sustains and supports their work. Cole came up by ferry, Church by railway and now artists come by car, but this region has remained an incubator for the new in American art since 1833."

"This groundbreaking exhibition puts these historic properties in an entirely new context — within the continuum of contemporary art," said Betsy Jacks, director of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. "In doing so, it creates a new understanding of how essential the work of Cole and Church

has been to the contemporary art that we enjoy today."

"Our sites seek to expand the dialogue between past and present," said Rena Zurofsky, interim president of The Olana Partnership. "It enables us to reflect the current influence of Cole and Church and their continuing impact today."

Special shuttle service will connect the train station in Hudson to both sites as well as downtown Catskill on certain weekends. This will enable visitors traveling by train to reach both sites and return to the station without needing a car. More information on the exhibition and shuttle service is available at www.rivercrossings.org.

This exhibition is supported by a grant from the New York state Council on the Arts and by New York state's Empire State Development and the I Love NY Division of Tourism under Gov. Andrew Cuomo's Regional Economic Development Council Initiative. The companion book and related public programs are supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Olana/The Olana Partnership

The eminent Hudson River School painter Frederic Edwin Church (1826-1900) designed Olana, his family home, studio and estate as an environment integrating architecture, art, landscape and conservation ideals. Considered one of the most important artistic residences in the United States, Olana is a 250-acre artist-designed landscape with a Persian-inspired house at its summit, embracing unrivaled panoramic views of the vast Hudson Valley.

Olana State Historic Site, a historic site administered by the New York state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Taconic Region, is a designated National Historic Landmark and one of the most visited sites in the state. The Olana Partnership, a private not-for-profit education corporation, works cooperatively with New York state to support the restoration, development and improvement of Olana State Historic Site. To learn more about Olana and The Olana Partnership, visit www.olana.org.

Thomas Cole National Historic Site

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site is the place where American art began, as it is the home of Thomas Cole (1801-1848), the founder of the Hudson River School — the first major art movement of the United States. Cole's landscape paintings encompassed a new-found awe for the majesty of the American landscape and they sparked the longest-running art movement in American history, including more than 100 artists in the period between 1825 and about 1870. Today, the National Historic Site welcomes thousands of visitors each year. Thomas Cole's original easels and art-making tools are on view in his "Old Studio" and a film about Cole and the Hudson River School can be seen in the visitor center. Visitors especially enjoy the panoramic view from the west porch to the Catskill Mountains, which remains strikingly similar to Cole's paintings of the same view. Current programs and events can be found online at www.thomascole.org.