

# LANDSCAPE AND VIEWSHED



Framing the Viewshed: Groundswell photo by Crane Davis

## Landscape

Olana's 250-acre naturalistic landscape is one of Frederic Church's great works of art, and it exists today as one of the most intact artist-designed landscapes in the United States. Because it was created by a major Hudson River School painter in the birthplace of that art movement, the landscape at Olana possesses an exceptional sense of place – *genius loci*. Church was intimately involved in all aspects of his landscape's creation and design. "I am busy landscape architecturing!" wrote Church in 1887. His large-scale composition included a working and ornamental farm, meadows, outbuildings, an "artificial" lake, native woodlands, and more than five miles of carriage roads, so that visitors could move through and experience Olana's crafted foreground against a backdrop of sublime and far-reaching views.



Frederic Joseph Church, *Plan of Olana*, September 1886, watercolor on paper, OL. 1984.39. Collection Olana State Historic Site, NYS OPRHP.

## Viewshed

Frederic Church carefully designed Olana's 250 acres with an artist's eye to his property's 360-degree "borrowed views" of neighboring hills, valleys, the Hudson River and distant mountains. The views beyond Olana – its "viewshed" – were an essential part of Church's original composition. The Olana Viewshed was Church's muse, and in the 21st century it remains a vital part of Olana's integrity as a complete work of art. Over the last few decades, a collaborative effort among preservation organizations, governmental divisions and private landowners has resulted in the protection of important views from Olana. In recent years, The Olana Partnership has begun to include the integral viewshed into its interpretation of Church's design and Olana's larger preservation story.

