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Image: Electric open air vehicle for Historic Landscape Tours on carriage road at Olana. Photo contributed.

Historic Landscape Tours Give Visitors a New View of Olana and Celebrate Frederic Church's Legacy

HUDSON, NY---The Olana Partnership is launching the 2016 season at Olana by introducing regular public tours of Olana's historic landscape. This is a dramatic and fundamental expansion of the visitor experience and coincides with the 50th Anniversary of the saving of Olana from the brink of destruction. Landscape tours will begin on Friday, May 20 and continue through Sunday, November 6. Guided group landscape tours along Olana's carriage roads are available via an open-air electric vehicle and on foot, and a self-guided version is available through a downloadable cell phone app. These new tours present Olana as an integrated work of art, architecture, conservation, agriculture and landscape design and take the visitor to key locations in Olana's 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. It also possesses an exceptional sense of place created by a famous Hudson River School painter in the birthplace of that art movement. Church was intimately involved in all aspects of his landscape's creation and design. "I am busy landscape architecting!" wrote Church in 1887. His large-scale composition included a working and ornamental farm, varied architectural elements, 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 Church carefully designed Olana's 250 acres with an artist's eye to his property's 360-degree "borrowed views". Similar to the background element in one of his landscape paintings, Church's three-dimensional design incorporated views of neighboring landforms, 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. To date, nearly 3,000 acres have been protected, largely through conservation easements. In recent years, The Olana Partnership has begun to include the integral viewshed in its interpretation of Church's design and Olana's larger preservation story. "What's exciting is that you get to put your body into the painting. You get to live and breathe the work of art. As you move along the carriage roads, you inhabit an artful landscape" said Thomas Woltz from the consulting architects Nelson Bryd Woltz Landscape Architects. Historic Landscape tours mark a milestone in The Olana Partnership's ongoing mission to restore and interpret Church's legacy. It is their desire for visitors from near and far to experience the full story and vision of Frederic Church's Olana – a Living American Masterpiece.

Several specialty events and hikes in the landscape will be offered to highlight this inaugural season including exploring the night sky during the Skyscape Series, combining patterns of steps and breathing during Breathwalk, a number of Artful Hikes, Geology, and the annual Barry Hopkins Run.

The Landscape Tour Program is funded in part by grants from The New York State Parks and Trails Partnership Program of New York's Environmental Protection Fund, The Thomas A. and Georgina T. Russo Foundation, the numerous individuals who made special gifts to the landscape critical initiative, and by members of The Olana Partnership.

For more information about The Olana Partnership, the 2016 exhibition "Capturing the Cosmos: Frederic Church Painting Humboldt's Vision of Nature," upcoming programs and events or to book your tour visit www.olana.org.

About Olana and The Olana Partnership: Olana is the greatest masterpiece of Frederic Edwin Church (1826-1900), the preeminent American artist of the mid-19thC and the most important artist's home, studio and designed landscape in the United States. Church designed Olana as a holistic environment integrating his advanced ideas about art, architecture, landscape design, and environmental conservation. Olana's 250-acre artist-designed landscape with a Persian-inspired house at its summit embraces unrivaled panoramic views of the Hudson Valley and Catskill Mountains and, today, welcomes more than 150,000 visitors annually.

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, conservation, and interpretation of Olana State Historic Site. 2016 marks the 50th anniversary of this public/private partnership. To learn more about Olana and The Olana Partnership, please visit www.olana.org