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Olana Opens New Exhibition Mystery Box: Student Artists at Work

HUDSON, NY –

The Olana Partnership and Bard College have partnered for a second year to create a student exhibition titled “Mystery Box: Student Artists at Work” in the Coachman’s House Gallery at Olana State Historic Site on view from June 4-July 31. The gallery has become an unusual laboratory for student artists and site interpretation in June and July. The Mystery Box Project is designed to focus on the act of making art and the process of using a historic site to inspire contemporary artists. How can history inform contemporary art making? The Mystery Box Project is one possible answer.

Frederic Church travelled to the Hudson Valley, and specifically to Catskill and Hudson, to study with his painting teacher Thomas Cole. The apprentice/mentor relationship was Church’s “art school” in the mid-19th Century in the United States. The Olana Partnership is honoring the mentor/student relationship with the second year of the Mystery Box Project with Bard College. Student artists, MFA graduates and undergraduates, are doing research and making art using Olana as their laboratory. In this “lab” it is true that many things have changed since Church painted here, but many things remain the same! In the tradition of Church and Cole, we think there is much to be learned from the young artists who look to break away from their teachers and make their own path.

In 2015, the first year of the Mystery Box Project, Olana’s student artists made stellar art onsite while completing their very first professional residency. They said their summer was critical to their development as working artists, and their time was filled with “conducting our research, using primary sources and investigating first-hand this 250-acre “living

painting.” One said, “It is so different to make art at a museum than on a college campus.” This residency allows for student artists to begin the transition to professional artist.

This year’s students were accepted, through a rigorous and competitive application process. When these young artists arrived on the site in June they were handed a Mystery Box. In the box were about 30 different items and documents that the staff at The Olana Partnership had assembled around the topics of the Church family, Alexander von Humboldt, and art. You can see the box, and read more about the topic when you visit the Coachman’s House Gallery.

About this year’s artists:

Lily Prince has her B.F.A. from The Rhode Island School of Design, her M.F.A. from Bard College and has exhibited widely both nationally and internationally-- recent solo shows were at Vassar College and The Naples Museum. Prince's work has appeared in the *New York Times* and *New York Magazine*, among many others; she has collaborated twice with writer Richard Klein-- *Something To Say: Thoughts on Art and Politics in America*, was published by Leapfrog Press and *Abstract Expressionism for Beginners*, will be published in August. Lily was a fellow at the BAU Institute in Italy and had a residency at New York's The New Museum’s Draftmen’s Congress. and she is an Associate Professor at William Paterson University. Her website is www.lilyprince.com

Scott Vander Veen is a recent graduate of Bard College, where he majored in Studio Art. He takes an interdisciplinary, multimedia approach to creative practice; his work encompasses sculpture, video, drawing, and installation. Oriented towards literary and mythic sources, he explores the fragmentary nature of histories. Through this lens he re-imagines narratives of identity and inheritance.

Gallery Hours: The Coachman’s House Gallery will be open Friday-Sunday from 1-4pm starting June 4, 2016. Join us and find out what is coming out of the new Olana art laboratory! A free closing reception will be held on July 30th from 3-5pm. Come meet the artists, see new art made onsite, and look into the Mystery Box. Wine and cheese will be served.

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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