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TREASURES FROM OLANA:
Landscapes by Frederic Edwin Church
Oct. 14, 2006 – Jan. 3, 2007

*Exhibition will feature 18 paintings traveling together for the first time,
as well as artwork and artifacts from the Huntington's collections*

SAN MARINO, Calif. – A group of 18 paintings by Hudson River School painter Frederic Edwin Church (1826–1900), so cherished by the artist that he kept them in his home, will be on view in the MaryLou and George Boone Gallery at The Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens from Oct. 14, 2006 to Jan. 3, 2007. “Treasures from Olana” represents the first time these paintings have traveled as a group; collectively they demonstrate why Church is among the most renowned American landscape artists of the Civil

War era. In conjunction with the exhibition, The Huntington will feature artwork and artifacts drawn from its own collections, most notably the large Church landscape *Chimborazo* (1864), one of the institution's most prized works of American art.

The traveling exhibit, organized by Kevin J. Avery, associate curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, provides an unprecedented opportunity to view the paintings outside of Church's Hudson Valley home, which he called Olana, considered one of the most important artists' residences in the United States. Located 100 miles north of New York City, the house and 250-acre estate was inspired by his affection for Persian architecture and the beauty of the surrounding landscape. Perched on a hill-top, the estate offers spectacular views of the Hudson River and the Catskills, the same views captured by Church in several paintings in the exhibition. Church collaborated with architect Calvert Vaux to build the stone and brick home, where he lived and painted for four decades.

Most of the paintings in “Treasures from Olana” are intimate landscape studies and oil sketches that demonstrate Church's deft brushwork and extraordinary skill in rendering the natural world that he observed around him. Some of the paintings are small preparatory versions of his best-known works, such as the *Heart of the Andes* (1859), in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and *Niagara Falls* (1860), in the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. The exhibition also includes the largest of Church's paintings that he kept in his home, the theatrical *El Khasné, Petra* (1874), which he had given to his wife as a gift. All of the paintings demonstrate Church's extraordinary ability to evoke light, space, topography, and botanical detail.



The Huntington is the fifth stop for the traveling exhibition, but the show here features items not on display at the other venues. A special installation of *Chimborazo*, Church's large landscape of Ecuador's Mount Chimborazo that normally is on view in the Huntington's Virginia Steele Scott Gallery of American Art, will provide an opportunity for visitors to consider Church as an explorer and naturalist as well as an artist. "This object-in-focus portion of the exhibition has been inspired by the marvelous paintings from Olana, which trace the arc of Church's career and provide a rich context that helps us better understand *Chimborazo*," says Jessica Todd Smith, the Huntington's Virginia Steele Scott Curator of American Art.

Church first traveled to South America in 1853 but painted *Chimborazo* after his second trip to Ecuador in 1857. Both of his trips were inspired by the famed explorer and naturalist Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859), who wrote of the region's exotic landscape and encouraged artists to follow in his footsteps. *Chimborazo* will be displayed in a separate room, along with four additional studies that Church made of Mount Chimborazo, lent by the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum in New York, a branch of the Smithsonian Institution. Related Huntington items on view will include a letter by Church, maps of South America tracing the artist's expeditions, and botanical prints of plants found in his paintings. Visitors to The Huntington also have the opportunity to see living examples of a number of these plants nearby in the institution's Rose Hills Foundation Conservatory for Botanical Science.

The occasion of the exhibition also has prompted an exciting project associated with *Chimborazo*. The Huntington has commissioned Eli Wilner and Co. of New York to create a reproduction of the painting's dramatic original frame, designed by Church himself. The frame had been separated from the painting and lost before The Huntington acquired the canvas in 1989. In 1999, descendants of the painting's original owners discovered old photographs that document the original frame, making the recreation possible.

While his explorations took Church from the jungles of Jamaica to the icebergs of the North Atlantic, he continued to be drawn to the Hudson River Valley and the Catskill Mountains. Designated a National Historic Landmark in 1970, Olana is owned and operated by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation and supported by its nonprofit collaborator, The Olana Partnership.

The exhibition is accompanied by the catalog *Treasures from Olana: Landscapes by Frederic Edwin Church*, by Kevin J. Avery and published by Cornell University Press in 2005.

The presentation of this exhibition at The Huntington is made possible by Steve Martin.

RELATED PUBLIC EVENTS:

Curator Talk and Tour on the Art of Plants in Landscapes by Frederic Edwin Church

October 24 (Tuesday) 5-6:30 p.m.

A unique opportunity to learn about the sublime landscapes of American artist Frederic Church and the plants that inspired him. Jessica Smith, Virginia Steele Scott Curator of American Art, will talk about the artist and his work as she leads a tour through the exhibition, "Treasures from Olana: Landscapes by Frederic Edwin Church." This will be followed by a walk through the Rose Hills Foundation Conservatory for Botanical Science where Dylan Hannon, Curator of the Conservatory and Tropical Collections, will discuss some of the flora and fauna so beautifully depicted in Church's paintings.

Members: \$25. Non Members: \$35. Registration: 626-405-2128.

"The Center of the World": Frederic Church, Olana, and its Landscapes
Lecture by Kevin J. Avery, associate curator of American art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

October 26 (Thursday) 6:30 p.m.

Kevin J. Avery will deliver the annual Robert R. Wark lecture, addressing the life and career of Church from the perspective of the hilltop estate he fashioned for himself and his family. Olana became Church's private museum focused on his experience and art, and he adorned it with many of his most vivid oil sketches of natural phenomena, studies for several of his major works.

Free. Friends' Hall

VISITOR INFORMATION: Hours: Tuesday through Friday from noon to 4:30 p.m., Saturday and Sunday from 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Admission: \$15 adults, \$12 seniors, \$10 students (ages 12-18), \$6 youth (ages 5-11), free for children under 5. Group rate: \$11 per person for groups of 15 or more. Members are admitted free. Information: (626) 405-2100, or visit online at www.huntington.org.

The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens is a collections-based research and educational institution serving scholars and the general public. More information can be found on the Web at www.huntington.org.

The Olana Partnership and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation organized "Treasures from Olana: Landscapes by Frederic Edwin Church." The exhibit was underwritten through the generous support of The Henry Luce Foundation, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts' American Masterpieces: Visual Arts Touring Initiative. Additional support has been received from Jan P. and Warren J. Adelson; The Beulah Land Foundation; The Felicia Fund; David B. and Mimi G. Forer; Valerie and Brock A. Ganeles; Frederick D. Hill; The Lucelia Foundation, Inc.; The Lunder Foundation; Pauline Metcalf; Elizabeth Gosnell Miller; The New York State Council on the Arts; Washburn and Susan Oberwager; Louis M. Salerno; The Olana Partnership's Strabo Council; and Susan Winokur and Paul Leach. This exhibition was also made possible through the support of N.Y. Gov. George E. Pataki and Bernadette Castro, N.Y. Commissioner of the Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation. Olana State Historic Site is one of 35 historic properties owned and administered by New York State. More information on Frederic Edwin Church and his Victorian castle is available at www.olana.org.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: High-resolution digital images are available upon request for publicity use.