

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Martin Van Buren National Historic Site
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Witness Tree Project Exhibit Concluding Lecture August 22 at Omi
International Arts Center**

The unique and successful Lindenwald Mulberry Exhibition will mark its conclusion with a lecture on Saturday August 22nd at the Charles B. Benenson Visitors Center and Gallery at Omi International Arts Center in Ghent, NY at 4:00pm. The exhibition featured at Martin Van Buren National Historic Site this summer is part of the Rhode Island School of Design's (RISD) "Witness Tree Project." The Project is a joint venture of RISD and the National Park Service in which students enrolled in a joint history seminar and furniture design studio interpret the history fallen historic trees have "witnessed" to create relevant objects from the tree's wood. At the Omi lecture, RISD faculty members Dale Broholm, Senior Design Critic, and Dan Cavicchi, the school's Dean of Liberal Arts, will explain the concept of bridging design and history within the Witness Tree Project.

The Witness Tree Project (witnessstreeproject.org) was developed in 2009 by Broholm and Cavicchi. They work each year with a National Park Service site that has removed a fallen historic “witness tree” from its landscape. In past years, the Project has used trees from Hampton National Historic Site in Maryland, Olmsted National Historic Site in Massachusetts, the Home of Franklin Roosevelt and Sagamore Hill National Historic Sites in New York, Edison National Historic Site in New Jersey and George Washington Birthplace National Monument in Virginia. In 2015 RISD students used wood from the fallen “Lindenwald Mulberry” to create their reflections on the history of antebellum America. For 150 years the mulberry had graced the landscape of Lindenwald, the home and farm of our eighth president.

The Lindenwald Mulberry Witness Tree exhibition, which opened on June 27, at Martin Van Buren National Historic Site, displays the work of the students within Lindenwald - itself the witness to so much history. The effect has further deepened the Project’s articulation of the interplay between history and design. The objects created by students present aspects of Van Buren's biography as well as the political and social issues faced by Americans in the decades before the Civil War. Van Buren, who grew up in Kinderhook, purchased the Lindenwald property in 1839 while president. He was a leading politician during the antebellum period, the 40 years before the Civil War, serving in numerous offices and founding the Democratic Party.

Omi International Arts Center has made their wonderful facility available for the lecture. The Charles B. Benenson Visitors Center and Gallery is an important and appropriate venue for Saturday's lecture. The impressive sensitively designed LEED certified building will be the perfect stage for Broholm and Cavicchi, whose talk will provide insight into the way historic events may be further understood through design. The lecture is the final activity associated with the exhibition, although the artwork will be in place inside Lindenwald through August 29th. It may be viewed any day of the week by taking a regular tour of Lindenwald. One final free tour focusing on the Witness Tree exhibit is available Saturday morning August 29th at 9:30.

Martin Van Buren National Historic Site is located on Route 9H, two miles south of the Village of Kinderhook, New York. For additional information, visit www.nps.gov/mava, call the site at [518-758-9689](tel:518-758-9689) or write MAVA_info@nps.gov. Individual entrance to the site is \$7.00; family entrance is \$14.00 and is valid for four adults and accompanying children age 15 and under. America the Beautiful - National Park & Federal Recreational Lands Passes are honored and may be purchased at the park visitor center. There is no charge to walk the grounds which are available year round from 7:00 a.m. to sunset

Photo caption: Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) student Riley Sykes explains one of the pieces he created as part of the Witness Tree Project which is on display inside Lindenwald. Faculty from RISD will present a

lecture discussing the mingling of history and design which is unique to the Witness Tree Project on Saturday the 22nd at 4:00pm at the Omi International Arts Center. The Lindenwald Mulberry exhibit is in place at Martin Van Buren National Historic Site in Kinderhook, NY until the 29th.

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More than 20,000 National Park Service employees care for America's 401 national parks and work with communities across the nation to help preserve local history and create close-to-home recreational opportunities. Visit us at www.nps.gov, on Facebook www.facebook.com/nationalparkservice, Twitter www.twitter.com/natlparkservice, and YouTube www.youtube.com/nationalparkservice.