



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The arts thrive on continuity amidst change. This is true of the creative making of things – art – as it is of the appreciation, interpretation, preservation, study and teaching of the history of human creativity. The Samuel H. Kress Foundation (est. 1929) has been devoted to the “appreciation, interpretation, preservation, study and teaching” of the history of art for three quarters of a century. “Continuity amidst change” has characterized the philanthropic efforts of the Foundation from its inception.

The Foundation today remains strongly committed to the Kress Collection and the scores of American art museums which, collectively, have stewarded that collection ever since it was distributed to communities across the nation many decades ago, in a remarkable populist gesture from which contemporary art collectors have much to learn.[1] This commitment takes several forms, some long-standing and some new – such as our current support for the creation of a “virtual Kress Collection,” through a partnership with the ARTstor Digital Library. Continuity amidst change.

[1]“New York collectors Dorothy and Herbert Vogel, with the help of the National Gallery of Art, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, are launching a national gift program entitled The Dorothy and Herbert Vogel Collection: Fifty Works for Fifty States. ... Inspired by the Kress Foundation's placement of old master paintings throughout the United States in the middle of the last century, the Vogels hope that their project will, as a parallel effort, enhance knowledge of the art of our time.” *Press release, National Gallery of Art, April 11, 2008.*

The same may be observed of our other fundamental and abiding commitments. Thus, the Kress Foundation was an early champion of professional training in art conservation – and remains a mainstay of the profession today. The legion of Kress conservation fellows, by now numbering in the hundreds, continues to grow and to replenish the profession, taking on new forms over time, as with a recently-funded fellowship in Imaging Science at the National Gallery of Art. The Foundation's support for the practice of conservation also continues unabated, occasionally assuming new shapes, as with a recent grant to the University of Virginia's Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities, which is working with the Dresden State Museums to pioneer new forms of “virtual restoration” in connection with Dresden's great antiquities collection.

The Foundation further remains an essential source of support for academic art historians. Here, too, we seek to be attuned and responsive to the changing needs of the field as it begins to explore new, technology-enabled modes of study, teaching, publication and scholarly communication.

Our support for interpretive activities in art museums similarly remains strong, while also acquiring new facets. We are just introducing, for example, a series of “interpretive fellowships” in art museums, intended to advance the professional training of art museum educators. In this way we hope to make a contribution to the development of the profession of art museum educator – and to the professional development of individual practitioners – comparable to our support for other core art professions.

Continuity amidst change. In the examples of change cited above, a common denominator is the formative – and occasionally transformative – role of new technologies. A case in point is the study of humanity’s architectural heritage. New technologies, such as laser scanning and the creation of three-dimensional digital models, make it possible to document the built environment – both individual buildings as well as entire architectural ensembles – in unsurpassed ways, and to disseminate and share the resulting documents, over the internet, both within professional circles and well beyond. The Kress Foundation’s longstanding support for the preservation of European architectural heritage will increasingly focus upon the documentation of that great heritage, and upon the widest possible dissemination of such documentation. In the decades since Kress first engaged with the field of architectural preservation, other charitable organizations with similar commitments have emerged. By focusing our own future support upon documentation and dissemination, we believe we will both make the best use of the Foundation’s resources and bring our support for this important field into close alignment with our across-the-board commitment to teaching, learning, and scholarship.

Michele Tosini (Italian, 1503-1577);  
*St. Mary Magdalene*, c. 1560's;  
Samuel H. Kress Collection,  
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston,  
Houston, TX

## **New Avenues to New Audiences**

When Samuel Kress decided to distribute his unique collection of old master European paintings and other works of European art to scores of regional and academic museums throughout the country, his intention was to expand exponentially the audience for European art from antiquity to the dawn of the modern era. He had in mind both a scholarly and professional audience as well as a broader lay constituency. Today, we at the Kress Foundation hope to continue to cultivate new audiences. As suggested, digital technologies offer a powerful new avenue to new audiences. Our support for the building and deployment of new digital resources in the fields we serve signals our interest in exploiting these new tools in ways that will advance our core mission. The same may be said of our interest in supporting the profession of art museum educator. The art museum educator is now a - and increasingly, the - primary agent through whom young people in this country are exposed to the history of art. By strengthening this pivotal profession, we hope to have a significant downstream impact on the appreciation of European art, and thereby to foster the early development of the art historians, art conservators, museum curators and museum educators of tomorrow.

As the Kress Foundation's current President, I am especially mindful of the legacy of great leadership to which I am heir. Sustaining my predecessors' inspiring commitment to "continuity amidst change" is foremost among my priorities as, together with the Foundation's Trustees and staff and the broad community of which we are a part, we move further into a new century and a new millennium.



**Max Marmor**  
President