



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The year 2012 may in retrospect come to be seen as a defining moment and watershed in the evolution of the field of art history. What we have come to refer to as “digital art history” has recently showed signs of flourishing on a significant scale and on several related fronts, and may be poised to assume its rightful place among the “digital humanities.” We are proud to think that the Kress Foundation has played – and will continue to play – a significant role in this evolution, both by supporting significant digital initiatives and committed practitioners, and by encouraging the field to approach the subject judiciously. We have also sought to ensure that our support of new directions in art history has complemented and reinforced our traditional forms of support for the field as practiced in academe, in art museums and in other venues.

Readers of this annual report will find that during our fiscal year 2012 the Foundation awarded no fewer than twenty-five grants in the embracing category of “Digital Resources for the History of Art.” Since the inception of this grant program in 2009, we have made more than seventy-five grant awards, totaling nearly \$3 million. Awards made during this fiscal year include grants to art museums, independent research centers and universities both in North America and abroad. These grants supported a wide range of projects, including:

- ◆ the digitization of key art history photographic archives and primary source materials, including among others the Rijksmuseum’s remarkable archive of historic photographs of its exhibitions and installations; the Royal Academy of Art’s essential Winter Exhibition catalogues (1870–1939); and the John G. Johnson collection of historic art auction catalogues at the Philadelphia Museum of Art;

- ◆ the development of new online resources in art conservation and historic preservation, including Columbia University's effort to design a new curriculum in advanced documentation techniques for historic preservation;
- ◆ the publication of important online art history journals, among them ArtMatters: International Journal for Technical Art History, hosted by the University of Glasgow;
- ◆ the creation of important online resources in the arena of provenance research, such as the World War II-Era Provenance resources being digitized by the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art;
- ◆ important convenings of stakeholders, including a digital art history "laboratory" hosted by the Getty Research Institute, and a meeting of representatives from many key art history photographic archives here and in Europe, hosted by the Frick Art Reference Library;
- ◆ the creation of significant new online resources related to the Kress Collection, under the leadership of the National Gallery of Art's General Archives;
- ◆ a sponsored study of the current state of digital art history today that has generated intense interest both here and abroad.

Several of these grants built upon previous support from the Foundation, and the fruits of many of the projects we have supported have been presented at professional conferences devoted to digital art history and held at such key institutions as the Getty Research Institute and the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University.

In this prefatory “message,” we single out for brief consideration a study we co-sponsored alongside the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media at George Mason University, a key node in the emerging network of the digital humanities then under the inspired leadership of Professor Dan Cohen. In 2011, we jointly invited Diane Zorich to undertake a study of digital art history in relation to traditional art history research centers. Ms. Zorich, a cultural heritage consultant with extensive experience in the digital humanities and art history fields, has now completed this study. This year we were pleased to share the final report, *Transitioning to a Digital World: Art History, Its Research Centers, and Digital Scholarship*, with all the communities that take an interest in art history, the digital humanities, humanities research centers, and research and scholarship in the humanities in general.\*

Ms. Zorich’s thoughtful study, based upon scores of interviews with key stakeholders here and, to a more modest extent, in the UK, has been favorably received and has generated intense interest and discussion. It is routinely acknowledged and cited at professional gatherings, on art history blogs, and throughout the community. Indeed colleagues in Europe have recently called for a successor study of the state of digital art history outside North America.

Among Ms. Zorich’s key observations is that art historians are still grappling to understand the contribution emerging technologies might make to the study and teaching of art history and to art historical research and scholarship. Due largely to this uncertainty, art history has been relatively slow to adopt new methodologies increasingly characteristic of the digital humanities. To be sure, what some might lament as conservatism or undue ambivalence others might prefer to regard as a healthy and judicious sense of caution, born of a basic commitment to the core values of the profession. We leave it to readers of Ms. Zorich’s thoughtful environmental scan to reach their own conclusions.

Meanwhile, as the field of art history continues to navigate the “digital turn” in art history, we at the Kress Foundation remain committed to supporting innovative digital initiatives – in academe, in art museums, in art history research centers and other organizational settings – and the pioneering practitioners who conceive and carry them out. At the same time, we intend to continue to encourage and help the entire field move forward in a thoughtful and judicious way, by supporting efforts within the art history community to envision what a truly digital art history might be.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Max Marmor".

**Max Marmor**  
President

\* Portions of the report have been published in the Journal of Digital Humanities (<http://journalofdigitalhumanities.org/1-2/transitioning-to-a-digital-world-by-diane-zorich/>) and in Visual Resources (v.29, issue 1-2, 2013; <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/gvir>). A PDF version of the full report may be found and downloaded at [http://www.kressfoundation.org/uploadedFiles/Sponsored\\_Research/Research/Zorich\\_TransitioningDigitalWorld.pdf](http://www.kressfoundation.org/uploadedFiles/Sponsored_Research/Research/Zorich_TransitioningDigitalWorld.pdf)