



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

2016 has been notable for many things. In the microcosm of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, it is noteworthy primarily for the watershed transition it has witnessed within our organizational culture and governance structure. No fewer than four of the (typically eight-to-nine) members of our Board of Trustees have recently retired, or are poised to retire soon, reflecting our term limits policy. Never have so many of our Trustees cycled off our Board more or less at once, and this singular transition provides an occasion to reflect upon and publicly recognize the selfless contribution our Board of Trustees makes to the mission and the ongoing work of the Kress Foundation.

We would not be Kress, of course, if this moment did not occasion an art historical reflection. And in that spirit, it is intriguing to realize how many significant art historical milestones have occurred in years ending in '16, even in our chosen domain of the pre-modern history of European art. Let one example stand for many: Today the French are celebrating the fact that five hundred years ago, in 1516, Leonardo da Vinci left his Italian homeland for France, entering the service of François I. He was given use of the manor house of Clos Lucé, connected via tunnel to the King's residence, the Château d'Amboise. He is thought to have brought his Mona Lisa with him. With a bit of effort, one could easily construct a history of western art across the centuries, with the year '16 serving as a marker for key artistic farewells and migrations.

As the year 2016 demonstrates, the Kress Foundation itself is no exception. Over the course of the long history of our Foundation (established in 1929), nearly fifty distinguished individuals have served on our Board of Trustees.¹ Recently three remarkable individuals have joined the numbers of our Trustees Emeriti/ae. They include Cheryl Hurley, President of the Library of America (retired fall 2015); David Rumsey, map collector and pioneering digital innovator (retired fall 2016); and Barbara A. Shailor, an outstanding scholar and digital humanist (retired

¹ For a comprehensive list of our forty-seven past Trustees, and our four past Presidents, see page 45 and http://www.kressfoundation.org/about/past_presidents_and_trustees/.

Peter Paul Rubens (Flemish, 1577–1640)
Workshop of Philippe Maëcht & Hans Teye
Comans-La Planche Tapestry Factory, Paris
Constantine Directing the Building of Constantinople
1623–1625, Samuel H. Kress Collection
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA



fall 2016). And in the fall of 2017, our esteemed chairman, Frederick W. Beinecke, will join the distinguished roster of former Kress Trustees. All four have made abiding contributions to the work of the Foundation by generously sharing their wisdom and expertise, and they have enriched the lives of our staff and Trustees alike by virtue of their friendship and collegiality.

For a Board to lose nearly half its Trustees in the short span of two years is significant, and that is why we regard 2016 as a watershed in our

organizational history. While we are entirely confident that our Board will replenish its membership wisely, we do wish to take this occasion to reflect briefly upon the role and contributions of a private foundation's Board of Trustees, and that of our own in particular.

Private foundation boards, as we know, have direct responsibility for governance, for financial prudence, for legal compliance, and for a host of other essential duties. But perhaps—and in the case of the Kress Foundation, certainly—the Board's greatest contribution is the corporate wisdom it embodies and the guidance its members generously provide in the execution of a foundation's mission.

The Kress Foundation's mission is relatively specialized: "Our mission at the Samuel H. Kress Foundation... is to sustain and carry out the original vision of our founder, Samuel H. Kress (1863–1955). We support the work of individuals and institutions engaged with the appreciation, interpretation, preservation, study and teaching of the history of European art and architecture from antiquity to the dawn of the modern era."² While the time span "from antiquity to the dawn of the modern era" is not a trivial one, the fact remains that in an era of emergent "global art history," we still focus on one, very focused dimension of the field. And while our programs embrace the specialist and the public alike, we have long had a central commitment to grooming the next generation of specialists—conservators, curators, educators and scholars.

Interestingly our Trustees have rarely been art historians in this specialized sense. Rather they are typically humanists in the Erasmusian mold: deeply embedded in the history of western culture and deeply committed to the intellectual and aesthetic values it embodies. They have, in other words, tended to be "amateurs" in the best sense: highly educated, almost invariably bibliophiles, often collectors—lovers, in that

² See page 47 and <http://www.kressfoundation.org/about/mission/>.

venerable phrase we would do well to revive, of the humane arts and letters. And all have simultaneously brought other forms of expertise (academic, administrative, financial, legal and sometimes art historical) to the task. The result is a distinctive cultural mosaic that, situated strategically at the head of the Foundation, both reflects and sheds light on the Kress Foundation's charitable mission and its grant programs.

The Kress Board of Trustees assembles three times each year, and makes a point of visiting at least one Kress Collection annually. In 2016 we paid a memorable visit to the New Orleans Museum of Art, where we enjoyed the hospitality of Susan Taylor, Director, and her excellent staff. And in recent years we have also enjoyed the opportunity to visit Kress Collections in Atlanta, Birmingham, Honolulu, Kansas City, Lawrence, Raleigh, Ponce, Sarasota and Tucson. These visits testify to and underscore the Kress Foundation's abiding ties and sense of commitment to the former Kress Collection, now distributed across more than forty art museums—and dozens of other institutions—nationwide. They represent an ideal way of introducing new Kress Trustees to our complex mission and we look forward to future visits with our new Trustees.

As the Kress Foundation's current President, I wish to end this brief "message" with a plenary "thank you" to our past, present and future Trustees for all they do to advance the Kress mission!

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

Max Marmor
President