



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

One year ago, I wrote that the year 2020 had been a year unlike any other in recent memory. As I reflect today upon the year 2021, it is tempting to simply write "Ditto." And yet there have in fact been changes over the course of the past year, a few of which seem especially noteworthy; and there might even be a glimmer of light at what we hope will be the end of this tunnel.

Two years ago, Kress's small staff joined the legions of Americans working largely from home as part of a nationwide effort to minimize the use of public transportation and to help mitigate the spread of the Coronavirus through human contact. As I observed last year, it is a tribute to our staff that we managed to navigate this pivot to remote work nearly seamlessly. The same is true of our colleagues at the three other non-profits that in recent years have shared our Upper East Side townhouse with us: the Association of Art Museum Curators (AAMC), the Center for Curatorial Leadership (CCL) and the New York Preservation Archives Project (NYPAP).

Recent events have, of course, also profoundly impacted the communities we seek to serve. And as we look to the future, we inevitably wonder what changes in the academy and in the art museum sector might prove to be of abiding significance. Acknowledging that much remains uncertain still, it seems safe to say, for example, that art history's forced turn to digital will prove meaningfully irreversible. With classrooms largely shuttered for months at a time, academic art historians – like their colleagues across the curriculum – have been compelled to migrate teaching to the Internet and to what might potentially become "hybrid" platforms. And while this has come at a significant price in terms of interpersonal engagement, the digital infrastructure that has evolved will surely endure even as classroom instruction returns.

Salomon van Ruysdael (Dutch, 1602–1670)
River View of the Nijmegen with the Valkhof, 1648
Samuel H. Kress Collection
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA



The same is true of other key components of the academic art historian's professional ecosystem. Annual professional conferences, which long provided the primary forums for cross-institutional collaboration, pivoted to being online. This, too, came at a price, of course, but it also allowed a degree of international engagement to flourish, one that would be hard to replicate without an enduring commitment to online delivery.

Art museums, too, have inevitably come to engage with all things digital in new and promising ways. New digital tools have facilitated online engagement with both permanent collections and temporary exhibitions, reaching audiences across geographical boundaries. Museum publications – both collection and exhibition catalogs – increasingly have a digital component or version, providing potentially universal access. At the same time, the outreach efforts of museum educators have benefited from the online delivery of educational programming. And, of course, conferences for museum professionals have come to engage new and increasingly international audiences.

At Kress we have sought to sustain our support for the fields about which we care so profoundly, and to express that support in creative new ways that we hope have been responsive to the changing needs of these fields. At the same time, these recent developments have validated Kress's singularly strong commitment to digital art history, of which we were one of the first supporters and advocates over a decade ago. And the same can be said of our strong and abiding commitment to the guild of art museum educators, whose profile and importance will surely only grow in coming years.

As calendar year 2021 draws to a close, we cautiously express the hope that the new year will bring a welcome return to the pre-pandemic world, while also affirming our shared commitment to building a new world together.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Max Marmor". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Max Marmor
President