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SAMUEL H. KRESS FOUNDATION

OLD MASTERS IN CONTEXT

GUIDELINES

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To encourage new ways of presenting European art to the American public, the Kress Foundation Old Masters in Context Program invites joint proposals from art curators and art historians (and art conservators, as appropriate) to interpret works of art in relation to their European origins. At the heart of the project is the premise that the knowledge gathered by the historian of art why works of art were created, how they were originally seen, and what they meant to their first viewers - is potentially fascinating to the general public, and that imaginative ways of presenting this information will excite new interest in Old Masters.

Considerations that have influenced the creation of this program:

In the museum. By definition, European art in American collections is cast adrift from its original moorings. Objects commissioned for palace walls, high altars, public buildings or funerary chapels are of necessity displayed as isolated specimens, presented and valued primarily for their aesthetic qualities. In larger collections, Old Masters are typically grouped by period and school (the early Italian, the Flemish baroque), a practice that facilitates the recognition of artists' names, dates, and styles in the overall history of art. But apart from occasional wall labels for exceptional pieces (describing a dismantled altarpiece, for example, or illustrating a missing pendant), few attempts are made to enhance the viewer's pleasure by exploring how a picture or statue was first seen and enjoyed.

In the university. In contrast, the original context of works of art is one of the primary concerns of the art historian, who seeks greater understanding by identifying the chapel for which a picture was painted or the political environment that dictated a cycle of allegorical frescoes. While it invariably influences the appreciation of the work of art, this historical information is typically available to the public only through art history books and catalogues, learned articles in scholarly publications, or formal lectures.

In the conservation studio. The physical uniqueness of the work of art is the province of the art conservator, who is familiar with such arcane information as the insects and minerals from which pigments were ground or how the size of canvas weave influenced the appearance of an oil painting. Although not often presented in conjunction with museum exhibits, exposure to the processes by which objects were created has potential for enhancing the public's interest in and enjoyment of traditional European art.

The Kress Foundation Old Masters in Context program is designed to provide an incentive for experimentation in making the historical context of European art accessible to the museum visitor.

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Key elements:

- The purpose of the program is to promote a greater understanding of European art from antiquity to the early 19th century in regard to the context for which it was originally created and/or the means by which it was made.
- The central feature of every grant will be an expanded presentation to the public of one or more works of European art in the permanent collections of museums and other public institutions in the United States through interpretation of original context and/or structure and materials. When possible, the projects should include works of art in the Kress Collection. Forms of interpretation will involve the work(s) of art, and may include special exhibitions, reconstructions, conferences, lectures, workshops, performance, video, film, publication, and advanced technology. (Comparative objects are not limited to American collections.)
- The project is developed as a collaboration among curators, scholars, and conservators (as appropriate), and typically reaches beyond the resources of a single institution. Professionals from other arenas, such as music, theatre, religion, or food preparation may also be engaged.
- When practicable, the project is shared by two or more institutions (museums, universities, conservation facilities, etc.).

Competitive grants will be offered for two phases.

- Planning grants of up to \$ 10,000 to enable the proposers to identify other partners and to define the scope of the future project.
- Implementation grants of up to \$ 100,000, which in some cases may include a matching component.
- Applications must conform to the Guidelines.

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Guidelines

The Samuel H. Kress Foundation invites grant applications for projects that illuminate the original context of European works of art from antiquity to the early nineteenth century in American collections. Please review these Guidelines before applying.

Basic components:

- Proposals focus on works of European art in American public collections (comparative materials from other venues are not excluded).
- Objects in the Kress Collection are of particular interest, but are not essential.
- Proposals engage professional participants from more than one institution.
- Proposals concentrate on the presentation of one or more works of art by elucidating the original context of the object(s) - i.e., who it was made for, where it was placed, how it was made, what it meant to its first viewers, etc.

Competitive grants are offered for two project phases:

- Planning grants of up to \$ 10,000
- Implementation grants of up to \$ 100,000

Application materials, to be submitted as one package:

- Three- to five-page description of the proposed project.
- Illustrations (color photocopies are acceptable).
- Checklist of works of art (if applicable).
- Resumes of the project's primary participants.
- A detailed budget.
- IRS determination letter for the organization that would receive and administer the grant.
- Self addressed, stamped postcard to acknowledge receipt of application.

Deadlines:

- Applications received by January 15 will receive notification by June 1
- Applications received by July 15 will receive notification by December 1