



President's Message

THE HUNTINGTON TODAY

By the time you receive this issue of *Calendar*, we will be putting the finishing touches on The Huntington's first Rose Parade® float in 50 years, readying it for its glide down Colorado Boulevard—a longstanding tradition that celebrates the arrival of another new year. Representing our three collection areas and our research and educational mission, our float (“Cultivating Curiosity”) is funded by donors who believe that the Centennial is exactly the right moment to showcase The Huntington today.

As we launch into the second half of our Centennial Celebration, we are thinking about what it means to be relevant 100 years after our founding. What does it mean to be both historic and contemporary? One way to think about the relevance of our materials is to consider how they provide inspiration for artists and writers as well as scholars. For example, our Octavia E. Butler archive, acquired in 2008, is one of our most frequently consulted collections, and in the new year, we will host a series of programs that explore the way Butler's work continues to be adapted by other writers and artists. In early January, we will host renowned musician and composer Toshi Reagon, as she and guests from diverse disciplines respond through music and spoken word to Butler's three “Earthseed” novels, including the unpublished *Parable of the Trickster*. Reagon is known for having transformed Butler's *Parable of the Sower* into an opera, which she will present in March at UCLA's Center for the Art of Performance.

In March, we host writer Damian Duffy and illustrator John Jennings, discussing their collaboration in creating a graphic novel of Butler's *Parable of the Sower* (to be published in January). This is a return to The Huntington for Duffy and Jennings; they spoke at a lively event in Rothenberg Hall in 2017 about their approach to the graphic novel adaptation of Butler's early novel, *Kindred*. And in May, The Huntington will host a half-day event for the public that focuses on Butler and her methodology—that is, how she went about creating the speculative worlds she so vividly brought to life in her novels and how they have inspired a generation of readers, scholars, writers, and activists. (Stay tuned for details in upcoming issues of *Calendar*.)

Our collections speak to us at every turn and in unexpected ways. Take our 200-year-old *Blue Boy*, which has been undergoing conservation treatment both in the lab and in public view. Christina Nielsen, director of our art museum, reminds us that this 18th-century grand manner portrait inspired epiphanies in two very different artists who have written about their formative experience viewing the painting in the Huntington Art Gallery: Robert Rauschenberg in the 1940s and Kehinde Wiley in the 1980s. Standing in front of *The Blue Boy*, years apart, they each realized that they, too, could create works of art.

This issue of continuing relevance, in fact, is at the core of the series I will host beginning in February, called “Why it Matters,” which takes up the question of how libraries, archives, and, more generally, history, art history, philosophy, and literature offer meaningful stories and perspectives for our complex, diverse, and “wired” society today. The first of these programs features a conversation with Carla Hayden, Librarian of Congress, and the second, a discussion with Drew Gilpin Faust, historian of the Civil War and former president of Harvard University. Those of us working in the humanities are well aware of the challenges we face in an economic landscape favoring careers and achievements in the sciences and technology. And yet, we also know that these fields are not at odds with one another and, in fact, are part of the singularly human endeavor that involves intellectual excavation, innovation, imagination, and critical thinking. As we round the corner of our first 100 years, one important role The Huntington can play is to provide a space for exploring both the enduring and evolving questions raised in our collections. Our educational mission is broad at The Huntington—as well as serving scholars and students, we welcome the public to see us as a vital resource for discovery and enlightenment.

These are ambitious days at The Huntington and we look forward to providing enjoyment and enrichment to our many audiences, those who know us and those who are just discovering who we are. Wishing you a splendid New Year, “cultivating your curiosity” at The Huntington.

Karen R. Lawrence, President