



## President's Message

# WITH A NOD TO THE PAST, WE STEP FORWARD

For a person turning 100, it's natural to look back and reflect on the past. For an institution turning 100, it's a moment to be like the Roman god Janus: looking back and forward at the same time. As The Huntington's yearlong Centennial continues through September 2020, we are celebrating how far we've come and reflecting on where we want to go. We are thinking carefully about our mission and what it means to be among the oldest cultural and intellectual centers in this great region, which itself reflects the dynamic demographic evolution of our state and country. We are working vigorously to broaden our audiences and to focus on The Huntington's ongoing role in the cultural fabric of Southern California and beyond.

The name of an institution reflects its relation to its audiences as well as its mission and ethos. In 1919, we began our journey as the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery. Over time, we became more commonly known as the Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. At the dawn of our second century, we have taken this moment to make a further change, from "collections" to "museum," becoming The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens. With the word "museum," we underscore our mission as an institution that not only collects art but interprets, displays, researches, and conserves it, interacting with our varied audiences and showcasing our collections' relevance to the public. The name helps people know who and what we are. In the digital age, with the internet literally at the world's fingertips, the word "museum" possesses the added advantage of making us more "searchable" for potential visitors of all kinds.

The use of our collections for research and education remains fundamental. But Henry and Arabella Huntington gave their collections for the "advancement of learning, the arts and sciences, and to promote the public welfare," and our commitment to our *public* mission has never been stronger. In that spirit, among the new initiatives launching this year is the President's Series—free public programs

offering insightful conversations and performances held in Rothenberg Hall. The first, on Nov. 4, is a conversation focusing on Southern California featuring contemporary authors Susan Orlean and Viet Thanh Nguyen, moderated by historian Bill Devereell, director of the Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West. On Nov. 14, another free event in our President's Series will feature the Independent Shakespeare Co. performing selections from the "bad quarto" of *Hamlet*, with commentary by Zachary Lesser, professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania. The so-called "bad quarto" is the 1603 edition of *Hamlet*, the first version to be published and substantially different from the one with which we are familiar. The Huntington has one of only two known copies of it; the other is held at the British Library. Stay tuned for additional developments on this front as we do more to further activate our collections and add more programming.

To strengthen our public mission, we intend to expand our collaborations and partnerships, which not only link institutions but also audiences and parts of our city. This month, we open "Beside the Edge of the World," an exhibition that is the result of a collaboration between The Huntington and the LA-based arts organization Clockshop. The exhibition features five artists and writers, selected by Clockshop, who have spent the past year exploring our collections to create new work. It's a manifestation of what's possible—as artists and writers draw new meaning from our collections, reframing the questions asked and challenging traditional assumptions. In this same spirit, we are partnering with the Hammer Museum to present its internationally renowned biennial, "Made in L.A. 2020." By situating the exhibition both on the west and east sides of Los Angeles next summer, we are creating cross-town synergy, access, and new audiences for both institutions. It's all part of the exciting Huntington future. We look forward to seeing you here.

Karen R. Lawrence, President