



# PANORAMA

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## Introduction: Bully Pulpit

In this issue *Panorama* debuts the Bully Pulpit, a regularly recurring section that will pair short scholarly and polemical essays with brief responses from academics, curators, critics, and other interpreters of American art and visual culture. Expanding on the contemporary meanings of the section's title (and departing from some of its Rooseveltian resonances), we conceive the Bully Pulpit as a unique space for argumentation and investigation, a space where Americanists can jointly discuss pressing problems or difficult questions—be they scholarly, curatorial, pedagogical, or professional in character—of general interest to the field. With this in mind, we invite our readers to submit short scholarly essays, provocation pieces, roundtables, or ideas for future Bully Pulpit sections to this address: [journalpanorama@gmail.com](mailto:journalpanorama@gmail.com).

The inaugural Bully Pulpit considers a historical question with significant implications for contemporary art history: how have American art historians defined and reconceived their discipline during past moments of severe economic, political, and institutional crisis? The academic status and disciplinary objectives of art history have of course inspired much discussion in recent years. Facing myriad new challenges—including the reorientation of higher education around scientific and technical inquiry, cutbacks in support for arts education, and the intertwined problems of widening income gaps and narrowing access to the fine arts—art historians have begun to question the means and ends of their field with a new intensity.

The section's lead essay, written by Lauren Kroiz, demonstrates that these crisis-fueled self-assessments have a deep history. Kroiz's essay, "Parnassus Abolished," examines the bold arguments for disciplinary reform that Iowa art historian Lester Longman made during his brief tenure as editor of the College Art Association periodical *Parnassus* (1940-41). As Longman was well aware, and as Kroiz explores, this exercise served as a mirror for bigger debates about American art and art history during the tumultuous interwar years.

In turn, our five respondents consider the period meanings and present-day implications of Longman's arguments. While Martin Berger examines the contradictions that undermined establishment definitions of art history in Longman's day, Erika Doss reconsiders the scholar's brief editorship as an illuminating example of the contributions that art history can make to the critique of dominant forces. Drawing inspiration from the *Parnassus* story, Frances Pohl calls for a new conception of art history's "usefulness." Taking up this idea, Jennifer Marshall argues for an art history committed to imaginative stewardship, or the active preservation of the powerful social and creative insights embodied in fine art objects. Drawing attention to the imperial hubris and historical myopia that underlay Longman's arguments, JoAnne Mancini calls for a "post-exceptionalist" reconception of the editor's pedagogical theories. And, in a coda, Alexander Nemerov considers Longman's main concern: the fraught and mysterious "compact," in Nemerov's terms, between the artist and the art historian.