

## About the French American Chamber of Commerce in Houston Constance Bost, Executive Director



The French American Chamber of Commerce is a non-profit, non-governmental, 100% independent, member-driven organization, made by companies for companies. Our mission: foster the French-American business community, support businesses in their settlement and development in Houston and build bridges for US companies with France. The FACC Houston is a place to exchange, learn and network.

Each year in March, the Cultural Service of the French Embassy in Houston organizes the French Cultures Festival (FCF) in Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. A celebration of the diversity of "la francophonie", it brings together people who not only speak French, but also feel, in one way or another, connected to French cultures and the Francophone community.



## About the International Friends of the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna

The **Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna** brings together one of the largest, most complex collections in the world, spanning over 5000 years. The collections reflect diverse global cultures and are housed in a palace of fine arts, which is an artwork in itself and in 2016 celebrates the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its grand opening. The wide-ranging collections are the result of centuries of passionate collecting by a long succession of Habsburg family members and are open to all who wish to be inspired by and enhance their understanding of art.

The **International Friends of the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna (IFKHM)** is a dynamic group of patrons, collectors, and connoisseurs, joined by their love of the museum's extraordinary imperial collection and masterpieces of European art, with a desire to see them properly cared for and passed on to future generations.

International Friends  
of the  
Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna

## About the Painting on the Front Cover (Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna)

The Art of Painting by Johannes Vermeer (1632-1675), is one of this Dutch painter's most famous works. Unlike many others, it was not created for a commission and it remained in his studio throughout his lifetime. In the spirit of today's presentation, we note that this painting's provenance has been in dispute. In 1940, the painting was acquired for the planned Führermuseum in Linz, Austria and was stored throughout much of World War II in an Austrian salt mine. In November of 1945, the American military government handed over the painting to the Austrian government, which deposited it in the Kunsthistorisches Museum. The painting was the object of lawsuits in Austrian courts in the years after World War II, the last of which was decided in the Museum's favor in 1960. In 2008, heirs of Jaromir Czernin claimed the painting under provisions of the 1998 Kunstrückgabegesetz (Austrian Law on the Restitution of Art). After an extensive project to research and document the painting's provenance, the Kunstrückgabebeirat (the official body of the Austrian government dealing with claims under the 1998 law) concluded in 2011 that the Museum was its rightful owner.

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## Looted, Lost, and Stolen Art Andrius Kontrimas (Norton Rose Fulbright US LLP)

June 7, 2016  
Hotel Granduca  
Uptown Park, Houston

THE POWER OF BEING UNDERSTOOD  
AUDIT | TAX | CONSULTING



*The Art of  
Business*

## About Today's Presentation

When acquiring a work of art its "provenance," or the chain of ownership, is critical; not only for valuing it but for keeping it, as recent high-profile cases have shown. If a dispute arises, it typically involves a gap in provenance, whether due to confiscation by the Nazis or their agents during the years 1939 to 1945 or due to more mundane reasons such as the three Ds – death, divorce, and debt – when owners sought to monetize family treasures in anonymity.

Andrius Kontrimas has represented museums, art dealers, private collectors, foundations, and estates in cases involving provenance but also when forgeries and newly discovered "masterpieces" are missing from the *catalogue raisonné* listing all the known works of an artist. He offers substantial expertise in resolving looted art claims that arise from World War II when an estimated 150,000 pieces of art were looted in Western Europe and nearly 500,000 in Eastern Europe – all with a current estimated value exceeding \$200 billion.

Great strides have been made with respect to documentation of works of art with questionable provenance, due in large part to the Internet. Many museums have posted works having gaps in their provenance but often claimants are on their own when it comes to doing the research and having the financial resources to seek restitution. Such are the cases that continue to intrigue today's speaker and where clients seek his legal advice.

## Today's Presenter – Andrius Kontrimas



Andrius Kontrimas is the Global Head of Tax for Norton Rose Fulbright as well as Head of its Art Law Practice. His passion for art developed early, on family trips around Europe, and continued throughout undergraduate school at the University of California, Berkeley and law school at the University of California, Los Angeles. The opportunity to work on the estate of Armand Hammer, legendary oil man and art collector, and his art related private foundation set young Andrius on the career path he has pursued ever since, combining art law and tax.

Andrius serves on the Board of Trustees of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Board of Directors of the University of St. Thomas and the Board of Catholic Charities of Galveston-Houston. For the Museum he serves on the European Art Committee, which affords the opportunity to preview possible acquisitions and to be involved with exhibition planning.

An avid art collector, his particular area of interest has been 18th and 19th century European art but with a contemporary American twist since marrying artist and fellow lawyer, Tamara Kontrimas who specializes in water color ([www.tdkart.com](http://www.tdkart.com)). His daughter Alexandra is also a contemporary artist ([www.corathoa.com](http://www.corathoa.com)).

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## About *The Art of Business*

*The Art of Business* is a luncheon series featuring business people presenting a topic of interest highlighting how commercial enterprise spurred and funded artistic endeavors. Emphasis is on the history of Europe from Ancient Greece to the mid-20th century with topics showcasing the intersection of culture and commerce, such as --

- Looted, lost, and stolen art and legal steps to get it back
- Double-entry bookkeeping and its importance for the luxury goods market across Renaissance Europe
- International banking and credit facilities from the Knights Templar to the Bruges-Florence axis
- Tax policy and its role in disseminating Viennese culture throughout the Habsburg Empire
- Commissioning new operas and attracting the businesses who sponsor them

Have an idea for a presentation?

Contact Meril Markley at 713.350.6109 or [Meril.Markley@rsmus.com](mailto:Meril.Markley@rsmus.com)

## About RSM (Tom Rourick, Office Managing Partner, Houston)



RSM is a leading provider of audit, tax and consulting services in Houston. We guide our clients through today's complex business environment by understanding their needs and bringing together the right teams to address them. We are a world leader in providing audit, tax, and consulting services to middle market enterprises. Our motivation is to help them think ahead and prepare for the future of their business as they grow and expand domestically and abroad. At RSM, we build strong relationships based on deep understanding of what matters most to our clients.

With more than 9,000 professionals in more than 86 U.S. cities and access to more than 38,300 people in over 120 countries through our membership in RSM International, we can meet your needs wherever in the world you do business.

For over 50 years, RSM has been taking the middle market to the global market.