

Should the Society be unable to attract the local support that should be there but may not be forthcoming, it might consider thinking a bit more creatively about exploiting its resources, following the example of such distinguished and venerable institutions as the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, or, as we are currently hearing, the Louvre. In other words: consider forming a partnership with an institution elsewhere that is rich in other ways, but without much of a collection. I expect that there should be numerous possibilities, but one springs to my mind: the museum of American art being formed in Arkansas by a Wal-Mart heiress. A partnership would allow many of your pictures for which there is insufficient space on your walls to come out of storage for the sake of being seen and enjoyed by an appreciative mid-American public, either as extended loans or as part of a program of temporary exhibitions. As its contribution to the exchange, the benefactors of your partner institution should certainly be prepared to help meet your needs. In a true spirit of partnership, they might even consider paying for construction and endowment of your extension in the vacant space: a Wal-Mart Wing of the New-York Historical Society!

If that wonderful idea leads nowhere, please try to encourage your leaders to come up with something better than a real-estate deal. There must be other possibilities that will allow an institution as worthy and revered as the New-York Historical Society to follow some other path than the one not mentioned in your letter, but, nevertheless, certainly somewhere behind it.

I am sorry to have to respond in this way, and I apologize for being so long-winded, but it is my attempt to suggest something constructive, and not be entirely negative. I do love the New-York Historical Society. I am a long-standing member and a frequent visitor. I wish it well, and I wish you well, but not as a builder of towers.

Sincerely,

Allen Staley