

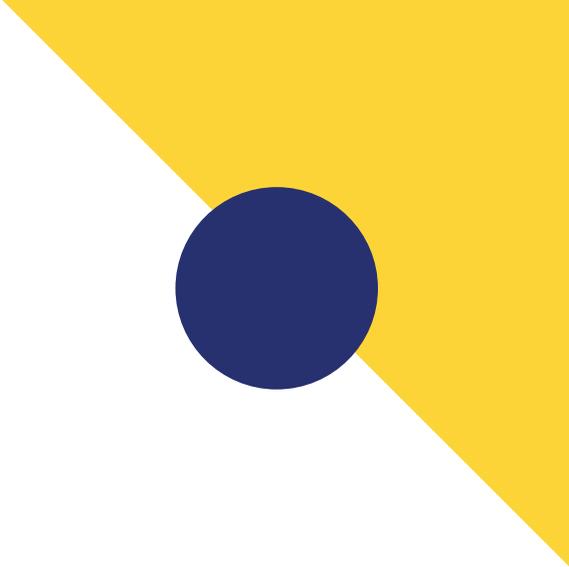


**THE GLOBAL  
ENGAGEMENT  
OF MUSEUMS  
IN CANADA**

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**REPORT 2021**





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# I SUMMARY

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*The Global Engagement of Museums in Canada* is a research project led by Primary Investigators Jeffrey Brison (Queen's University) and Sarah E.K. Smith (Western University). Funded by a Mitacs Accelerate Grant, the initiative is a collaboration between the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and Queen's University involving ten graduate student research fellows.

The project examines the international activities and global engagement of a selection of museums in Canada to consider the ways these institutions—and the broader creative and cultural sectors—act as cultural diplomats on the global stage. Our research parses the work of ten institutions across the country, including the Art Gallery of Alberta; Aga Khan Museum; Canadian Museum of History; Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21; Montreal Museum of Fine Arts; Museum of Anthropology at UBC; National Gallery of Canada; Ottawa Art Gallery; Pointe-à-Callière, Montréal Archaeology and History Complex; and the Royal Ontario Museum.

The scope of our study focused on activity over the last decade, specifically the period of 2009 to 2019. This allowed us to consider museum activities in recent years—foregrounding new activities and methods, while also grounding these within the context of developments in the last decade. Through archival research, document analysis, and interviews with museum professionals, our research establishes baseline data on the global reach of Canadian museums and identifies best practices to share with the museum sector and cultural diplomacy community.



This report consists of three components. First, a framework for the project explains the logic behind the selection of institutions and the pedagogical considerations that inform our collective methodology. Second, a review of the literature in the field of cultural diplomacy, situates our research. And third, the core of the project, are ten studies of specific institutions, drawn from the fieldwork conducted by our team of graduate student research fellows. These institutional reports demonstrate the ways in which these museums engage with a range of global activities and actors. They further address developing trends in the sector emerging from this research, as well as suggest future avenues for exploration.

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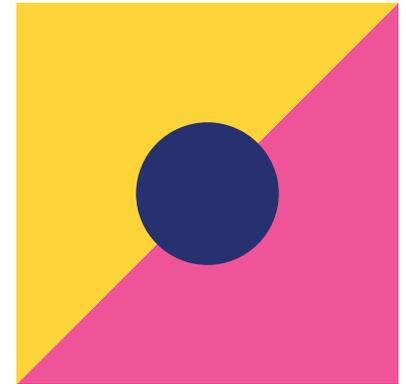


Photo credit: Sarah E.K. Smith

# I **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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We are grateful to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA) for so warmly hosting us in the summer of 2019. Our special thanks go to the Department of Education and Wellness and its Director Thomas Bastien, our lead partner, along with Michèle Staines, whose graciousness and good humour was pivotal to the success of research residency. We also thank museum personnel at the MMFA who shared their insight with us and contributed to our project.



Further thanks go to our collaborators Dr. Sascha Priewe of the Royal Ontario Museum and Dr. Lynda Jessup of Queen's University, with whom we conceived of this study. Drs. Priewe and Jessup contributed to the design of the research residency and also shared their work as guest speakers in Montreal. Additionally, during the residency we were grateful to virtually host Dr. Anne Dymond of the University of Lethbridge, who generously shared her research on international travelling exhibitions at Canadian museums.

This project would not be possible without the participation of numerous museums across Canada. We are grateful to all of those who made time to speak with us about their roles, their institutions, and their ideas about how museums advance global engagement. Thank you to all of the institutions that partnered with us, hosted researchers, and made their staff and documentation available for our study.

Most importantly, we thank all of the students who participated in this project - their contributions were invaluable to co-producing this research.

Jeffrey Brison and Sarah E.K. Smith



AGA KHAN MUSEUM | MUSEE AGA KHAN

# A FRAMEWORK FOR EXAMINING MUSEUM DIPLOMACY

JEFFREY BRISON AND SARAH E.K. SMITH

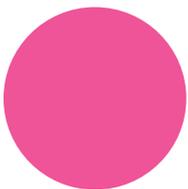
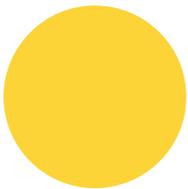
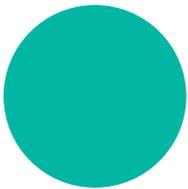
In 2016, the Director General for Culture and Communication in Germany's Foreign Office, Andreas Görgen, characterized museums as "the diplomats of the 21<sup>st</sup> century."<sup>1</sup> Discussing the mediating role these cultural institutions play in global relations, he argued that museums and their personnel facilitate dialogue through personal and professional networks that are independent of and often supersede the economic and political rivalries associated with formal state-to-state relations. Görgen's comments mark an increasing awareness of museums' multifaceted international activities.<sup>2</sup> Whether through exhibitions, programming, collaborative research, or fieldwork, museums are embedded within global webs of cultural relations. This report surveys Canadian institutions as they engage in this "new diplomacy." Our research team asks what types of activities exist and proliferate? We analyze these activities and orientations and examine what they reveal about the ability of Canadian institutions to bridge cultural difference and foster intercultural understanding. We assess the prominence of Canadian institutions in broader cultural ecosystems. Seeking to understand how museums bring together communities and support cultural engagement, we also ask: how do individual cultural workers understand and conceptualize these activities?

To address these questions, in 2018–2019 we embarked on a multipartner collaborative research project surveying the

1. Andreas Görgen, "Museums are the Diplomats of the Twenty-First Century: Why a Show in Berlin of Tehran's Superb Collection of Modern Art Is a Crucial Part of Germany's Foreign Policy," *Art Newspaper*, 16 November 2016, <http://theartnewspaper.com/comment/comment/museums-are-the-diplomats-of-the-21st-century>.
2. See Christine Sylvester, *Art/Museums: International Relations Where We Least Expect It* (New York: Routledge, 2009); Jennifer Dickey, Samir El Azhar & Catherine M. Lewis, *Museums in a Global Context: National Identity, International Understanding* (Washington, DC: The AAM Press, 2013); Cristina Ruiz, "Curators as Kissingers: Can Museums Repair Diplomatic Relations?" *The New Republic*, 17 October 2014, <https://newrepublic.com/article/119884/how-museums-became-diplomatic-fixers>, accessed 1 November 2020; Lee Davidson & Leticia Pérez-Castellanos, *Cosmopolitan Ambassadors: International Exhibitions, Cultural Diplomacy, and the Polycentral Museum* (Wilmington, DE: Vernon Press, 2019); and Natalia Grincheva, *Museum Diplomacy in the Digital Age* (London: Routledge, 2020).

Left: iStock, photo credit: bukharova

3. Brian W. Head and John Alford, "Wicked Problems: Implications for Public Policy and Management," *Administration & Society* 47, no. 6 (2013): 711-739.



museum sector in Canada and its contributions to the field of global engagement. This Mitacs-funded research project, *The Global Engagement of Museums in Canada*, is now providing preliminary baseline data and qualitative analysis of Canadian museums' global activities. Specifically, the study asked the following research questions: 1) In what ways do Canadian museums engage through personal and professional networks that span political boundaries and divisions? 2) How do museums advance a variety of productive international partnerships? 3) What innovative methods exist for engaging and bridging distinct, and at times, opposing communities? While its direct focus is on the museum sector, this report also suggests the role cultural institutions and individual culture workers play more generally in mediating conflict and promoting productive dialogue in the present, increasingly adversarial, era.<sup>3</sup>

Through a qualitative survey, this report parses the ways that ten museums in Canada have engaged globally over the last decade. These institutions are: the Aga Khan Museum, the Art Gallery of Alberta, the Canadian Museum of History, the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the Museum of Anthropology at UBC, the National Gallery of Canada, the Ottawa Art Gallery, the Pointe-à-Callière Montréal Archaeology and History Complex, and the Royal Ontario Museum. These case study institutions were selected because, as a group, they represent a diversity of experience, location, mandate, and funding structures, size and scale, geopolitical focus, and histories of global activity. The chronological scope of our study, 2009 to 2019, allowed our research team to probe the current state of the field while also assessing longer term trends. Our study contributes a holistic analysis of international engagement by addressing a wide range of activities rarely brought together as subjects for institutional study, including research, programming, advancement, professional networking, and institutional partnership development. This research is presented in a series of ten individual museum reports which together comprise this study.

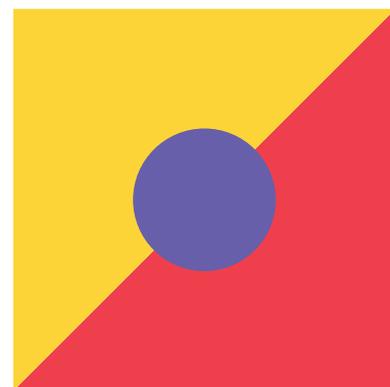
These reports are prefaced by this introductory framing essay and an essay by Bronwyn Jaques and Ben Schnitzer that assesses the literature at the intersection of museum studies and cultural diplomacy that conceptually underpins this research project. Setting the stage for the data gathered on Canadian museums, this framing essay addresses: the context of the study, including our approach to cultural diplomacy; our research methodology and how we see museums as cultural diplomats; the scope of the study, including parameters and limitations; and outcomes, pointing to broad trends in museum diplomacy in Canada gleaned from the data gathered by the research team.

## MUSEUMS AS CULTURAL DIPLOMACY ACTORS

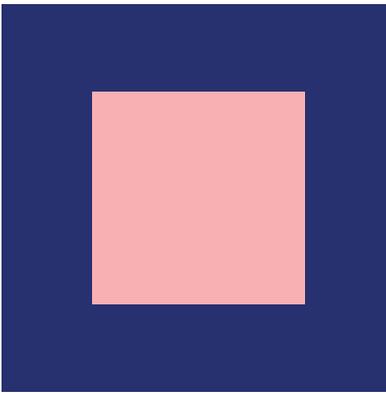
Our interest in examining the cultural diplomacy of Canadian museums stems from our work with the North American Cultural Diplomacy Initiative (NACDI). This transdisciplinary, multisector research network founded in 2017 advances a broad and critical understanding of cultural diplomacy—one that moves beyond a focus on states and their formal diplomatic representatives to encompass a wider range of cultural actors, communities, and disciplines. With this goal in mind, NACDI comprises an ever-expanding network of networks—of scholars, policymakers, and a wide variety of practitioners—drawing from North America and beyond.

Three of NACDI's central goals inform our research design for this report. First, the network situates culture at the heart of the study and practice of global relations. Cultural diplomacy, with emphasis on formal state-to-state "diplomacy," is often treated as solely the domain of the disciplinary fields of Political Science, International Relations, and Policy Studies. Following political scientist Christian Reus-Smit, we argue that these disciplines have been using a definition of culture that is out of date and simplistic.<sup>4</sup> According to Reus-Smit, the dominant disciplinary logic of International Relations treats "cultures as coherent things: as tightly integrated, neatly bounded, and clearly differentiated."<sup>5</sup> The shortcoming of

4. Christian Reus-Smit, "International Relations Theory Doesn't Understand Culture," *Foreign Policy*, 21 March 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/03/21/international-relations-theory-doesnt-understand-culture/>, accessed 11 August 2021.
5. Reus-Smit, "International Relations Theory," n.p.



6. Reus-Smit, "International Relations Theory," n.p.
7. EUNIC (European Union National Institutes for Culture), *Cultural Diplomacy as Discipline and Practice: Concepts, Training, and Skills* (Siena: University of Siena, 2016), [https://www.cultureinexternalrelations.eu/cier-data/uploads/2017/03/eunic\\_cultural\\_diplomacy\\_report\\_.pdf](https://www.cultureinexternalrelations.eu/cier-data/uploads/2017/03/eunic_cultural_diplomacy_report_.pdf)



such a monolithic and static approach to culture is clear: it fails to attend to the historically specific complexity of social relations and of intersectional subjectivity. In the cultural disciplines—those that make “culture” their primary object of study and treat the concept and their own disciplinary perspectives as historically reflexive—“cultures are now seen as heterogeneous and contradictory, highly porous, and deeply entwined and interrelated.”<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, and in alignment with NACDI’s research mission, this study aims to address the global work of museums from the perspectives and areas of expertise of the cultural disciplines, to vitalize research into the everyday cultural activities of museums and their personnel. To this end, the research team responsible for this report is interdisciplinary at its core, jointly led by Sarah E.K. Smith (Carleton University), a visual cultural studies scholar, and cultural historian Jeffrey Brison (Queen’s University), and including a team of ten emerging scholars from the fields of Art History, Communications, History, and Cultural Studies.

Second, our study reflects NACDI’s work to incorporate the vital perspectives of practitioners into assessments of cultural diplomacy. Here, our research network specifically responds to the EU National Institutes for Culture’s (EUNIC) 2016 call to bridge the gap between “academics” and “practitioners” in the study of cultural diplomacy.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, we suggest an expanded understanding of the practitioner, one that looks beyond the activities of formal diplomats and the realm of state-to-state relations to include artists, educators, cultural workers, administrators, activists, and others active in the cultural spheres of global civil society and their various agencies. The perspectives and voices of these practitioners are the focus of this project, and the research design reflects this. Further reflecting linkages between academics and practitioners, our study was conceived in partnership with the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA), as well as in collaboration with fellow members of NACDI’s leadership team: cultural studies scholar Lynda Jessup (Queen’s University) and senior cultural practitioner Sascha Priewe (Royal Ontario



Museum [ROM]). The research project is, moreover, rooted in our partnerships with the ten museums across Canada that we study, with the aim to both co-produce research and to productively share knowledge with key museum personnel who were keen to reflect on, understand, and articulate their contributions to global cultural relations. Bridging scholarly and practitioner approaches, our research answers calls to assess museums from multiple perspectives, given their location at the intersection of state and civil society.<sup>8</sup>

Third, this study reflects NACDI's commitment to train and mentor students, emerging scholars, and practitioners for the purpose of providing them with the skills and methodologies, necessary for intellectual and professional development. As important as the immediate mobilization of knowledge that this report accomplishes is the longer-term development of the individual and collective capacities of members of the research team. Accordingly, ten graduate student research fellows, ranging in experience from first year MA students to senior PhD candidates, were actively involved in every aspect of the project from the initial funding application to strategic planning, project design and workshop development, and formal report writing and research presentation. Working collegially with the principal investigators, amongst themselves, and with

8. Sylvester, Art/Museums.

Above: iStock, photo credit: monkeybusinessimages

9. Jorge Heine, "From Club to Network Diplomacy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy*, ed. Andrew Cooper, Jorge Heine, and Ramesh Thakur, 55–69 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
10. Anne-Marie Slaughter, *The Chessboard and the Web: Strategies of Connection in a Networked World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).
11. Lynda Jessup and Sarah E.K. Smith, "Introduction: Curating Cultural Diplomacy," *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 5, no. 3 (2016): 283–287.
12. Charlotte Coates, "Museum Branding That Stands Out From The Crowd," *MuseumNext*, 1 February 2021, <https://www.museumnext.com/article/museum-branding-that-stands-out-from-the-crowd/>; S.J. Freedberg, Gervase Jackson-Stops, and Richard E. Spear, "Art History and the 'Blockbuster' Exhibition," *The Art Bulletin* 69, no. 2 (1987): 295–298.
13. John Robert Kelley, "The New Diplomacy: Evolution of a Revolution," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 21 no. 2 (2010): 286–305; John Robert Kelley, *Agency Change: Diplomatic Action Beyond the State* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014); James N. Rosenau, *Distant Proximities: Dynamics Beyond Globalization* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Jan Melissen (ed.), *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005)

museum personnel at leading cultural institutions across Canada, members of the team developed research and professional skills, including advanced academic writing, the ability to critically review secondary literature, and effective knowledge mobilization. In short, the research experience helped this group of emerging highly qualified personnel (HQP) to hone skills and knowledges specific to their areas of research and practice and thus develop competencies necessary to improve their employability and enhance their intellectual practice. By fostering confident engagement with intellectual and professional challenges, the research project provided a social and professional internship in the larger community of scholars and practitioners.

In keeping with the NACDI mandate, this report engages with scholarship that recognizes that the building and management of global relations is no longer solely the work of the hegemonic Cold War club of nation-states or the product of the Westphalian interstate systems that predate it. In line with the body of scholarship that charts the shift from "club to network diplomacy," we argue that in the present global era the rules, patterns, and mores of engagement are being established by a myriad of newly empowered non-state actors (NSAs), including antiracism activists, scientists, artists, educators, administrators, entrepreneurs, cultural institutions, Indigenous communities, diasporas, cities, NGOs and Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs), philanthropists, and others whose power is cultural as well as political and economic.<sup>9</sup> The complex civil society networks of power constructed by these "new diplomats" work both with and against statist diplomacy to engage with the critical challenges of the day. This network approach has empowered museum diplomacy, city diplomacy, citizen diplomacy, diaspora diplomacy, Indigenous diplomacies, and queer diplomacy, to mention just a few of the new formations that both contest and interact with state-centric conceptualizations of diplomacy. Simply put, the metaphoric game of chess still played by the club of states and articulated through national foreign policies and in transnational governance now takes place



within and alongside more diverse webs of civil society networks of cultural relations and power in which museums are key players.<sup>10</sup>

Museums have long engaged on a global scale, but these initiatives have deepened and broadened in the twenty-first century.<sup>11</sup> We see this expansion in the rise of satellite museums, an ever-expanding web of international partnerships, the popularization of global museum brands such as the “MoMA,” “The Met,” and the “V&A,” and the proliferation of “blockbuster” international touring exhibitions.<sup>12</sup> The qualitative and quantitative extension of the sectors’ transnational reach has been accompanied by a growing recognition of the importance of museums as a particularly powerful subset of NSAs that are major players in global relations.<sup>13</sup> This development is in line with scholarship in Political Science, Communications, and International Relations, which identifies a “new diplomacy” characterized by a networked environment in which the state is simply one of many actors.<sup>14</sup> This new understanding of the diplomatic field, as well as increased recognition of the range and importance of museums’ international activities, points to the need for our study, which offers a critical assessment of museum internationalism in the Canadian context.

While a great deal of cultural diplomacy literature is celebratory, we also acknowledge that bringing cultures into contact is not inherently positive. In fact, museums can be mobilized for cultural diplomacy activities that may run counter to their stated goals and community priorities.<sup>15</sup> “Soft power,” in the forms we examine in this report, always exists, after all, within very “hard power” geopolitical contexts. Amidst a growing acknowledgement that museums are intrinsic actors in the civil society networks of culture and diplomacy, we must also grapple with the long and continuing history of museums as colonial institutions.<sup>16</sup> Museums are complex technologies of social, economic, political, and cultural power.<sup>17</sup> Any study of museum diplomacy must critically address these dimensions of power and recognize their hegemonic function as an ideological apparatus of government and governance.

14. Nicholas J. Cull, *Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past* (Los Angeles: Figueroa Press, 2009).
15. Jeffrey Brison, “Famous/ Infamous: Philanthrocapitalism, Art Patronage and Celebrity Cultures,” Conference of the Universities Art Association of Canada, Quebec City, 25 October 2019.
16. James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Ruth B. Phillips, *Museum Pieces: Towards the Indigenization of Canadian Museums* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill–Queen’s University Press, 2011); Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).
17. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, translated by Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984); Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006); Carol Duncan and Allan Wallach, “The Universal Survey Museum,” *Art History* 3 no. 4 (1980): 448–69; Brian Wallis, “Selling Nations: International Exhibitions and Cultural Diplomacy,” in *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles*, ed. Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff, 265–81 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).



18. Josh Basseches, interview with Simge Erdogan, 2019.

Above: iStock. Photo by Bombaert

In fact, our research reveals that many museums are engaging with these issues and seeking to thoughtfully examine their place, privilege, and cultural power. ROM Director and CEO Josh Basseches identifies colonial history as a key challenge to museums. What is the role of “encyclopedic museums in a post-colonial world?” asks Basseches, reflecting on the colonial roots of such institutions. Global work, he cautions, “has to be entered into” with awareness “that there are different ways of knowing and different insights, and that we need to meet people and institutions regardless of where they are, at a level of parity rather than assuming ... [that] we are going to be missionaries of knowledge.” The future of museums, according to Basseches, lies in engaging with communities and institutions in a manner that considers parity and equality.<sup>18</sup>

In seeking to understand the current work of Canadian museums and to establish research methodologies for our study, we looked back to Henry A. Miers and S. F. Markham’s foundational 1932 *Report on the Museums of Canada*, which was commissioned by the Carnegie Corporation of New York as part of its series of surveys of museums in Britain and its dominions. The Miers and Markham report was designed to set benchmark standards of

practice and was, in this way, tied to the Carnegie Corporation's efforts to establish and shape a professionalized museum culture in Canada at a moment when a Canadian cultural infrastructure was just beginning to be established on a national scale.<sup>19</sup>

Our research project is similar in that it seeks gather data on contemporary practices within the Canadian museum sector. In this case, the aim of our study is not to set benchmark standards but to reflect the range of practice advancing global engagement in Canadian museums. Of more direct relevance, the research team also engaged with a variety of more recent international museum studies that focus on twenty-first-century activity. Key among these is the British Council's *Trust Pays: How International Cultural Relationships Build Trust in the UK and Underpin the Success of the UK Economy*, which substantiates the link between cultural initiatives and economic success through an examination of arts, education, and English language activities in the UK.<sup>20</sup>

Other surveys influenced research design and our thinking about museum practice, including TBR's study for Arts Council England, *International Activity of Arts and Cultural Organizations in 2014–15*, the National Museums Directors' Conference study *International Dimensions*, Charlotte Dew and Touring Exhibitions Group's study *Economics of Touring Exhibitions Survey Report: An Analysis of International Touring Exhibitions Practice in the UK*, and Jane Weeks' *Success Guides: Working Successfully Internationally*.<sup>21</sup>

Inserting a select group of Canadian case studies into this body of research, our project demonstrates continued interest in building knowledge of museums' contemporary international engagement.

This report also recognizes and reflects Canada's unique "soft power" history, including its legacy as a middle power and as a junior partner to the superpowers in what Srdjan Vucetic identifies as the racialized "Anglosphere," or the "English speaking world."<sup>22</sup> Canada's historic relationship to and involvement in both the British and the American imperial projects is crucial to understanding the cultural context underlying the contemporary global activities of its museum sector. Important as well to Canada's brand as a "nation"

19. Jeffrey Brison, *Rockefeller, Carnegie and Canada: American Philanthropy and the Arts and Letters in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005).
20. British Council, *Trust Pays: How International Cultural Relationships Build Trust in the UK and Underpin the Success of the UK Economy* (London: British Council, 2012).
21. TBR for Arts Council England, *International Activity of Arts and Cultural Organizations in 2014–15* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: TBR, 2016), [https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/International\\_activity\\_arts\\_cultural\\_organisations\\_final\\_report\\_0.pdf](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/International_activity_arts_cultural_organisations_final_report_0.pdf); National Museums Directors' Conference study *International Dimensions* (2002), [https://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/media/documents/publications/int\\_dimensions.pdf](https://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/media/documents/publications/int_dimensions.pdf), accessed 1 May 2021; Charlotte Dew and Touring Exhibitions Group's study *Economics of Touring Exhibitions Survey Report: An Analysis of International Touring Exhibitions Practice in the UK* (London: Touring Exhibitions Group, 2016), [https://touringexhibitionsgroup.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/TEG-Economics-of-Touring-Exhibitions-Survey-Report-An-Analysis-of-Touring-Exhibitions-Practice-in-the-UK\\_April-16.pdf](https://touringexhibitionsgroup.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/TEG-Economics-of-Touring-Exhibitions-Survey-Report-An-Analysis-of-Touring-Exhibitions-Practice-in-the-UK_April-16.pdf), accessed 1 May 2021; Jane Weeks, *Success Guides: Working Successfully Internationally* (Ludlow, UK: Association of Independent Museums, 2013), [https://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/media/documents/successfully\\_working\\_internationally.pdf](https://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/media/documents/successfully_working_internationally.pdf), accessed 1 May 2021.
22. Srdjan Vucetic, *The Anglosphere: A Genealogy of a Racialized Identity in International Relations* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011).

23. Ian McKay, "The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History," *The Canadian Historical Review* 81, no. 4 (2000): 616–645.

and its museum diplomacy is its history as both a British and French settler colony. Cultural institutions in Canada share this specific and important cultural diplomacy context. As historian Ian McKay argues, Canada is a manifestation of a particular liberal order—all supposedly liberal democracies are, and they are historically distinct.<sup>23</sup> Key to Canada's perceived "difference" is its official multiculturalism, a policy stance that is not only domestic but also infuses its global orientations and capabilities vis-à-vis "soft" and "hard" power.

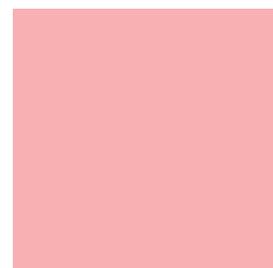
Also critically reflected in the design of this research report is Canada's mixed public-private political economy of culture. The case study institutions explored here run the gamut in terms of their relationships to state and private patrons and the degree to which they operate at "arm's length" from government whether at the federal, provincial, or local levels, and to private wealth. The Canadian Museum of History (CMH), the National Gallery of Canada (NGC), and the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 are all formally part of the federal government's museum complex, while the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM), the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA), the Art Gallery of Alberta, the Museum of Anthropology at UBC (MOA), the Ottawa Art Gallery (OAG), the Pointe-à-Callière Montréal Archaeology and History Complex, and the Aga Khan Museum blend provincial, municipal, and private supports to sustain their operations.

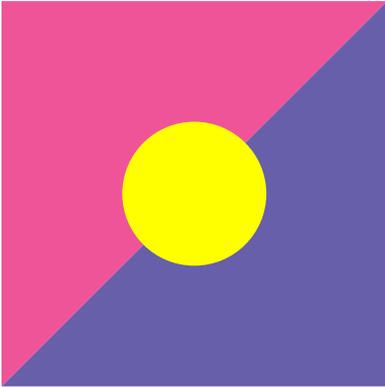
Here, it is important to note that we selected institutions to study not because they represent a homogenous "Canada" or "Canadian Experience," but because their varied operating structures, collection bases, thematic foci, and institutional identities provide rich and compelling sites for analysis. For instance, the institutions in this report provide representational balance in terms of 1) region (east coast, central Canada, Prairie west, and Pacific coast); 2) mandate and funding structure (public/private, federal/provincial/municipal); 3) geopolitical spheres of activity (Asia/Pacific, Africa, Americas, Europe, and/or the global Indigenous community); and 4) size and scale (small, medium, and

large). The report gives consideration both to museums with long-established records of international activities, such as the NGC, ROM, and the MMFA, and to museums like the Aga Khan Museum and Pier 21 that are relatively new to the game. The report also addresses global work closely tied to federal diplomacy, and, in other cases, to provincial and city diplomacies. In all cases, the goal is to explore the ways in which museums and their activities are mobilized by public and private webs and networks. The project also examines institutions known for their focus on Indigenous arts and cultures, including the MOA, CMH, and ROM. These institutions evidence special attention paid to relationships and protocols, which this study seeks to attend to in the ways that Indigenous communities engage in global cultural relations work with non-Indigenous peoples and the wider global Indigenous community.

While we adopt a Canadian frame for our study, this project also resists a simplistic methodological nationalism—the “unquestioned framework,” rooted in modernity, that sees the nation-state as the “natural,” taken for granted, and “primary unit of analysis and social organization.”<sup>24</sup> By demonstrating the importance of specificity and the ways in which institutions work differently in various regional, economic, geopolitical, and cultural contexts, we seek to counter claims of a Canadian national and nationalist universalism that, in its current iteration, seeks to instrumentalize cultural diversity to increase Canada’s attractiveness and credibility abroad; what Joseph Nye has called “meta soft power.”<sup>25</sup> By extension, we also seek to investigate the contours of diplomatic practice after what Ulrich Beck describes as the “epistemological turn” in which the “premises and boundaries that define the units of empirical research disintegrate” such that the “whole conceptual world of the ‘national outlook’ becomes disenchanted, stripped of its necessity.”<sup>26</sup> The museums selected for this study are meaningful sites to conduct such work, since they represent what Beck has termed “the unintended consequences and challenges of the success of modernity,” both in terms of their thematic mandates as well as the implication of museums in larger projects of colonialism and nationalism.<sup>27</sup>

24. Eve Darian-Smith & Philip C. McCarty, *The Global Turn: Theories, Research Designs, and Methods for Global Studies* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017): 71; See also Daniel Chernilo, “The Critique of Methodological Nationalism: Theory and History,” *Thesis Eleven* 106, no. 1 (2011): 98–117; R.S. Zaharna, *The Cultural Awakening of Public Diplomacy* (Los Angeles: Figueroa Press, 2019); Yudhishtir Raj Isar, “Cultural Diplomacy: An Overplayed Hand?” *Public Diplomacy Magazine* 3 (Winter 2010): 29–44. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5be3439285ede1f05a46dafa/t/5be34faf1ae6cfee29d51ef7/1541623732917/CulturalDiplomacy.pdf>; Ulrich Beck, “The Cosmopolitan Condition: Why Methodological Nationalism Fails,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 24, no. 7–8 (2007): 286–290.
25. Joseph Nye, *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World’s Only Super-Power Can’t Go It Alone* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).
26. Beck, “The Cosmopolitan Condition,” 287.
27. Beck, “The Cosmopolitan Condition,” 289.





## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: CO-PRODUCTION AND PEDAGOGY

Our project was designed as a co-production between “industry partners”: the MMFA co-sponsored and hosted our research group, while nine other cultural institutions hosted individual researchers for on site study. Further, the study encompasses the work of multiple researchers, including the two primary investigators, many senior scholars and practitioners, as well as ten graduate students from the Cultural Studies and History programs at Queen’s University. This large-scale research team thus brought together a range of disciplinary backgrounds, academic institutions, museums, and individuals. As one of the participants reflected: “The size and varied interests and methods within the group provided a unique opportunity to reflect on my disciplinary and intellectual assumptions.”<sup>28</sup> Similarly, other participants pointed to the nature of the team as a key contributor to their learning: “What made this project very special for me was the fact that it has brought people with different skills, different learning styles, and research interests together, who have not only supported one another but also shared their individual ... strengths with the team.”<sup>29</sup>

28. Kyle Hammer, correspondence with authors, 2019.

29. Simge Erdogan, correspondence with authors, 2019.



To this end, the project was anchored by two residencies in June and August of 2019, which were designed to bring together the research team in a hot house learning environment presided over by project PI’s Smith and Brison. Both residencies took place in the Department of Education and Wellness within the MMFA’s Pavilion for Peace. The MMFA was a logical starting point for this collaboration as one of Canada’s preeminent cultural institutions with a long history of international cultural engagement dating back to its founding in 1879 as the gallery of the Art Association of Montreal. Located in Canada’s leading cultural capital, Montreal—a city deeply imbricated in the cosmopolitan networks of high culture—the MMFA is a key institution in the “golden triangle” cultural region encompassing Montreal, Ottawa, and Toronto, the area preferred by foreign states and private patrons alike seeking



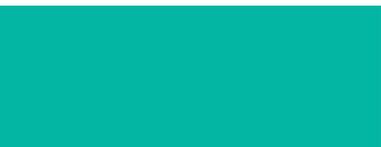
large audiences for their shows. Of particular relevance to this report, in 1960 the MMFA hosted an exhibit of Soviet art—an early international blockbuster show.<sup>30</sup> This Soviet art exhibition followed by only a year the “Kitchen debate” between US Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev at the American National Exhibition at Sokolniki Park in Moscow, and marked Canada’s entry into the east-west cultural exchange that was part and parcel of a harder power détente that saw a decrease in geopolitical tensions between the US and the Soviet Union. Through the 1970s, the museum hosted a series of spectacular international shows that marked the rise of the “blockbuster exhibition” as an international phenomenon. Of late, the MMFA’s interest in international engagement is evident in its exhibitions of fashion design by Jean Paul Gaultier (2017) and Thierry Mugler (2019) and the 2019 opening of the Stéphan Crétier and Stéphanie Maillery Wing for the Arts of One World, a space that a museum press release tells us “promotes inclusive values that reflect Montreal, a metropolis made up of close to 120 cultural communities,” that “invites people of different cultures to come together to better understand one another at a time, in this 21st century, when togetherness has become an issue of vital importance.”<sup>31</sup>

30. Barbara Moon, “A Rare Peek at Russian Art: Will Canadians Rave or Roar Over this New Show of Modern Art – Soviet Style?” *Maclean’s*, 12 March 1960, <https://archive.macleans.ca/article/1960/3/12/a-rare-peek-at-russian-art>.
31. Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, “Arts of One World,” 2021, <https://www.mbam.qc.ca/en/collections/arts-of-one-world/>, accessed 1 May 2021.

Above: iStock, photo credit: jenoche



As primary investigators, we were keen to structure the MMFA-hosted workshops as an opportunity to take advantage of possibilities for collaborative research as well as to think about research as pedagogy. To this end, we conceptualized our project as a lab. That is, we entered into the project to co-produce research with students, assigning them tasks requiring the autonomous development of their already advanced skillsets, rather than simply delegate to them relatively simple and subordinate research tasks. The ultimate goal was to undertake a research program greater than the sum of its parts, that is, a project that would draw on the collegiality of a lab and build on the varied experiences, knowledges, perspectives, and skills of the research team to inform its direction and development. Notably, this research relied heavily on collaboration in its design, data collection, analysis, and execution, such that it would not have been possible for us to undertake solely as primary investigators the bulk of the original research and interpretation.



The first residency in June 2019 served to develop the terms of the study. While we had determined the focus of the research—understanding the cultural diplomacy work of Canadian museums—the parameters of that research problematic was determined through the first residency. This two-week intensive workshop at the MMFA established the rapport of the research team, thus building a scholarly community in which we shared dialogue and began to articulate a common language through seminar discussions of the secondary source literature underpinning our project, of the major debates in the field, and of the research method we would employ.

The residency also provided members of the team with an opportunity to connect with MMFA staff to prepare for the project, facilitating understanding of the structure of the museum as well as building our awareness of how the museum connects with its immediate community. A key point of contact was the MMFA's then-director of Education and Wellness, Thomas Bastien, who partnered with the project to support the research and facilitate

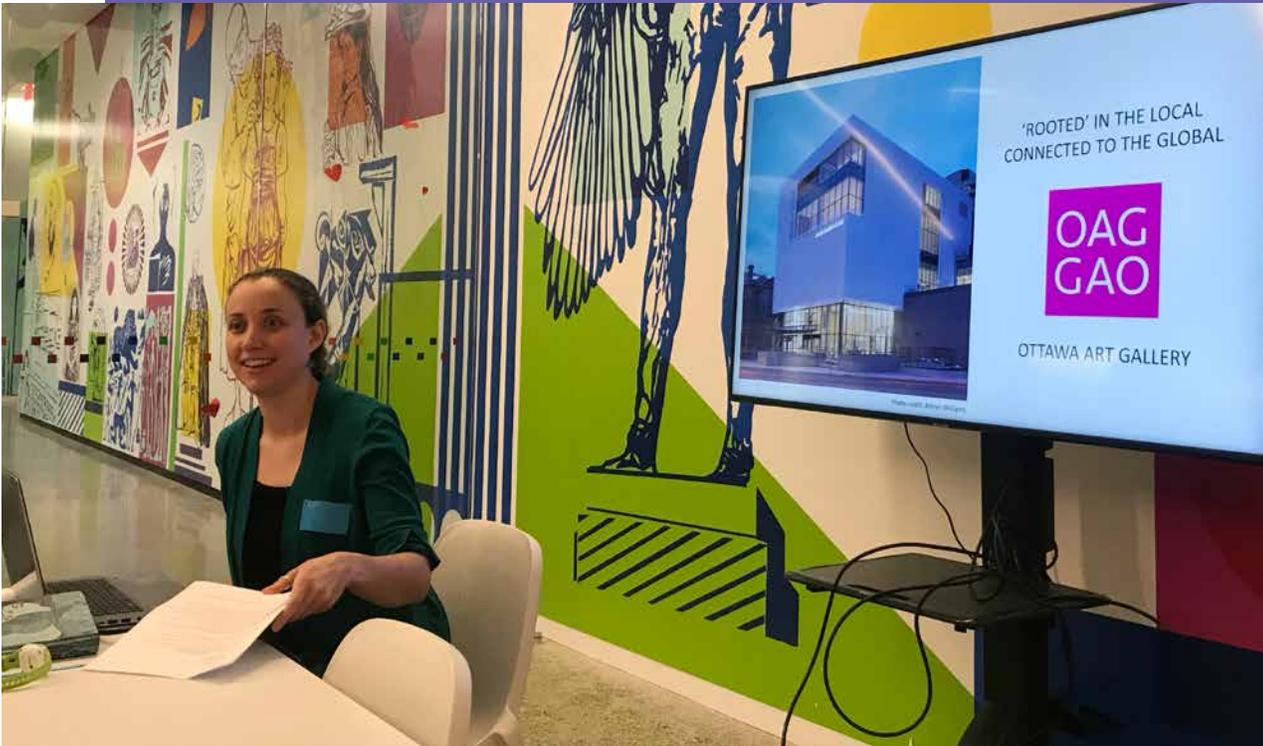
access to the MMFA. The residency was structured to include research training workshops on methodological and practical skills such as archival research, interviewing, and report writing. The residency also featured seminars devoted to readings and discussions of theories of cultural diplomacy, museum diplomacy, and city diplomacy. These seminars included guest lectures and presentations by leading academics and cultural practitioners in the field. Situating this residency at the MMFA allowed us to model the case study research method. For instance, the team toured the MMFA's archives, libraries, and exhibitions, and visited other key cultural institutions in Montreal. This work advanced the students' professional development by building their networks of connections. On a practical level, the first residency allowed for the coproduction of a standardized research methodology, including an interview guide, list of questions, and an approach to institutional archival resources that ensured consistency across the ten case studies addressed in this study.

Following the first residency, each graduate student carried out their individualized research programs on site at their assigned institution. Their primary methods of inquiry included analysis of archival resources and semi-structured interviews with key personnel to ascertain the policies, activities, and language around international initiatives at each museum since 2009. To augment the textual record, each graduate student conducted semi-structured interviews of approximately one-hour in length with key personnel at various levels of the institution, among them, staff in directors' offices, government relations offices, curators, heads of exhibitions, and staff in departments of loans, communications, and education. Each research fellow completed approximately five interviews at their focus institution, though some examining larger museums completed as many as 21. These interviews were aimed at determining issues, motivations, and rationales informing institutions' involvements in international cultural relations work and the perceived impact of this work both qualitatively (in terms of a museum's image/prestige) and quantitatively (as determined

by revenue from increased admissions and from partnership agreements). As a research methodology, interviews were especially important because they allowed the research fellows to explore international activity through the perspectives of front-line cultural professionals. Using a narrative inquiry approach, these interviews elicited evocative experiential testimony that provided qualitative data for analysis. They also filled gaps in the documentary record and helped to provide context to those documents that were saved and preserved, while also allowing for the possibility of alternative narratives that complicate or in some cases even contradict the official institutional archival record. The combination of these two methods of research resulted in a thorough exploration of the international cultural work undertaken by the case study institutions.

At the end of the summer, in August 2019, we ran a culminating residency at the MMFA. The research team reunited to share data obtained over the course of the summer field research. This second residency analyzed data and engaged in discussions about findings and overall trends observed in the field. Each graduate student presented on their institution's ten-year record of international activity, perceptions of this work, and its value in the eyes of those engaged in advancing it. The workshop provided research fellows with the opportunity to share their research, leading to generative discussions that helped the group to collectively discern points of commonality and difference across the museums in the study. As one research fellow explained: "The two residences at the MMFA provide invaluable discussions that helped to frame the direction of data collection and the theoretical underpinnings necessary for the writing of the report."<sup>32</sup> Following the final residency, each graduate student completed individual reports on their institutions and submitted these to the principal investigators, who edited them and collated the findings.

Beyond the data on museum diplomacy generated, we suggest that this project makes a significant, if preliminary, contribution



Above: Photo credit: Sarah E.K. Smith

to modelling knowledge co-production between industry, practitioners, scholars, and students. Co-production of knowledge amongst these actors ensured that the perspectives of practitioners were attended to and that the research generated reflected current museological practice. In addition, it is our hope that this research may impact and influence developments in the field. Our project is also instructive in the pedagogical value of collaborative research. The emphasis on peer-to-peer collaboration in research design had a substantial impact on shaping the research team members' experiences. At the conclusion of the project, we asked students a series of questions about their participation, providing insights into their research experiences. Reflecting on the project, one team member noted:

This project, however, is focused on process as much as, if not more than, the end goal. Every step of the process is a shared experience, and the team has taken succinct and synched steps towards our larger objective. To break out

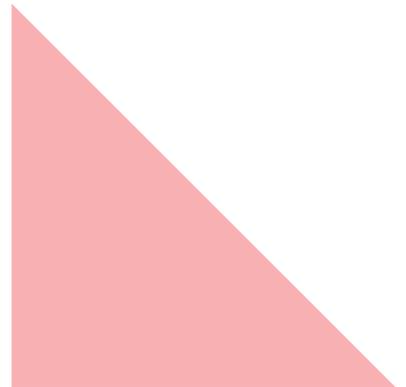


of the individualist mind frame was, for me, a challenge in itself yet the rewards are plentiful—the supportive feedback from my peers reveals different perspectives and blind spots of my own work that I would otherwise be unable to see; collaborative discussions enable us to craft individual reports as complimentary components of a bigger picture; working together at the MMFA, one of our partner institutions, keeps us immersed in the intellectual environment that our project aims to capture and export.<sup>33</sup>

Experiential learning opportunities were fundamental to the research design. The two research residencies at the MMFA offered team members significant opportunities for on-the-ground interaction with key museum personnel at our host partner institution. Moreover, each student’s on-site research at their case study museum offered even deeper sustained engagement in experiential learning. As at least one researcher noted, working alongside museum practitioners greatly informed his knowledge of cultural institutions. Immersion in the institution “helped me better appreciate the richness and nuance of philosophical positions related to museum practice, cultural policy and international engagement.” Elaborating, this research team member pointed to his on-site field work as a means to “bridge theory and practice,” an “invaluable experience ... [that] was crucial for my intellectual development because it helped enlarge the field of analysis in my work; specifically, it forced me to be constantly aware that cultural institutions work within a variety of professional, institutional and cultural contexts, which inform their engagement on both local and global levels.”<sup>34</sup> Another research fellow noted, “I certainly gained a wealth of insights into my institution in a way that a traditional didactic or dialectic learning model would have been unable to capture or convey. Further, because of the nature of the project and the freedom we had in discovery, I was able to think about my institution in a way that related to my larger theoretical interest whilst also incorporating other perspectives and insights throughout the collaborative process.”<sup>35</sup>

33. Christina Fabiani, correspondence with authors, 2019.
34. Ben Schnitzer, correspondence with authors, 2019.
25. Hammer.

Left: iStock. Photo credit: hstiver





## A SNAPSHOT OF GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

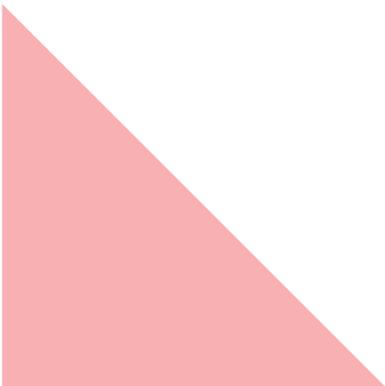
The ten museum reports that follow demonstrate the ways Canadian museums and their personnel function as cultural diplomatic actors on the global stage. While the museums represent different scales, locations, and mandates, the following trends emerge from this survey of global engagement:

- ***Canadian museums are intrinsically global***

Our research found that all the museums in the study are intrinsically global and part of multifaceted and diverse networks. The reports are striking in the range and amount of global engagement, making the case for museums as significant NSAs. For many of the institutions surveyed, this has long been the case. Size matters in terms of the scale of activities as reflected in day-to-day communications within the transnational sector and in such special initiatives as touring exhibitions and multipartner research projects. Such activity produces specific international outcomes, but also reveals how deeply cultural institutions are imbricated in global networks.

- ***Canadian museums are part of a professional community of practice***

Despite differences in size and scale, Canadian museums engage in a similar range of activities and in similar modes of professionalization. This incremental standardization is likely the result of historical development leading to common practices in employment, definitions of museums, and codes of ethics. There is a homogenization of the museums sector in terms of practices and policies, including working conditions, standards for climate control, and conservation that all lead to the emergence of an epistemic community of peers at local, regional, national, and global levels.

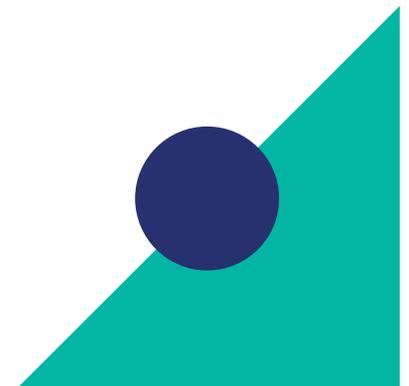
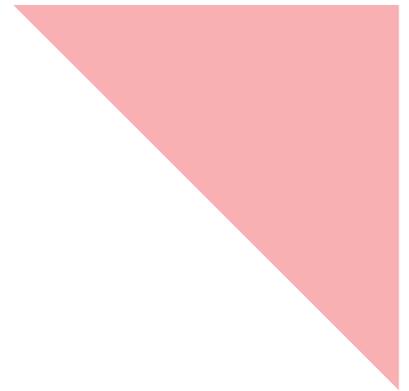


- ***Local contexts and institutional mandates allow for innovative activities***

As a counterpoint to the standardization of activities described above, our research team discovered diversity in the range of global engagements practiced by our case study institutions. The Ottawa Art Gallery, for instance, benefits from its unique location in the capital, with access to a substantial formal diplomatic community centred in the city's embassies and missions. Down the road, the National Gallery of Canada engages through exhibitions, including programming for the Canadian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. Other national institutions in the region, such as the Canadian Museum of History, are often framed as representative of Canada. Another national institution in our study, the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, is engaged in a global network of immigration museums and has key ties to Global Affairs Canada, providing training to Canadian consular officials who represent the state abroad. Other institutions in this report have very different mandates addressing local, regional, and provincial audiences and interests, or are private and thus even more "arm's length" from the direct diplomatic interests of the state. In sum, local contexts, professional relationships, and institutional mandates all provide for a wide and diverse range of global engagement activities.

- ***The global engagement of museums is not necessarily perceived or understood through the framework of cultural diplomacy***

Practitioners do not necessarily read their global work through the framework of cultural diplomacy; often they simply see their activities as "part of the job," aspects of their professional and intellectual practices. While they rarely see themselves as the "new diplomats" Görden speaks of, their work is indicative of the extent to which the museum sector is a deeply trans- and supranational epistemic community.



36. Senate of Canada, *Cultural Diplomacy at the Front Stage of Canada's Foreign Policy*, 2019, [https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/421/AEFA/Reports/Report\\_CulturalDiplomacy\\_e.pdf](https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/421/AEFA/Reports/Report_CulturalDiplomacy_e.pdf), accessed 1 May 2021; Denis Stairs, "Myths, Morals, and Reality in Canadian Foreign Policy," *International Journal* 58, no. 2 (2003): 239–256; Louis Belanger, "Redefining Cultural Diplomacy: Cultural Security and Foreign Policy in Canada," *Political Psychology* 20, no. 4 (1999): 677–699.
37. Simon Brault, "In Defence of a Renewed Cultural Diplomacy," *Radio-Canada*, "Plus on est de fous, plus on lit," 4 June 2019, transcript available on the Canada Council for the Arts website, <https://canadacouncil.ca/spotlight/2019/07/in-defense-of-a-renewed-cultural-diplomacy>, accessed 27 April 2021.

### • **Complexifying diplomacy**

The institutional case studies in this report make clear that we need to move away from simplistic and unitary notions of statist diplomacy in order to understand, value, and validate the global work of non-state actors such as museums. This change necessitates a rejection of methodological nationalism and a move away from seeing diplomacy only as it exists in formal structures governed by state actors.

## CONCLUSIONS

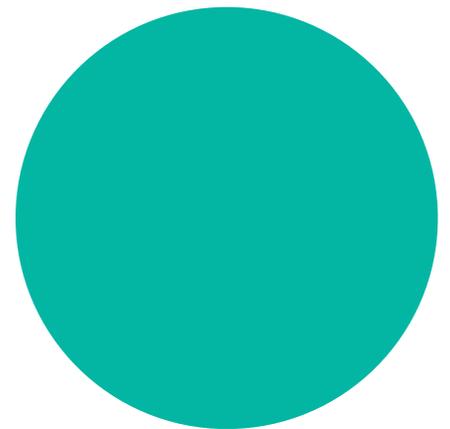
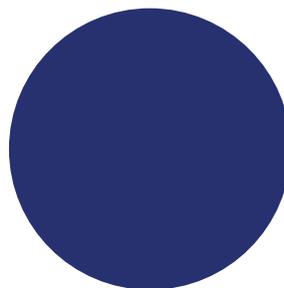
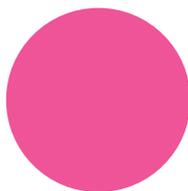
In 2019, the Canadian Senate released a study on Canada's cultural diplomacy activities titled *Cultural Diplomacy at the Front Stage of Canada's Foreign Policy*. This was, in fact, the first federal-level study of Canada's cultural diplomacy since 1994, despite the fact that since the late 1990s cultural diplomacy has been the acknowledged "third pillar" of Canada's foreign policy.<sup>36</sup> The 2019 report and the testimony that it was based on offers a glimpse into the present and recent past of Canadian cultural diplomatic activities. We note that museums are underrepresented in this study—specifically their role (and potential) as cultural diplomatic actors. *The Global Engagement of Museums in Canada* seeks to address this lack of recognition and tries to ascertain how Canadian institutions are undertaking activities as actors in cultural diplomacy.

At a moment when the Canadian government is responding to the Senate study and considering how cultural diplomacy may function at the federal level, we see other cultural contributors engaging in these same discussions. For instance, players such as the Canada Council for the Arts are increasingly reading themselves into Canadian efforts in cultural diplomacy. Director and CEO Simon Brault, appearing on Radio-Canada in 2019, emphasized the ability of culture to contribute to progressive agendas, stating that a new innovative cultural diplomacy "aims to create spaces for discussion based in respect, attentiveness, and openness around the artistic and literary works, and experiences that express what they want to express free from any diktat, and often far removed from the idyllic

and misleading postcard some people would prefer to present for Canada or Quebec.”<sup>37</sup>

Given the recent flurry of activity around cultural diplomacy at the federal level in Canada, we feel it is important to consider museums and their roles and agencies in global engagements. We hope this study starts a conversation amongst scholars, practitioners, and institutions and at a variety of levels of engagement from the local to the global. This study provides the baseline data to inform these conversations and suggests new ways of thinking about cultural diplomacy and museums. By establishing a baseline for the “impacts” of such work, as well as identifying best practices to guide future initiatives, this report serves as a resource for museum professionals, cultural workers, policymakers, and academics to better understand how cultural institutions and their actors engage in intercultural relations. The evidence it presents helps to articulate the positive externalities of these activities and provides compelling evidence to justify ongoing support for them from philanthropic, governmental, institutional, and other private and public actors.<sup>38</sup> In so doing, this study aims to demonstrate the viability of such work by “broadening ... the way in which museums articulate and demonstrate value” through the creation of “a new language for narrating the social purpose of museums, including international exhibitions.”<sup>39</sup> This report provides evidence that, at a moment when right-wing populism and resurgent nationalism indicate a lack of willingness to engage with diverse communities (within and outside of national and interstate frames), museums can facilitate knowledge of other communities and promote the cultural competencies necessary for productive relationships.

38. Sarah J. Skinner, “Estimating the Real Growth of Blockbuster Art Exhibits: A Time Series Approach,” *Journal of Cultural Economics* 30, no. 2 (2006): 109–125.
39. Davidson and Pérez-Castellanos, *Cosmopolitan Ambassadors*, 195.





OAG · GAO

JOHN RUDDY CUBE

# “WE ARE ALL DIPLOMATS NOW”: UNDERSTANDING MUSEUMS AS DIPLOMATIC ACTORS

**BRONWYN JAQUES AND BEN SCHNITZER**

Few visitors to Berlin can forget the sight of the *Berliner Dom*, the German capital’s main cathedral. Rebuilt at the turn of the twentieth century during a period of re-emergent German nationalism, the Cathedral was designed to celebrate the consolidation of the newly formed Second German Empire, its monumental grandeur an imposing expression of the imperial and nationalist sentiments that made it manifest.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the Cathedral’s physical location, between the City Palace on one side and Berlin’s renowned Altes Museum on the other, symbolizes not only the interconnected and contingent nature of the temporal, spiritual, and cultural sovereignties claimed by the German nation-state during that time, but also positions the museum, at least physically, as an institution immediately bound up in the workings of both church and state.

Equally significant for our purposes, but perhaps less obvious, is that the Cathedral was constructed with a separate door for the sole use of the diplomatic community. This historic anomaly speaks to the intersection of culture and nation, as well as diplomacy, with the door standing as a symbol of the relationship between the state (the palace) and civil society (museum and cathedral). Notably, however, these architectural arrangements clearly show that diplomacy was the exclusive preserve of those with rights of entry to the portals of state power.<sup>2</sup> Those who traversed this portal did so separately from the public, which evidences the privileged realm of diplomacy

1. Ronald Taylor, *Berlin and its Culture: A Historical Portrait* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997).
2. Jorge Heine, “From Club to Network Diplomacy,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy*, ed. A. Cooper, J. Heine, and R. Thakur, 55-69 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Right: Image credit. Adrien Williams



range of activities by state and non-state actors, between two or more cultures, that seek to build better mutual understanding and sustained dialogue between people and cultures."<sup>8</sup>

This museum-specific research builds on a growing area of scholarship addressing the role of non-state actors and institutions operating at "arm's length" from state control within broad networks of intercultural relations; not merely as part of the "soft power" tool-kit of nation-states, which Joseph Nye defines in relation to the ability of states to achieve their objectives by attraction rather than coercion, but rather as a multidirectional and potentially activist practice that encompasses a broad range of non-state actors, including cultural institutions, managers, producers, consumers, and communities seeking to imagine counter-hegemonic possibilities and inclusive futures.<sup>9</sup> In order to situate the field of literature to which this research project contributes, this essay assesses the literature on museum diplomacy, delving broadly into topics of public and cultural diplomacy, international relations, and cultural studies, amongst others. In so doing, we suggest the significance of museums as global actors and the numerous facets of their global engagement.

Cultural diplomacy in the Westphalian tradition has been understood as an instrumental and state-based practice whereby governments harness, support, or direct intercultural relations to achieve certain political, social, or economic outcomes.<sup>10</sup> However, the practice of diplomacy has shifted in our globalized world to operate "beyond the national interest" in ways that "untether" culture from the state.<sup>11</sup> While there are perennial debates about how cultural diplomacy is practiced and by whom, what is certain is that the creation and management of global relations is no longer the exclusive domain of a privileged "club" of nation-states as it was in the Cold War era.<sup>12</sup> Diplomacy now takes place in a technologically and socially diverse, "networked" environment and favours horizontal communication, dialogue, and multidirectional flows of information.<sup>13</sup> In this global era of networked diplomacy,

9. NACDI, *Cultural Diplomacy and Trade: Making Connections: Technical Report Prepared for the Copyright and International Trade Branch of the Department of Canadian Heritage* (2018), <http://culturaldiplomacyinitiative.com/>; For more on the notion of 'soft power,' see Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Succeed in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004) and Joseph Nye, "Soft Power and Public Diplomacy Revisited," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 14 (2019): 7–20.
10. See Patricia Goff, "Cultural Diplomacy," In *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy*, ed. A. Cooper, J. Heine, and R. Thakur (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2015); Nicholas J. Cull, *Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past* (Los Angeles: Figueroa Press, 2009); Simon L. Mark, "Rethinking Cultural Diplomacy: The Cultural Diplomacy of New Zealand, the Canadian Federation and Quebec," *Political Science* 62, no. 1 (2010): 62–83; Richard T. Arndt *The First Resort of Kings: American Cultural Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2006).
11. Ien Ang, Yudhishtir Raj Isar & Phillip Mar, "Cultural Diplomacy: Beyond the National Interest?" *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 21 no. 4 (2015): 366; Zaharna, "Culture, Cultural Diversity and Humanity-Centred Diplomacies," 117.
12. Davidson & Pérez-Castellanos, *Cosmopolitan Ambassadors*.
13. Terry Flew & Falk Hartig, "Confucius Institutes and the Network Communication Approach to Public Diplomacy," *IAFOR Journal of Asian Studies* 1, no. 1 (2015): 1-18; Gayle McPherson & David McGillivray, *Arts, Cultural Relations and Soft Power: Developing an Evidence Base (Interim Report)*, 2017.

14. Kelley, "The New Diplomacy"; Kelley, Agency Change; Jan Melissen (ed), *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
15. Kelley, "The New Diplomacy"; Kelley, Agency Change; Melissa Nisbett, "New Perspectives on Instrumentalism: An Empirical Study of Cultural Diplomacy," *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 19, no. 5 (2013): 557-575; Roland Flamini, "The Art of Diplomacy: Exhibitions and National Promotion," *World Affairs* 176, no. 5 (2014): 69-76.
16. British Council, *Trust Pays: How International Cultural Relations Build Trust in the UK and Underpin the Success of the UK Economy* (London: British Council, 2012); British Council, *The Value of Trust: How Trust is Earned and Why It Matters* (London: British Council, 2018); Bernadette Lynch and Samuel Alberti, "Legacies of Prejudice: Racism, Co-production and Radical Trust in the Museum," *Museum Management and Curatorship* 25, no. 1 (2010): 13-35.
17. For discussions on contact zone theory in relation to museums, see James Clifford, "Museums as Contact Zones," in *Routes, Travel and Translation in the Late 20th Century*, 188-219 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Robin Boast, "Neocolonial Collaboration: Museum as Contact Zone Revisited," *Museum Anthropology* 34, no. 1 (2011): 56-70; Kylie Message, "Contentious Politics and Museums as Contact Zones," in *The International Handbooks of Museum Studies: Museum Theory*, first edition, ed. A. Witcomb and K. Message, 253-281 (Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, 2015); and Lynch & Alberti, "Legacies of Prejudice."



states vie for authority with non-state actors, such as non-governmental and non-profit organizations (NGOs and NPOs), activist groups, artist organizations, and cultural institutions: the so-called "new" diplomats.<sup>14</sup>

There is growing acknowledgement of the global role that cultural institutions, and specifically museums, play in global relations.<sup>15</sup> Academics and practitioners alike recognize museums, and by extension all cultural institutions, as important sites through which trust—essential for positive intercultural relations—can be built.<sup>16</sup> James Clifford and others argue that museums are "contact zones," functioning as (often asymmetrical) spaces of intercultural collaboration, consultation, and contestation between museum workers and the communities whose cultures and objects are represented and exhibited within these institutions; spaces in which trust and connections between people, institutions, and nations can be built and where reciprocal relationships can be fostered.<sup>17</sup> Intercultural trust and connections develop when diplomacy becomes an orientation—a set of behaviours, dispositions, and attitudes rooted

Right: iStock, photo credit: monkeybusinessimages

in global, cosmopolitan, humanity-centred perspectives—and moves beyond traditional state-based practices and protocols.<sup>18</sup>

In the contemporary moment characterized by fake news and twitter politics, cultural institutions are seen by the public as more trustworthy sources of “believable” information than governments and news outlets. A recent study by the British Museums Association concludes that:

Museums hold a unique position of being trusted, which is particularly important given the perceived lack of trusted organisations in society such as the government and the media. Both of these are seen as biased and operating under agendas. Participating members of the public see museums as guardians of factual information and as presenting all sides of the story.<sup>19</sup>

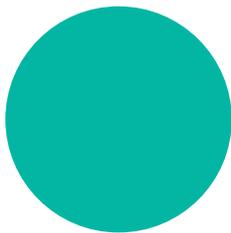
Despite their apparent “arms-length” relation to the state, museums have long been involved in cultural relations work and have long functioned at the intersection of state and civil society and as sites where government agendas and cultural interests meet and sometimes clash.<sup>20</sup> Museums have in fact always contributed to the work of the state and have always been enmeshed in relations of power; they create cultural resources that may be used by governments and civil society elites for political goals and are embedded within international webs of relations, whether through exhibitions, programming, research, fieldwork, or almost any other conventional museum activity imaginable.<sup>21</sup> As Paul Bové notes, cultural institutions “mak[e] available as a knowledge-form [the] symbolic systems [that] politicians and state players can manipulate and deploy.”<sup>22</sup> Because of this position, museums often function in response to the policies of various levels of government. In state-based cultural diplomacies, nation-states often instrumentalize culture in order to advance a range of policies or interests, be they economic, commercial, military, or cultural, and the global activities of museums are one vehicle through which they do so.

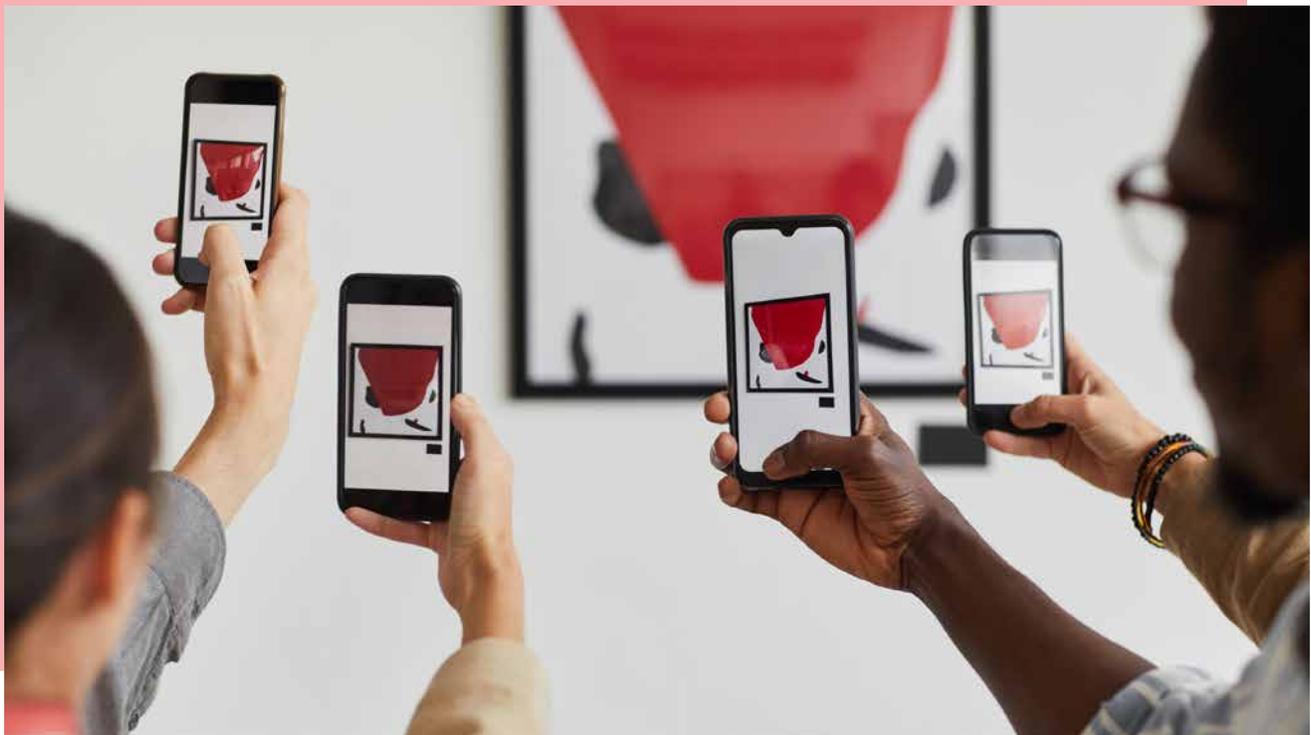
18. Melissa Conley Tyler, Rhea Matthews & Emma Brockhurst, “Think Tank Diplomacy,” *Diplomacy and Foreign Policy* 2, no. 3 (2017): 1-96; See also Kelley, “The New Diplomacy”; Paul Bové, “Can American Studies be Area Studies?” in *Learning Places: The Afterlives of Area Studies*, ed. M. Miyoshi and H. D. Harootian (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013); Cesar Villanueva Rivas, “Cosmopolitan Constructivism: Mapping a Road to the Future of Cultural and Public Diplomacy.” *Public Diplomacy Magazine* 3 (Winter 2010): 45–56; Zaharna, “Culture, Cultural Diversity, and Humanity-Centred Diplomacies.”
19. British Museums Association, *Public Perceptions of – and Attitudes – to the Purposes of Museums in Society* (London: British Museums Association, 2013): 3.
20. Jessup and Smith, “Introduction: Curating Cultural Diplomacy”; Tony Bennett. *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (Oxon: Routledge, 2007).
21. For examples see Paul Greenhalgh, “Education, Entertainment and Politics,” in *The New Museology*, ed. P. Vergo, 74–98 (London: Reaktion Books, 1989); Nancy Lin, “5,000 Years of Korean Art: Exhibitions Abroad as Cultural Diplomacy,” *Journal of History of Collections* 28, no. 3 (2016): 383-400; Kristin A. Eggeling, “Cultural diplomacy in Qatar: between ‘virtual enlargement’, national identity construction, and elite legitimation,” *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 23, no. 6 (2017): 717-731; and Jim Berryman, “Art and National Interest: The Diplomatic Origins of the ‘Blockbuster Exhibition’ in Australia,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 37, no. 2 (2013): 159–173.
22. Bové, “Can American Studies be Area Studies?” 208.

23. Davidson and Pérez-Castellanos, *Cosmopolitan Ambassadors*.
24. Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*, 6.
25. Anna Farmaki and Katerina Antoniou, "Politicising Dark Tourism Sites: Evidence from Cyprus," *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes* 9, no. 2 (2017): 178.
26. Brian Wallis, "Selling Nations: International Exhibitions and Cultural Diplomacy," in *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles*, ed. Daniel Sherman and Irit Rogoff, 265–81 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).
27. Wallis, "Selling Nations," 267.
28. Robert Albro, "The Disjunction of Image and World in US and Chinese Soft Power Projection," *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 21, no. 4 (2015): 384.
29. Julia Brock, "Museums Connect Grants and Contact Zones," *Curator: The Museum Journal* 58, no. 2 (2015): 133-135; Yunci Cai, "The Art of Museum Diplomacy: The Singapore-France Cultural Collaboration in Perspective," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 26, no. 2 (2013): 127-144.
30. Davidson and Pérez-Castellanos, *Cosmopolitan Ambassadors*, 3.

The recent work of Davidson and Pérez-Castellanos suggests that this political work has remained a constant in the modern histories of cultural institutions, even as the drivers of such instrumentalization have changed over time.<sup>23</sup> Museums, as Tony Bennett explains, are involved in the practice of "showing and telling," and as such, communicate specific cultural meanings and values through exhibits, which in turn influence internal and external perceptions of the state's image and identity.<sup>24</sup> As presenters and producers of cultural information, museums create narratives, symbols, and other cultural resources that are readily adoptable by the state for political use. Anna Farmaki and Katerina Antoniou (2017) argue that museums represent "official sites whereby national cultural narratives are communicated."<sup>25</sup> Taking a more critical stance, Brian Wallis makes the case that museums' international exhibitions and cultural endeavours are "propagandistic deployments" of culture.<sup>26</sup> He argues that "their unabashed purpose is to transform negative stereotypes into positive ones and, in the process, to improve the political and economic standing of their country."<sup>27</sup> In this way, museums operate within what Robert Albro calls a "cultural policy of display ... showing or representing the nation through cultural spectacle," in which the unidirectional projection of values discourages, and can even be inimical to, intercultural communication and reciprocal engagement.<sup>28</sup>

Yet, while museums and cultural institutions may engage in global activities at the behest of the nation-states within which they are located, that is, as instruments of "soft power," the instrumental relationship with the state is only part of the broader constellation of social power technologies in which the museum sector is deeply enmeshed.<sup>29</sup> Davidson and Pérez-Castellanos assert that museums engage in international exhibitions and global activities to "fulfill an array of strategic goals, including a mix of political, institutional and commercial objectives"; a dynamic combination of diplomatic, mission, and market-oriented drivers, which may or may not align with state interests.<sup>30</sup> In other words, while museums may work in direct and instrumental relation to state foreign policy agendas





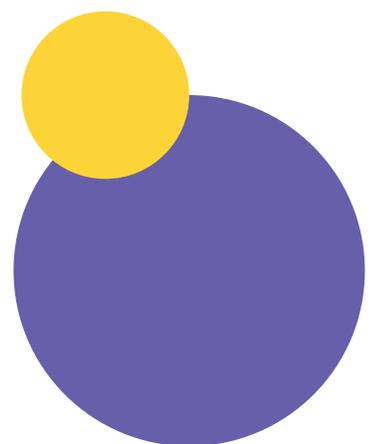
and objectives, they also have independent agendas located in partnership-building, the cultivation of their unique profiles in a global network of museums, and particularly their professional and epistemic communities of practice. As Davidson and Pérez-Castellanos suggest:

Museums are potentially implicated in the practice of cultural diplomacy at a number of levels: directly as government agencies specifically funded to undertake cultural diplomacy programmes; indirectly supporting foreign policy objectives by co-operating with diplomatic agencies while also pursuing their own agendas; or *they may undertake international activities for their own diplomatic purposes* [emphasis added].<sup>31</sup>

In keeping with this view, this study of Canadian museums emphasizes museum professionals' practical knowledge and on-

31. Davidson and Pérez-Castellanos, *Cosmopolitan Ambassadors*, 179.

Above: iStock, photo credit: SeventyFour



the-ground experiences to reveal best practices, while situating this professional expertise within the larger theoretical frameworks of cultural diplomacy and cultural relations and within and between states and global civil society. The research project also responds to calls to bridge the gaps between theory and practice, and between academics and practitioners, to create a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which museums engage in diplomatic work, how museum professionals perceive this work, and how museums as platforms for exchange and relationship-building can create conditions for intercultural dialogue.



Recognition of museums' agency may not be new per se, but the full realization of their potentialities effects something akin to a "loss of innocence," by which we mean the realization and appreciation of the ways in which cultural institutions function as critical sites for the development of intercultural understanding that can in turn contribute to the mitigation of global cultural conflict.<sup>32</sup> This realization is timely given emerging trends in global geopolitics such as the rise of right-wing populism, protectionism, and extremism that further complicate how museums around the world, particularly those with direct connections to the state, align their global activities and interests with those of the governments that fund their activities. Patrick Steel reports that the ability of museums to act independent of state interests and to negotiate their own international agendas is compromised by increasing—and increasingly overt—political interference.<sup>33</sup> According to Yascha Mounk, we are witnessing the political manifestation of re-emergent extremisms and nationalisms, in which politicians of various stripes seek to "destroy the free media, to undermine independent institutions, and to muzzle the opposition" in order to advance authoritarian agendas.<sup>34</sup>

In this environment, how do museums negotiate the "complicated partnerships between institutions and various private, public and non-profit organizations," as well as the tensions between institutional and government policies that shape the context of their global intercultural work?<sup>35</sup> How do museum professionals and cultural workers perceive their involvement in global intercultural work and their role as global agents? Do museum professionals see their work as cultural diplomacy? How do they see this work contributing to nationalist politics and/or global relations? What are the impacts and benefits—to museum professionals, the institution, the region, the nation, or global networks—of these endeavours? Simply put, how do museums "do" diplomacy? These are some of the questions coming out of the literature that are addressed in this research project.

32. Davidson and Pérez-Castellanos, *Cosmopolitan Ambassadors*; Mark Gibson, *Culture and Power: A History of Cultural Studies* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2007).
33. Patrick Steel, "European Museum Directors Warn of Increasing Interference by Nationalist Governments," *Museums Journal*, 13 June 2018, <https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/12062018-european-museum-directors-warn-of-increasing-interference-by-nationalist-governments>.
34. Yascha Mounk, *The People vs. Democracy: Why our Freedom is in Danger and How to Save it* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018): 8.
35. Jessup and Smith, "Introduction: Curating Cultural Diplomacy," 284.

Left: iStock. Photo credit: cagkansayin

36. See NACDI, *Cultural Diplomacy and Trade*; Davidson and Pérez-Castellanos, *Cosmopolitan Ambassadors*; Jessup and Smith, "Introduction: Curating Cultural Diplomacy."

37. Bound et al., *Cultural Diplomacy*, 13.

Right: iStock. Photo credit: roman\_slavik

Specifically, this study documents how global intercultural work is understood in cultural institutions and by cultural practitioners by analyzing the global activities of ten museums across Canada. The project investigates the official, institutional record of global cultural work, as well as the perceptions and understandings of this work, in each institution and across them all. This research assesses the impacts of these institutions and their global intercultural activities, not only in terms of such concrete, short term outcomes as economic impact and museum attendance, but also in the ways museums function or are perceived to function as catalysts for mutuality, respect, and trust, which in turn can lead to more productive and long-lasting people-to-people relationships across borders and cultures.<sup>36</sup>

Returning to Bound et al.'s assertion that "we are all diplomats now," we suggest that *The Global Engagement of Museums in Canada* makes the case for specific and significant roles for museums and cultural practitioners in the global arena. Although museums must often balance obligations and expectations from external actors with their own institutional agendas, it is precisely this positioning at the intersection of state and civil society that affords museums the power and freedom to effectively engage in global cultural work. As this review of literature demonstrates, museums are not merely pawns of the state or of their private patrons, they actively exercise their own agency and autonomy in the pursuit of institutional goals, network- and partnership-building, and their own political agendas. In addition, museums can be productive sites for establishing trust between peoples to mitigate global intercultural conflict. The ten museum reports that follow provide readers with a nuanced understanding of how museums understand their global role in a changing world, and in turn, imagine the emancipatory possibilities of global practices that transcend the binaries that have heretofore circumscribed—and limited—diplomacy.



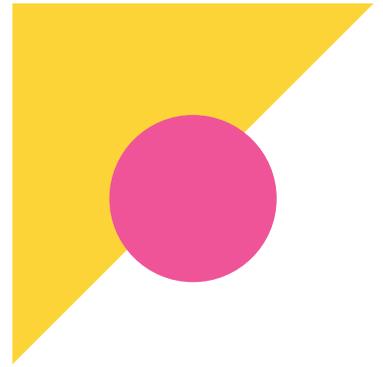




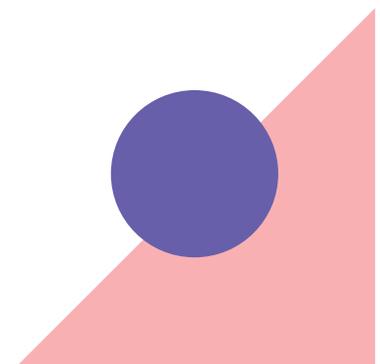
**MUSEUM  
REPORTS**

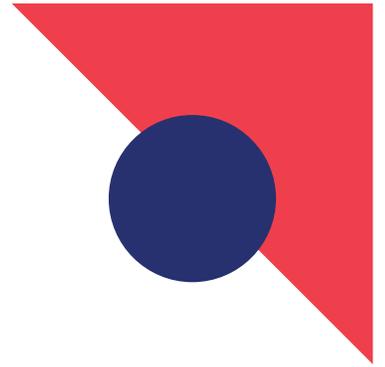
# MUSEUMS FEATURED IN THIS STUDY

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1. Aga Khan Museum
2. Art Gallery of Alberta
3. Canadian Museum of History
4. Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21
5. Montreal Museum of Fine Arts
6. Museum of Anthropology at UBC
7. National Gallery of Canada
8. Ottawa Art Gallery
9. Pointe-à-Callière Montreal Archaeology and History Complex
10. Royal Ontario Museum







AGA KHAN MUSEUM | MUSEE AGA KHAN

# AGA KHAN MUSEUM

## CHRISTINA FABIANI

Toronto's Aga Khan Museum (AKM) operates as "a museum like no other"<sup>1</sup> in every respect – its collections and exhibitions, performances, educational programs, even the building and site, all reflect the AKM's unique holistic and community-driven approach to cultural diplomacy and intercultural relations. Opened in September 2014 as the first museum in North America "dedicated to the arts of Islamic civilizations,"<sup>2</sup> the AKM has emerged swift and strong onto the global stage of cultural institutions, rapidly filling "an arts and culture gap"<sup>3</sup> in the Western world and elevating the conventional social, ethical, and humanitarian roles of museums. The AKM addresses a critical global problem it identifies as "a clash of ignorance" that neglects "a long history of respect and cooperation between Islamic and Western peoples, and their respective civilizations."<sup>4</sup> The private, not-for-profit museum tackles this cultural rift and corrects negative, homogenizing views of the Islamic world often perpetuated in Western society by disrupting the "simple rules that people apply to the way that they instantly see and judge things,"<sup>5</sup> which, in turn, put us "at risk as a society."<sup>6</sup> For instance, when US President Trump issued Executive Order 13769, commonly known as "the travel ban,"<sup>7</sup> which denies or severely restricts entry into the United States by people from a list of Muslim-majority countries,<sup>8</sup> the AKM promptly curated an exhibition in the hope of "uniting people through education," "fostering understanding," and "building bridges across our fractured world."<sup>9</sup> Executed in just nine months, *Syria: A Living History* (15 Oct. 2016–26 Feb. 2017) countered "stories of conflict and displacement [that] dominate the media and define people's awareness" of the

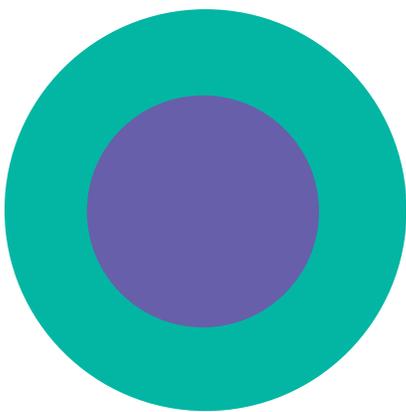
1. CEO and Director Henry Kim, quoted in *Aga Khan Museum, A Year in Review*, 2017 (Toronto: Aga Khan Museum), 4, [https://agakhanmuseum.org/about/pdf/AKM\\_A-Year-in-Review-2017.pdf](https://agakhanmuseum.org/about/pdf/AKM_A-Year-in-Review-2017.pdf).
2. Henry Kim, "Director's Welcome," <https://www.agakhanmuseum.org/about/directors-welcome.html>.
3. *Aga Khan Museum, A Year in Review, 2014–15* (Toronto: Aga Khan Museum, 2015), 6, [https://agakhanmuseum.org/about/pdf/AKM\\_A-Year-in-Review-2014-15.pdf](https://agakhanmuseum.org/about/pdf/AKM_A-Year-in-Review-2014-15.pdf).
4. Extract from His Highness the Aga Khan's address to the graduates of the School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University, New York, 15 May 2006, <https://www.akdn.org/speech/his-highness-aga-khan/graduation-ceremony-school-international-and-public-affairs-usa>.
5. Henry Kim, in discussion with the author, 11 July 2019.
6. Kelly Frances, in discussion with the author, 12 July 2019.
7. Thomson Reuters, "Trump Travel Ban Leads to 80% Decline in U.S. Visa Approvals from Some Affected Countries," *CBC News*, 26 February 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/travel-ban-visas-us-decline-1.5033986>.
8. Rick Gladstone, "Trump Travel Ban: How it Affects the Countries," *The New York Times*, 26 June 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/26/world/americas/trump-travel-ban-effects.html?register=email&auth=register-email>.
9. Aga Khan Museum, "Building Bridges to Connect the World," <https://agakhanmuseum.org/support/pdf/CaseForSupport.pdf>.

Left: Aga Khan Museum exterior.  
Photo: Janet Kimber, 2014

10. Aga Khan Museum, "Syria: A Living History," <https://agakhanmuseum.org/exhibitions/syria-living-history>.
11. Frances, in discussion.
12. An estimated 90,000 Ismaili Muslims reside in Canada. Ron Csillag, "For Ismaili Museums, a Toronto Milestone," *The Washington Post*, 16 September 2014, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/religion/for-ismaili-muslims-a-toronto-milestone/2014/09/16/a0aa5b5a-3dd6-11e4-a430-b82a3e67b762\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/religion/for-ismaili-muslims-a-toronto-milestone/2014/09/16/a0aa5b5a-3dd6-11e4-a430-b82a3e67b762_story.html).
13. Speech by His Highness the Aga Khan at the opening of the Aga Khan and Ismaili Centre, Toronto, 12 September 2014, <https://www.akdn.org/speech/his-highness-aga-khan/opening-aga-khan-museum-and-ismaili-centre-toronto>.
14. Aga Khan Museum, "Aga Khan Development Network," <https://www.agakhanmuseum.org/about/aga-khan-development-network.html>.
15. Kim, in discussion.
16. Ulrike Al-Khamis, in discussion with the author, 26 July 2019.
17. Aga Khan Museum, "Mission," <https://www.agakhanmuseum.org/about/mission.html>.

country with "artifacts and artworks that tell a different story – one of cultural diversity, historical continuity, resourcefulness, and resilience."<sup>10</sup> This exhibition emphasized cornerstone messages of shared heritage and humanity that underlie all activities at the AKM. As Marketing and Communications Director Kelly Frances points out: "Anyone that walks through the door of this museum can see and experience the true artistic diversity of Muslim civilizations – but it's beyond that, it's really exposing people to the fact that we are more alike than we are different."<sup>11</sup>

The AKM fulfils a long-term goal of His Highness the Aga Khan, the 49<sup>th</sup> hereditary Imam of the world's fifteen million Shia Ismaili Muslims, to create a museum showcasing Islamic history, heritage, and cross-cultural influences in order to foster "dialogue and warm human rapport"<sup>13</sup> among Muslims and non-Muslims. The AKM operates under the umbrella of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), the cultural arm of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), a "private, international, non-denominational development organization that works to improve the living conditions and opportunities for people in the developing world."<sup>14</sup> CEO and Director of the AKM Henry Kim explains that the museum "fits within the overall mandate of the AKDN, which is founded on three pillars – economic development, social development, and cultural development."<sup>15</sup> Dr. Ulrike Al-Khamis, the director of Collections and Public Programs, commends the unified commitment of the AKDN, the AKTC, and the AKM to "societal improvement, harmony, progress, and cohesion, irrespective of faith or ethnic background." She explains that, for the museum, "art and culture are not the end goal" but rather "a catalyst to engender larger discussions around big societal interests and concerns."<sup>16</sup> AKM staff at all levels, from upper management to the more than 300 volunteers, cultivate this mandate through "education, research, and collaboration." Prince Aynn Aga Khan, brother of His Highness and chairman of the Board, iterates that the AKM "aims to build understanding in a time when it is clear that such understanding is especially



needed.”<sup>18</sup> For him, “museums have a unique role and responsibility to lead their visitors to apprehend the dialogues and exchanges that have inspired the arts from seemingly far-flung and diverse cultures, to see and recognize that we share a common heritage, the heritage of the human heart, which underlies all art.”<sup>19</sup>

Initial efforts to find a geographic home for the AKM reflected the global need for a museum of its kind. Nearly two decades ago, His Highness selected a landmark site along the River Thames in London, England, for the museum, yet, despite offering “double the site’s apparent market value,”<sup>20</sup> public outcry encouraged the Aga Khan to seek an environment more representative of the museum’s core commitments. Kim explains that, “His Highness made a very deliberate choice to place it in Canada, a country of immense diversity in which immigration is a strategic part of its growth and future.” The museum’s emphasis on pluralism – a positive and progressive approach to cultural difference – parallels the Canadian agenda of “immigration, inclusion, social cohesion, harmony, and peace.”<sup>21</sup> Specifically, Toronto, one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the world and home to a robust Ismaili community, best represents the country’s multicultural character.<sup>22</sup> The building itself, an impressive monument of angular white granite centred around a double-height, open-roofed courtyard, sits across a public garden of reflecting pools and quiet pathways from the Ismaili Centre – one of only six of its kind in the world – within the 17-acre Aga Khan Park. The entire site, inflected by “Islamic traditions in architecture and art,”<sup>23</sup> not only supports the museum’s mission to, in the words of the AKM’s manager of Education and Public Engagement, Jovanna Scorson, “show people the positive contributions of Muslim civilizations to the world we live in” but also to foster community as “a place of living and interacting.”<sup>24</sup>

All aspects of the AKM’s programming demonstrate that “there was always communication, inspiration, and interchange between East and West,”<sup>25</sup> connections often omitted in historical narratives

18. Aga Khan Museum, *A Year in Review*, 2014–15, 3.
19. Aga Khan, *A Year in Review 2016* (Toronto: Aga Khan Museum, 2016), 2, [https://agakhanmuseum.org/about/pdf/AKM\\_A-Year-in-Review-2016.pdf](https://agakhanmuseum.org/about/pdf/AKM_A-Year-in-Review-2016.pdf).
20. James Adams, “Aga Khan’s Museum Thwarted by Real-Estate Fight,” *The Globe and Mail*, 11 October 2002, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/aga-khans-museum-thwarted-by-real-estate-fight/article18289619/>.
21. Kim, in discussion.
22. The 2016 Canadian Census reveals that more than 50 per cent of the city’s population consists of visible minority groups and over 2.5 million residents derive from immigrant communities. Statistics Canada, “Census Profile, 2016 Census, Toronto [Population Centre]” [statcan.gc.ca, https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=POP-C&Code1=0944&-Geo2=PR&Code2=35&-Data=Count&SearchText=toronto&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&TA-BID=1](https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=POP-C&Code1=0944&-Geo2=PR&Code2=35&-Data=Count&SearchText=toronto&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&TA-BID=1).
23. Alex Bozиковic, “Building On Faith: Inside Toronto’s New Aga Khan Museum, Designed by the World’s Leading Architects,” *The Globe and Mail*, 5 June 2017, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/home-and-garden/architecture/building-on-faith-inside-torontos-new-aga-khan-museum-designed-by-the-worlds-leading-architects/article19887289/>.
24. Jovanna Scorson, in discussion with the author, 18 July 2019.
25. Laura Lavie, in discussion with the author, 25 July 2019.



26. Aga Khan Museum, "Museum Collections," <https://www.agakhanmuseum.org/collections-dept/museum-collection.html>.

27. Aga Khan Museum, "A Thirst for Riches: Carpets from the East in Paintings from the West," <https://www.agakhanmuseum.org/exhibitions/thirst-riches-carpets-east-paintings-west>.

28. Kim, in discussion.

Above: Aga Khan Museum exterior.  
Photo: Janet Kimber, 2014

and cultural institutions. The museum's permanent collection largely derives from the private acquisitions of the Aga Khan family and features over 1,000 objects in "a broad range of artistic styles and materials," including manuscripts, paintings, ceramics, glass, and textiles, that "represent more than 10 centuries of human history and a geographic area stretching from the Iberian Peninsula to China."<sup>26</sup> Temporary exhibitions, such as *A Thirst for Riches: Carpets from the East in Paintings from the West*, explore "how beautiful objects acquire new meanings as they are exchanged,"<sup>27</sup> and collapse the East/West binary through a holistic and interconnected view of human history. The AKM's Performing Arts program "has the farthest reach,"<sup>28</sup> showcasing hundreds of local and international musicians, dancers, and artists from over fifty countries who "perform, collaborate, create, and inspire

audiences.”<sup>29</sup> Director of Development Laura Lavie remembers the 2019 performance *Rhythm Rewritten* by Indian kathak dancer Seema Mehta and African-Canadian tap dancer Jason Samuels Smith as a powerful display of “what happens when you cooperate with something or somebody that is little understood, or an artform that’s not ‘yours’ – it reveals our linkages, common themes, and possibilities for creation.”<sup>30</sup>

The AKM’s programming knows no religious, national, or ethnic boundaries and strives instead, according to Executive Assistant to the Director Marianne Fenton, “to make all people feel like they are welcome to come – they’re *invited* to come.”<sup>31</sup> Importantly, the commitment of the museum to community and accessibility is by no means limited to the city of Toronto or the country of Canada but rather extends, in sync with the AKDN’s mission, to the global level. Kim explains that “working in the international sphere is pretty much our day-to-day”<sup>32</sup> – the museum’s unfaltering emphasis on pluralism works toward “a better world” by connecting the global with the local, because “there’s impact both ways.”<sup>34</sup>

The AKM has made tremendous strides in its short lifespan and looks to extend its reach and influence in the years to come. During its first year, the museum welcomed over 150,000 visitors, hosted over 12,000 attendees at performances in its auditorium, admitted more than 4,500 students to school programs, and gained members from over 20 countries. Expanding upon its mission to “[connect] cultures through art,”<sup>35</sup> the AKM’s “Changing Perspectives” campaign<sup>36</sup> strives to “grow, innovate, and impact even more people around the world, uniting them in the face of adversity while spreading peace through understanding.”<sup>37</sup> The AKM’s unique mandate and its application on local, national, and global scales over the past five years distinguishes the museum as one unlike any other – it practices cultural diplomacy through the arts as, in the words of Dr. Al-Khamis, “a matter of survival, of defying the dark tendencies in the world, and looking for the beauty, encouraging the hope, and creating new perspectives that can still lead us to the future, hand-in-hand.”<sup>38</sup>

29. Aga Khan Museum, “Performing Arts,” <https://www.agakhanmuseum.org/performing-arts/index.html>.
30. Lavie, in discussion.
31. Marianne Fenton, in discussion with the author, 11 July 2019.
32. Kim, in discussion.
33. Al-Khamis, in discussion.
34. Fenton, in discussion.
35. Aga Khan Museum, *A Year in Review, 2014–15*, 4.
36. Aga Khan Museum, “Changing Perceptions Campaign,” <https://www.agakhanmuseum.org/support/changing-perceptions-campaign.html>.
37. Aga Khan Museum, *A Year in Review, 2017*, 7.
38. Al-Khamis, in discussion.



# ART GALLERY OF ALBERTA

## KATIE-MARIE MCNEILL

The Art Gallery of Alberta (AGA) in Edmonton positions itself as a creative hub in Alberta through its wide-ranging exhibitions and programming, as well as staff who are devoted to building and maintaining strong relationships with communities in the city and in the province.<sup>1</sup> The gallery's mission statement declares that the AGA "is a museum dedicated to excellent and innovative practice in programming, stewardship, and presentation of visual arts in Western Canada and across the nation. The [AGA] creates a welcoming and engaging environment where people are motivated to transform their understanding of the world by connecting with the visual arts."<sup>2</sup> Established in 1924 as the Edmonton Art Gallery, the AGA reopened in 2010 after completing an \$88 million redesign supported by all levels of government as well as individual and corporate donors.<sup>3</sup>

The AGA's collection includes more than 6000 works with an emphasis on contemporary work, sculpture, and a growing collection of photography by largely Alberta- and Canada-based artists.<sup>4</sup> Supported by a Canada Council New Chapter grant, the AGA has also been actively acquiring art from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit artists. Two new adjunct curators of Indigenous art have assessed the gallery's current collection and curated exhibitions featuring Indigenous artists, offering the gallery an opportunity to bring new works into the collection.<sup>5</sup> Indigenous ways of knowing are also being welcomed into the museum in other ways. For instance, at the request of Indigenous artists the Collections Department has adopted new conservation practices such as including pieces in performances and smudging ceremonies.<sup>6</sup>

1. Thank you to the staff at the AGA and Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) who supported this research project by providing interviews and accessing institutional files.
2. Art Gallery of Alberta, *AGA Strategic Plan, 2016–2020* (Edmonton: Art Gallery of Alberta, 2015), 5.
3. Art Gallery of Alberta, *Report to the Community, 2009* (Edmonton: Art Gallery of Alberta, 2009), 4; The AGA is governed by a Board of Directors which includes an active representative from the City of Edmonton, the Mayor as Honourary President, and the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta as an Honourary Patron. Art Gallery of Alberta, *Report to the Community 2015* (Edmonton: Art Gallery of Alberta, 2015), 7.
4. For more visit <https://www.youraga.ca/about-aga/collection>.
5. Danielle Siemens (Interim Curator of Interpretation and Engagement), in discussion with the author, July 2019.
6. Kerrie Sanderson (Collections Assistant), in discussion with the author, July 2019.

Left: Art Gallery of Alberta exterior.  
Photo: Robert Lemermeyer,  
2010

7. Ibid.
8. Catherine Crowston (Executive Director and Chief Curator of AGA), in discussion with the author, July 2019; Sara McKarney (Exhibitions Manager at AGA), in discussion with the author, July 2019.
9. Art Gallery of Alberta, "Vision Exchange: Perspectives from India to Canada," <https://www.youraga.ca/exhibitions/visionexchange>.
10. *Vision Exchange* was presented with the assistance of Chemould Prescott Road (Mumbai), Galleri Mirchandani + Steinruecke (Mumbai) and Nature Morte (New Delhi) and sponsored by prominent Edmonton philanthropists such as Radhe and Rohit Gupta (Rohit Group of Companies). The exhibit received funding from the Canada Council for the Arts' Arts Across Canada program, the Ontario Arts Council and the Toronto Arts Council. Art Gallery of Alberta, "Vision Exchange: Perspectives from India to Canada; Rohit Communities, "Rohit Group's Father/Son Duo Named to Edmonton Journal's Power 30," (press release, November 19, 2014, <https://www.rohitcommunities.com/edmonton/rohit-groups-fatherson-duo-named-edmonton-journals-power-30/>), University of Toronto Art Museum, "Vision Exchange: Perspectives from India to Canada," <https://artmuseum.utoronto.ca/exhibition/vision-exchange-perspectives-from-india-to-canada/>.

In addition to shows of Albertan and Canadian art supported by the Gallery's collection, the AGA has shown 16 exhibitions in the last ten years that it identifies as "international." The Gallery broadly defines international as: exhibitions organized by internationally-located galleries; exhibitions organized by the AGA and partners that feature internationally-based artists only; exhibitions organized by the AGA and partners that feature Canadian and international artists; or exhibitions of Canadian art that tour abroad.<sup>7</sup> Strong partnerships lie at the core of the AGA's international work. Staff emphasize the importance of open dialogue, timely communication, and sharing workloads in a mutually beneficial way that values the strengths and expertise of those involved as key to collaboration.<sup>8</sup> For example, the NGC@AGA is an ongoing partnership between the AGA and the National Gallery of Canada (NGC) that provides the AGA with access to the NGC's collections and pairs the two galleries to curate original exhibitions, often featuring international artists. This partnership helps both institutions to fulfill their mandates and facilitates the sharing of resources to create important exhibitions that engage Canadian audiences through both domestic and international art.

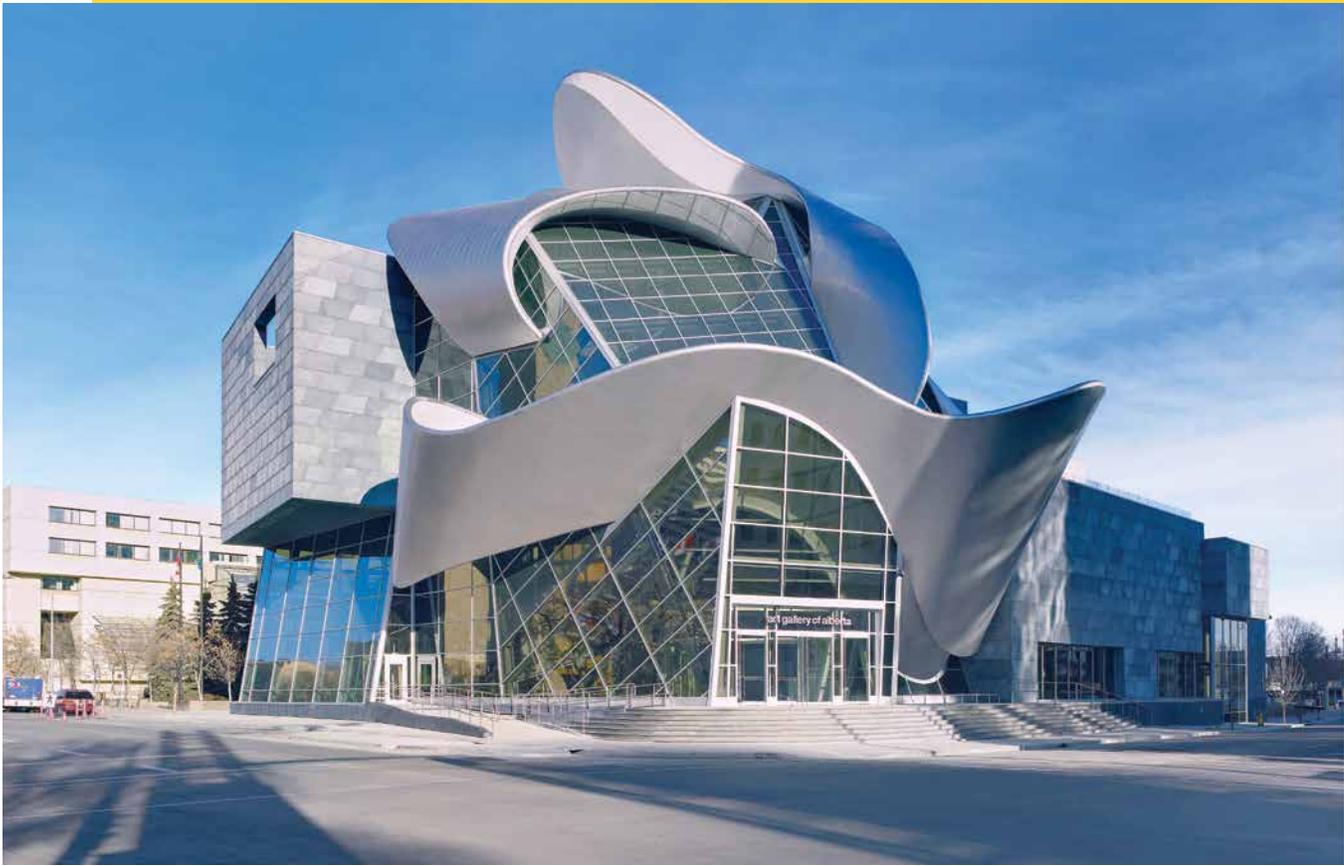
A notable international show resulting from NGC@AGA was *Vision Exchange: Perspectives from India to Canada*. This exhibition, which debuted at the AGA in fall 2018 brought together 20 "contemporary artists from India and artists of Indian heritage living in Canada."<sup>9</sup> The exhibit's 146 works explore historical narratives, colonialism, sovereignty, relationships to land, diaspora, migration, and shifting borders through a variety of media (including video, painting, and installation). The exhibition, which was presented with the assistance of several museums in India and sponsored by all three levels of government as well as philanthropists from Edmonton's South Asian Community subsequently travelled to the Art Museum at the University of Toronto and the Winnipeg Art Gallery, before going on to the NGC itself in fall 2019.<sup>10</sup> Executive Director and Chief Curator of the AGA Catherine Crowston explains that "one of my primary motivations is to be responsive to the local community, which

includes the many diasporic communities that are here. Edmonton has large South Asian and Chinese populations, for example, so creating exhibitions that connect to the cultural heritages of people that live in Alberta is important to us.”<sup>11</sup> Partnerships and strong professional relationships with other institutions, artists, peers and philanthropists in Canada and around the world allow the AGA to show the work of international artists, such as those in *Vision Exchange*, whose work resonates at a local level with different communities in Edmonton and Alberta.

When appropriate, the AGA receives financial support for international exhibitions from the diplomatic community, which can take different forms such as sponsoring events or assisting with artists’ travel to Edmonton. For example, the Israeli government sponsored the NGC@AGA exhibition *A Moving Image* (2014), which featured five contemporary Israeli artists.<sup>12</sup> In 2016, the United States Consular Office in Calgary supported *Allora and Calzadilla: Echo to Artifact*, the first major Canadian exhibition of renowned Puerto Rico-based artists Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla, based on their research into Western Canada’s prehistoric past.<sup>13</sup> While such arrangements provide funding, they do not shape the content of exhibitions. In fact, diplomatic representatives are generally very conscious to avoid any perception of involvement in the exhibition process beyond financial support.<sup>14</sup> Backing from diplomatic communities in Canada brings new audiences to the AGA and strengthens the gallery’s international networks with the potential to create new connections at personal, institutional and governmental levels.

In one instance, however, the AGA hosted a show for which government sponsors were interested in weighing in on exhibition content. During negotiations for *China Sensation: New Art From Chengdu* (2007), representatives from the then Edmonton Art Gallery and the Edmonton municipal government engaged with representatives from China. Dick Wong, Director of China Initiatives for the City of Edmonton, wanted to create an exhibition that would help to strengthen Edmonton’s business relationship

11. Crowston, in discussion; other employees shared similar sentiments: McKarney, in discussion; Siemens, in discussion.
12. Art Gallery of Alberta, “A Moving Image,” <https://www.youraga.ca/exhibitions/moving-image>
13. Art Gallery of Alberta, “Allora and Calzadilla: Echo to Artifact,” <https://www.youraga.ca/exhibitions/allora-and-calzadilla-echo-artifact>
14. Crowston, in discussion.



15. Crowston, in discussion; Art Gallery of Alberta, *China Sensation: New Art From Chengdu* (Edmonton: Art Gallery of Alberta, 2007), 5.
16. Sascha Priewe, "Cultural Diplomacy and The City," *Arts and International Affairs*, October 27, 2019, <https://theartsjournal.net/2019/10/27/priewe/>.

Above: Art Gallery of Alberta exterior. Photo: Robert Lemermeyer, 2010

with Chengdu.<sup>15</sup> Officials from Chengdu met with the Gallery's executive director and curator during visits to the city and were directly involved in tours to artists' studios. The exhibition would include work from 22 artists at all stages of their careers, featuring sculpture, painting, and photography that explored the realities of living in twenty-first-century China where deep histories and traditions mix with modern daily life. The research revealed that this was the first large international exhibition created by the AGA, and this experience helped the AGA to learn how to curate thought-provoking international exhibitions while navigating complex relationships with stakeholders. This partnership also underscores the role of cultural institutions in building direct relationships between cities, which in turn highlights the fact, noted by Dr. Sascha Priewe, that mutual understanding – a key building block of cultural diplomacy – "extends through networks that crisscross all levels of political jurisdiction."<sup>16</sup>

Another example of the AGA's ability to navigate sensitive topics and be simultaneously attuned to different contexts and concerns occurred when Catherine Crowston was chosen as Commissioner for *EXTRACTION*, Canada's official submission to the International Architecture Exhibition of the 2016 Venice Biennale. Created in partnership with the Canada Council for the Arts and OPSYS, a collaborative, land-based project engaging with social, political, economic, and territorial challenges through new media and the application of alternative forms of knowledge,<sup>17</sup> *EXTRACTION* explored Canada's long-standing and complex relationship with natural resources through a multimedia installation.<sup>18</sup> Crowston said of the show:

Resources run deep in Alberta, through the ground itself, but also through our economy, politics, land, daily life and ultimately through the province's public identity and our own private lives. We are all connected – directly or indirectly – to resource extraction and, in Alberta, this connection is very strong, for we are conscious of both its benefits and the responsibilities this requires us to bear.<sup>19</sup>

Specifically, *EXTRACTION* addressed resource extraction and the histories and ongoing legacies of colonialism through film, installations (including one that required visitors to kneel on the ground and peer into a drill hole that revealed layers of involvement in extraction), a book, and contemporary works juxtaposed with historical paintings of early colonial trade in Canada and at world expos.<sup>20</sup> *EXTRACTION* called upon visitors to "radically rethink Canada's global position" by engaging with the long history of resource economies in Canada, whether fur, timber, minerals, or oil, and their connection to empire and colonialism.<sup>21</sup> By presenting *EXTRACTION*, the AGA challenges traditional narratives about Canada presented abroad even as it represents Canada in international fora. On the surface, such interventions might seem detrimental to Canada's global standing; however, as Joseph Nye argues, a country's credibility – and

17. For more visit <http://opsys.net/>.

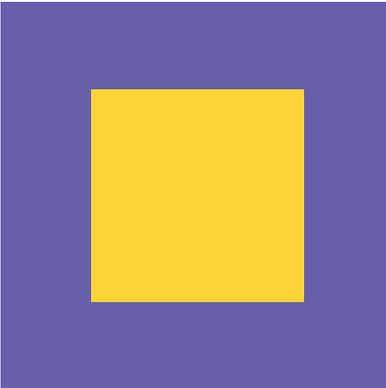
18. Canada Council for the Arts, "EXTRACTION Wins National Competition to Represent Canada at the 2016 Venice Architecture Biennale," press release, 7 December 2015, <https://www.youraga.ca/whats-happening/blog/extraction-wins-national-competition-represent-canada-2016-venice-architecture>.

19. Ibid.

20. "Biennale Architettura 2016 – National Participation of Canada: Extraction," Google Arts and Culture, May 31 2016, <https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/ZQLySL6ghNallg>.

21. Art Gallery of Alberta, "EXTRACTION wins national competition to represent Canada at the 2016 Venice Architecture Biennale," (Press Release, December 7, 2015), <https://www.youraga.ca/whats-happening/blog/extraction-wins-national-competition-represent-canada-2016-venice-architecture>

22. Joseph Nye, *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Super-Power Can't Go It Alone* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).
23. Lynda Jessup and Sarah E.K. Smith, "Guest Editor's Introduction: Curating Cultural Diplomacy," *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 5, no. 3 (2016), 283-284.
24. Crowston, in discussion.
25. Ibid.



hence its international reputation – is often enhanced to be self-critical and introspective.<sup>22</sup> Regardless of how *EXTRACTION* changed perceptions about Alberta or Canada (if at all), the AGA's involvement shows how exhibitions can "function as diplomatic envoys," even as such activities are shaped by the "complexities of global cultural exchange, the significance of curatorial approaches and the complicated partnerships between institutions and various private, public and non-profit organizations that support these initiatives."<sup>23</sup>

*EXTRACTION* was not the first time that the AGA engaged internationally with the global impacts of resource extraction. In 2010, the gallery showcased works by Canadian artist and photographer Edward Burtynsky in a solo exhibition organized by the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. *EDWARD BURTYNSKY: OIL* detailed the magnitude of the trauma that resource industries inflict on the earth and featured photographs of resource extraction taking place in Alberta. This show, and the AGA's involvement in *EXTRACTION*, were successful despite the AGA's frequent reliance on energy company sponsorship due to Crowston's philosophy of supporting artists' right to express themselves. She explained that the AGA supports artists' presentations and does not necessarily take a political position toward an exhibition, instead focusing on the AGA's ability to facilitate discussion and act as a forum.<sup>24</sup> This philosophy allows the AGA to host international artists whose works generate conversation and dialogue, for example, about the local and the global impact of climate change.

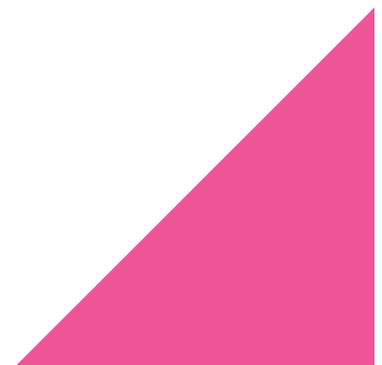
The AGA prides itself on bringing global conversations to the local level by presenting international art that may otherwise be inaccessible to Edmontonians who may have neither the financial means nor the desire to travel.<sup>25</sup> Experiencing international art allows visitors to share an understanding and connection with people from around the world across time and space. As Exhibitions Manager Sara McKarney explains: "It's really healthy

for our art community to see what's going on and it helps them. Not just the art community, it's super beneficial for the rest of the community as well."<sup>26</sup> The cultural exchanges that can occur when exhibitions sit along a local-to-global continuum bring a richness to visitors' experiences at the AGA.

The AGA supports all its international exhibitions with educational programming offered in French, English, and Spanish and guided by a student-led, inquiry-based philosophy that encourages participants to explore their creativity and engage with the big ideas presented in the exhibitions through their artmaking skills.<sup>27</sup> To connect with Albertans outside of Edmonton, the AGA has partnered with other galleries and organizations throughout the province to coordinate the Alberta Foundation for the Arts' (AFA) TREX program, which provides travelling exhibitions with full interpretative packages for Alberta communities of all sizes that can be customized according to local conditions.<sup>28</sup> The TREX program was fully subscribed between 2010 and 2017, reaching anywhere between 85,294 and 179,000+ visitors per year in dozens of communities the province, including Caslan, Fort McMurray, and Ardmore, among others.<sup>29</sup>

The AGA is a leader that has positioned itself as a creative hub for the province, working to create connections with many different communities that are often both locally and globally connected. Showing international art is one way the AGA connects with diasporic and arts communities, which is a primary motivation for exhibiting such work. Through partnerships and strong relationships, the AGA brings the global to the local, making connections between the local community and the gallery to enrich the experiences of visitors. The AGA's international activities also demonstrate the complexities that characterize museums' role as diplomatic actors and their capacity to navigate such complexities to further their own objectives, even as they promote the interests of the political communities in which they are located.

26. McKarney, in discussion.
27. Anonymous staff member of Education and Learning team at AGA, in discussion with the author, July 2019.
28. Art Consultant at the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, in discussion with the author, July 2019; Art Gallery of Alberta, *Report to the Community, 2012* (Edmonton: Art Gallery of Alberta, 2012), 10.
29. AGA Annual Reports 2009, 16; 2010, 10; 2011, 12; 2012, 10; 2013, 11; 2014, 11; 2015, 18; 2016, 14; and 2017, 13.





# CANADIAN MUSEUM OF HISTORY

## SEBASTIAN DE LINE

The purpose of this report is to review how the Canadian Museum of History (CMH) engages in cultural diplomacy, with a particular focus on Indigenous content. Specifically, the report examines the general conception and production of exhibitions, acquisitions, loans, temporary special exhibitions, and international travelling exhibitions from 2008-2019. The study will also speak to Indigenous perspectives, repatriation, and the complexities of addressing an ethnographic gaze by museum visitors (both domestic and international) who are conditioned to view Indigenous arts and cultures through a fetishistic imaginary.

The CMH is situated on unceded Anishinaabeg/Omamiwininiwag territory (Gatineau, Quebec). A national museum of Canada, the CMH is internationally recognized and produces an estimated range of 12 to 24 exhibitions annually, including international travelling exhibitions. The CMH's collection contains over one million photographic images, 72,000 sound recordings, 18,000 films, 60,000 books, 2,000 journals, and over 4 million artifacts and "specimens," most of whom or which are Indigenous ancestors, arts and material cultures, including the largest collection of Inuit arts in Canada.<sup>1</sup>

The Museum's origins date back to the establishment of the Geographical Survey of Canada in 1842, a repository of geographic, prehistoric, and anthropological research and collection that was to a great extent, absorbed into the

1. Retrieved July 27, 2019 from <https://www.historymuseum.ca/learn/resource-centre/information-about-the-collections/#tabs>.

Left: © Canadian Museum of History

2. In 1968, the Museum was divided into the Canadian Museum of Nature and the Canadian Museum of Man. In 1986, was renamed the Canadian Museum of Civilization.
3. For example, in his 2013 testimony before the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage during its study on the federal government's proposal to rename the Museum, Dr. Victor Rabinovitch (President and CEO of the Canadian Museum of Civilization from 2000 to 2011) argued that the museum's new mandate to focus on events and experiences "that have shaped Canada's history and identity" restricted and reduced the Museum's activities, noting: "Contemporary issues, contemporary activities, community issues, and cultural expressions have no place in this except peripherally as outcomes of the past. These proposed changes to the mandate," he went on to add "will have the overall effect of reducing the museum's scope of activity and creating an inward focus that turns away from the world and eliminates concern with the here and now" (Victor Rabinovitch, Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, No. 67, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, Evidence, Wednesday, June 5, 2013, 26-27).
4. Canadian Museum of History, "Summary of the Corporate Plan for the 2017-18 to 2021-22 Planning Period," 36, <https://www.historymuseum.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/corp2017e.pdf>.

Museum's current collection. Throughout its history, the Museum has undergone many changes in mandate and structure,<sup>2</sup> with the most recent occurring in 2013 with the Government of Canada changed the name of the Museum from the Canadian Museum of Civilization (CMC) to the Canadian Museum of History. This renaming and the accompanying change in mandate shifted the Museum's focus from a more general study of "world cultures" to an explicit focus on "Canadian" history; a change that was controversial at the time<sup>3</sup> and whose repercussions, as will be discussed, have a direct bearing on the ways in which Indigenous peoples are represented by the Museum abroad.

The CMH corporate plan (2017-18 to 2021-22) cites the national collection as the museum's most valuable asset. High-level priorities for the planning period include "a) Further develop[ing] the Canadian Museum of History Network to include First Nations museums and cultural centres; b) Initiat[ing] or participat[ing] in partnerships with likeminded institutions, i.e. large scale international consortiums, local cultural institutions; and c) Continu[ing] to establish and build upon international partnerships to enhance Canadians' awareness of world history and cultures."<sup>4</sup> Long-term relationship building and the mentoring of newer employees within such networks are key to sustained partnerships with communities and institutions, some of which presumably date the Museum's establishment in the mid-nineteenth century.

During this study addressing cultural diplomacy, museum employees emphasized the importance of established and trustworthy partnerships, not only to the success of individual exhibitions but also for building the necessary long-term relationships between curators and fellow museums (nationally and internationally) that support the sharing of travelling exhibitions. A key component of the CMH's international work is the organization and circulation of exhibitions. The CMH's Advisor, Strategic Initiatives, Anne-Marie Raymond notes that along with her work for the Museum she has also served as Secretary of the

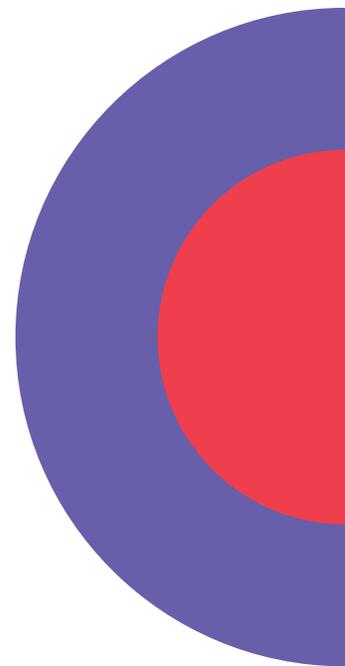
Board of the International Committee for Exhibition Exchange (ICEE) – International Council for Museums (ICOM) since 2013.<sup>5</sup> As Raymond describes it, the ICEE is, “the professional interest group that’s part of ICOM that focuses on exhibitions and traditionally it has focused more on travelling exhibitions and been kind of a forum for international institutions to exchange ideas and develop partnerships.” Such networks – both personal and institutional – highlight how effective museum and association networks function on national and international scales. CMH employees emphasized that building relationships between partners often supersede in importance the specific projects in which they decide to collaborate.

Partnerships between the CMH and Indigenous nations and communities are developed through careful navigation of the *Museums Act*, which gives national museums (including the CMH) the authority to collect material culture, and to preserve and conserve their collections.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, Indigenous communities are calling for the repatriation of their Ancestors (both remains and belongings) currently held by museums, and which are considered inanimate objects by Western perspectives.<sup>7</sup> As Director of Research Dean Oliver explains, relationships between the CMH and Indigenous nations develop with long term mutual considerations in mind:

[T]here is enormous advantage in long term relationships, personal relationships, sometimes institutional, mostly personal, the visibility and the known quotient of a long time Indigenous leader or a long-time curator and the kinds of rapport, trust, familiarity, that is built up between people over time is as important in those relationships as it is in international relationships that are more purely cultural diplomacy.<sup>8</sup>

This basic tenet of trust building, many former and current employees agree, is one of the strengths of the Museum’s management team and, as studies show, is a basic precondition

5. Anne-Marie Raymond, in discussion with the author, 9 July 2019.
6. The *Museums Act* does not specify Indigenous cultural and historical materials, but this can be inferred given the Act’s broad definition. I refer here to Sections 9 (a), (b), and (c): “The Canadian Museum of History may ... (a) collect objects of historical or cultural interest and other museum material; (b) maintain its collection by preservation, conservation or restoration or the establishment of records or documentation; (c) sell, exchange, give away, destroy or otherwise dispose of museum material in its collection and use any revenue obtained from that disposal to further its collection.” *Museums Act* (S.C. 1990, c. 3), <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/m-13.4/index.html>.
7. Dylan Robinson, “Ethnographic Redress.” In *Hungry Listening: Between Indigenous Ontologies of Song & Settler Colonial Musical Logic*. (University of Minnesota Press, Indigenous Americas Series, in-press).
8. Dean Oliver, in discussion with the author, 9 July 2019.

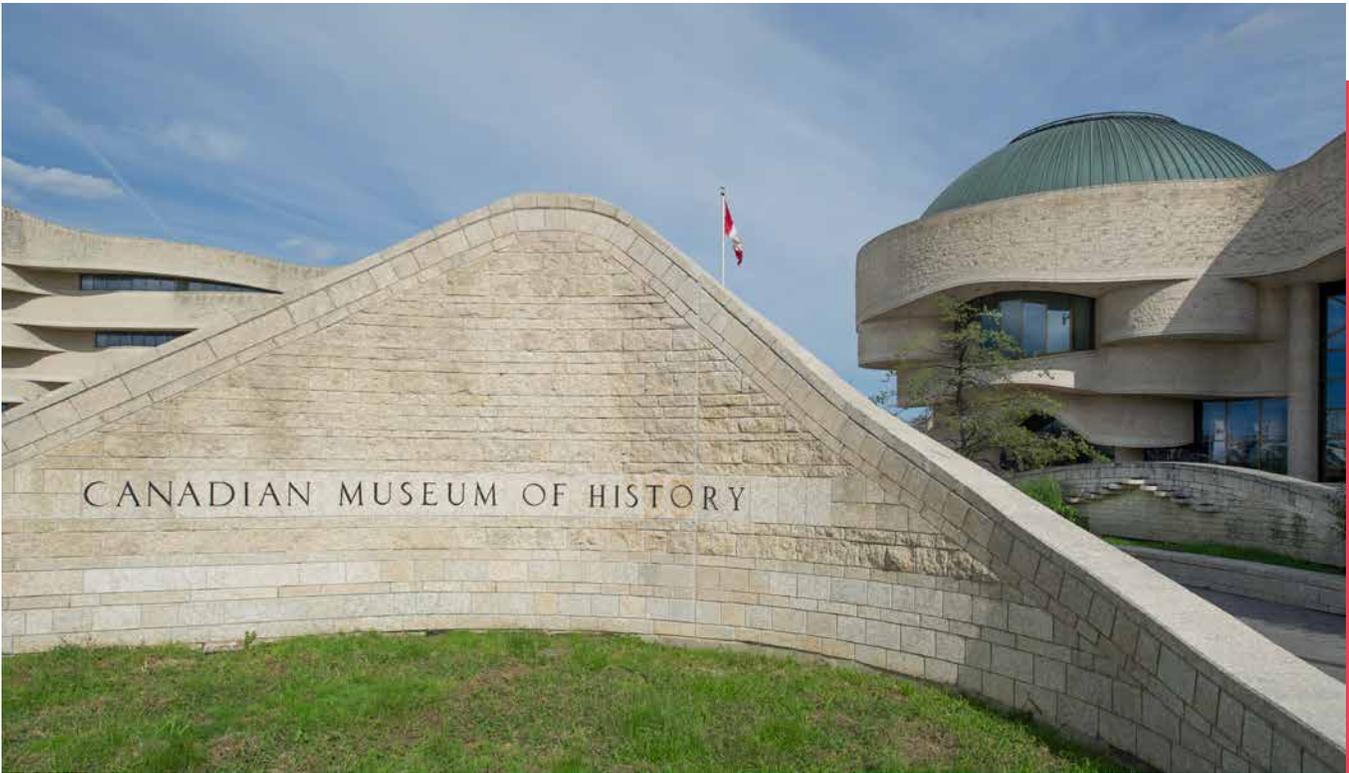


9. British Council, *Trust Pays: How International Cultural Relationships Build Trust in the UK and Underpin the Success of the UK Economy*, 2012.
10. Oliver, in discussion.

of developing resilient relationships between groups and peoples that can lead to advancing shared objectives.<sup>9</sup> When asked whether they considered partnerships with Indigenous nations to be international, interviewees expressed a range of views from the affirmative to somewhat ambivalent. However, all agreed that there is an element of cultural diplomacy to these relationships. Dr. Oliver specifies:

[T]he range of Indigenous groups that we deal with [...] include many that] have well organised governmental structures, presence, institutions to deal with and many [that] don't, and often we deal with Indigenous groups on an individual or family or clan level and only, and sometimes also quite often actually, we deal with them as a nation, essentially nation-to-nation, Crown of Canada to Indigenous nation. So, we certainly consider cultural diplomacy, whether or not it falls into international diplomacy [as] a slightly different question, but we treat it with the same gravitas, I guess, that we would have with any other major relationships, so trying to find the right conduits of communication, the right protocols to be followed. Everything from basic things like ... gifts and meeting formalities and ethics through to formal communication and so forth. In a far different way then, I would say we consult with just another museum or just another group of researchers or historians.<sup>10</sup>

A notable exhibition demonstrating both the ways in which the CMH collaborates internationally, and the importance of Indigenous arts in the promotion of Canadian culture abroad is *First Peoples of Canada: Masterworks from the Canadian Museum of Civilization* (2008). This travelling exhibition was developed in partnership with Japanese, German, and Mexican national museums, and in reciprocal partnership with the 2007 exhibition, *Treasures From China*, developed by the National Museum of China solely for exhibition at the then Canadian Museum of Civilization in conjunction with opening of the 2008 Olympic



Games in Beijing.<sup>11</sup> This case study emphasises the importance of Indigenous arts within the promotion of Canadian culture abroad. As curators Jean-Luc Pilon and Nicholette Prince explain in the exhibition catalogue:

Part of the agreement to allow [*Treasures From China*] to take place was that a reciprocal exhibition showcasing treasures of the First Peoples of Canada would be prepared by the Canadian Museum of Civilization and shown in China's capital [...] on August 3, 2008, just days before the Olympic flame entered the Bird's Nest stadium, *First Peoples of Canada: Masterworks from the Canadian Museum of Civilization* was welcomed at the Art Museum of the Imperial City, located against the outer wall of the Forbidden City, just metres from Tiananmen Square.<sup>12</sup>

The exhibition in China provided an important site for international meetings, and dignitaries and cultural workers were present at

11. Jean-Luc Pilon and Nicholette Prince, "Introduction," In *First Peoples of Canada: Masterworks from the Canadian Museum of Civilization*, ed. Jean-Luc Pilon and Nicholette Prince (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 5–6.
12. Ibid.

Above: © Canadian Museum of History

13. Dr. Victor Rabinovitch, in discussion with the author, 12 July 2019.

14. Ibid.

15. See Section 8 of the *Museums Act*. Emphasis added.

the opening ceremony. Despite their benefits, however, such international partnerships of this nature can involve challenging negotiations. Former CMC President and CEO, Dr. Victor Rabinovitch recalls particularly difficult discussions between the CMC and its partner museum in China over differences in exhibition content.<sup>13</sup> The CMC did not propose including totem poles from Pacific Northwest First Nations in *First Peoples of Canada: Masterworks from the Canadian Museum of Civilization*, even though Chinese partners requested them. Although the CMC declined their proposition, Chinese partners insisted on artificial totemic exhibition merchandise to satisfy public economic expenditure and manufactured their own exhibition merchandise. As Rabinovitch recalled:

They [Chinese partners] produce[d] instantaneous totem poles because they want to see that. In Germany, I remember our two curators had gone in advance and they had to have some serious discussion with the host museum to explain why they wanted to do certain installations in a certain order, in order to bring out the idea that Indigenous peoples are alive and diverse in Canada and to avoid, I have to use the expression, folkloric and avoid an idealized misrepresentation.<sup>14</sup>

First Peoples of Canada makes clear two intertwined issues: first, the tension between partnering museums in negotiating exhibition content with, at times, very different actors in mind; and second, the Museum's need to shift focus away from an ethnographic imaginary of Indigenous peoples as primitive and locked in the past, a predicament that re-emerged when the Harper government changed the mandate of the Museum in 2013 to focus explicitly on "...experiences, people and objects that reflect and have *shaped Canada's history and identity*."<sup>15</sup> Dean Oliver underscores the level of caution exercised by the Museum in generating narratives for exhibitions. "In particular, the stories of Indigenous Canada travel well abroad. We have to be very careful in particular in northern Europe and in Asia, because those stories are sometimes seen

by Europeans and Asians as being objects of cultural curiosity [...].”<sup>16</sup> Given recent Calls-to-Action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2016) and the groundwork laid by the 1992 Task Force Report on Museums and First Nations, current curatorial, design planning, communications, marketing, and educational management seek to dismantle misrepresentations of Indigenous nations and peoples both nationally and abroad.<sup>17</sup>

A common goal shared by Indigenous nations and the CMH is in the desire to tell contemporary Indigenous stories from Indigenous perspectives, by Indigenous peoples. An exhibition under the working title, “Indigenous Stories Beyond Borders” is expected to open in 2021. A description by CMH Curator (First Peoples), Jonathan Lainey (Huron-Wendat Nation of Wendake, Quebec) on the CMH website reads:

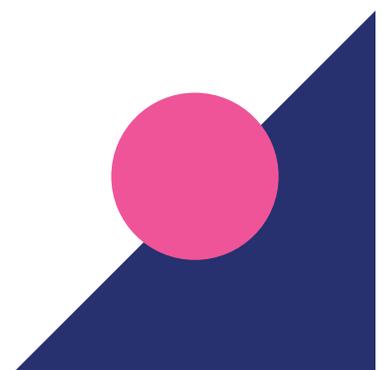
By turning the spotlight on individuals and groups that have travelled the world as diplomats, warriors/soldiers, performers, artists, athletes and/or scholars, the exhibition will highlight stories about how Indigenous peoples have asserted, and continue to assert, their sovereignty and identities beyond Canada’s borders.<sup>18</sup>

One issue that is particularly pertinent to the assertion of Indigenous sovereignty is the repatriation of Ancestors. While some Indigenous nations have received support from federal bodies institutions such as the CMH to establish autonomous cultural centres and have been successful in their efforts to repatriate Ancestors from museums, repatriation processes are often lengthy and require financial infrastructures that go beyond the immediate priorities of many communities. At present, there is no legal obligation in Canada to repatriate Indigenous Ancestors currently housed in national collections, international collections, or private collections. While the federal government has begun to discuss this issue, former NDP MP and Cree leader Romeo Saganash remarked that in his view, the language of Bill C-391, the *Indigenous Human Remains and Cultural Property Act* proposed

16. Oliver, in conversation.

17. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Calls to Action* (Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012), [http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls\\_to\\_Action\\_English2.pdf](http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf). Assembly of First Nations and The Canadian Museums Association, “Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoples,” *Museum Anthropology* 16, no. 2 (1992).

18. Retrieved on July 26, 2019 from <https://www.historymuseum.ca/blog/seeking-indigenous-stories/>





in 2018 --calling for the development of and implementation of a “comprehensive national strategy promote and support” the return of Ancestors to Indigenous communities, and to “encourage owners” to do so-- left most of the legislation’s provisions as optional, and therefore unenforceable. He also remarked, as did others, that the legislation did not satisfactorily address the cost of repatriation efforts on Indigenous communities.<sup>18</sup> For its part, the CMH has demonstrated longstanding principled engagement with Indigenous communities on repatriation efforts in order to build positive relations between the Museum and Indigenous communities. Speaking to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage regarding Bill C-391, Dean Oliver spoke of the Museum’s sustained involvement in repatriation efforts, and the importance of such dialogue and knowledge sharing to building positive relationships between the CMH and Indigenous communities.<sup>19</sup>

The CMH has the difficult task of mediating the complexities of multiple historical and contemporary perspectives pertaining to Indigenous peoples while facilitating the agency of Indigenous knowledge keepers, curators, artist, scholars, and cultural centres. At the same time, the CMH is legally bound by the *Museums Act* to promote Canada abroad, and to domestic audiences who may know little about Indigenous nations on Turtle Island through Indigenous perspectives. An emphasis on long term collaborations between the CMH and Indigenous curators, continued repatriation efforts, and legislative interventions are timely initiatives aimed at alleviating the shortcomings of a mandated historicity which situates Indigenous presences in the past. Ideally, such efforts will contribute to the strengthening of positive relations between the CMH and Indigenous communities in the future, which can in turn inform the Museum’s engagement with partners beyond Turtle Island.

18. In February 2018, Liberal MP Bill Casey sponsored a private member’s bill: Bill C-391, the *Indigenous Human Remains and Cultural Property Act*, which called for the “development and implementation of a national strategy to enable the return of Indigenous human remains and cultural property to the Indigenous peoples of Canada.” (Parliament of Canada, “Bill C-391,” <https://www.parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/bill/C-391/third-reading>). In April 2018, Saganash raised his concerns in a speech during the debate surrounding the Bill’s second reading in the House of Commons (Romeo Saganash in House of Commons Debates, Edited Hansard Volume 148, No. 286, April 26, 2018, 18831-18832). Following revisions, the Bill was passed by the House of Commons and reached second reading in the Senate, where debate was adjourned preceding the 2019 federal election (the bill did not become law). Following the 2019 federal election, Prime Minister Trudeau called on the Minister of Canadian Heritage to “co-develop, with Indigenous Peoples, a framework for repatriating for repatriating Indigenous cultural property and ancestral remains” (Office of the Prime Minister, December 13, 2019, “Minister of Canadian Heritage Mandate Letter,” <https://pm.gc.ca/en/mandate-letters/2019/12/13/minister-canadian-heritage-mandate-letter>.)

19. Oliver remarked: “In the field of repatriation activities specifically, we have been very heavily involved for around four decades. Beginning in the early 1990s, the repatriation of objects in the national collection was also added as a topic in treaty negotiations.” He also noted: “The Museum’s leadership in that kind of principled engagement was, in fact, highlighted in the 2015 report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by name. Such projects build, we believe, strong and positive relationships with communities, and they share knowledge and expertise.” (Dean Oliver, Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, No. 12, 1st Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, Evidence, Tuesday, October 2, 2018, 2,1).

Left: iStock. Photo credit: nantela



# CANADIAN MUSEUM OF IMMIGRATION AT PIER 21

KYLE HAMMER

The Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21<sup>1</sup> (CMI) is a national museum “dedicated to exploring the history of immigration in Canada.”<sup>2</sup> Located at the mouth of Halifax Harbour, the CMI is one of only two national museums outside the National Capital Region, and the only one in Atlantic Canada.<sup>3</sup> The decision to locate a national museum of immigration at Pier 21 was a natural one. For much of the twentieth century, Pier 21 was the central hub for processing migrants crossing the Atlantic as they entered Canada. Between 1928 and 1971, Pier 21 welcomed over one million migrant and refugees, resulting in comparisons between the site and Ellis Island.<sup>4</sup> In 2009, ten years after the private Pier 21 society established a museum at the former immigration facility, the federal government’s intention to expand the museum’s scope and mandate to “include all major Canadian newcomer experiences.”<sup>5</sup> In 2010, the Government of Canada amended the *Museums Act* (1990) to establish the CMI in its current form and provided a \$15 million appropriation to support the museum’s first 12 months of operation.<sup>6</sup>

As part of the federal museums system, the CMI is largely guided by its mandate as established in the *Museums Act*.<sup>7</sup> Serving that mandate organizes the activities of the institution, from the exhibitions it develops to the events that it hosts. The CMI’s collection consists mainly of images and oral histories,

1. I would like to extend a special thank you to the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 and its staff whose hospitality and insights were invaluable to the writing of this report; especially to Marie Chapman and Emma Roach who organized the interviews and provided needed archival materials. Also, my thanks go to Carrie-Ann Smith, who took valuable time away to provide comprehensive lists of visiting professors, exhibitions, events, and public programming over the last two decades, which were vital to the writing of this report.
2. Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, “Collection Policy.” <https://pier21.ca/collection-policy>.
3. The Canadian Museum of Human Rights is located in Winnipeg. All other national museums are located in Ottawa-Gatineau. Canada’s national museums are administered as separate Crown corporations and report to the Minister of Canadian Heritage. Each national museum has a board of directors, whose role is to “ensure a clear separation between the Crown and the day-to-day management of the institution’s activities, while providing a link between the museum’s executive and the Crown.” National museums are supported primarily by public funding. For more information, please see: Marie-Claude Langlois, “Background Paper: Canada’s National Museums” (Ottawa: Library of Parliament, 2013), <https://lop.parl.ca/staticfiles/PublicWebsite/Home/ResearchPublications/BackgroundPapers/PDF/2013-06-e.pdf>.
4. Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, *Annual Report, 2010-2011*.
5. Office of the Prime Minister, “Background: Canada’s Newest National Museum at Pier 21” (June 25, 2009), <https://web.archive.org/web/20090911145104/http://pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=2657>.
6. Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, *Annual Report: 2009-2010* (Halifax: Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21), 7.
7. Bill C-34, *An Act to Amend the Museums Act*, 3rd sess., 40th Parliament (2010), 13. The mandate reads in part: “To explore the theme of immigration to Canada in order to enhance public understanding of the experiences of immigrants as they arrived in Canada, of the vital role immigration has played in the building of Canada and of the contributions of immigrants to Canada’s culture, economy, and way of life.”

Left: Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21

8. Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, *Annual Report, 2014–2015* (Halifax: Canadian Museum of Immigration, 2015), 5, [https://pier21.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/files/corporate-reports/Annual-Report\\_En-2015.pdf](https://pier21.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/files/corporate-reports/Annual-Report_En-2015.pdf).

9. Carrie-Ann Smith, in discussion with the author, 11 July 2019. A cursory look at the CMI's expansion might indicate a top-down imposition from Ottawa or a reactive approach to the new national mandate. However, the Pier 21 Society had long advocated for nationalizing the museum and expanding the story it told. Smith relayed that in 2004, Bob Moody was brought in as CEO to obtain \$10 million from the government "to do an expansion and move beyond the Pier 21 story." Thus, the seed of the CMI's national story was planted long before the CMI became a national museum. Indeed, this change in structure was not accompanied by turnover among the museum's senior leadership

10. Ibid.

11. Dan Conlin, in discussion with the author, 16 July 2019.

12. Carrie-Ann Smith, 4. Note: such activities were especially useful for staff as they prepared to launch the fully-refurbished CMI in 2015.

13. Ibid.

the majority of which were collected by the Pier 21 Society. Initially, the CMI's collection reflected a European, Atlantic history of immigration to Canada, in keeping with Pier 21's history.<sup>8</sup> As Carrie Ann Smith, VP of Audience Engagement notes, the CMI did not undertake its transition to a representative story of immigration to Canada lightly: "We had to walk that walk really fast because once you are Canada's immigration museum, you can't just have pictures of white people on your walls between 1920 and 1971 because that's what's in your collection."<sup>9</sup> As a result, the first years of the CMI's operation was a transition period focused on in-house growth and expanding the museum's oral history collection to include content that addressed the new national mandate.<sup>10</sup> To compensate for the limits of its own collection, the CMI engaged in outreach and relationship building with a wide variety of diasporic and cultural communities across Canada and the world, alongside its international partnerships with other museums.<sup>11</sup>

For museum staff, travelling to international migration museums provides opportunities for professional development in terms of cultivating best practices, building institutional knowledge, and strengthening professional ties.<sup>12</sup> The resulting networks in turn allow the CMI to expand its collection and spur dialogue on migration issues among museum professionals around the world. The CMI in turn facilitates this dialogue at the local level by hosting international academics and students. Such activities are not only central to the CMI's mandate and practices, but also demonstrate the capacity for cultural institutions to facilitate conversations about pressing global issues, in this case migration, by cultivating networks of exchange at personal, professional and institutional levels.

Navigating the global nature of migration while fulfilling the Museum's national mandate is top of mind for CMI staff. As Curator Dan Conlin notes: "it's impossible for me to imagine a job as curator of an immigration museum without an international dimension, and that comes up literally every day."<sup>13</sup> For the CMI, focusing on relationships is key to engaging with these

complexities. As Conlin puts it: “The immigration experience by nature, about somebody leaving one part of the world to permanently reside in another part of the world and bringing their culture with them, is all about cultural relationships and challenges.”<sup>14</sup>

A focus on relationships also allows the CMI to cultivate resilient connections with the communities it serves. In particular, the Museum is committed to demonstrating an awareness of and sensitivity to the nuances of content and mandate in their research methods. For example, while staff underscore the importance of working with diasporic communities to advance intercultural collaboration, cultural exchange and understanding, they also note that such relationships require time and care to develop. As Dr. Monica McDonald, the CMI’s Manager of Research stated, “you can’t just call people up and say ‘hey you know we need some [oral history] interviews...’ it just doesn’t work that way, at least [in terms of] best practices ... There’s a whole research process that has to happen... [underneath] the tip of the iceberg a lot of people see, which is the actual interview....”<sup>15</sup> As demonstrated in the analysis of the two other national museums in this study, the Canadian Museum of History and the National Gallery of Canada, collaboration is intrinsic to the global orientation of Canada’s museums, and the CMI is no exception. Yet it is also important to note that successful collaboration rests on the cultivation of authentic relationships that build trust between the institution and the singular or communal subject. The CMI develops this trust by sharing authority with community partners in developing content.<sup>16</sup>

In the case of the CMI’s most recent travelling exhibition, *Refuge Canada*, which explores the challenges faced by refugees in Canada, the CMI partnered with PAGE-Rwanda, an organization made up of family and friends of victims of the Rwandan genocide.<sup>17</sup> Together, the museum and members of the Rwandan community in Canada co-wrote the text and chose the oral histories and images that went into the exhibition.<sup>18</sup> This type of

14. Ibid.

15. Dr. Monica McDonald, in discussion with the author, 7

16. Tanya Bouchard (VP of Research, Exhibitions, and Collections) in discussion; McDonald in discussion. Shared authority rests in a desire to democratize history and, in relation to oral history, focuses on co-creation of materials; a “dual authority” between the storyteller and the interviewer/researcher. Steven High, “Sharing Authority: An Introduction,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 43:1 (Winter 2009), 13.

17. McDonald, in discussion, 5

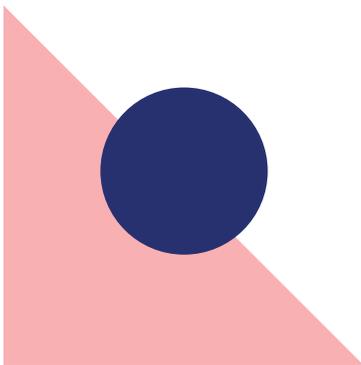
18. Ibid. Dr. McDonald went further regarding museological practices in Canada: “So I think, just in talking to other museum professionals in my own network, I see some of them are kind of scared of that process because they feel ‘people aren’t going to understand that you can’t have all this stuff on a wall,’ but you know what? People understand, they do, they get it, they understand, they want to raise awareness about their experience and they want to tell people what happened to them and increase knowledge about this situation.”

19. Bouchard, in discussion.
20. Carrie-Ann Smith, "Carrie's Notes," correspondence with Kyle Hammer, 11 July 2019, 9–16
21. Bill C-34.
22. Canada: Day 1 was produced by the CMI to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Confederation. *Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21*, "Canada: Day 1 – In Their Own Words Oral History Videos (Halifax, Canadian Museum of Immigration, 2017), n.p., <https://pier21.ca/cd1/canada-day-1-oral-history-videos>.
23. Bouchard, in discussion. "With Global Affairs it was pretty straightforward, it was an MOU basically, same approach where they would cover, I guess a little different here, they would cover the cost of recreating the exhibit and we would ship it to them."
24. Marie Chapman, in discussion with the author, 9 July, 2019.

collaboration is one way the Museum acts as an interlocutor for diasporic and cultural communities as they relate their experiences to museum visitors. Refuge Canada has travelled across Canada and is slated for international travel, expanding its reach and impact.<sup>19</sup>

The CMI furthers its global engagement at the level by engaging with foreign diplomatic networks. This allows the CMI to increase its profile by creating feedback loop to foster intercultural exchanges and dialogue and act as a meeting place for diasporic communities, for whom the presence of a high-profile diplomatic official from their countries of origin can catalyze engagement with the museum's programming.<sup>20</sup> In this way, the CMI puts the stories of diasporas into dialogue with the wider public, and in so doing, achieves its mandate to "enhance public understanding of the experiences of immigrants."<sup>21</sup>

The CMI also aims to enhance such understanding abroad. To date, the CMI has organized one international travelling exhibition: *Canada: Day 1* (2016–2017), a series of oral history videos documenting immigrants' experiences of their first day in Canada.<sup>22</sup> The CMI used the distribution networks and contacts of the federal Department of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and Global Affairs Canada (GAC) to facilitate the exhibit's tour to thirteen international locations between September 2016 and October 2017 (see Appendix E for *Canada: Day 1's* international travel). While partnerships with IRCC and GAC were central,<sup>23</sup> the CMI consistently asserted its own agency in the process of creating the exhibition, particularly when it came to content. "When people say it's easy to change these four words, or add this, or take away that," says CMI CEO Marie Chapman, "it's not necessarily [the case], and it can change the water and the beans, so to speak....so I had to make sure to say in no uncertain terms 'no, no, no this is museological' and they [IRCC and GAC] happen to be the channel of distribution, but they are not the voice."<sup>24</sup> This experience shows the complexities of balancing the objectives of public museums and government departments, which



may operate within the same order of government, in this case, the Government of Canada. Yet it could be argued that for *Canada: Day 1*, the relationship was quid pro quo rather than directive. *Canada: Day 1* included content that both IRCC and GAC felt met their needs, and both Departments had the distribution networks and contacts the CMI needed to circulate its exhibition and raise its international profile.

At the institutional level, the CMI's multifaceted international engagement activities have also contributed not only to the Museum's recent growth in terms of international visitors, but also the expansion in terms of the origin of these visitors. In 2013, when the CMI first began collecting visitor data, 87 per cent of the CMI's 9,347 international visitors were from Europe of the United States.<sup>25</sup> By 2018, not only had the number of international visitors had grown (to 21,506), but over 4,000 (almost 20 per cent) were from Asia.<sup>26</sup> The number of digital visitors to the Museum also increased exponentially during this time, and by 2018, the total share of unique visitors from international IP addresses had grown to over 22 per cent of total online visits (see Appendix G for digital visitor data).<sup>27</sup> While the increase in international visitors to the CMI can be attributed in part to the Museum's focus on infrastructure investment and the province of Nova Scotia's efforts to draw cruise ship traffic to the city, it is also important to note that the CMI has actively fostered international growth by investing in digital platforms and by expanding site services to cater to international audiences, notably by offering tours in a greater number of languages in order to attract new audiences.<sup>28</sup> Describing the decision to add Mandarin and begin courting Chinese motor coach companies, VP of Audience Engagement Carrie-Ann Smith notes, "The first time I ever thought about it...I was at Peggy's Cove and the whole village was full of tourists from China. I was like 'of course it is' because at Peggy's Cove you can experience without the language, and there were just buses lined up and I was like, 'I want all these buses to come to the museum and to hear this story and learn about Chinese Canadians.'"<sup>29</sup>

25. Data on the CMI's Key Performance Indicators (financial information, visitors, acquisition) between 2013-2014 and 2018-2019 were shared with the author via correspondence.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Smith, in discussion with the author, 11 July 2019.
29. Ibid.



30. Terri Harlow (Digital Platforms Manager) in discussion with the author, 10 July 2019. Harlow recalled her encounter with a young woman visiting the CMI's Wall of Service, made up of bricks inscribed with the names of individuals who have served Canada. "There was a young woman ... who was facing the Wall of Service and she was weeping...she turned to me and told me about her grandfather and how important it was for her...for her to be here and she never met him but...she could go back and say she looked at this brick." This is not to say that the relationships visitors connect to through the museums are not real. Rather, all communities are to a degree imagined. Yet, unlike the national community, diasporic communities and familial relations are spatially and theoretically boundless. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 2006), 6–9.

As demonstrated in this analysis, the CMI consistently engages in dialogue and relationship building with a wide variety of cultural, ethnic, and diasporic communities throughout Canada and around the world; navigating the local-global continuum and exploring its complexities. For example, museum staff indicate that visitors come to the museum to see peoples and spaces they have only imagined, yet to which they still feel connected.<sup>30</sup> The museum's focus on immigration and international audiences means that the CMI is neither neatly national, local, nor global; rather, its exhibitions and visitors simultaneously inhabit these scales of spatial identification, punctuating the museum's collection and curation strategy.

The CMI's work with diasporic and cultural communities, as well as its engagement with the diplomatic community, has facilitated its growing international museological profile and instilled in staff a sense that they are embedded in global networks of collaboration and exchange through which they can fulfill the Museum's national mandate, raise its institutional profile, and address pressing global issues. In other words, they can act as diplomats; advancing a range of objectives without needing to cancel one to serve the others.<sup>31</sup> Chapman commented: "I humbly believe that we all in this museum community have the opportunity to be cultural diplomats in our own way and that I think the world needs as many people with the kind of knowledge and ability that I have in this museum to help people realize that it's just one ball we all live on."<sup>32</sup> The CMI's Manager of Research, Dr. Monica McDonald, echoed this sentiment: "I think we're all cultural diplomats. I see us as ambassadors of our museum and of Canada, really, and of our mandate everywhere we go. For conferences and what not, I think we all need to think of ourselves that way. I think that's really important."<sup>33</sup>

With its global partnerships, travelling exhibitions, and visitors from around the world, the CMI's projects Canada on the international stage and to an international audience. On the other hand, the CMI is also a "socially produced space;" in which a variety of actors, including federal institutions, museum employees, diplomats and diasporic communities engage with the Museum to create their own meaning and narratives about the worlds they inhabit.<sup>34</sup> This necessitates a reevaluation of the neat "national" category the CMI is meant to occupy. But perhaps such a reevaluation can allow the CMI to more authentically fulfil its mandate by situating the experiences of all newcomers to this place now called Canada within complex flows of migration and experience, even as the Museum itself charts its own course within the multidirectional networks that characterize diplomacy in the global era.

31. Lee Davidson and Leticia Pérez-Castellanos, *The Cosmopolitan Ambassadors: International Exhibitions, Cultural Diplomacy and the Polycentral Museum* (Wilmington, DE: Vernon Press, 2019), 9–10.
32. Chapman, in discussion.
33. McDonald, in discussion, 8.
34. Harvey Moltotch, "The space of Lefebvre," *Theory and Society* 22 no.6 (December 1993), 887.

Left Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21



# MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

**BEN SCHNITZER**

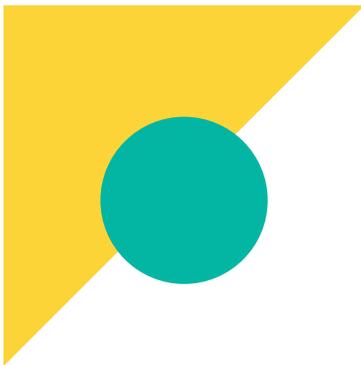
For Canadian art historian Anne Dymond, “the growth of the [Montreal Museum of Fine Arts]...is astounding. By many counts it is the largest museum in Canada, with the most visitors, the most members, a significant collection of both historical and contemporary art, and an ambitious program of internationally touring exhibitions.”<sup>1</sup> In 2019, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA) unveiled *Thierry Mugler: Couturissime*, the first retrospective of the renowned French couturier’s work, and the latest in a series of blockbuster fashion exhibitions that have catapulted the MMFA to international fame.<sup>2</sup> The exhibit, which includes the work of contemporary Quebec designers, has welcomed over 250,000 visitors and will soon embark on an international tour.<sup>3</sup> The MMFA’s international reputation has been further strengthened by the global museum community’s recognition of the effectiveness of its innovative approaches to contemporary social issues.<sup>4</sup> This locally rooted, globally engaged museum is worlds away from the elitist, Anglophone institution founded almost 160 years ago. Its path to global distinction warrants exploration.

It is no surprise that the MMFA calls itself an “Ambassador Museum.”<sup>5</sup> Its relationships with museums in the Francophonie and beyond are driven by formal agreements grounded in shared histories and personal networks. In 2017, Canada and France signed the France-Canada Agreement on Museum Cooperation and Exchanges, a “pioneering transatlantic partnership to encourage dialogue between those responsible

1. Anne Dymond, *Diversity Counts: Gender, Race, and Representation in Canadian Art Galleries* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2019), 149. In 2017, the MMFA was the second most visited museum in Canada after the Royal Ontario Museum, eighth in North America, and 49th in the world. See Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, *MMFA, 2017–2018 Annual Report* (Montreal: MMFA, 2018), 1.
2. Thank you to Thomas Bastien for his leadership and vision, Danielle Blanchette, Catherine Lennartz, and Jasmin Miville-Allard, who facilitated research at the MMFA archives, and Julia Frainier, Helene-Jane Groarke, and Michèle Staines, who provided administrative and logistical support.
3. Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, “Extended Hours! Thierry Mugler: Couturissime,” press release, 26 August 2019; MMFA, “Montreal Couture: 10 Contemporary Quebec Fashion Designers at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts,” press release, 26 February 2019.
4. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the International Council of Museums, *Culture and Local Development: Maximizing the Impact. Guide for Local Governments, Communities, and Museums* (OECD/ICOM, 2018), [https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/ICOM-OECD-GUIDE\\_EN\\_FINAL.pdf](https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/ICOM-OECD-GUIDE_EN_FINAL.pdf).
5. Thomas Bastien, “A Multifaceted Museum,” in *MMFA, 2017–2018 Annual Report*, 26.

Left: The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Michal and Renata Hornstein Pavilion for Peace. Photo © Marc Cramer.

6. Thomas Bastien, "Education and Wellness. More than Ever, an Integral Part of the MMFA's DNA," in *MMFA, 2016–2017 Annual Report* (Montreal: MMFA, 2017), 28.
7. Stephen Legari, in discussion with the author, 13 June 2019.
8. North American Cultural Diplomacy Initiative, "Cultural Diplomacy and Trade: Making Connections," March 2018, 9, <http://culturaldiplomacyinitiative.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Cultural-Diplomacy-and-Trade-Making-Connections.pdf>.
9. Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, "The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and the Avataq Cultural Institute Enter Partnership to Promote Inuit Art and Culture," *The Magazine of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts* (January–April, 2019), 3.
10. Ibid.
11. Jean-Sebasti n B langer, in discussion with the author, 13 June 2019. All translations from French by the author.



for educational and cultural activities in Canadian and French museums," jointly conceived of and initiated by the MMFA and the Louvre.<sup>6</sup> For MMFA art therapist Stephen Legari, the latitude museums have to be diplomatic actors is "both enabled and constrained by their identification." The MMFA's status as a private, non-profit institution means it has the "liberty to...set [its] own course. Our skipper says 'head that way,' and we head that way! We're not being constrained by the overarching, or...overreaching mandate of the state. Instead, the state gets to look [at us] and say 'that's ours.'"<sup>7</sup> This speaks to the potential of cultural diplomacy strategies that, to cite a recent report by the North American Cultural Diplomacy Initiative (NACDI), "align with the priorities of independent actors, but do not supersede their interests."<sup>8</sup>

The MMFA is arguably an ambassador of cultural diplomacy that challenges received notions about the centrality of the state and how the 'nation' is understood in diplomatic terms. In 2019, the Museum partnered with the Avataq Cultural Institute, a Nunavik-based Inuit organization that maintains and promotes Inuit culture. Avataq will lease office space from the MMFA to "foster dialogue and research on Inuit art...[and] establish knowledge sharing between Montreal and Nunavik organizations and experts."<sup>9</sup> For Josepi Padlayat, Avataq's president, the partnership signifies that "the heart of Montreal is set to be home to an Inuit cultural embassy."<sup>10</sup>

A commitment to knowledge sharing also strengthens the MMFA's engagement with the global museum community, allowing it to fulfill key aspects of its mission. For example, the MMFA is increasingly asked to share administrative expertise with museums in French-speaking Africa and in France, where museums are experiencing the kind of decline in public funding to which the MMFA has long been accustomed.<sup>11</sup> Such activities not only nurture professional networks, but fulfill the MMFA's mission to advance education through knowledge sharing. The MMFA also furthers this mission as the only Canadian member of the French Regional and American Museum Exchange (FRAME), a consortium

of 31 museums in France and North America. Within FRAME, the MMFA has spearheaded efforts to co-develop education and wellness programming through interdisciplinary approaches that embrace “reflexive inspiration, adaptation, [and] experimentation.”<sup>12</sup>

### *Manifesto for a Humanist Museum*

The turn toward reflection and collaborative experimentation stems from Director and Chief Curator Nathalie Bondil’s “manifesto for a humanist museum”; her vision of the MMFA as a catalyst for positive social transformation that “respond[s] to broad social issues [including] academic success, inclusion, diversity [and] the aging population...[through] innovative and multidisciplinary partnership.”<sup>13</sup> Bondil’s vision is a powerful animating force, notably for the MMFA Foundation, responsible for philanthropic giving. As Foundation personnel observe, private donors increasingly want to support collaborative partnerships promising positive social outcomes.<sup>14</sup> Participating organizations also benefit since they can collaborate on areas of shared concern rather than compete for funding.<sup>15</sup> Several private sponsors supported a recent study by the MMFA and medical partners on the effects of MMFA’s art therapy activities on participants’ wellbeing.<sup>16</sup> The study’s forthcoming international expansion will encourage future partnerships, strengthen the MMFA’s international reputation as a multidisciplinary catalyst for social change, and crucially, provide evidence to support future endeavours.

The MMFA’s collaborative orientation is rooted in its 60-year commitment to education, which has facilitated partnership-based programming.<sup>17</sup> This reputation, combined with the MMFA’s focus on health and well-being, convinced the Médecins francophones du Canada Association to prescribe free visits to the MMFA for their patients as a companion therapy to conventional medical treatment.<sup>18</sup> This program, the first of its kind in the world, has since been adopted by the Royal Ontario Museum, amongst others,<sup>19</sup> and has generated widespread attention from global museum and medical communities.<sup>20</sup>

12. Bastien, “Education and Wellbeing,” 26.
13. Nathalie Bondil, *Promoting Inclusiveness, Health and Well-being: A Manifesto for a Humanist Fine Arts Museum* (Montreal: MMFA, 2016).
14. Danielle Champagne and JoAnne Duchesne, in discussion with the author, 19 June 2019.
15. Ibid
16. Thomas Bastien, “Results of the First Clinical Study in Canada to Measure the Effects of Art on Seniors,” *Magazine of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts* (January–April, 2019), 26. Partners on the study were the MMFA, the RUIS McGill Centre of Excellence on Longevity, and Montreal’s Jewish General Hospital.
17. Marilyn Lajeunesse, in discussion with the author, 13 June 2019. The MMFA’s education department was founded in 1961. The MMFA notes that its educational wing, The Michel de la Chenelière International Atelier for Education and Art Therapy is “the largest educational complex in a North American art museum” (<https://www.mbam.qc.ca/en/education-and-art-therapy/about-the-atelier/>). In 2017–2018, over 450,000 people took part in the MMFA’s educational, therapeutic, and cultural activities (Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, *MMFA, 2017–2018 Annual Report*, i).
18. Thomas Bastien, “Doctors Now Prescribing Visits to the Museum: A World-First Pilot Project,” *Magazine of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts* (January–April, 2019), 27.
19. Royal Ontario Museum, “ROM Launches New Wellness Program Providing Free Visits to the Museum,” press release, 6 June 2018, <https://www.rom.on.ca/en/about-us/newsroom/press-releases/rom-launches-new-wellness-program-providing-free-visits-to-the>.
20. Legari, in discussion. Legari noted that the MMFA is co-developing a handbook on best practices for museum art therapy alongside other museums within FRAME.

21. Jane Knight, *Knowledge Diplomacy: A Bridge Linking International Higher Education and Research with International Relations* (London: British Council, 2018), 8, <https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research-knowledge-diplomacy-in-action.pdf>.
22. Jan Melissen, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations* (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave, 2005), 15.
23. Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, *MMFA, 2017–2018 Annual Report*, 9. Between 2008 and 2017, MMFA exhibitions travelled to 28 cities on four continents. The MMFA claims to be one of the most active museums in North America in terms of international exhibitions. In 2016, a record 2.6 million people visited MMFA exhibitions worldwide (*MMFA, 2016–2017 Annual Report*, 8). The MMFA's most widely-travelled exhibition, *The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier*, received almost 2.1 million visitors during its international tour, far outstripping the 173,632 who visited the exhibit in Montreal (*ibid.*); MMFA and McKinsey & Company, *MMFA: Analysis of Current Situation* (Montreal: MMFA, 2015), 26.
24. MMFA and McKinsey & Company, *Analysis of Current Situation*, 27.
25. Pascale Chassé, in discussion with the author, 18 June 2019.
26. Anonymous Staff Member, in discussion with the author, 13 June 2019.
27. Sylvain Cordier, in discussion with the author, 12 June 2019.

Left: The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Michal and Renata Hornstein Pavilion. Photo Terry Rishel

Such activities show the MMFA as a practitioner of knowledge diplomacy, which recognizes that solutions to global problems cannot be solved by the “higher education, knowledge, and innovation resources of one nation alone,” and instead addresses global issues by applying new ideas and knowledge generated through collaborative research.<sup>21</sup> The MMFA's capacity to be such an actor stems from a clearly-articulated vision and commitment to long-term partnerships, supporting international relations and diplomacy scholar Jan Melissen's observation that cultural diplomacy initiatives “should be in tune with medium-term objectives and long-term aims. [They] build on trust and credibility, and...often [work] best with a long horizon.”<sup>22</sup>

The MMFA boasts of being “Canada's leading exporter of exhibitions.”<sup>23</sup> Its exhibitions raise the international profile of Montreal and Quebec because most are conceived of and created by the MMFA. By employing local creators and suppliers, the museum fosters a unique, identifiable brand that contributes to the international visibility of the city and the province.<sup>24</sup> As Director of Communications Pascale Chassé notes, “The MMFA is a source of pride for Montrealers because they see the international profile of the museum...our touring exhibitions speak about the museum, but they also tell the story of Montreal.”<sup>25</sup> The MMFA is “anchored in Montreal, with its history, with its complexity,”<sup>26</sup> meaning each exhibition is imbued with the spirit and character of the city regardless of artists' origins. “We are not only exporting an exhibition, but...exporting a discourse...the *Montreal* view of an exhibition,” notes Dr. Sylvain Cordier, curator of Early Decorative Art.<sup>27</sup> It is the MMFA's unique sensibility that contributes to what one longstanding employee calls the “wow factor,” a combination of originality, vision, design, and *je ne sais quoi*, which has established the museum as a creative powerhouse.



28. Government subsidies accounted for 76 per cent of the museum's budget in the mid-1990s but had declined to 46 per cent by 2014. *Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, MMFA, 2014–2015 Annual Report* (Montreal: MMFA, 2015), 5. When adjusted for inflation, the MMFA's public grants declined by 14 per cent in real terms between 2009 and 2018. See MMFA's annual reports from 2009–2010 and 2017–2018 (figures adjusted for inflation using the Bank of Canada's Inflation Calculator).
29. Between 2004–2005 and 2014–2015, the museum decreased its net exhibitions costs by 60 per cent due primarily to revenues from touring exhibitions. MMFA and McKinsey & Company, *Analysis of Current Situation*, 16.
30. Isabelle Corriveau, in discussion with the author, 17 June 2019.
31. Legari, in discussion, 2019.
32. Lee Davidson and Leticia Pérez-Castellanos, *The Cosmopolitan Ambassadors: International Exhibitions, Cultural Diplomacy and the Polycentral Museum* (Wilmington, DE: Vernon Press, 2019), 9–10.

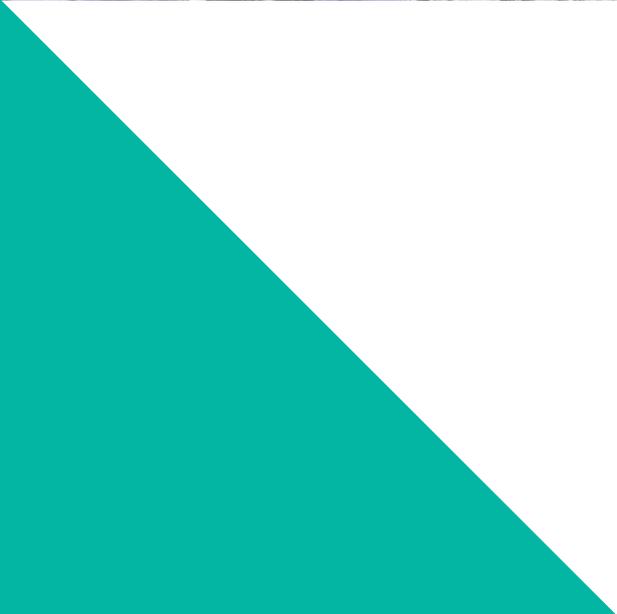
The MMFA's exhibition strategy is also rooted in practical concerns. While the museum receives public funds, it remains a private institution and is responsible for generating its own revenues, the proportion of which has steadily increased due to cuts to public arts funding.<sup>28</sup> In response to cuts, the MMFA developed a successful self-financing strategy centred on travelling exhibitions.<sup>29</sup> Even the decision to focus on fashion is, in part, a practical one. The fragility of many fine art objects limits their international touring potential; however, fashion pieces can withstand up to twelve venues, permitting larger audiences and increased revenues.<sup>30</sup> This combination of audacious vision and pragmatism has defined Bondil's leadership. "She has shaped and transformed this museum in innumerable ways," notes Legari. "As...both director and chief curator, which is not a role that all museum directors hold, she is actively participating in the visual language of the museum: how it's communicating its exhibitions, but also on the overall identity...she's often 10 steps ahead."<sup>31</sup> The MMFA's simultaneous concern for both creative and practical matters is also representative of the fact that, for museum studies scholars Lee Davidson and Leticia Pérez-Castellanos, the "production and consumption" of a museum's international exhibitions is "influenced by a combination of drivers across diplomatic, museum mission-related and market-domains [...] While one domain may dominate in any given case, most exhibitions will be driven by two or more of these domains, to various degrees."<sup>32</sup>

The humanist vision is not without its critics. Dymond argues that the "universalizing goals of the humanizing museum," in its reliance on "individual relations that are empathetic" to achieve diversity and interculturalism, do not account for "systemic

differences in power and access that make them impossible.”<sup>33</sup> At the same time, interviewees are keenly aware that their work is far from over. Partly in jest, one employee observes: “I think we’re the best because we have made so many mistakes.”<sup>34</sup> Thomas Bastien, director of Education, notes: “We’re not only listening. I think we’re trying to understand what everyone wants to achieve in the Museum and how the Museum could be of help in terms of education, wellness, accessibility, and inclusion. That’s a beautiful future, if you accept that the solution doesn’t come from the Museum, but from everyone willing to find the best in their own museum.”<sup>35</sup>

In November 2019, the MMFA inaugurated The Stephan Crétier and Stéphanie Maillery Wing of the Arts of One World, which “present[s] a dialogue between works from ancient and traditional cultures and those by local and international contemporary artists, framed in a renewed intercultural and transhistorical perspective.”<sup>36</sup> Speaking in advance of the opening, Dr. Erell Hubert, curator of the Art of the Americas, explained that presenting this collection along thematic rather than chronological lines will “help deconstruct the discourses about how the objects in the collections are constructed; to open up new ways of seeing, to new communications and discussions.”<sup>37</sup> In this way, the museum is embarking upon a transdisciplinary trajectory that potentially “move[s] beyond the limits of the disciplines and provide[s] new ways of organizing and modes of thinking” to better “understand multifaceted global-scale issues in a holistic fashion.”<sup>38</sup> Think of the global possibilities if this orientation were applied to the MMFA’s collaborative approach to finding solutions to the social issues of our time. A beautiful future indeed.

33. Dymond, *Diversity Counts*, 164.
34. Anonymous Staff Member, in discussion with the author, 13 June 2019.
35. Bastien, in discussion.
36. Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, “Arts of One World,” <https://www.mbam.qc.ca/en/collections/arts-of-one-world>.
37. Erell Hubert, in discussion with the author, 14 June 2019.
38. Eve Darian Smith and Philip McCarty, “Beyond Interdisciplinarity: Developing a Global Transdisciplinary Framework,” *Transcience* 7, no 2 (2016): 5.1, 3-5.



# MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY AT UBC

TYLER RUSSELL

The Museum of Anthropology (MOA) at the University of British Columbia is situated on the ancestral, unceded, traditional territories of the hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓ speaking Musqueam People (Vancouver, B.C.). The Museum contains over 48,000 ethnographic objects (including a prominent display of works from Northwest Coast Indigenous communities) and is housed in an architecturally-renowned building designed by Canadian architect Arthur Erickson that directly faces the Pacific Ocean. Founded in 1947 as a department under the University's Faculty of Arts, the MOA's objective is to "promote awareness and understanding of culturally diverse ways of knowing the world through challenging and innovative programs and partnerships with Indigenous, local and global communities."<sup>1</sup> From this description, it becomes apparent that the MOA's orientation (both physical and ideological) is at once locally rooted and globally-inspired, and that it is committed to challenging assumptions about the way knowledge is constructed and shared.

In considering the MOA's international activities between 2009 and 2018, it is important to note that 65 of 67 of the MOA's exhibitions (97 percent) had an international dimension, meaning that they involved actors outside Canada in terms of funding, the loan of objects, participation in research, or the

1. Museum of Anthropology, "About MOA," <https://moa.ubc.ca/about-moa/>.

Left: Photo by Cory Dawson, courtesy of the Museum of Anthropology at UBC

2. Dr. Susan Rowley, in discussion with the author, July 22, 2019.

participation of curators and artists. This demonstrates the extent to which the MOA is embedded in global networks of exchange. Yet to fully understand how the MOA fulfils its globally-oriented mandate, it is useful to undertake a more granular exploration that goes to the heart of how the Museum acts diplomatically; that is to say, how it navigates relationships and interests between communities and across borders. Through an analysis of the MOA's extensive public programming, conservation, research and publication activities, I have identified two case studies (one exhibition and one book) that provide remarkable insight into this element of the MOA's activities.

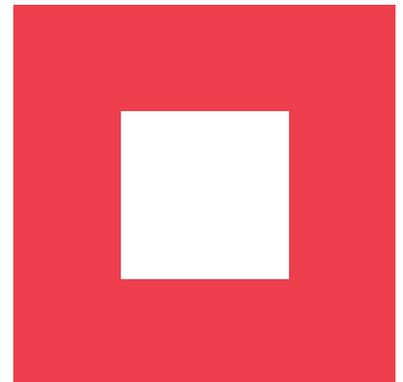
In 2018, the MOA presented a striking exhibit of Salish weavings entitled *The Fabric of Our Land: Salish Weaving*. This exhibition united local and regional Salish weaving communities with weavings that for up to 200 years have resided in collections far removed from the Pacific Northwest Coast where they were originally made. As curator Dr. Susan Rowley recounts, *The Fabric of Our Land* emerged out conversations with highly respected Musqueam community leader and three-term chief Wendy Grant-John (née Sparrow). Grant-John, who has played a pivotal role in the revitalization of Salish weaving since the 1980s, told Rowley that she had seen some of the compelling work of her ancestors when visiting museums in New York and Washington D.C., but remarked that not everyone from her community had this same opportunity. Acknowledging repatriation as a long-term goal, Grant-John asked the MOA to organize an exhibit that would bring a selection of those weavings home so weavers and their children could have the opportunity to be inspired by the treasures of their ancestors.<sup>2</sup> And thus began an international journey that saw ten Salish weavings from Finland, Scotland, England, and the Eastern United States come back to Salish territories.

Together with her colleague, Musqueam curator Jordan Wilson, Rowley identified 31 prospective pieces. Then, in early 2016, at the First Annual International Salish Wool Weavers Symposium in

Suquamish, Washington, Rowley and Wilson gave a presentation about the planned exhibition and asked the assembled weavers to pick five weavings they would most like to see. From these lists, they identified ten to include in the show. They subsequently approached lending museums with a proposal to hold pre-exhibition workshops where Salish weavers could view and even touch the weavings before they were encased in glass for exhibition. All of the participating institutions agreed.<sup>3</sup> This was a particularly valuable experience given that, as Grant-John stated in 2002: “Touching blankets that are over a hundred years old creates such a spiritual feeling, an understanding that the skill you’re reacquiring is the same that our ancestors had.”<sup>4</sup> In addition to providing the Salish weaving community with an opportunity to engage with these objects, the exhibition worked to undo long-held assumptions about pre-colonial Indigenous life, gave honour to ancient, local cultural practices, and reframed relationships to place. By collaborating with Indigenous communities to gather globally dispersed resources in the service of local Indigenous cultural revitalization, the MOA used “anthropology’s critical insights and relativist perspectives to subvert power relations and supplant dominant Western knowledge paradigms and ocular regimes with those of other cultures, classes, or marginalized groups,”<sup>5</sup> and in so doing, sought to undo “the privilege that is given to empirical or scientific knowledge” that, in the opinion of the MOA Director Dr. Anthony Shelton, “has marginalized Indigenous knowledges.”<sup>6</sup>

In 1973 the MOA acquired an extensive collection of Cantonese opera objects from the Jin Wah Sing Musical Association, “one of North America’s oldest and continuously active Cantonese Opera associations.”<sup>7</sup> In 2015, the MOA’s Mellon Curatorial Post-Doctoral Fellow, Dr. April Liu, made this collection the subject of her research, which was eventually compiled in the book *Divine Threads: The Visual and Material Cultures of Cantonese Opera*, published in collaboration with the MOA in 2019.

3. Ibid.
4. Museum of Anthropology, *Musqueam Weavers Source Book* (Museum of Anthropology, 2002): 1
5. Email from Anthony Shelton to the author, July 9, 2019
6. Anthony Shelton, in discussion with the author, July 5, 2019.
7. Liu, *Divine Threads*, 6.



8. Ibid., xii; 6.
9. April Liu, in discussion with the author, July 21, 2019.
10. Liu, *Divine Threads*, 10.
11. In 2009, UNESCO inscribed Cantonese opera on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. (UNESCO, 2009. "Decision of the Intergovernmental Committee: 4.Com 13.27.": <https://ich.unesco.org/en/decisions/4.COM/13.27>)
12. Liu, *Divine Threads*, 155
13. Ibid.

Left: Photo by Cory Dawson, courtesy of the Museum of Anthropology at UBC

The first image in this book shows a circa 1910 opera costume trunk from the MOA's collection with the inscription, "Specializing in Costumes that Circle the Globe/Jinlun Chang Costume Shop."<sup>8</sup> With this claim of Cantonese opera's self-conscious border-crossing, Liu traces the artistic practice's migration across the Pacific and throughout the Americas. Through objects and descriptions of practices, readers come to see how the material culture of Cantonese opera not only evolved in the post-Qing Dynasty Chinese context, but also remained a resilient and adaptive art form through the early twentieth century, when female performers donned Western swimwear and male performers wore top hats and cowboy attire. As Liu says, "Cantonese opera has always been very, very innovative. It's a multicultural mobile art form. It was never static."<sup>9</sup>

Speaking to the shamanic aspect of Cantonese opera practice, Liu highlights a ceremonial trident used in pre-performance cleansing rituals. Acknowledging the power of the object, she describes rituals enacted in the present day by local Cantonese opera elders to protect museum workers who must handle the spiritually charged object.<sup>10</sup> Embodying the MOA's commitment to diverse ways of knowing, Liu affirms, experiences, and legitimizes ways of knowing in which contact with spirits is real.

In 2009, Cantonese opera troupes, alongside governments in Hong Kong, Macao, the Province of Guangdong (China), and the central Chinese government in Beijing applied to UNESCO to designate Cantonese opera an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (ICH). While the application was successful,<sup>11</sup> Liu argues it largely failed to acknowledge the opera's transnational nature and its "thriving diasporic traditions."<sup>12</sup> Liu recognises this as a failure to heed the call made by UNESCO and other agencies, of the need for transnational safeguards for ICH and the need to "recognize, study, and inventory multi-sited traditions in an equitable and inclusive manner."<sup>13</sup> Moreover, Liu notes a competition between secularized representations forwarded by





14. In the field of Museology MOA is considered an innovative leader internationally. A photo of the museum features on *Wikipedia's* museology page (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Museology>). The MOA's director, Anthony Shelton is a widely-respected scholar and the author of "Critical Museology: A Manifesto," which leads off the first issue of the journal *Critical Museology* (1, No. 1, 2013, 7-23).

Above: Photo by Hover Collective, courtesy of the Museum of Anthropology at UBC

museums in mainland China and representations from Hong Kong that give prominence to the form's spiritual and shamanistic aspects. Liu also raises concerns with how the main funder of Cantonese opera's ICH designation, the Chinese state, emphasized national and secular narratives.

In addition to rigorously arguing for the decentring of the state in, and the transnationalization of, UNESCO preservation efforts, Liu's book acts as a tremendous resource for Cantonese opera researchers and conservationists going forward. Moreover, the MOA's sponsorship of Dr. Liu's research demonstrates the ways in which museological scholarship – for which the MOA is renowned<sup>14</sup> – can complicate state-based narratives about how cultural objects are perceived and valued by global organizations (in this case UNESCO). Specifically, the MOA mobilized its extensive Cantonese opera collection to narrate this tradition's transnational and spiritual



story of community and cultural resilience, mounting a sophisticated argument for the internationalization of efforts to preserve Cantonese opera's tangible and intangible cultural heritage.<sup>15</sup>

Through its research, then, the MOA problematizes hegemonic narratives of cultural traditions, in which nation states negate the complexity of cultural practices and subsume them into monologic "national brands" that serve state-centred instrumental objectives.<sup>16</sup> As the MOA itself notes, "museums have never been neutral and can never be neutral. And...they have to take a position in the world."<sup>17</sup> Reflecting the diversity of Vancouver itself, the MOA stays true to its commitment to promote "culturally diverse ways of knowing." And, as illustrated in Liu's work highlighting UNESCO's failure to sufficiently include the diasporic dimensions of Cantonese Opera in the ICH designation, the MOA does not shy away from facilitating space for dissenting voices in global contexts.

15. Liu, *Divine Threads*.
16. Sue Curry Jansen, "Designer Nations: Neo-Liberal Nation Branding – Brand Estonia," *Social Identities*, 14 no.1 (2008): 121-142; Nicholas J. Cull, *Public Diplomacy: Foundation for Global Engagement in the Digital Age* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2019).
17. Shelton, in discussion.



# NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA

## VANESSA RUNIONS

The National Gallery of Canada (NGC) has a long history of international engagement; its government mandate calls on the NGC to serve the nation while being global in scope.<sup>1</sup> In practice, the NGC balances its international activities with a consideration of domestic impact. Sonya Dumais, Chief of Collections Management, discussing how her department prioritizes which artworks to make accessible online, copyright restrictions notwithstanding, describes this balancing act as “trying to determine two things: what does our audience want and also how do we want to present ourselves. Who are we as an institution both nationally and internationally, what kind of face do we want to present to the world? I think it’s really about trying to find a balance there.”<sup>2</sup>

Established in 1880 by the Governor General, the Marquess of Lorne, the Gallery has long held ties to the Canadian Government, which formally assumed responsibility for the institution in 1913 through the *National Gallery of Canada Act*.<sup>3</sup> The federal government has maintained oversight of the NGC through subsequent acts of Parliament, culminating in the Museums Act of 1990, which established the Gallery as a crown corporation.<sup>4</sup> Although the NGC now operates at arm’s length from the federal government, it is still accountable to Parliament, and the majority of its funding comes through Parliamentary appropriations, including \$8 million annually for acquisitions.<sup>5</sup> The NGC is governed by a board of trustees who are appointed by the minister of Canadian Heritage, the

1. The National Gallery of Canada’s mandate is “to develop, maintain, and make known, throughout Canada and internationally, a collection of works of art, both historic and contemporary, with special but not exclusive reference to Canada, and to further knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of art in general among all Canadians” (*Museums Act*, S.C. 1990, c. 3).
2. Sonya Dumais and Karen Wyatt, in conversation with the author, 1 August 2019.
3. National Gallery of Canada, *Info Source: Sources of Federal Government and Employee Information 2017*, (Ottawa: NGC, 2017), 3. [https://www.gallery.ca/sites/default/files/upload/2017\\_-\\_info\\_source\\_update\\_-\\_eng-final\\_updates\\_-\\_feb\\_27.pdf](https://www.gallery.ca/sites/default/files/upload/2017_-_info_source_update_-_eng-final_updates_-_feb_27.pdf).
4. Ibid.
5. In 2017–2018, 71 per cent or \$48.1 million of the Gallery’s funding was provided by the Government of Canada. National Gallery of Canada, *Annual Report: 2017–2018* (Ottawa: NGC, 2018), 74–75, [https://www.gallery.ca/sites/default/files/upload/ra\\_design\\_17\\_18\\_en15-final-revised\\_apr\\_12\\_2019.pdf](https://www.gallery.ca/sites/default/files/upload/ra_design_17_18_en15-final-revised_apr_12_2019.pdf).

Left: Exterior Views of the National Gallery Canada, Ottawa.  
Photo: NGC

6. The gallery reported 385,576 visitors in 2017–2018. NGC, *Annual Report 2017-2018*, 73.
7. In 2017–2018, the foundation contributed \$3.2 million to gallery activities, and \$1.6 million to capital projects, primarily the renovation of the Canada Pavilion in Venice. National Gallery of Canada, *Annual Report 2017-2018*, 74
8. Originally the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography.
9. National Gallery of Canada, "Our History," 2019, <https://www.gallery.ca/about-the-gallery/our-history>.
10. Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters, and Sciences, Report. (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1951), chp. 7, <https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/massey/h5-414-e.html>.
11. National Gallery of Canada, "Acquisitions Policy," 11 June 2013, 1, [https://www.gallery.ca/sites/default/files/documents/planning%20and%20reporting/Acquisitions\\_Policy-approved\\_on\\_June\\_11\\_2013-\\_Revised\\_Sept\\_12\\_2013\\_-ENG.pdf](https://www.gallery.ca/sites/default/files/documents/planning%20and%20reporting/Acquisitions_Policy-approved_on_June_11_2013-_Revised_Sept_12_2013_-ENG.pdf).
12. Anne Eschapaspe, in conversation with the author, 19 August 2019.
13. Ibid.
14. See Martin Bailey, "Reflections and Interpretations: Canadian Artists from Impressionism to Modernism," 17 July 2019, [chair of which acts as a link between the Gallery and Parliament. The NGC generates revenue primarily through attendance and related activities.<sup>6</sup> The NGC Foundation – the gallery's fundraising arm – was established in 1997.<sup>7</sup> It also operates The Canadian Photography Institute, established in 1985.<sup>8</sup>](https://www.gallery.ca/magazine/exhibitions/reflections-and-interpretations-canadian-artists-from-impressionism-to-; and Eschapaspe, in conversation.</a></li>
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During the NGC's nearly 140-year history, it has occupied six different facilities in Ottawa.<sup>9</sup> In 1988 the Gallery moved to its current, purpose-built home at 380 Sussex Drive. Situated prominently in view of Parliament Hill and in close proximity to a host of embassies and national monuments, the current building, designed by the internationally-renowned architect Moshe Safdie, lies at the geographic heart of Canadian international relations. The NGC began exhibiting Canadian art abroad as early as 1924, when the institution was tasked with managing the Canadian Section of Fine Arts at the British Empire Exhibition in London.<sup>10</sup> The Gallery has continued to build its international presence ever since, from involvement in the Venice and São Paulo biennales to collecting art by significant international artists.<sup>12</sup> These activities help to nurture institutional trust and attract international partnerships that contribute to the gallery's success.

For Anne Eschapaspe, Deputy Director of Exhibitions and Outreach, international engagement is organized along three pillars: dissemination, engagement, and promotion.<sup>12</sup> Most recently, in August 2019, the exhibition *Canada and Impressionism: New Horizons* opened at the Kunsthalle in Munich, Germany. The exhibition was strategically programmed to coincide with the Frankfurt Book Fair, for which Canada is the guest of honour in 2020.<sup>13</sup> Although the NGC has a long tradition of organizing touring exhibitions abroad, it doesn't often have the opportunity to independently organize international programming that foregrounds Canadian contributions to a globally recognized art canon.<sup>14</sup> *Canada and Impressionism* exemplifies the gallery's strategic priority to identify and attract international partners who

can support the institution's mandate. As Eschapasse notes, in a highly competitive market for international exhibitions, "if you want to organize a major exhibition you build very strong, robust partnerships with international partners. If you don't have that profile, if you don't have the expertise, you will be left on the side of the road and be disregarded as a key partner for major projects."<sup>15</sup>

The NGC's collection is considered its strength, and Marc Mayer, NGC's Director from 2009 to 2019, refers to it as the "heart" of the gallery's mission.<sup>16</sup> In tandem with a significant collection of Canadian artworks, the NGC has an impressive store of European and international art. Collecting is built into the gallery's mandate, as is sharing its collection both in Canada and beyond. The gallery does so via its robust loans program, which, between April 1 2017 and March 31 2018, facilitated the distribution of 184 works to 25 institutions in Canada and 24 institutions outside Canada, primarily in the US and Europe.<sup>17</sup> The NGC's collection includes artworks that are in demand by international institutions and their audiences. Important works of international art attract partnerships with peers all over the world, enabling the gallery to build its reputation, which in turn helps to facilitate reciprocal benefits. Writing about the 2009 exhibition *From Raphael to Carracci: The Art of Papal Rome*, Mayer captures how the Gallery's international activities drive collateral gains, explaining that the exhibition was made possible because of the "excellent reputation and relationships the gallery enjoys among its global peers."<sup>18</sup>

In 2012, the Gallery's reputation and relationships with international partners led to the acquisition of the highly sought-after work *The Clock* by contemporary American artist Christian Marclay, co-purchased with the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. According to the NGC, this unusual collaboration with the Boston gallery is "another shining example of the power of partnerships."<sup>19</sup> *The Clock* was subsequently loaned to several Canadian institutions, which exhibited it to eager audiences.<sup>20</sup>

15. Eschapasse, in conversation.
16. National Gallery of Canada, "Mission Statement," <https://www.gallery.ca/about-the-gallery/mission-statement>; see also National Gallery of Canada, *Annual Report 2009-2010*, 6.
17. National Gallery of Canada, *Annual Report, 2017-2018*, 65.
18. National Gallery of Canada, *Annual Report, 2009-2010* (Ottawa: NGC, 2010), 7.
19. National Gallery of Canada, *Annual Report 2011-2012* (Ottawa: NGC, 2012), 4.
20. Liam Lacey, "Get Ready, Canada: The Clock is About to Start Ticking," *The Globe and Mail*, 8 February 2012, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/film/get-ready-canada-the-clock-is-about-to-start-ticking/article544425/>.



21. See National Gallery of Canada, Annual Reports from 2014–2018, <https://www.gallery.ca/about-the-gallery/governance/corporate-reports>. Earlier reports from 2002-2014 can be found in Corporate Reports Archive, <https://www.gallery.ca/about-the-gallery/governance/corporate-reports/corporate-reports-archive>.

Above: Exterior Views of the National Gallery Canada, Ottawa. Photo: NGC

The NGC's exhibitions program supports the institution's mandate to circulate and promote its collection, and art in general, at home and abroad. Exhibitions play a key role in furthering the gallery's global presence and attracting international audiences. In addition to exhibiting the work of international artists at home, the gallery tours exhibitions of both Canadian and international art globally. In the last ten years, the NGC has organized eight exhibitions featuring the work of Canadian artists that travelled to institutions in the U.S., Europe, and, in one case, India.<sup>21</sup> As Eschapasse notes, strategic priorities drive international exhibition activities, but

costs and a competitive market can be restrictive.<sup>22</sup> Dumais credits the Canada Travelling Exhibitions Indemnification Program for facilitating easier access to incoming international exhibitions.<sup>23</sup>

In the eight exhibitions shown abroad during the last decade, international interest in Indigenous art stands out, evidenced by two partnerships with American institutions (The Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and the National Museum of the American Indian in New York), as well as the gallery's presentation of *Sanaugavut: Inuit Art from the Canadian Arctic* in 2010 at the National Museum in Delhi, India, which the Gallery regarded as "a marvellous opportunity for cultural exchange."<sup>24</sup> In the last decade, the Gallery has also exhibited Indigenous art at its Ottawa facility. One of the NGC's most ambitious exhibitions over this time was *Sakahàn: International Indigenous Art* (May–September 2013).<sup>25</sup> Presented in partnership with 16 other institutions, *Sakahàn* was the "largest-ever global survey of contemporary Indigenous art."<sup>26</sup> The NGC organized a similar exhibition of global Indigenous art titled *Àbadakone/Continuous Fire* for 2019–2020, which is intended to travel to countries with which the NGC doesn't often partner, such as Brazil and Ecuador.<sup>27</sup> These exhibitions underscore the growing interest and unique importance of cultural exchanges that transcend geopolitical borders. Considering the proven interest in such exchanges, it is in the NGC's best interest to nurture relationships with Indigenous communities across the globe to foster continued partnerships.

The Gallery's management of the Canada Pavilion at the Venice Biennale is integral to the institution's international presence. It is the only international visual arts exhibition to which Canada sends official representation.<sup>28</sup> Canada began its official participation at the world-renowned arts festival in 1952, which today hosts 89 participating nations. In this context, Canada's presence helps to shape the profile of Canadian contemporary art internationally.<sup>29</sup> Canada's involvement in the biennale stemmed from the recommendations of the Royal Commission on National

22. Eschapassee, in conversation.

23. Dumais and Wyatt, in conversation. The Canada Travelling Exhibitions Indemnification Program was established by the Department of Canadian Heritage (Government of Canada) in 1999. Through this program, the Government assesses financial risk and assumes financial responsibility for loss or damage to objects and appurtenances in eligible travelling exhibitions. For more information, see <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/travelling-exhibitions-indemnification-program.html>.

24. National Gallery of Canada, *Annual Report 2010–2011* (Ottawa: NGC, 2011), 45.

25. National Gallery of Canada, *SAKAHÀN: International Indigenous Art*, press release, 13 February 2013.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Dumais and Wyatt, in conversation.

28. National Gallery of Canada, "Venice Biennale: Canada at the Biennale," <https://www.gallery.ca/whats-on/around-the-world/venice-biennale>.

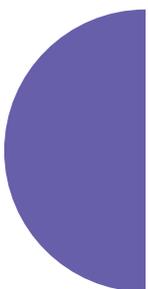
29. *Ibid.*

30. Sandra Paikowsky, "Constructing an Identity: The 1952 XXVI Biennale Di Venezia and 'The Projection of Canada Abroad'." *Journal of Canadian Art History* 20, no. 1/2 (1999): 130–81.
31. National Gallery of Canada, "Canada at The Venice Biennale," <https://www.gallery.ca/membership-giving/ngc-foundation/support-us/canada-at-the-venice-biennale>
32. National Gallery of Canada, *Annual Report, 2017–2018*, 74
33. Stephen Gritt, in conversation with the author, 30 July 2019.
34. Dumais and Wyatt, in conversation.
35. Eschapaspe, in conversation; Cyndie Campbell, in conversation with the author, 31 July 2019.

Development in the Arts, Letters, and Sciences (the Massey Commission) – a government body tasked with investigating the state of Canadian arts and culture in 1951 that called for the establishment of a comprehensive Canadian foreign cultural policy.<sup>30</sup> In 1985, in the lead-up to the gallery's relocation to its current residence, the NGC relinquished much of its involvement in the biennale, but it resumed management of Canada pavilion in 2011. Since then, the pavilion has been supported by the Canada Council for the Arts, the Government of Canada, as well as the NGC Foundation. In 2019, Isuma, the first Inuit-based production company and artist collective in Canada, represented Canada in a newly restored Canada Pavilion.<sup>31</sup> The Canada Pavilion's significance to the gallery's international activities is evidenced by, if nothing else, the number of visitors it attracts – 400,000 in 2017.<sup>32</sup>

Many departments at the NGC include dimensions of international engagement and outreach in their work. In many of these activities international engagement is implicit. Stephen Gritt, Director of Conservation and Technical Research, considers his interactions with international peers "collegial" in nature.<sup>33</sup> Some of this international work is driven by global issues; Dumais points out that environmental concerns often inspire international collaboration and conversations.<sup>34</sup> Staff across departments participate in conferences, symposia, and training both at home and abroad, where knowledge sharing with international colleagues helps to identify best practices in museum standards and provides opportunities to connect.

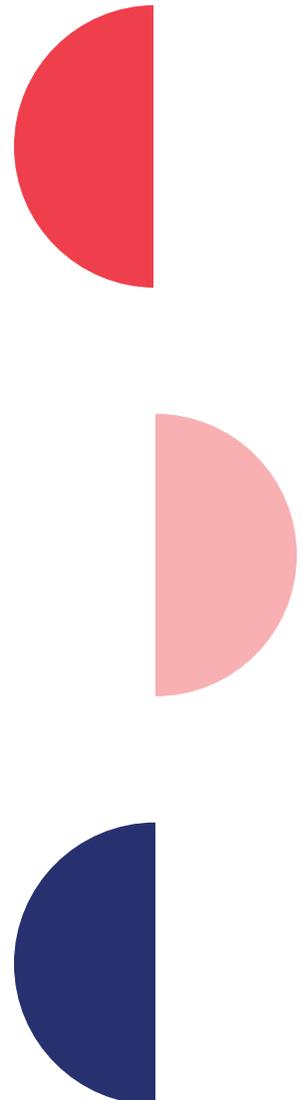
Participation in professional associations and organizations increases the international presence of the gallery – for example, Eschapaspe is on the steering committee of the International Exhibition Organizers network – and can also facilitate broader access to the NGC's collections.<sup>35</sup> The NGC expands the domestic audience for its collections by partnering with Canadian galleries, for example through the NGC@AGA program, (described in



McNeil’s report on the Art Gallery of Alberta), which provides the AGA with access to the NGC’s collections and pairs the two galleries to curate original exhibitions, often featuring international artists. In the digital domain, the NGC Library and Archives belongs to the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), which enables global access to member collections.<sup>36</sup> Access was a common theme in staff interviews for this report relating to the international dimension of the gallery’s work, especially for Education and Public Programs, Library and Archives, and Collections Management – departments with an explicit responsibility to share the collection and gallery activities per the NGC’s mandate. Gary Goodacre, chief of Education and Public Programs, expressed a desire to encourage and promote “global conversations.”<sup>37</sup> Some staff identified barriers such as linguistic and cultural differences that affect their ability to provide access more broadly, but the Gallery is constantly developing new initiatives and programming to overcome these obstacles.<sup>38</sup> For instance, international visitors can now purchase audio guides in languages such as German, Mandarin, Spanish, and French, depending on the exhibition.<sup>39</sup> Occasionally, the NGC will hire cultural consultants to introduce staff and volunteers, and sometimes audiences, to a specific cultural context that might be relevant for an exhibition. Virtual platforms and tools have the potential to increase access across borders – the gallery’s Artists in Canada database receives search requests from people in over 100 countries annually.<sup>40</sup>

International activities are built into the NGC’s mandate and advanced through initiatives both at home and abroad. The Gallery strategically seeks new initiatives that are intrinsic to the work of a globally-oriented institution. The gallery’s challenge is to balance domestic impact with an international imperative, and to overcome barriers to working with institutions and audiences across the globe.

36. The OCLC is described on its website as “a global library cooperative” ([www.oclc.org](http://www.oclc.org)).
37. Gary Goodacre, in conversation with the author, 2 August 2019.
38. Ibid; Dumais and Wyatt, in conversation.
39. Ibid.
40. Data analysis from the *Artists in Canada* database provided by Cyndie Campbell in person. See <https://app.pch.gc.ca/application/aac-aic/description-about.app?lang=en>.



OAG • GAO

JOHN RUDDY CUBE



# OTTAWA ART GALLERY

## ELYSE BELL

The Ottawa Art Gallery (OAG) is a municipal art gallery whose origins can be traced to a grassroots movement of artists and cultural advocates in Ottawa. Their efforts led to the establishment of the Gallery at Arts Court in 1988, which became the Ottawa Art Gallery in 1992.<sup>1</sup> Although a relatively young institution, the Gallery has grown and changed tremendously, especially during the last ten years: a period of development that culminated in the 2018 inauguration of the “new Ottawa Art Gallery,” which features more gallery space and facilities better suited to the needs of the community.<sup>2</sup> As a municipal gallery in the National Capital Region, itself straddling two provinces (Ontario and Quebec), the OAG is naturally equipoised between the local and the global; located in a place (the “Ottawa-Gatineau region...where three rivers meet”) the Gallery remarks “has long been a site of exchange and interconnection.”<sup>3</sup>

This connection between local communities and wider national and international contexts is embedded in the OAG’s mandate and activities. The philosophy at the heart of the OAG’s work is a “rooted understanding of global perspectives.”<sup>4</sup> OAG Director and CEO Alexandra Badzak explains that staff use the term “rooted” instead of “regional” because the former implies a grounding in a particular place that informs the gallery’s work but does not “put us within the boundaries of it.”<sup>5</sup> The OAG connects its “rooted” starting point to contemporary issues that go far beyond the local context of Ottawa, using art to engage with complex global concerns.<sup>6</sup>

1. That year, the OAG was also designated Ottawa’s municipal art gallery. Also in 1992, the City of Ottawa transferred custodianship of the Firestone Art Collection to the gallery. This extensive collection of Canadian art, including pieces by the Group of Seven, was collected by Ottawa residents O.J. and Isobel Firestone. In 1993, the gallery was incorporated as a charitable organization, and formed its first board of directors. Ottawa Art Gallery, *Annual Reports, 2010–2017*; provided by Catherine Sinclair (Deputy Director, Chief Curator) via WeTransfer, 8 August 2019; Ottawa Art Gallery, “Director’s Message,” and “A Proud History.” About OAG, <https://oaggao.ca/about-oag>.
2. Ottawa Art Gallery, “New Ottawa Art Gallery Unveils Contemporary Beacon in Heart of Downtown Ottawa,” press release, 28 April 2018. These plans were part of a four-year Arts Court Redevelopment project, which also included a boutique hotel by Groupe Germain Hotels and Arthaus Condominiums by DevMcGill. The new building was designed by KPMB Architects and Régis Côté et associés.
3. Ottawa Art Gallery, “Director’s Message.” About OAG, <https://oaggao.ca/about-oag>.
4. Badzak, in conversation with the author, 29 July 2019.
5. Ibid.
6. At the time of this report, the OAG was showing the exhibition *Carbon + Light: Juan Geuer’s Luminous Precision*, which looked at how Ottawa-based artist Juan Geuer explored the intersection of art, science and technology in his work, and was ahead of his time in terms of investigating how art can speak to discussions around humanity’s global effect on both a geological and spiritual level. For more information, see the exhibition catalogue published by the OAG in 2019.

Left: Image credit. Adrien Williams

7. Ottawa Art Gallery, "Vision and Mandate."
8. Gewurtz, in conversation with the author, 29 July 2019.
9. Badzak, in conversation.
10. Catherine Sinclair, in conversation with the author, 29 July 2019.
11. Global Affairs Canada, "Foreign Representatives in Canada," 7 September 2019, <https://www.international.gc.ca/protocol-protocole/repes.aspx?lang=eng>.
12. Ottawa Art Gallery, *Annual Report, 2013* (Ottawa: OAG, 2013).
13. John Robert Kelley, "The New Diplomacy: Evolution of a Revolution," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* no. 21 (2010); British Council, *Trust Pays: How International Cultural Relations Build Trust in the UK and Underpin the Success of the UK Economy* (London: British Council, 2012); Lee Davidson and Leticia Pérez-Castellanos, *The Cosmopolitan Ambassadors: International Exhibitions, Cultural Diplomacy and the Polycentral Museum* (Wilmington, DE: Vernon Press, 2019), 9–10.
14. For example, the American Embassy facilitated bringing artwork by New York-based artist Monique Mouton to the OAG for inclusion in a group show entitled *Close Listening: Eli Bornowsky, Jeremy Hof, Monique Mouton, Jinny Yu* (26 July–21 September 2014), which placed the work of Canadian Artist Jinny Yu in a national and international context. Gewurtz, in conversation; Ottawa Art Gallery, *Annual Report, 2014* (Ottawa: OAG, 2014).
15. An example of the former is *Canada Canada*; a 2017 exhibition featuring new works by British-born, Paris-trained photographer Rip Hopkins, inspired by exchanges with the Ottawa Community. Organized in partnership with the French Embassy, and with support of the British High Commission and the City of Ottawa, the exhibition was coordinated by Pépita Car, Cultural Coordinator of the French Embassy in Canada, and held at the OAG Annex Gallery at Ottawa City Hall from 28 April to 11 June 2017. Exhibition text acknowledgements for *Canada Canada*, OAG, 2017; Aislinn May, "British Photographer

In its programming, the OAG explores and reflects on "diversity and social change through a spectrum of visual arts practice, focused on – but not exclusive to the region – in a national and international context."<sup>7</sup> This practice is especially evident in exhibitions that aim to challenge traditional teleological narratives by creating a dialogue between historical and contemporary concerns through art.<sup>8</sup> Because of the unique position, size, and type of institution the OAG is, staff do not feel that they have to put on "metanarrative" shows (such as a history or overview of an artistic movement), and can therefore be more innovative in their exhibitions, for example, highlighting underrepresented artists or engaging with contemporary issues – a model that they are coming to see as their niche.<sup>9</sup> Deputy Director and Chief Curator Catherine Sinclair describes a typical group show at the OAG as containing "some local, some national, and often an international artist, as this ... mix that serves to contextualize what's happening locally."<sup>10</sup>

The OAG's ability to connect the local community with global issues is also enabled by the Gallery's location in the heart of Canada's capital, leading to longstanding relationships with the diplomatic corps of the city, home to over 130 missions and consular posts.<sup>11</sup> The international reach of the OAG is often facilitated through programs and partnerships with these various embassies and high commissions. Activities range from hosting events and providing tours of the collection and galleries for members of the diplomatic community to partnering on projects, events, and exhibitions. For example, in 2013, to mark the fortieth anniversary of the OAG's important Firestone Collection of Canadian Art (donated by Ottawa philanthropists O.J. and Isobel Firestone), the gallery put on a display of paintings from the collection of the American ambassador's residence alongside works by important American painters. This event allowed the OAG "to highlight how [the Firestone Collection] has acted as a bridge between new audience members and the gallery as well as between countries."<sup>12</sup> It also serves as an important reminder of the importance of philanthropists and cultural institutions in

cultural diplomacy, since these actors enable the people-to-people exchanges that can build mutual understanding and trust, which in turn strengthen ties; not only between nations and cities, but between museums themselves.<sup>13</sup>

The OAG's relationships are perhaps most obvious in its exhibitions, and it is common practice for the OAG to connect in some way with the diplomatic community when developing and hosting exhibitions with an international element. Sometimes this collaboration takes the form of support or assistance from an embassy to bring artists or artworks from other countries.<sup>14</sup> On occasion, an embassy might approach the gallery with an existing show or a concept for a show to display at the gallery; at other times shows are hosted at embassies or other cultural institutions in partnership with the OAG.<sup>15</sup> Another, relatively new, way of working is for a foreign embassy or cultural institution to put the OAG in touch with museums in its country, allowing the institutions to form direct partnerships for international touring exhibitions.<sup>16</sup> Increasingly, exhibitions are also developed in-house by the curatorial team, which often engages the diplomatic corps in the project. For a recent exhibition about gender identity and performativity in the work of two French surrealist photographers connected to contemporary Canadian and international artists, the curators approached the French Embassy, which agreed to partner on the project as a way of engaging in conversations around these kinds of themes – exactly the sort of work that they wanted to do as diplomats.<sup>17</sup> While not explicitly referenced in the exhibition's description, the curatorial objective to "complicate our understanding of femininity, masculinity, and...challenge binary ways of thinking"<sup>18</sup> buttresses the shared commitment made by Canada and France to pursue a feminist foreign policy agenda that seeks to "challenge traditions and customs that support and maintain gender inequalities."<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, the collaboration demonstrates the dynamic intersection of foreign and domestic cultural policies, and the role cultural institutions can play in informing such policies and strengthening ties.

Turns his Lens on Canada at 150," CBC News, 3 March 2017, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/rip-hopkins-canada-150-photographer-1.4007651>. An example of the latter is the OAG's partnership with the G17/18 Gallery at the Embassy of the Czech Republic to co-present five exhibitions from 2017 to 2019 that paired artists from Prague and Canada. Catherine Sinclair, email correspondence with the author, 2 August 2019.

16. This practice is exemplified by an exhibition of contemporary Asian art in conjunction with the Gyeonggi Museum in South Korea, planned for 2020. This partnership is facilitated by the Korean Cultural Centre, which secured a grant through the Korean government, allowing the OAG to partner directly with the Gyeonggi Museum without requiring a cultural centre or foundation as a go-between. Sinclair, in conversation.
17. Gewurtz, in conversation. The exhibition in question, called *Facing Claude Cahun & Marcel Moore*, "bridges generational and geographic divides as contemporary artists respond to the ground-breaking work of Surrealist artists and genderqueer pioneers Claude Cahun (1894–1954) and Marcel Moore (1892–1972)." The exhibition featured work by local artists Laura Taler and Cara Tierney, as well as Mark Clintberg (Alberta), Dayna Danger (Montreal), Zanele Muholi (South Africa), and Sarah Pucill (London, UK), and was on display at OAG from 14 September 2019 to 9 February 2020. For more information, see <https://oaggao.ca/facing-claude-cahun-marcel-moore>.
18. Ibid.
19. Government of Canada, 2020. "Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy." For more information, see: [https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues\\_development-enjeux\\_developpement/priorities-priorites/policy-politique.aspx?lang=eng](https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/priorities-priorites/policy-politique.aspx?lang=eng); French Embassy in Canada, 2020. "Feminist Diplomacy." For more information, see <https://ca.ambafrance.org/Feminist-Diplomacy>.

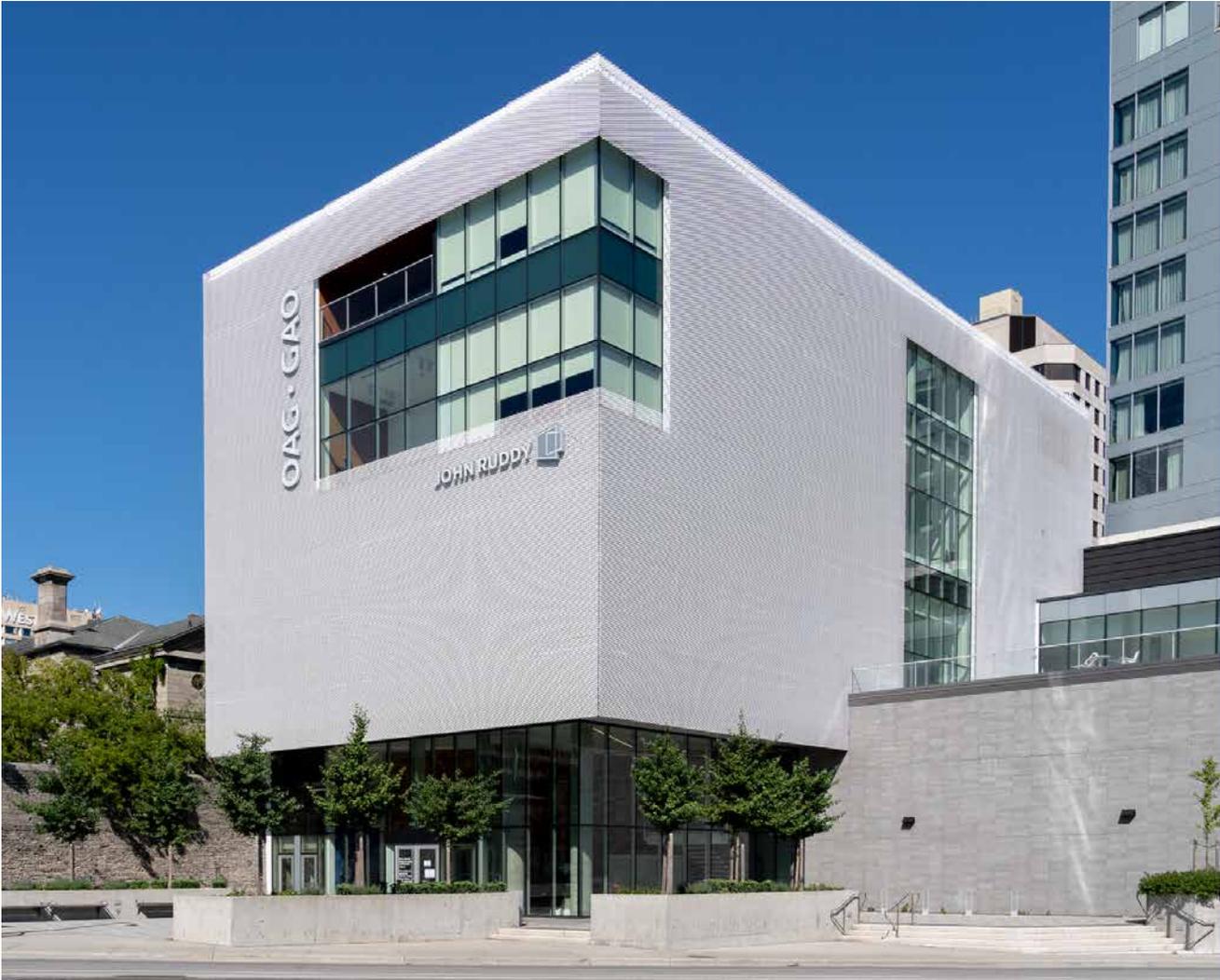
20. *Wrapped in Culture*, "About the Project," <https://wrappedinculture.ca/about/>; Ottawa Art Gallery, *Wrapped in Culture*, ex. cat. (Ottawa: OAG, 2019).
22. Ottawa Art Gallery, "Vision and Mandate," About OAG, <https://oaggao.ca/about-oag>.
22. Michelle Gewurtz, in conversation with the author, 29 July 2019; Ottawa Art Gallery, "Vision and Mandate."

Right: Image credit. iStock. Photo credit JHVEPhoto

The OAG's international reach extends well beyond its connections to the diplomatic community. The gallery also engages directly with artists on a global scale and is fully immersed in a diverse range of national and international arts communities and professional networks. The OAG's commitment to local, artist-led initiatives also expands the global dimensions of its engagement. An example of this productive local-to-global process is the 2019 exhibition *Wrapped in Culture*. When Ottawa-based, Métis artist Rosalie Favell approached the OAG with the idea to bring together ten Indigenous artists from Australia and Canada to create contemporary versions of an Australian Aboriginal possum-skin cloak and a Blackfoot buffalo robe, the Gallery saw an opportunity to present "a powerful reclamation project grounded in community engagement" that reflected Indigenous traditions in relation to arts and material culture while also bringing the past into conversation with the present.<sup>20</sup> The exhibition included a display of the cloak and robe alongside portraits of all of the collaborating artists, and is scheduled to tour both Canada and Australia after its run at the OAG. *Wrapped in Culture* is an example of the way in which people-to-people relationships can foster intercultural collaboration and understanding. It also demonstrates the OAG's commitment to community and local artists, while upholding a mandate to connect local and global concerns, in this instance, acknowledging the legacies of colonialism.

The OAG's current vision and mandate is "to be the most vital visual arts institution in Ottawa."<sup>21</sup> The Gallery achieves this objective not only through provocative exhibitions and productive collaborations with international partners, but also by reinforcing its rooted orientation to act as a dynamic space for local communities. A cultural centre as well as a gallery, the OAG ambitiously aims to be a leader in the arts community that "present[s] new ideas and provide[s] a cultural meeting place to actively promote relationships and exchanges between artists and various diverse facets of community."<sup>22</sup> Key to this role is the removal of barriers to participation and attendance through strategies such as free





23. At the time of writing (August 2019), the OAG is open 9 a.m.–9 p.m. every day. The gallery offers free childcare during opening receptions, and every Friday from 3 p.m.–7 p.m. from September to June (but not during summer camps in July and August).

24. Badzak, in conversation.

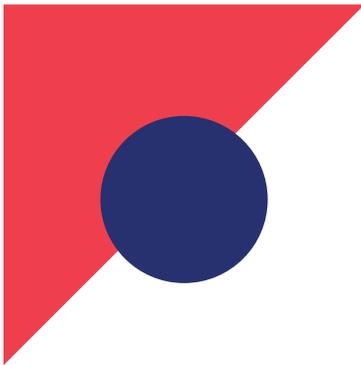
25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

entrance, extended hours of operation, and a fully accessible building with gender-neutral washrooms.<sup>23</sup> Reaching beyond what might be considered the more traditional activities of an art gallery, the OAG is committed to “holding space” for the community in order to give a sense of local ownership over the institution.<sup>24</sup>

Engaging with contemporary issues and concerns helps keep the OAG relevant, and its leadership recognizes that specific local experiences are intrinsically connected to wider contexts. Through public programs and exhibitions, the gallery connects issues of global concern (like climate change and the Anthropocene, gender diversity and identity, immigration and belonging) to their local manifestations in the Ottawa community. Importantly, staff do not aim to be objective in their engagement with these issues. Badzak observes that “there’s something changing right now in museums where we need to now start not being so neutral, and taking a stance on certain things.”<sup>25</sup> For the OAG, this principled orientation has also been a motivating force behind efforts to create a barrier-free environment, “hold space” for the community, and it uses its charitable status to help other local organizations. These activities form part of what gallery staff envision as the institution’s broader social function. One challenge staff face, however, is embedding this kind of work within the institution’s everyday practices, so that it does not sit separately from their curatorial work or public programming.<sup>26</sup>

Given the OAG’s focus on seeking societal change by “holding space” for individuals and groups to engage in issues of global concern while remaining rooted to the local community, it is no surprise that that the next phase of the Gallery’s strategic planning features “Cultural Diplomacy” as one of its three main areas of activity. On a day-to-day level, staff already feel that they are engaging with this kind of work. Curator Michelle Gewurtz views herself as an advocate for culture, and emphasizes that museum staff need to remember that “culture and representation matter, and that they can have wider-reaching implications than you might

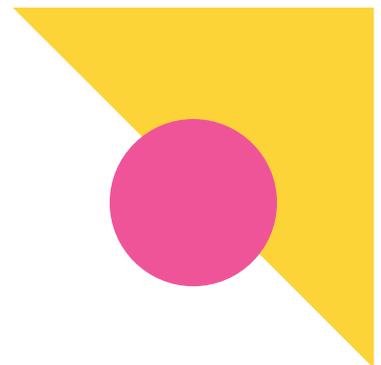




think.”<sup>27</sup> One of these implications might be a wider recognition – both by society and by museum professionals themselves – of the role museums play as diplomatic actors in their own right, with the societal power and influence to shape global conversations and, through their embeddedness in formal and informal networks of exchange, to challenge conceptions of cultural diplomacy as a state-based practice. As OAG Director and CEO Badzak reminds us, “there are a lot of issues and themes that are shared worldwide, and I think culture needs to say something about those themes and issues, and I don’t think it necessarily needs to come from a state perspective.”<sup>28</sup>

- 27. Gewurtz, in conversation.
- 28. Alexandra Badzak, in conversation with the author, 29 July 2019.

Above: iStock, photo credit: monkeybusinessimages





# POINTE-À-CALLIÈRE MONTRÉAL ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY COMPLEX

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**ANTOINE DEVROEDE**

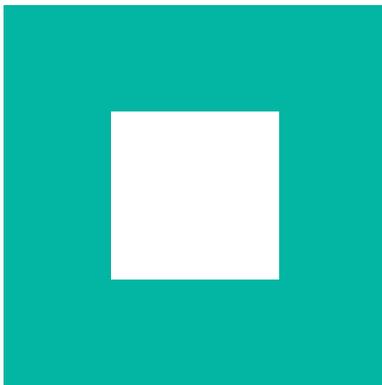
Established in 1992, Pointe-à-Callière, Montréal Archaeology and History Complex, is a leading Canadian museum of archaeology and history. It is the largest museum dedicated to archaeology in Canada and one of the few *in situ* archaeological institutions in the world. Through the exhibition of colonial era artifacts and on-location archaeological sites, it aims to educate the public about the history of Montreal. Archaeological sites found below the museum are now integrated into the permanent exhibition; an underground space that navigates between the remnants of Fort Ville-Marie, the Égoût Collecteur (an old sewer system), and several other historical reminders of Montreal's past. At just twenty-seven-years-of-age, Pointe-à-Callière is a young museum, and yet it has grown tremendously. This growth has primarily been defined by the development of its infrastructure in relation to newly discovered archaeological sites and the expansion of temporary exhibition programming.

From its inception, the museum has developed an excellent international reputation and expanded its curatorial scope by including foreign and intercultural exhibitions well beyond its original focus on Montreal's history. In the process, Pointe-à-Callière has developed valuable partnerships, immersing itself in global networks of museums, researchers, academic institutions, and state actors. The mutually beneficial nature

Left: The Pointe-à-Callière, Montréal Archaeology and History Complex in 2011.  
© Pointe-à-Callière, Montréal Archaeology and History Complex, Photo: Normand Rajotte

1. Louise Pothier, in discussion with the author, 19 July 2019 (recording).

of these partnerships, and the key role they play in the activities of the museum, allows for the creation of ambitious international projects while also promoting cultural diplomacy and international outreach. When speaking about the international dimension of their work, senior level staff at Pointe-à-Callière insist on two primary elements: first, the value of their international partnerships in enriching their exhibitions, sharing research, and exchanging know-how; and second, the strategic design of intercultural and international exhibitions that mirror the diversity of their audiences. As a result, Pointe-à-Callière is becoming a rallying site for cosmopolitan notions of identity, which meet within the museum space to create an institution at the intersections of the local and the global, the national and the international.



Pointe-à-Callière had humble beginnings as a much smaller institution than it is today. In its earliest days space constraints limited the museum's ability to host travelling exhibitions or to create temporary exhibitions of its own. And yet, the museum began to work internationally early on, about four years after its establishment. In doing so, Pointe-à-Callière developed a web of international partnerships that were critical to creating exhibitions which drew heavily on foreign collections. Senior staff members responsible for these exhibitions insist on the importance of trust, reputation, and the quality of Pointe-à-Callière's professional skillset for developing these foreign collaborations, especially the guarantee of compliance with high safety standards in the transportation and conservation of foreign museum collections. In the opinion of Louise Pothier, chief conservationist and archaeologist for the museum, *L'archéologie et la Bible – Du roi David aux manuscrits de la mer Morte* (2003), conducted in partnership with The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, "truly marked a new chapter for Pointe-à-Callière because of its scale and the considerable value of the lent collection, much of which had previously never left Israel."<sup>1</sup> This trend continued with successful exhibitions including *l'Île de Pâque, le grand voyage* (2010) and *Reines d'Égypte* (2018), among many others. Another notable

exhibit, *Les Iroquoiens du Saint-Laurent, peuple du maïs* (2007), appeared in 2016 at the Museo del Templo Mayor in Mexico City. It was part of a larger political delegation that included Quebec's premier at the time, Philippe Couillard, and Mexican state officials. Travelling exhibitions such as this one demonstrate the potential influence of international exhibitions both on Pointe-à-Callière and also on the larger diplomatic scene. *Les Iroquoiens* shows the interesting role government officials sometimes take in partnership with the museum. Often Quebec delegations and Canadian foreign affairs officials serve as initial points of contact for projects in foreign countries. These officials can facilitate certain administrative tasks, inform the museum of the existing arts industry, and share best practices for the development of a project. Likewise, foreign consulates and embassies in Canada are informed when Pointe-à-Callière develops an exhibition about their countries and cultures and are always invited to openings. This is often an occasion to rally the community of a given diaspora on the museum grounds and extend official approval for the exhibition's standing. According to Marie-Josée Robitaille, director of communications for Pointe-à-Callière, "the museum then becomes a site of exchange for a variety of communities in Montreal to present conferences, share their culture, and expose their presence to the larger Montreal community."<sup>2</sup>

Another hallmark of Pointe-à-Callière's rapid development in recent years is the expansion of its exhibition space. In 2010, Quebec's Ministry of Culture and Communications announced its support for the integration of the Mariners' House into the museum.<sup>3</sup> This addition, completed in 2012, considerably expanded the museum's capacity for temporary and travelling exhibitions, thus opening new possibilities for richer and more ambitious international exchanges. Since then, Pointe-à-Callière has broken attendance records, exceeding half-a-million visitors in 2018. Museum staff express special pride in two of their most recent exhibitions, *Reines d'Égypte* (2018) and *Les Grecs - D'Agamemnon à Alexandre le Grand* (2014–15). In the latter case, organizers stressed the value

2. Marie-Josée Robitaille, in discussion with the author, 26 July 2019 (recording).
3. The Mariners' House is located in Old Montréal, at the corner of Place d'Youville and Place Royale. Originally built in 1875, the building was purchased by the Pointe-à-Callière Museum in 2004 through Pointe-à-Callière's Foundation. In 2011, the building was included in Pointe-à-Callière's expansion plans. In this new centre devoted to history and archaeology, the Museum hosts major exhibitions, lectures and special events.



Above The Pointe-à-Callière, Montréal Archaeology and History Complex in 2011. © Pointe-à-Callière, Montréal Archaeology and History Complex, Photo: Normand Rajotte

of the collections lent by Greece and the great pride of their Greek partners in sharing them. There was a willingness to showcase Greek culture at a time when the political situation in Greece was especially difficult. The exhibition's success was due, in large part, to the cultural institution's ability to alleviate tension and initiate a positive cultural response in times of political crisis.

The international dimension of Pointe-à-Callière is also defined by a larger strategy that encompasses multiple objectives. The first objective is to build a curatorial diversity that matches the museum's mission to educate the public about Montreal's history.



By presenting intercultural and international exhibitions, Pointe-à-Callière aims to welcome an audience that reflects the diversity of the city's population, which evolved through multiple waves of immigration. The second objective is for high profile international exhibitions to serve as "hooks" for the permanent exhibition. They have the potential to attract a wide audience, sometimes atypical of the usual museum goer at Pointe-à-Callière whose primary interest is the history of Montreal. The museum has an opportunity to reach out to individuals who may not normally be interested in the permanent collection and show them that their story is also part of the city's history.

4. Anne Élisabeth Thibault, in discussion with the author, 25 July 2019 (recording).

International partnerships also have a logistical purpose. Transportation and insurance costs have risen over the last decade, and museums occasionally work together to cover expenses by sharing costs and rotating collections amongst themselves. Additionally, travelling exhibitions present an opportunity to showcase collections under different curation, with a variety of focusses, and with different audiences in mind. According to Anne Élisabeth Thibault, director of exhibitions and technology development at Pointe-à-Callière: “We are a history museum, not an art museum, but we frequently showcase collections that can be presented with an artistic lens. Thus, for us and our partners, displaying their collection with an ethnographic and historical focus provides a valuable contrast. We tend to emphasize giving more information on individual objects and telling a story. As a result, the perspective on these objects becomes quite different, and it presents an opportunity for either institution to learn from the other”<sup>4</sup> Indeed, staff at Pointe-à-Callière also found these exchanges to be opportunities to learn and improve professionally as well.

Pointe-à-Callière is also involved in archaeological and academic research. The museum has partnerships with such universities as the Université du Québec à Montréal and the Université de Montréal. Additionally, the museum regularly hosts international students and interns from prestigious schools including the École du Louvre. Pointe-à-Callière works with universities for the purpose of training archaeologists and museum workers and also to push the boundaries of research. Extensive archaeological work has

been underway in the immediate vicinity of the museum since its inception, and new projects are in the planning phase.

Pointe-à-Callière complements its research with publications, another important source of international exposure and exchange. Some of these publications are orientated toward the wider public and others are geared toward specific research expertise. Among the former, for instance, is *Terre – L’empreinte humaine Archéologie du Québec*, which provides an overview of archaeological work in Quebec.<sup>5</sup> Part of the objective of this publication program, according to Pothier, is to showcase the quality of archaeological research and heritage work in Quebec.<sup>6</sup> The museum hopes that its publications will increase exposure in the research sector nationally and internationally, and perhaps stimulate interest in archaeological work at the provincial level.

Éric Major, archivist at Pointe-à-Callière, expresses the ambitious nature of his institution’s mission in these words: “It is truly in our DNA to alternate between the local and the international. Similarly, we alternate our activities between different age ranges and various education levels. We are ambitious in the sense that we are highly versatile: we want to do research, but we also want to be accessible to the general public, we want our exhibitions to be fun, but also highly informative.”<sup>7</sup> Other senior staff members echo this sentiment. The museum’s plans for expansion are also evidence of its ambition; additional exhibition space is likely to bring increased international exposure. Pointe-à-Callière is poised to maintain an influential role in international activities and in cultural diplomacy.

5. Pointe-à-Callière, *Terre – L’empreinte humaine Archéologie du Québec* (Montréal : Les Édition de l’Homme, 2019).

6. Pothier, in discussion.

7. Éric Major, in discussion with the author, 30 July 2019 (recording).



  
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# ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

## SIMGE ERDOGAN

In 2019 the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) announced its new strategic direction for the twenty-first century.<sup>1</sup> The museum intends to become a global, ever-more outward-facing institution, a thought leader that not only opens up new spaces for intercultural dialogue and understanding but also transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries. As the museum's CEO and director, Josh Basseches, puts it "our aspiration is to be counted as one of the greatest cultural institutions in the world."<sup>2</sup> With this new direction the ROM is poised to "take a dramatic leap forward on the global stage."<sup>3</sup>

From its collections to research and exhibitions, the ROM's core activities are supported by a strong international mandate and awareness that facilitate intercultural dialogue, understanding, and interest on a global scale. Underscoring the ROM's international activities are efforts to bridge multiple communities: museum professionals, international scholars, cultural institutions, and private, state, and non-state actors. These connections take shape through networks of objects, exchanges, programs, events, fellowships, partnerships, experiences, and relationships.

The ROM's global reach is not entirely new. As Basseches explains, "the ROM, from its founding [in 1912] has been an internationally-focused institution. Its collections are very global, it's research and curatorial activities are global."<sup>4</sup> The museum dates to the turn of the twentieth century, when a group of Torontonians came together to create a museum of

1. Thank you to the Royal Ontario Museum staff for their hospitality and insights which greatly contributed to this report, especially to Sascha Priewe for his generous support, leadership, and vision, and to Brendan Edwards who provided materials and facilitated all documentary research at the ROM library and archives.
2. Josh Besseches, in conversation with the author, 15 July 2019.
3. Royal Ontario Museum, "ROM 21st Century: The Museum's Strategic Direction," <https://www.rom.on.ca/ecommunications/strategic-direction/>.
4. Basseches, in conversation.

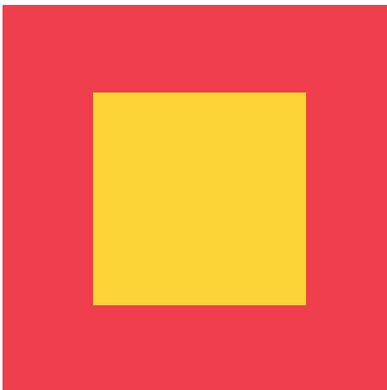
Left: Image credit © Royal Ontario Museum

5. Mark Engstrom, in conversation with the author, 11 July 2019.
6. Jean-Bernard Caron (Richard M. Ivey Curator of Invertebrate Palaeontology), in conversation with the author, 16 July 2019.

international stature. They persuaded both the Government of Ontario and the University of Toronto to fund a museum with this potential. The Ontario Legislature passed the ROM Act on 16 April 1912, and the museum opened its doors to the public for the first time barely two years later on 19 March 1914. Initially, five separate museums made up the ROM: the Royal Ontario Museums of Archaeology, Palaeontology, Mineralogy, Zoology, and Geology. These were reorganized as a single body in 1955. Until 1968, the University of Toronto managed the ROM; today it is an arm's length agency of the provincial Government of Ontario. In 2007, the ROM opened a major new extension, the Daniel Libeskind-designed Michael Lee-Chin Crystal.

Toronto and the ROM are deeply intertwined. The location of the ROM at the heart of Ontario's global city – a diverse, multicultural, and multiethnic environment – has a deep impact on the breadth of the museum's international activities. The ROM serves a diverse range of audiences and communities, tackles global issues, and works internationally, even at home. Dr. Mark Engstrom, deputy director of Collections and Research, highlights this link between the ROM's global work and the city, noting "the fact that the ROM, that Toronto itself in Canada [has] become such an international society [means] that we are well suited to serve these audiences."<sup>5</sup> As a museum with global reach, the ROM makes important contributions to the international reputation of the city and the province. The ROM's iconic entrance on Bloor Street, the Michael Lee-Chin Crystal, is regarded as a city landmark, emphasizing the museum's role as an iconic and dynamic cultural destination in the heart of Toronto.

Apart from its history and location, the ROM's core activities have strong international dimensions. The first area of museum activity with important international implications is its collection. The breadth and diversity of the ROM's collection, which encompasses art, culture, and natural history, is one of the strengths of the museum that makes it "inherently international."<sup>6</sup> ROM Vice



President of Exhibitions and Project Management Lory Drusian comments that “all our content, whether it’s natural history or on the arts and culture side, is about the world, [and] is about [having an] international [view/perspective].”<sup>7</sup> Having art, culture, and natural history under one roof distinguishes the ROM from other museums in Canada and globally.<sup>8</sup> This multifaceted focus situates it within the ever-expanding international networks of a broad range of institutions and organizations. For example, in 2017–2018, the Natural History Department loaned over 6,000 specimens worldwide.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, through its collections, the ROM transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries; its permanent galleries and temporary exhibitions encompass all collection areas across art, culture, and natural history.<sup>10</sup>

Research is another area of museum activity through which the ROM engages in global conversations and exerts its influence on an international scale. The ROM engages in a vast number of field and other research projects worldwide, producing and expanding knowledge of art, culture, and natural history. Since 2008, ROM curators have conducted fieldwork in at least 20 countries, working in different parts of the world in close collaboration with colleagues and other researchers.<sup>11</sup> ROM staff likewise travel internationally for professional development purposes, attending conferences, colloquiums, and other scholarly events, at the same time advancing the museum’s global networks. In 2016–2017 for example museum staff took 57 international trips, and in the following year another 46.<sup>12</sup> This high level of international mobility plays a key role in the creation of personal and professional networks, allowing the ROM to share its expertise and knowledge abroad and foster intercultural practice and understanding.

The ROM also acts as a cultural diplomat by convening people, communities, scholars, and partner organizations in Toronto. A key example of the ROM’s “convening power” in the cultural field is the museum’s heavy engagement with international networking events, colloquiums, conferences, and fellowships.<sup>13</sup> Through

7. Lory Drusian, in conversation with the author, 19 July 2019.
8. Engstrom, in conversation. Also, Tricia Walker (Manager, Registration), in conversation with the author, 17 July 2019.
9. Natural history specimens were loaned to universities, governments, museums, private individuals, research organizations, hospitals, and clubs and associations in Australia, Brazil, China, Czech Republic, Dominican Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Norway, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United Kingdom.
10. An example of this practice is the museum’s exhibition, *Pompeii: In the Shadow of the Volcano* (2015). Featuring approximately 200 loans from multiple cultural institutions in Italy, including the Special Superintendency for Archaeological Heritage of Naples and the Archaeological Depositories of Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Stabiae, the exhibition explored both the archaeology and culture of Pompeii, in addition to the science of volcanoes, tectonics, and eruptions.
11. Doug Currie (Vice President, Department of Natural History, Senior Curator of Entomology), in conversation with the author, 15 July 2019, Caron, in conversation.
12. This number does not include trips to the US. Priewe, in conversation.
13. “Convening power” refers to the ability to bring the right people to the table to address and find solutions to global challenges. The term comes from Smithsonian Global, “Power to Convene,” <https://global.si.edu/expertise-areas/power-convene>.

14. This event was sponsored by the Bei Shan Tang Foundation. More than 60 curators from major museums around the world gathered at the Royal Ontario Museum to discuss ideas about art, globalization, and the important role museums share in breaking down barriers.
15. Royal Ontario Museum. "Renowned Ancient Egyptian Collections from the ROM Reach a New Audience at China's Prestigious Xuzhou Museum," press release, 4 July 2019, <https://www.rom.on.ca/en/about-us/newsroom/press-releases/renowned-ancient-egyptian-collections-from-the-rom-reach-new>.
16. ROM objects featured first at the Nanjing Museum's *Pharaohs and Kings: Treasures of Ancient Egypt and China's Han Dynasty* exhibition between 9 August 2016 and 9 January 2017. They then moved to the Jinsha Site Museum in Sichuan Province where they were on display between 25 January and 4 May 2017. Royal Ontario Museum, "Important Works from the ROM's Renowned Ancient Egyptian Collections Reach new Audience at Nanjing Museum in China," press release, 16 October 2016, <https://www.rom.on.ca/en/about-us/newsroom/press-releases/important-works-from-roms-renowned-ancient-egyptian-collections>.

Right: Image credit © Royal Ontario Museum



these, the ROM gathers thought leaders in Toronto. For example, in 2015, it hosted a biennial meeting of the American Council for Southern Asian Art, and in 2017 the ROM hosted the sixth Forum for Curators of Chinese Art, which brought together the world's leading curators of Chinese Art.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the ROM is expanding its role as a leader in research and development through formal partnerships and external funding such as Social Sciences and Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) grants, the J. S. Lee Memorial Fellowship, and the Menzies Fellowship, which bring international scholars, thinkers, researchers, and collaborators to the museum and enable field research.

The ROM also hosts numerous international exhibitions in Toronto that create intercultural and cross-cultural exchanges between cultural institutions. Particularly prominent over the last decade have been collaborations with China. The ROM staged *Terracotta Warriors* in 2010 and *Forbidden City* in 2014, both created with objects loaned from Chinese museums, many of which had never travelled outside of China. As an agent of intercultural exchange, the ROM also shares its collections with Chinese museums. For example, Suzhou Museum's *Time Travel & Civilization Dialogue: The Special Exhibition of Ancient Egypt Treasures* (2019) featured over 120 ancient Egyptian objects from the ROM's renowned Egyptian Collections.<sup>15</sup> Likewise, the ROM loaned over 150 ancient Egyptian objects to the Nanjing Museum's *Pharaohs and Kings: Treasures of Ancient Egypt and China's Han Dynasty* (2016) exhibition. These objects then moved to the Jinsha Site Museum in Sichuan Province.<sup>16</sup> Through these partnerships, the ROM creates dialogue among museum professionals in Canada and China and their respective publics. Dr. Chen Shen, vice president, Department of Art and Culture and senior curator of Chinese Art and Culture, notes with regard to the *Time Travel & Civilization Dialogue* exhibition that it "[allows] people to know that we are moving forward with the two country friendships and collaborations. I feel



17. Chen Shen, in conversation with the author, 11 July 2019.
18. *Vanity Fair Portraits: Photographs 1913–2008* (2008) was organized by the National Portrait Gallery, London, UK, and toured to the Scottish National Portrait Gallery (2008), the ROM (2009), the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2009), and the National Portrait Gallery, Australia (2009). *Mesopotamia: Inventing Our World* (2013) was developed and organized by the British Museum, London, UK, in collaboration with the ROM, the British Museum, the University of Chicago Oriental Institute Museum, the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, and the Detroit Institute of Arts. *Vikings: The Exhibition* (2011) was developed and toured internationally by the Swedish History Museum.
19. In most cases, the ROM was the sole Canadian venue or the first North American venue to stage these exhibitions.
20. Priewe, in conversation.
21. In April 2018, the ROM participated in Canada's First Creative Industry Trade Mission to China. Led by the Government of Canada, this was the first creative industry trade mission with a stated goal of opening new markets for Canadian artists, creators, and creative entrepreneurs.
22. The ROM's jades featured at the exhibition *Collections of Wu Family from Suzhou in the Qing Dynasty* (2017), curated by the Suzhou Museum. Royal Ontario Museum, "Wu Dacheng: ROM Chinese Jades at the Suzhou Museum," press release, 1 February 2018, <https://www.rom.on.ca/en/blog/wu-dacheng-rom-chinese-jades-at-the-suzhou-museum>.
23. Lory Drusian (Vice President, Exhibitions and Project Management), and Tamara Onyschuk (Head, Exhibitions and Interpretive Planning), in conversation with the author, 19 July 2019.
24. Marilyn Brown (VP Philanthropy, ROM Governors), in conversation with the author, 18 July 2019.

like it is really bringing people together."<sup>17</sup> Dr. Shen's remarks seems particularly important in light of the current difficult political relations between Canada and China. Through these cultural exchanges, the ROM can make important contributions to positive relations between the two countries.

The China-Canada exchange is but one example of the range of relationships the ROM facilitates in Toronto and abroad. Other international exhibitions hosted by the ROM include *Vanity Fair Portraits: Photographs 1913–2008* (2009), *Mesopotamia: Inventing Our World* (2013), and *Vikings: The Exhibition* (2017).<sup>18</sup> Such shows produce important cross-cultural interactions between the ROM and various cultural institutions throughout the world. Crossing continents and countries, international exhibitions place the ROM at the heart of a vast network of institutional relationships.<sup>19</sup>

The ROM continues to expand its global networks through new exhibition collaborations. As Associate Vice President, Strategic Initiatives & Partnerships, Dr. Sascha Priewe explains, "Our new director has advanced the idea that we should be heavily engaged in the work of travelling our exhibitions."<sup>20</sup> Responding to the initiative of CEO and Director Basseches, who took office the previous year, in April 2017, the ROM signed onto two new partnerships while taking part in the Government of Canada's first creative industries trade mission to China.<sup>21</sup> The first was with the Suzhou Museum in Jiangsu Province, which subsequently borrowed 28 Chinese jades from the ROM's Far Eastern collection, and the second was with China's National Silk Museum in Hangzhou, where the ROM's Christian Dior exhibition opened in fall 2019.<sup>22</sup> These exchanges are a key component of the ROM's future global influence and its goal of becoming one of the world's greatest museums.<sup>23</sup> While increasing the museum's international profile and reputation, these exhibitions also contribute to revenue generation, attracting more international donors and sponsors to the ROM.<sup>24</sup>

Behind these successful engagements and exchanges are strong international collaborations that require long-term commitment. To make this possible, the ROM emphasizes development in two areas of geographic priority, China and South Asia.<sup>25</sup> In addition to its ongoing work with Chinese institutions, the ROM has started the Dan Mishra South Asian Initiative, which includes an endowed curatorial position and sustainable funding for South Asian art and culture.<sup>26</sup> Part of this initiative is the annual South Asia Lecture Series, which brings cultural innovators and experts from the South Asia region to Canada.<sup>27</sup> Another example of the ROM's commitment to South Asian art and culture is the *Treasures of a Desert Kingdom: The Royal Arts of Jodhpur, India* (2019) exhibition. Sponsored by Dan Mishra, this exhibition was organized in collaboration with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas, and the Mehrangarh Museum Trust, Jodhpur, India.<sup>28</sup>

The ROM's core activities, partnerships, and engagements all have strong international dimensions. Through vast networks of objects, exchanges, programs, fellowships, partnerships, experiences, and relationships, the ROM fosters intercultural dialogue and understanding on a global scale. Moreover, it functions as an international cultural hub, producing cross-cultural interactions, mobilizing people, and convening multiple international communities. This allows the ROM to work with cultural institutions across the world, tackle global issues, and transcend national boundaries. As a global museum, the ROM has an international awareness, mandate, and vision. It brings the international to Canada and takes Canada abroad.

25. Priewe, in conversation.
26. Entrepreneur and philanthropist Dan Mishra donated \$5 million, the largest gift received by the ROM's South Asian section. The Dan Mishra South Asian Initiative, launched in 2017, has endowed a curatorial position and provided sustainable funding for exhibitions, public engagement, research, and learning activities. Royal Ontario Museum, "The Royal Ontario Museum Receives Landmark \$5 Million Gift From Entrepreneur and Philanthropist Dan Mishra," press release, 27 April 2017, <https://www.rom.on.ca/en/about-us/newsroom/press-releases/the-royal-ontario-museum-receives-landmark-5-million-gift-from-entrepreneur-and-philanthropist-dan-mishra>.
27. The ROM's Annual South Asian Lecture Series launched in November 2017. Royal Ontario Museum, "ROM Launches New South Asia Lecture," press release, 20 November 2017, <https://www.rom.on.ca/en/about-us/newsroom/press-releases/rom-launches-new-south-asia-lecture>.
28. The exhibition brought a royal collection from Jodhpur to Canada for the first time.



# RESEARCH TEAM BIOGRAPHIES

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**JEFFREY BRISON** is Co-Director of the Cultural Studies Program and Associate Professor of History at Queen's University. He is also an Associate of the Wilson Institute for Canadian History at McMaster University and a founding member of the North American Cultural Diplomacy Initiative. His work addresses Canadian-American relations, cultural philanthropy, and the history of cultural policy formation in Canada and the United States. Currently, he is examining the role philanthropic foundations played in fostering extra-national intellectual and cultural networks of power that connected Canada, the United States, and Great Britain in the second half of the twentieth century.

**SARAH E.K. SMITH** is Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Information and Media Studies at Western University. Her research focuses on visual culture, contemporary art, and museums. Currently, she is engaged in projects addressing creative labour and cultural diplomacy. Sarah is a Fellow of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute and a founding member of the North American Cultural Diplomacy Initiative. In 2015, Sarah was the Fulbright Visiting Research Chair in Public Diplomacy in the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California.

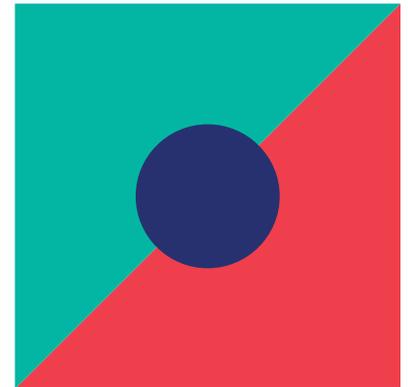


Image at left and on pages 130, 133 by Sarah E.K. Smith



**ELYSE BELL** is a PhD Candidate in the Department of History at Queen’s University. After completing her MA in Museum Studies at the University of Leicester, she worked in the museum sector in the UK for several years before returning to study in Canada. Her research interests include global and transnational history, museums and heritage, material culture, identity, migration, and empire. Her SSHRC-funded doctoral project examines material and emotional aspects of home and belonging in the British Atlantic world from c.1750-1830.

**ANTOINE DEVROEDE** is a master’s student in Cultural Studies at Queen’s University. His research focuses on the history of political thought and intellectual history in France around the period of the Vichy regime. He is interested in the political and psychological impact of defeat, national trauma, nationalism, collaboration, and the ideological narratives they create when they intersect. Antoine is currently working at Global Affairs Canada as a Learning Advisor. He is assisting in the conception and development of training for a variety of stakeholders within and outside government. In the past, Antoine worked for NGOs and non-profits in Haiti and Canada as part of cooperation and development projects.



**SIMGE ERDOGAN** is a PhD candidate in Cultural Studies at Queen's University and the Manager and Curator at the Murney Tower Museum National Historic Site of Canada. She is a museum professional with nearly a decade of experience in the museum and heritage sector in the UK and Turkey. Simge's research encompasses museums, cultural diplomacy, and visitor studies. Her doctoral project on museum diplomacy examines museum programming as a diplomatic activity that fosters a cosmopolitan worldview. She is a recipient of the European Union's Jean Monnet Scholarship Award and Common Ground Research Networks' Emerging Scholar Award.

Christina Fabiani is an interdisciplinary historian, currently enrolled in the Cultural Studies PhD program at Queen's University. Through her research on the history of tattoos and body modifications, she investigates the body as a site of identity, social control, and individual resistance. She has published and presented on a range of topics, including early twentieth-century circus performers, Foucauldian biopower, and cultural economies. Her work with the Aga Khan Museum has sharpened her focus on pluralism in a global context, constructions of cultural identity, and enactments of cultural diplomacy in an increasingly transnational world.

**KYLE HAMMER** is fifth year PhD candidate and Teaching Fellow in the Department of History at Queen's University, currently researching the history of urban and suburban change in Halifax following the First World War. Kyle's work aims to understand how identities and statuses are reproduced and entrenched through spatial patterns and state apparatuses. A SSHRC Doctoral Fellow and recipient of the MANECCS Young Scholar Award, Kyle has presented and published work on the relations between race and space through the processes of suburbanization and public commemoration. Recently he has been developing work which addresses disaster relief, demobilization, and nation-building in 20th century Canada.

**SEBASTIAN DE LINE** is an artist, PhD Candidate in Cultural Studies, and Teaching Fellow in the Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures at Queen's University. His/their research focuses on the manufacturing of values and economies that transform Indigenous and racialized Ancestors into labouring objects of extraction, accumulation, and consumption determined by acquisition criteria within museum collections and archives.

**KATIE-MARIE MCNEILL** is a PhD candidate in the Department of History at Queen's University. Currently, her CGS SSHRC-funded doctoral research examines the transnational connections between philanthropic societies that supported incarcerated people in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and in the United States between 1930 and 1970. In 2019, she was a Visiting Scholar in the School of History at the Australian National University during an extended archival research trip supported by a Michael-Smith Foreign Study Supplement scholarship. In general, her research interests include socio-legal history, prison history, and the history of education.

**VANESSA RUNIONS** is the Associate Curator at Scotiabank with nearly a decade in two of Canada's leading corporate art collections. She was a board member at Gallery 44 and Mercer Union. She began her career in the arts as the Managing Editor and Founder of Carbon Paper Magazine. Vanessa is currently pursuing her master's degree in Cultural Studies at Queen's University. Her research explores the value of arts in contemporary society, with an emphasis on access, arts engagement, and the relationship between art and health. Her work focuses on the need for corporate art collections to evolve their operations and remain viable in a rapidly changing world.

**TYLER RUSSELL** is a PhD student in Cultural Studies at Queen's University. He holds a BA in International Development Studies from Dalhousie University and an MA from Tokyo National University of Arts. He completed his post-graduate internship at the Pearson Peacekeeping Training Centre and has worked for organizations including International Ocean Institute, Municipality of Nakatsue, and samuso: space for contemporary art. Previously, he was Executive Director/Curator of Centre A: Vancouver International Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, a public art gallery in Vancouver's Chinatown. Tyler's doctoral research focuses on the role of private philanthropy in contemporary Chinese cultural diplomacy.

**BEN SCHNITZER** is a PhD student in Cultural Studies at Queen's University, where he has also taught in the School of Policy Studies. A member of the North American Cultural Diplomacy Initiative, Ben was awarded a Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) to support his doctoral research on Canadian cultural diplomacy in the contemporary period. Ben is a graduate of the Master of Public Service program at the University of Waterloo and previously enjoyed a diverse career in the federal public service, most recently as a Senior Policy Analyst in the Cultural Industries Branch of the Department of Canadian Heritage.



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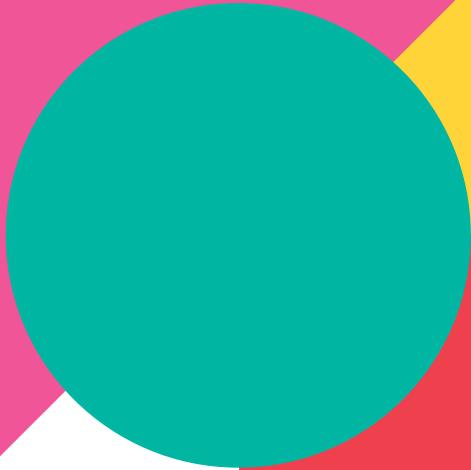
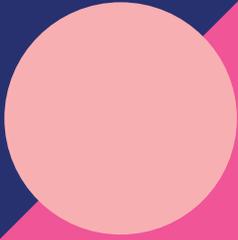


  
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