Title of Project: The Diplomacy of Diaspora and Migration Museums

Undergraduate Students
2 FIMS Undergraduate students will each be hired for 2 terms at $1,250 per term

Required Skills: excellent verbal and written communication skills, ability to work in a team environment, organizational skills, strong research skills (including familiarity with Western Libraries and/or literature reviews)

Term of Employment: September - December 2022; January - April 2023

FIMS Investigators:
Sarah Smith, Canada Research Chair in Art, Culture and Global Relations

Co-Investigators:
-Kirsty Robertson, Professor, Department of Visual Arts, Faculty of Arts & Humanities, Western
-Sascha Priewe, Director of Collections and Public Programs, Aga Khan Museum

Graduate Student
To be hired

Description of Project
The management of international relations—the realm of diplomacy—has traditionally been understood as the purview of a select and hierarchal “club” of nation states (Cooper, Heine, & Thaku 2013). It follows that cultural diplomacy has been characterized as a state-based practice, in which nations utilize culture to advance foreign policy goals. By the late twentieth century, however, scholars identified a “new diplomacy” where the state is simply one of many actors in a networked environment (Riordan 2003). Non-and-substate actors, including cultural institutions, non-governmental organizations, philanthropic institutions, educational institutions, and cities, play an increasingly influential role in global relations (Kelley 2010, 2014; Rosenu 2003; Melissen 2005).

Amongst these new players, museums emerged as crucial sites for global engagement. Museums are embedded within global webs of relations, through activities including exhibitions, programming, fieldwork, and repatriation initiatives (Collison et al. 2019). Simultaneously, museums are contested colonial institutions (Coombes & Phillips 2015, Lonetree 2012, Phillips 2011), grappling with difficult legacies, including, in Canada and other settler colonial states, their work to capture and commodify Indigenous “belongings” (Wilson 2016). Canadian museums also have to decide how they can address...
the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s (2015) calls to action. Understood as storehouses for valued objects, sites for the creation of memory, and important hubs for tourism, education, and community engagement, museums’ role as cultural diplomacy actors has yet to be fully addressed.

Within the museum sector, diaspora and migration museums offer an important perspective for consideration of cultural diplomacy. These museums sit, just like the diaspora and migratory communities they represent and have emerged from, at the location between their host nation and country of origin (Ang 2003). Thus, they defy entrenched methodological nationalism and engender narratives that bridge the local-global continuum (Darian-Smith & McCarty 2017). Beyond focusing on diaspora museums, as well as the diasporas themselves as participants in diplomacy (Brinkerhoff 2019, Dickinson 2020, Ho & McConnell 2019, Kennedy 2022, Stone & Douglas 2018), this project responds to calls to attend to diaspora communities as active agents who connect with a significant number of diverse constituencies, and are notably a group that “troubles the territorial assumptions associated with diplomatic practices” (Ho & McConnell 2019, p.237). Addressing the diplomacy of diaspora and migration museums, this project seeks to generate new understandings of museum diplomacy and contextualize the work of select Canadian and US institutions amongst their global counterparts.

Research questions to be addressed include:
• How do diaspora and migration museums productively advance diverse global relationships? This includes assessing how institutions navigate political, geographic, linguistic, and cultural agendas that affect their work and may dictate international partners.
• How do museum professionals at diaspora and migration museums perceive their involvement in cultural diplomacy work?
• How do diaspora and migration museums negotiate institutional and government policies within the context of their global work, including policy agendas that museums did not necessarily shape or that may run counter to their interests?

This research will advance our understanding of museum diplomacy and strengthen ties between research and practice in the cultural sector. The project will yield insights that speak to the global networks of Canadian and US institutions that are often presumed to have limited cultural or regional audiences. In turn, this research will allow museums to better understand their impact and leverage their connections, while formulating improved policies that speak to the relevance of the sector and its work in an increasingly connected world.

**Support and development of Undergraduate Student Fellows**

Students will receive methodological training from Sarah Smith to facilitate the literature review (fall 2022), analysis of museum policy documents (winter 2023), and qualitative interviews with practitioners (winter 2023). Through engagement with co-investigators Kirsty Robertson and Sascha Priewe, students will also gain an understanding of scholarship in the field of museology and current practices in the field. Additionally, they will receive training in knowledge mobilization, supporting the dissemination of the research (winter 2023). Students may have the opportunity to travel to Toronto to participate in research events (travel costs will be funded by Smith).
To apply, please submit your resume, an unofficial transcript, and a cover letter that explains your interest in the role and relevant skills via email to Karen Kueneman (kueneman@uwo.ca). Deadline for applications is August 10, 2022, 4:00 pm ET.