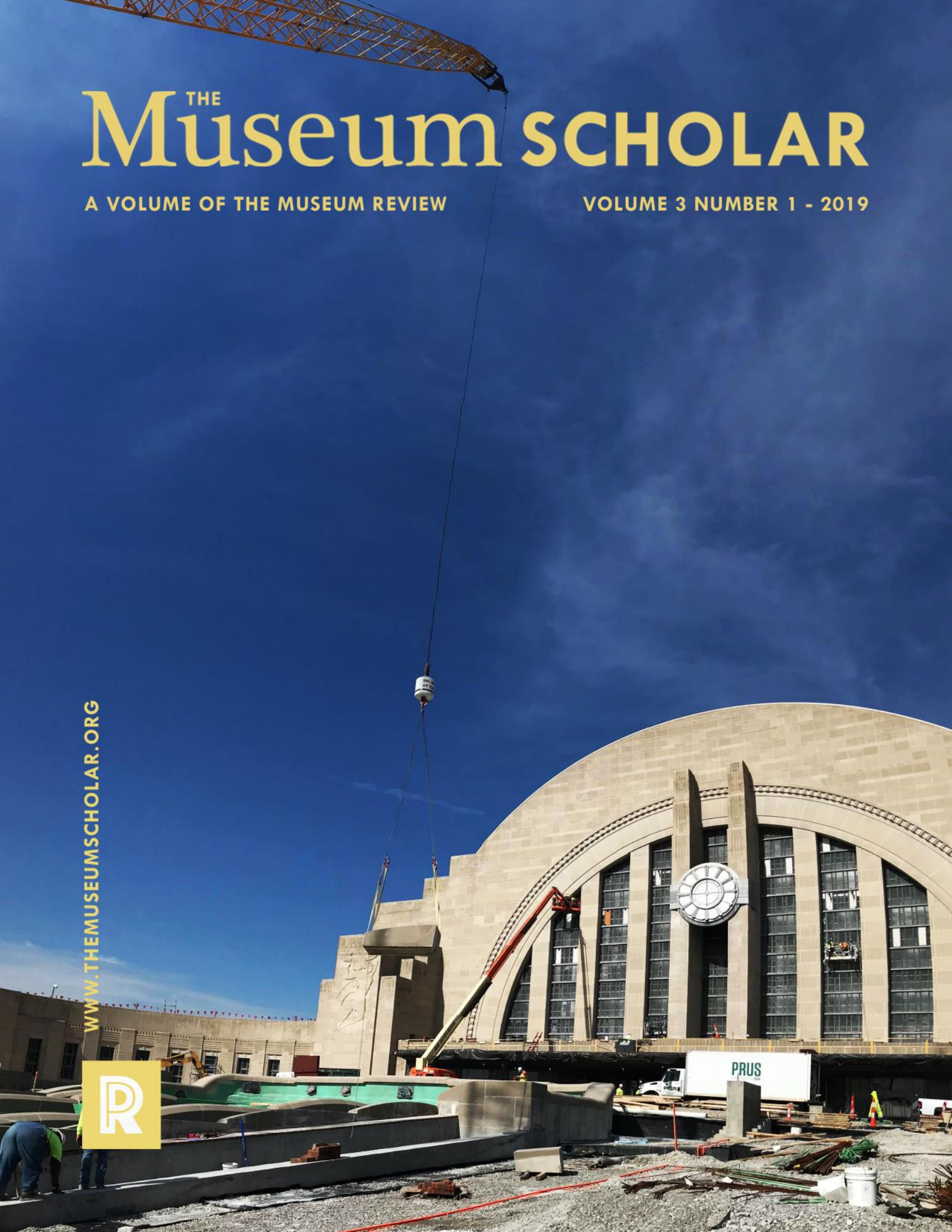


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# Museums as Points of Connection: How Institutions in North America and Europe Engage with Diaspora Communities

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**Keywords** Outreach; Diaspora; Museums; Inclusion

**Abstract** Global migration has changed the shape and nature of diaspora communities around the world, creating new opportunities for museums to engage with diverse visitors. Several museums in the West have developed innovative outreach programs that work with diaspora communities, yet little has been done to evaluate and compare these programs. This paper begins to fill this gap by presenting qualitative data from 18 interviews with stakeholders representing 11 institutions across 6 countries. Three program models are identified: tour-based programs, short-term initiatives based on existing exhibitions, and one-time education events. Key takeaways include the importance of context-based programming, empowerment of community members, confronting gender stereotypes, and increasing communication between museums. This paper also points to areas for future research.

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## Introduction

Global migration has changed the nature and shape of diaspora communities around the world. Today, 40 million people living in the United States—13% of the total population—were born in another country.<sup>1</sup> Across the Atlantic, 4.4 million people immigrated to or within the European Union in 2017 alone.<sup>2</sup> Such migration has changed the communities that museums in North America and Europe work with, creating new opportunities for museums to engage diverse visitors. A number of museums have developed innovative programs for these purposes, yet a broad-scale impact assessment study of these programs has yet to be conducted.

This paper is a first step towards understanding why, when, and how museums engage diaspora communities through programming. It is the product of a year-long collaboration between the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City and a three-person graduate team at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) Women Lead Practicum Program. The research team surveyed 18 individuals from 11 institutions across the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Italy. A particular emphasis was placed on examining programs that involve Middle Eastern diasporas, although not all programs worked exclusively with this group. As such, the core findings of this research can be applicable to museums working with any type of diaspora community.

The team found that each engagement program is highly contextual: there is no “one size fits all” model. Programs can be vehicles to empower diaspora communities with skills and leadership opportunities, and they can push back against harmful stereotypes about cultures often unfamiliar to host communities. Looking forward, programs might be improved by increasing the level of museum-to-museum communication and the sharing of best practices.

In presenting these findings, this paper first discusses relevant literature on how the museum’s role in society is changing. It then lays out the research methodology and common themes from the interviews, including summaries of existing programs. The paper next explores key facets of successful and unsuccessful initiatives. Finally, it presents recommendations for museum practitioners and researchers. The research team hopes that this paper will serve as inspiration for museum stakeholders who aspire to further develop their engagement with diaspora communities.

## The Changing Role of the Museum

There is a diversity of thought within the museum field on how museums can best engage with local communities. A museum’s mission is ideationally defined by its perceived role in society, and stakeholders invest in community engagement initiatives accordingly. There is a direct link between how a museum sees its role in society, sets its institutional agenda, and engages with the local community.

Some scholars believe museums are a catalog for the community. James Cuno, former president and director of the Art Institute of Chicago, has been an outspoken supporter of the “encyclopedic museum’s” traditional role to collect, catalog, and present samples from world cultures in a scientific and objective way.<sup>3</sup> Cuno argues that the encyclopedic museum satisfies its visitors’ “hunger to have their world enlarged, their life enriched by the experience

of new and strange, wonderful things.”<sup>4</sup> The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Musée du Louvre, both participants in this study, have traditionally been considered examples of encyclopedic museums described by Cuno.

Other museum professionals envision a very different role for the museum. For example, Robert Janes, Editor-in-Chief of *Museum Management and Curatorship*, argues that museums, as publicly supported and knowledge-based institutions, could be potential actors in addressing contemporary social issues.<sup>5</sup> Taking an interdisciplinary approach, Janes explores the meaning and role of museums as key intellectual and civic resources in a time of profound social and environmental change.<sup>6</sup>

Museum stakeholders included in this study describe innovative programs that strike a middle ground between Cuno’s and Janes’ perspectives. Survey-participant Dr. Stefan Weber, Director of the Museum für Islamische Kunst, argues that regardless of prior institutional agendas, innovative programs can change the way a museum is perceived by its local community.<sup>7</sup> He and other museum professionals across the West have undertaken various programmatic and curatorial efforts to address contemporary issues such as war and other forms of conflict.

These perspectives, while diverse, demonstrate the clear museum role – agenda - outreach link. Therefore, stakeholders interested in piloting new community engagement programs should also clearly define how these programs will impact the museum’s role in its local community. In practice, museums can engage with local communities simultaneously in ways described by different and at times dissenting voices in the museum field. In other words, there is no one right way to develop innovative models of engagement, and museums in today’s world envision themselves serving complex and multifaceted roles within their local communities through programming.

### **Surveying 11 Institutions in North America and Europe**

Individuals recruited for this study are either affiliated with a museum program that engages with diaspora communities or are employed at a museum that houses a large Middle Eastern art collection. Contacts were initially sourced by the research team’s advisor, Dr. Sarah Chicone at Johns Hopkins University, and Dr. Sarah Graff, Associate Curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. At the end of each interview, the research team asked participants to suggest additional contacts. Through this snowball method, the team reached out to over 25 individuals.



Figure 1: A map highlighting the cities of participating institutions.

The research team also traveled to Berlin, Germany, for seven days in January 2019 to conduct in-person interviews with stakeholders at the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin and the associated Multaka Program (Multaka-Berlin) that engages newcomers. In total, 18 interviews were completed. Figure 1 highlights the locations of the representative institutions.

### **Existing Programs that Engage Middle Eastern Diasporas**

Museums initiate new programs for different reasons, some inspired by the evolving role of museums in society and others growing out of stated community needs. When programs are established, they take a variety of shapes and sizes, as will be discussed below.

### **Why Museums Engage with Middle Eastern Diaspora Communities**

#### **Museums are Re-Envisioning Their Role in Society**

Museum stakeholders are developing programs that provide platforms for newcomer groups to share their perspectives. In doing so, they are defining the role of the museum and participating in political conversations.

For instance, in an interview with the research team, Dr. Stefan Weber, Director of the Museum für Islamische Kunst in Berlin, suggested that his museum is “inherently political,” housing objects that spark constructive debates about Middle Eastern heritage, culture, conflict, and gender. As a result, Dr. Weber and his team have intentionally reached out to and engaged with Middle Eastern diaspora communities. In 2015, after a wave of immigration from Syria, the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin created Multaka-Berlin, which provided Syrians and Iraqis with the opportunity to give Arabic-language museum tours to other newly arrived residents. This program created a space for diaspora community members to connect with each other and the museum, often starting important dialogues.<sup>8</sup>

Other museums believe they can use their resources for social cohesion and offer opportunities for their community members to develop their skills and experience. For example, newcomers received a structured volunteer program through the Oxford University Museums' Multaka Program (Multaka-Oxford), which helps them develop event planning, public speaking, English language, and leadership skills. In addition, the Oxford University Museums provide tours of their collections in Arabic and English to increase access for community members who are not yet fluent in English.<sup>9</sup>

### **Museums are Listening to Their Communities**

Several museum engagement programs arose from authentic conversations with diaspora community members. Before the Oxford University Museums began their Multaka Program, the museum tested a variety of program models. Nicola Bird, the Multaka-Oxford Project Manager, described how her team had a "lightbulb moment" when a volunteer said that many of the models were nice, but they didn't meet the needs of the people arriving in Oxford. This changed the way the museum approached newcomer community engagement, and led them to focus on skill-building and providing leadership opportunities that serve as essential work experiences in the United Kingdom.<sup>10</sup>

By comparison, the Musée du Louvre in Paris wanted to find a way to make objects in the museum accessible to a greater share of the population. Given feedback that low-income and immigrant populations perceive the Louvre as exclusive and difficult to visit, the Louvre piloted a three-year program, called "Le Louvre chez vous," to place over 200 replicas of artwork in one library and two social centers located in low-income Paris suburbs. The museum also partnered with 20 local community organizations to host events, including meetings, workshops, local cultural events, as well as local school collaborative projects.<sup>11</sup> In this way, the Louvre expanded program participants' access to diverse materials.

### **Museums Know the Power of Their Collections**

Successful museum engagement projects are rooted in the strength of individual collections. They leverage these strengths to meaningfully engage visitors. For example, the Global Guides program at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (Penn Museum) employs Syrians and Iraqis to give tours of the Middle Eastern Galleries. These guides are asked to choose objects from the museum's collection that have personal significance to them. Guides develop a unique tour itinerary that provides visitors with a personalized interpretation of the galleries. For example, one guide referenced a 7000-year-old spindle wheel to share stories of how his grandparents used similar instruments.

Other museums have used historic objects to address contemporary social issues. The Brooklyn Museum hosted a temporary exhibit, *Syria, Then and Now: Stories from Refugees a Century Apart*, that featured thirteenth-century Ayyubid ceramics unearthed in Raqqa alongside contemporary artwork from three artists of Middle Eastern heritage. The ceramics were collected by refugees, and the contemporary art depicted the challenges of today's Syrian refugees. The exhibition was able to leverage the unique story of older objects to highlight the challenges of modern Syrian communities.<sup>12</sup>

## How Museums Engage with Diaspora Communities

Because each collection and community are unique, effective outreach programs are contextual. Current initiatives include diaspora-led tours, one-time events that highlight the unique perspectives of underrepresented communities, and co-curated exhibitions with members of the diaspora community. This research identified three distinct categories of programming: tours, exhibition-based, and periodic events.

### Tour Programs

Museums from four institutions—Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Oxford University Museums, Penn Museum, and seven Florence museums—have initiated refugee- or immigrant-led tour programs.

- **Multaka-Berlin** currently engages 22 Syrian and Iraqi newcomers as tour guides at the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.<sup>13</sup> “Multaka” means “meeting point” in Arabic, and in 2015 when the program first began, newcomer-to-newcomer tours were given exclusively in Arabic. Now, tours are also given in German and English to reach a wider audience. Guides are given a small stipend, per German “Freiwillige Orientierungspraktika” or voluntary orientation placement law.<sup>14</sup>
- **Multaka-Oxford** at the Oxford University Museums<sup>15</sup> began as an inclusive volunteering program in 2018 that engages newly-arrived foreign residents of the Oxford area in voluntary roles including as tour guides. Tours are given in Arabic and targeted at other newcomers. Multaka-Oxford has a strong focus on skill-building, including language and public speaking skills. Additionally, Multaka volunteers are involved in other museum public programming, such as planning high profile public events, co-curating exhibitions, and object handling within the museum galleries.<sup>16</sup>
- **The Amir Project** involves seven museums in Florence, Italy.<sup>17</sup> It provides opportunities for newcomers to serve as tour guides. Most of the 40 guides are from Sub-Saharan Africa, South America, and Afghanistan.<sup>18</sup> Tours are given in Italian, and typical audiences include local citizens, foreign immigrants, and school groups.<sup>19</sup>
- **The Global Guides Program** at the Penn Museum employs two Iraqis and one Syrian as tour guides for the Middle East Galleries. Guides tell personal stories related to the objects, tours are conducted in English, and most participants are members of the broader Philadelphia community. Free public tours are offered for free every weekend for the general public and students, college, adult, and community groups can schedule private tours as well.<sup>20</sup>

### Exhibition-Based Programs

Several museums have created temporary exhibitions engaging Middle Eastern diaspora members alongside a general audience. Some exhibitions are co-curated with the community, while others are curated by museum staff.

- The **Brooklyn Museum** organized *Syria, Then and Now: Stories from Refugees a Century Apart* from October 2018 to January 2019. The exhibition presented thirteenth-century Ayyubid ceramics that were unearthed in Raqqa, Syria by the Circassian refugees alongside contemporary pieces that describe the challenges of Syrian refugees today. In conjunction, the museum brought a group of students, many of whom were of Middle Eastern descent, to the museum for a tour with one of the artists who contributed to the exhibition.<sup>21</sup>



- The **Aga Khan Museum's** exhibition *Syria: A Living History*, on display from October 2016 to February 2017, showcased the rich cultural history of Syria. The museum produced a three-minute video of newly arrived Syrians in Toronto reacting to the objects of the exhibition.
- The **Portland Art Museum** organized a photography exhibition from February to May 2018, *Common Ground*. The exhibition focused on human rights, displacement, and conflict. In conjunction with the exhibition, the museum worked with Portland Meet Portland, a refugee and immigrant service agency, to welcome newcomers into the museum. The two organizations jointly produced a four-part podcast series that featured immigrant and refugee youth commenting on the exhibition and reflecting on their experiences in Portland.

### Education Programs and Single Events

Museums have created education programs and periodic events that highlight the unique perspectives and cultural heritage of underrepresented communities.

- The **Aga Khan museum's** *Finding Home: Personal Journeys and Visual Narratives* engaged 300 school children between December 2016 and January 2017. Many of the students were newcomers to Toronto, coming from Syria, Sudan, Colombia, Iraq, the Congo, Nigeria, and Eritrea. They worked with two artist-educators from Venezuela and South Africa to create three-dimensional structures that reflected their meaning of "home" and their artworks were displayed in the museum.<sup>22</sup>
- The **Oriental Institute** hosted a one-time Assyrian cooking class in April 2017. The event brought together the expertise of an Assyrian cook with a professor of Assyriology at the University of Chicago, allowing participants to cook traditional food while learning about its historical significance. Many members of the Assyrian diaspora community reported that they felt a personal connection with their heritage through the event.<sup>23</sup>
- The **Musée du Louvre** established a three-year program title *Le Louvre chez vous* at the beginning of 2017. The museum partnered with one local art library and two social centers in low-income neighborhoods outside Paris that house large immigrant populations. The museum has placed over 200 replicas of pieces from the museum in these places and partnered with 20 local community organizations to host events around the artwork.<sup>24</sup>

### Community Partnerships

Nearly all programs built upon new or existing community partnerships. The Multaka Program at the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, for instance, identified its original group of volunteers through its existing Syrian Heritage Project network.<sup>25</sup> Other institutions have used long-term relationships with cultural affiliation groups or embassies to recruit participants for their programs.

Many museums work in partnership with community organizations that provide important support for newcomers' needs and goals. "You need community organizations. When museums try to work alone, they keep perpetuating the same approach over and over," Nicola Bird from Multaka-Oxford expounded.<sup>26</sup> However, Linda Norris from the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience noted that interfacing with a single community organization cannot be a stand-in for comprehensive community engagement.<sup>27</sup> Organizations may represent a specific portion of their local community and not necessarily be inclusive of diversity within

the community itself. Therefore, a museum might miss important perspectives when relying solely on a single organization.

Stakeholders at North American museums often referred to well-established partnerships in program development. For example, The Oriental Institute in Chicago has developed a long-standing relationship with members of the local Assyrian community. The community often hosts events at the museum and helps promote cultural events to its members. Similarly, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art's Art of the Middle East Department has partnered with the Farhang Foundation as well as other private foundations, which represent members of the local Iranian community in the greater Los Angeles region, when developing and promoting museum events.

Museums in Europe have begun to form new partnerships with community groups that work with newly-arrived residents or refugees. A coalition of seven museums in Florence, Italy created the Amir Project to engage newcomers in their community. To do so, the museums worked with refugee support and resettlement agencies to recruit paid tour guides and voluntary tour participants.<sup>28</sup>

### **Gender Considerations**

While gender was not the primary consideration of a community engagement program in the institutions surveyed, it was a way that museums foster inclusive, empowering spaces. Salma Jreige from Multaka-Berlin described how she used gender-neutral language when developing promotional materials in Arabic. For Jreige, the use of gender-neutral language signals that the Multaka Program is thinking about gender dynamics in its program design.<sup>29</sup>

In other cases, museums have used their collections to spark important conversations about the perception of gender identities. Aysin Yoltar-Yıldırım noted that the Brooklyn Museum has previously displayed historical objects from the Middle East in its permanent collection that may be interpreted to depict gender fluidity from the present-day perspective. Although such pieces had a different meaning in their own contexts, they can spark conversations on gender issues across history and culture.<sup>30</sup>

Still, other museum stakeholders discuss the importance of recruiting and retaining female leaders from diaspora communities. Rachel Harrison in Oxford reported that when Multaka-Oxford first started, most volunteers were men. Over time, Harrison said that more women began coming to the museum. One Multaka-Oxford volunteer from Middle Eastern heritage once described the impact of this experience, "I felt safe and respected in the workplace here. This gave me encouragement, and I am planning to apply for a teaching assistant position right now."<sup>31</sup> Hilary Walter at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art also emphasized that recruiting diverse individuals to the museum studies field ensures that crucial, yet often forgotten, perspectives are considered.<sup>32</sup>

### **Programmatic Challenges**

Once a program is operational, museums still face ongoing sustainability challenges. These challenges include bureaucratic slowdown, sustained engagement, and securing long-term funding.

Program managers report that it can be difficult to navigate the bureaucracy of large institutions. At times, this can delay program approval and funding. Stakeholders from the Penn Museum, for example, reported that museum leadership intentionally aligns their programmatic efforts with larger university goals.<sup>33</sup> As such, each program must be vetted and approved by a university official, which can make it difficult to implement new programs quickly. Conversely, stakeholders from the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto stated that they had been able to create and execute engagement projects in a short timeframe because their institution is small and nimble.<sup>34</sup>

Some programs also struggle to sustain volunteer engagement. Multaka-Berlin was created in 2015 in response to a large influx of Syrian refugees. Most of the program's volunteers were refugees themselves. Over time, these volunteers secured employment or admission to universities, which made sustained engagement with the museum more difficult.<sup>35</sup>

Funding is also a challenge for some museums, as it is crucial to a program's longevity, design, and impact. Some stakeholders reported that they were worried that unstable funding would force them to cut-off existing programs. Conflicts of interest can also emerge from funding sources. For example, the Brooklyn Museum chose to relinquish funding from the Misk Art Institute, which received funding from the Misk Foundation established by the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, after news emerged that the Saudi government had killed journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018. The museum decided not to use funds from the Misk Art Institute for the exhibition but decided to stay within the Arab Arts and Education Initiative. However, forgoing the funds did put unanticipated financial pressure on the museum to fund the *Syria, Then and Now* exhibition internally. Yoltar-Yıldırım, therefore, pointed out that even using accepted funds can become problematic for the museums under certain social circumstances and careful decisions need to be made by museum administrations.<sup>36</sup>

## **The Path Forward: Building Inclusive, Empowering Programs for Diaspora Communities**

The results of these interviews reveal several key takeaways, including the importance of context-based programming, empowerment of community members, confronting gender stereotypes, and increasing communication between museums.

### **Context is Key**

Each of the 11 institutions highlighted in the study developed unique approaches to engaging with Middle Eastern diaspora or newcomer communities. This emphasizes that there is no "one size fits all" approach to reaching these communities. For instance, although the Oxford program borrowed its name from the Multaka initiative in Berlin, its purpose is quite different. Multaka-Oxford activities are focused on skill-building, while Multaka tours in Berlin are primarily meant to be a point of connection for newcomers.<sup>37</sup>

When developing engagement programs, museums should also consider the context of their community. Brooklyn Museum Curator Aysin Yoltar-Yıldırım described how she coordinated a visit from a local high school that had a large number of students with Middle Eastern heritage to the *Syria, Then and Now* exhibition. The students were greeted by one of the artists who contributed artwork to the exhibition. However, the artist was dismayed that a few students showed little interest in the art. Yoltar-Yıldırım stated that this experience reveals that it is

important to gauge the interest of community members to adjust programming.<sup>38</sup> The mere fact that a person comes from Middle Eastern heritage does not mean that he or she will be interested in a specific collection.

### **Programs That Empower**

The most successful engagement programs empower individuals instead of merely including them in museum initiatives. Programs that empower include those that put diaspora community members in leadership positions, focus on skill-building, and break down barriers between newcomers and long-time residents in the community.

Empowering programs can have a strong and meaningful effect on program participants. For one thing, seeing representative cultural heritage celebrated can make community members feel empowered in their new communities. For another, through volunteering with the museum, community members can gain recognition in a professional place independent of their nationalities or identities. When reflecting on his experiences with the museum, a tour guide from the Amir Project who had recently immigrated to Italy said, “This was the first time that I have felt recognized in local society. I feel proud to explain Italian culture to Italian people.”<sup>39</sup>

Empowerment-based programs can also positively impact the work of the museum itself. “Our newcomer tour guides reach people I never could,” explained Dr. Stefan Weber, Director of the Museum für Islamische Kunst in Berlin. To Weber, programs such as Multaka give voices to groups that are traditionally underrepresented in the museum field.<sup>40</sup> This allows the museum to better address and grapple with larger social issues, such as identity and cultural heritage, and demonstrates that some institutions are making conscious efforts to shift their role in society to be a convener of diverse thoughts.

Other institutions have been able to leverage their partnerships with diaspora community members to answer questions about object sourcing. Ellen Owens from the Penn Museum described how a visitor of Middle Eastern heritage was uncomfortable with the presence of some objects in the Middle East Galleries. A Syrian tour guide with the Global Guides Program responded by explaining the museum’s sourcing practices in Arabic. “Having the guide step in sent a different message than if I had been there,” Owens explained, “the guide and visitor share the same language and come from the same community.”<sup>41</sup> By putting individuals of Middle Eastern heritage in key positions, museums thus may be able to improve relationships with their visitors and address key questions more effectively.

Beyond engagement programs, museums should also consider how to recruit and retain employees of different heritages. Jovanna Scorsone from the Aga Khan Museum stresses the necessity of having a diverse museum workforce to ensure that museums are places of relevance for many audiences. When planning programs, different perspectives offer new opportunities for connection. This comes up often at a museum celebrating the diversity of Muslim civilizations. “We recently held a Nowruz (Persian New Year) celebration event. That’s something we might not have thought of without a diverse staff. It also made space for people of Persian origin to tell their own story, while introducing a broader audience to new cultures and traditions they may not have the opportunity to hear from otherwise.”<sup>42</sup> Also, the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin and the Oxford University Museums have hired members from

diaspora communities into full-time staffing roles that oversee museum tour-guide programs. Both the Project Coordinator of Multaka-Berlin and the Community Ambassador for Multaka-Oxford bring important professional experience and community networks to their professional roles, and the programs are strengthened as a result.

### **Confronting Gender Stereotypes**

As places of cultural celebration and community convening, museums have the power to share narratives that confront gender stereotypes. Specifically, museums can challenge contemporary Western representations of Muslim women that are one-dimensional. One such example is the Berlin Museum für Islamische Kunst. Artwork is displayed in chronological order, and the gallery entrance includes a 600 CE mosaic that depicts a nude woman. Salma Jreige from Multaka-Berlin said that this object had sparked constructive debate among members of both Western and Middle Eastern communities.<sup>43</sup>

In addition, museums can break down gender stereotypes by employing more immigrant women and women of color. Not only will more diverse hiring bring new perspectives, but the presence of such women directly confronts the negative portrayals of women from different cultural backgrounds. The Staatliche Museen zu Berlin and the Oxford University Museums have already hired women from Middle Eastern diaspora communities into crucial positions, an encouraging first step.

### **Increasing Communication and the Sharing of Best Practices**

Museums would benefit from increasing communication and sharing best practices. By doing so, museums can learn about successful and unsuccessful initiatives by peer institutions and improve the quality of museum engagement programs.

Some of the European institutions interviewed have begun to develop a loose network. Tour guide programs, including those at the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Oxford University Museums, and a coalition of museums in Florence, have created the “Multaka Network.” These practices are valuable, as they allow museums to collaborate and share insights and best practices with one another.

While programs in the United States and Canada that target diaspora communities tend to be short-term, museum stakeholders do express interest in sharing best practices. For them, intra-agency collaboration will be an effective way to develop new program models and pool ideas and resources across museums.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **Considerations for Museum Professionals**

Each museum and collection is unique, and therefore every museum program will reflect the specificity of its community and the singular beauty and culture of the objects it displays. However, as highlighted by this study, several key trends define a successful community engagement project. Museum professionals looking to develop new programs can consider these aspects when developing their initiatives.

- Programs should be responsive to community needs. Before starting a program, museums should conduct exploratory interviews with their target communities in the

local region. In addition, community members should not just be the recipients of the programs, but also influencers in the programs' management and design. Museums could also consider hiring members from the community to lead the program to better connect with and respond to the community.

- Partnerships are essential to identifying and adapting programs to community needs. Museums could consider building upon existing community organizations or establishing new community partnerships when starting a new engagement program. Cultural centers, religious institutions, or immigrant support services may be natural places for collaboration. However, museums should be careful in selecting community organizations to ensure that they represent the diversity of the community itself, not just one portion of the community.
- Programs are built on the strength of each museum's collections. Museums should consider the relative strengths and weaknesses of its collections and how to leverage the strengths to better engage with diaspora communities. In particular, western museums that possess objects of rich cultural significance for diaspora communities have opportunities to facilitate authentic engagement with controversial topics. Allowing these conversations to take place in a museum not only broadens an institution's role in society, but it can pave the way for deeper connections between visitors and the objects. This could form stronger relationships between the museum and its visitors, leading to repeat engagement.

### Areas for Future Research

This study also reveals several areas for future research, including a systematic impact assessment of museum programs, needs assessment of diaspora communities, and research on the role of immigrant women and women of color in museums. Future research could also look into how stakeholders define the role of the museum and how they develop community engagement initiatives. As communities continue to grow and change, it will be essential for ongoing research and evaluation to be conducted on how museum programming can serve to uplift a community and contribute to a more open and inclusive world.

### List of Figures

Figure 1: A map highlighting the cities of participating institutions.

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### Notes

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<sup>3</sup> James Cuno, *Museums Matter: In Praise of the Encyclopedic Museum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Cuno, *Museums Matter*, 2011.

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<sup>5</sup> Robert Janes, *Museums in a Troubled World: Renewal, Irrelevance Or Collapse?* (New York: Routledge), 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Stefan Weber, "Pulling the Past into the Present: Curating Islamic Art in a Changing World, a Perspective from Berlin," *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* 7 (2) (2018): 237-61.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Nicola Bird, Multaka Project Manager, Oxford University Museums, interview by authors, typed notes, January 16, 2019, Phone.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Cathy Losson, Head of Services, Musée du Louvre, interview by authors, typed notes, February 19, 2019, Phone.

<sup>12</sup> Aysin Yoltar-Yildirim, Hagop Kevorkian Associate Curator of Islamic Art, Brooklyn Museum, interview by authors, typed notes, February 8, 2019, Video Conference.

<sup>13</sup> Staatliche Museen zu Berlin participating in the Multaka-Berlin program include: the Museum für Islamische Kunst; the Vorderasiatisches Museum; the Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst; the Deutsches Historisches Museum.

<sup>14</sup> Salma Jreige, Multaka Program Coordinator, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, interview by authors, typed notes, January 15, 2019, Berlin.

<sup>15</sup> Oxford University Museums participating in the program include: the Pitt Rivers Museum and the History of Science Museum.

<sup>16</sup> Rachel Harrison, Multaka Volunteer and Community Engagement Coordinator, Oxford University Museums, interview by authors, typed notes, January 10, 2019, Video Conference.

<sup>17</sup> Florence Museums participating in the Amir Project include: the Museo Civico Archeologico; the Museo di Palazzo Vecchio; the Museo degli Innocenti; the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo; the Museo Bandini; Twentieth Century Museum (Museo Novecento); the Museo Primo Conti.

<sup>18</sup> Amir Project tour guides include: Afghanis, Tunisians, Egyptians, Malians, Gambians, Moroccans, Cameroonians, Colombians, Italians, Nigerians, Venezuelans, Senegalese, Ivorians, Peruvians, and Ghanaians.

<sup>19</sup> Chiara Damiani, Education Programs Consultant, Duomo Museum, interview by authors, typed notes, January 19, 2019, Phone.

<sup>20</sup> Ellen Owens and Kevin Schott, Merle-Smith Director of Learning Programs and Associate Director of Interpretive Programs, interview by authors, typed notes, 9 January 2019.

<sup>21</sup> Aysin Yoltar-Yildirim, interview, February 8, 2019.

<sup>22</sup> Jovanna Scorsone, Education and Public Engagement Manager, Aga Khan Museum, interview by authors, typed notes, February 19, 2019, Video Conference.

<sup>23</sup> Tasha Vorderstrasse, University and Continuing Education Program Coordinator, Oriental Institute, interview by authors, typed notes, January 22, 2019, Video Conference.

<sup>24</sup> Cathy Losson, interview, February 19, 2019.

<sup>25</sup> Salma Jreige, interview, January 15, 2019.

<sup>26</sup> Nicola Bird, interview, January 16, 2019.

<sup>27</sup> Linda Norris, Global Networks Program Director, International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, interview by authors, typed notes, January 17, 2019, Phone.

<sup>28</sup> Chiara Damiani, interview, January 18, 2019.

<sup>29</sup> Salma Jreige, interview, January 15, 2019.

<sup>30</sup> Aysin Yoltar-Yildirim, interview, February 8, 2019.

<sup>31</sup> Rachel Harrison, interview, January 10, 2019.

<sup>32</sup> Hilary Walter, interview, February 1, 2019.

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- <sup>33</sup> Ellen Owens and Kevin Schott, interview, January 9, 2019.  
<sup>34</sup> Jovanna Scorsone, interview, February 19, 2019.  
<sup>35</sup> Salma Jreige, interview, January 15, 2019.  
<sup>36</sup> Aysin Yoltar-Yildirim, interview, February 8, 2019.  
<sup>37</sup> Nicola Bird, interview, January 16, 2019.  
<sup>38</sup> Aysin Yoltar-Yildirim, interview, February 8, 2019.  
<sup>39</sup> Chiara Damiani, interview, January 18, 2019.  
<sup>40</sup> Stefan Weber, interview, January 16, 2019.  
<sup>41</sup> Ellen Owens and Kevin Schott, interview, January 9, 2019.  
<sup>42</sup> Jovanna Scorsone, interview, February 19, 2019.  
<sup>43</sup> Salma Jreige, interview, January 15, 2019.

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