

Curator of Global Indigenous Art and Lifeways  
The University of Kansas

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Posted Oct. 5, 2023, set to expire Jun. 6, 2024

**Job Title** Curator of Global Indigenous Art and Lifeways  
**Department** Spencer Museum of Art  
**Institution** The University of Kansas  
Lawrence, Kansas

**Date** Oct. 5, 2023  
**Posted**

**Application** Open until filled  
**Deadline**  
**Position** Available immediately  
**Start Date**

**Job** Professional Staff  
**Categories**  
Faculty Associate

**Academic** Museum Studies  
**Field(s)**  
Native American Studies  
Ethnic/Multicultural Studies

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**Description**

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# Curator of Global Indigenous Art and Lifeways

## Spencer Museum of Art

### Position Overview

The Spencer Museum of Art at the University of Kansas stewards and supports broad public engagement with a collection of more than 48,000 works of art created across a wide range of time periods, geographic locations, and cultural affiliations. The Museum seeks a Curator responsible for the collaborative stewardship, care, and accessibility of the approximately 9,300 objects and supporting materials (62% North and Central American, 15% African, 9% South American, and 14% Asian, Oceanic, and European) that comprise the [collection of Global Indigenous art](#). This collection encompasses historical and more contemporary artworks across mediums that came to the Museum through a variety of channels, often by people associated with the University. More recent museum purchases have expanded the collection in ways that insert Indigenous art into global dialogues about art, environment, culture, and social change. Integral to the position, the Curator of Global Indigenous Art and Lifeways will actively engage contemporary Indigenous knowledge keepers and community members to build lasting relationships and integrate their voices, perspectives, and beliefs into museum practices and programming.

The University of Kansas is located in the city of Lawrence, a thriving community 40 minutes from the Kansas City metropolitan area and 30 minutes from the state capital, Topeka. Lawrence is a progressive college town of 95,000, boasts a lively downtown with many cultural venues, award-winning restaurants, and a nationally celebrated independent bookstore among its many independently owned small businesses. Founded in 1865, KU is a designated Carnegie comprehensive doctoral and research university and is one of only 34 public members of the prestigious Associate of American Universities (AAU). The University enrolls more than 28,000

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Universities (AAU). The University enrolls more than 28,000 students representing all 50 states and 112 countries.

At the University of Kansas, diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging are an important part of our culture and university strategic plan. Applications from members of underrepresented groups are encouraged. The successful candidate must be eligible to work in the U.S. by the effective date of the appointment.

### Job Description

**The Curator** will make Indigenous art and ways of knowing and being more visible and prominent, assert Indigenous priorities, and develop innovative, exploratory, and expansive curatorial practices. Driven by a community-centered approach and methodology of team-based collaboration that includes the core tenets of respect, reciprocity, and relationship-building, the Curator will contribute to developing inter-relational ways of working, opening museum spaces to other voices, implementing listening practices, and activating community engagement and our collective imagination for a just future. The person in this position must bring a deep cultural sensitivity to their work with people and art to build relationships grounded in trust. Among the many potential partners for collaboration at KU are the Indigenous Studies Program, the Museum Studies Program, the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, the Kansas African Studies Center, the departments of African and African American Studies, geography and atmospheric sciences, visual art, art history, and anthropology, in addition to the First Nations Student Association, Native American Initiatives, and the Indigenous Arts Initiative. Other important local partners include neighboring Haskell Indian Nations University and a number of regional Native communities.

### Job Duties

#### Exhibitions and Research (30%)

- Center and support Indigenous communities, knowledges, and experiences through research and scholarship, including exhibitions, commissioned works, and digital projects.
- Amplify and integrate voices and perspectives of Indigenous elders, cultural carriers and leaders, artists, and curators.
- Make collections accessible through active consultation and collaboration with Indigenous community members.
- Organize collection-based and loan exhibitions, including in collaboration with community and campus partners.
- Co-generate research projects to support past, present, and future Indigenous culture.

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- Provide expertise about and conduct research on the collection; encourage and support collection research, including by descendent community members.
- Maintain an active program of community-engaged scholarship with Indigenous communities.
- Collaborate with faculty, staff, students, Indigenous communities, and other public constituencies to meaningfully integrate Indigenous art and culture into the teaching and research mission of the University.
- Initiate, collaborate on, and contribute to grant proposals and funded project management.
- Participate in intellectual life of the Museum and University as well as professional and intellectual discourse related to global Indigenous art and the museum profession.
- Remain current with changes in museums in the international environment, including legal and ethical issues, and participate in the development of more expansive reparative approaches with Indigenous communities.

### **Collection Stewardship, Care, and Development (25%)**

- Develop meaningful relationships and collaborative practices with Indigenous communities for stewardship of the collection.
- Respectfully tend to the ways objects carry knowledge and participate in culture.
- Oversee care, conservation, display, lending, and general use of the Museum's global Indigenous art collection and its records, integrating standard museum practices with Indigenous care practices.
- Catalogue or supervise cataloguing for the global Indigenous art collection with a focus on inclusive cataloguing and working with museum colleagues and Indigenous community members to reconsider and update records and data management.
- Ensure that federal, state, and university regulations and policies relevant to the collections are followed, including those outlined in the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).
- Work with Museum and University colleagues, such as the repatriation program manager, in addition to representatives of Indigenous communities, to monitor the progress and continue the repatriation of objects, including but not limited to those as specified under NAGPRA.
- Lead the Spencer Museum of Art team for NAGPRA and related claims research and resolution.
- Acquire historical and contemporary works of art for the collection, advise on deaccessioning, and maintain and develop relationships with dealers and donors.

### **Community Engagement and Teaching (20%)**

- Assist and support in the revitalization and preservation of the culture and traditions of Indigenous peoples, connecting the vibrant lives of artists and communities with their artworks.

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- Co-create spaces and practices to inspire and benefit communities and future generations through meaningful and memorable art experiences.
- Support curricular engagement with the collection and exhibitions, including leading or participating in class and community visits.
- Present and participate in programs relating to relevant exhibitions and aspects of the collection.
- Field and respond to inquiries from the public.
- Provide guidance and advice for programming and other activities with Indigenous communities.
- Work with colleagues in Advancement and Grants to develop support for programs and community partners.
- Teach occasional courses as appropriate.

### **Mentorship and Supervision (10%)**

- Mentor and advise, including students in Museum Studies and Indigenous Studies Programs.
- Supervise graduate intern.

### **Professional Service (10%)**

- Contribute to major initiatives across the museum and campus, with regional and state partners, and within the museum profession.
- Sustain and expand scholarly and professional collaborations across the University, the state of Kansas, and with national and international colleagues.
- Serve on University and professional committees.
- Represent the Museum at scholarly, professional, campus, public, and cultivation events.
- Establish and maintain active professional affiliations regionally, nationally, and internationally.

### **Other Duties as Assigned (5%)**

- Participate in museum- and campus-wide initiatives and trainings.
- Contribute to targeted digital projects.
- Attend all staff meetings.
- Assist and participate in other initiatives as they arise and in concert with supervisor.

### **Required Qualifications**

#### **Assistant Curator Level**

1. Ph.D. or terminal degree in art history, visual art, visual/cultural studies, Indigenous studies,

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museum studies, or other related fields.

2. Relevant experiences, including demonstrated experience working with collections.
3. Knowledge of global Indigenous art and visual culture through study and/or experiences as evidenced by application materials.
4. Demonstrated record of scholarship such as completed dissertation, peer-reviewed publications, projects or performances, and/or contributions to exhibitions and exhibition publications.
5. Demonstrated record of making art accessible to wide audiences as evidenced by application materials.
6. Demonstrated ability to work collaboratively and creatively on teams.
7. Experience working openly and effectively with community members, including students and artists, as evidenced by application materials.
8. Demonstrated knowledge of NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act) and other regulations and issues regarding repatriation.

**Associate Curator Level:** Consideration will be given to assignment of associate curator based on fulfillment of all of the above, plus the following:

1. Eight or more years of relevant arts, collections and/or museum experiences
2. Documented achievement of high-level, professional expertise in fields or areas of specialization.
3. Demonstrated record of accomplishments that would advance the goals of Spencer Museum of Art, the University of Kansas, and the profession.
4. Quality and quantity of research (scholarship and/or creative and innovative work) demonstrating a successfully developing career.
5. Demonstrated pattern of service to an institution at one or more levels; to the discipline or profession; and/or to the local, state, regional, national, or international communities.

### Contact Information to Applicants

Celka Straughn, Deputy Director for Public Practice and Curatorial  
Mellon Director of Academic Programs

[straughn@ku.edu](mailto:straughn@ku.edu)

(785) 864-0136

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Additional Candidate Instruction

For complete information and to apply, go to <https://employment.ku.edu/academic/26027BR>. A complete application packet will include the following:

- Cover letter addressing how you meet the required qualifications
- Curriculum vitae
- Statement of research interests and future directions (approximately 500-1000 words)
- Statement of collection philosophy and interests (approximately 500-1000 words)
- Names, email and contact information for three professional references

In addition to the materials above, learning about each applicant's contribution and engagement in areas of diversity is an important part of KU's mission. As a result, applicants will be presented the following question at the time of application:

- Describe your experiences working with people from diverse backgrounds and explain how those experiences reflect your commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

**Application review will be November 3, 2023 and will continue until a pool of qualified applicants is obtained.**

**Contact Information**

Please reference Academickeys in your cover letter when applying for or inquiring about this job announcement.

**Contact** Chris Anderson  
The University of Kansas  
Lawrence, KS

**Contact E-mail** [cwanderson@ku.edu](mailto:cwanderson@ku.edu)