

NAME Fellows at AAM:

Insights from the Future

Interviews by Nina Simon

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Each year, NAME provides fellowships for exhibition design students and emerging museum professionals to attend the AAM annual meeting. These fellowships are a powerful way to open up the conference to promising individuals who might not otherwise be able to come. The exchange of ideas between established and new exhibition professionals is always a highlight of the conference.

In 2011, NAME and its sponsors supported five fellows: Miri Young, Emilie Arnold, Thomas Oelberger, Noel Rihm, and Selene Foster. Here are some of their reflections on the experience.

What insights did you take home from the conference?

Noel: One of the biggest insights I gained at the conference was both the inspirational drive within the community of design as well as the lesson that exhibits can be ACTIVE without being INTERACTIVE. This entirely changed my concept and method about thinking of exhibit design.

Thomas: I found it very interesting to realize that there is not a definitive standard that defines a “museum” or “exhibit” within. It is wonderful to be part of such a creative and experimental group.

What surprised you about the AAM conference?

Emilie: I expected there to be many sessions to choose from, but I didn't expect that choosing would be so difficult. I'm happy with the selections I made but wish I could have absorbed more.

Miri: I was pleasantly surprised by the warm welcome that I received as an emerging museum professional and student from the senior museum professionals that I was introduced to throughout the conference.

Selene: I found there to be an eagerness to discuss the importance of pushing the boundaries of the museum format. It seems clear to most we are at a time in our culture's growth when the integration of genres and the sharing of ideas is of utmost importance.

What piece of advice would you give to next year's fellows?

Noel: One thing I found really helpful was scheduling a time to meet with my mentor to show her some things in my portfolio I had already worked on! This was a great chance to get some feedback from a professional in the field and also some critique and direction!

Thomas: Almost everyone is friendly and happy to chat for a bit, so don't be shy. Seek out sessions that allow talking, resume review, smaller more interactive sessions, etc. I found such experiences much better than the large presentations.

Selene: It's a great time to reflect on your own goals and to notice what discussions you feel the most drawn to. Try not to be overwhelmed by the number of sessions that are offered. Enjoy yourself! Ask questions. Oh, and write notes on business cards you're given to remind yourself what the context was.

Emilie: Talk to *everyone*, find out what they do and how they do it, find out what sessions they're attending and why they think they're important. Pick brains. Stay out late. Stomp the pavement. ✨