

A Lifetime of Creating, Teaching, and Mentoring

NAME Honors Janet Kamien with Lifetime Achievement Award

Janet Kamien was an innovative force in the creation of exhibitions since the early 1970's, when she was hired at the Boston Children's Museum as a "developer," one of the first times such a term and role were used in the field. With her colleagues in the exhibits department Janet went on to perfect, re-imagine, and bring to life director Michael Spock's initial model of a culturally-based (rather than science-based) immersive environment. Among her ground-breaking exhibitions there were:

- *What if You Couldn't?* (1974), an exhibition about disabilities. Emulated by other museums, the exhibition led to a book and a multi-session classroom kit. Janet became one of the museum field's pioneer authorities on issues of accessibility.
- *Endings* (1983), an exhibition about death and loss which built on the success of presenting sensitive subjects for children. This multi-stationed, interactive exhibition was used by parents, therapists and teachers to approach a subject long needing discussion but not available in any public forum up till that time. It was not easy; the exhibition generated much controversy. But it remains a classic and a model for exhibitions about difficult issues.

In Boston, Janet and her colleagues shaped the team approach now widely used all over the world, including the project manager's important role in exhibition development. (See her *Curator* article in 2001 and an upcoming book about exhibit development with Polly McKenna-Cress, J.W. Wiley, 2013).

In 1986 Janet moved to Chicago to become Chair of Design and Production for the Field Museum under Michael Spock's direction. During her time there much of the museum was reinstalled, including her two exhibitions, *Inside Ancient Egypt* and *Life Over Time*. In both of these Janet successfully transformed beloved but static

exhibitions (mummies and dinosaurs) into engaging ones that worked for all ages.

In 1999, Janet became an independent consultant to a wide range of organizations in the U.S. and abroad. She created concepts for challenging topics such as the Hurricane Katrina exhibit at the Louisiana State Museum, and the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, and coached the whole staff of the Colorado History Museum to transform its experiences and audiences into the new History Colorado in Denver. In 2011 she was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to work with museum professionals in Argentina who are struggling to tell some of that country's most painful stories and to bring the best of evaluation and exhibition strategies to a range of Argentine museums (*Curator*, 2012).

Janet was a much beloved teacher, mentor, and collaborator because she was knowledgeable, insightful, direct, sympathetic, and very funny. She loved people, and they loved her right back. She touched and inspired many of us, and we have been enriched because of her guidance, her strong encouragement and support of sometimes-risky ideas, and her friendship. In recognition of her lifetime of excellence, professionalism, and service in the field, Janet was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award this year by the National Association for Museum Exhibition. ✨



Janet in San Telmo, the old barrio of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Photo by Anibal Cicardi.

This acknowledgement of Janet's work was created, appropriately enough, by a team of her friends and colleagues. The notes and photographs we received would almost fill an issue. One page is not sufficient to list all her accomplishments, but the authors hope it will give a sense of Janet Kamien's remarkable contributions to museums both in the United States and abroad. The Editor.

The Janet A. Kamien Fund has been established at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. It is co-sponsored by NAME and will go toward the education of student and professional exhibition creators. For information on how you can contribute please go to <http://name-aam.org/about/news>.
