

Ellen Snyder-Grenier
Editor

Letter from the Editor

As John Falk and Beverly Sheppard write in *Thriving in the Knowledge Age: New Business Models for Museums and Other Cultural Institutions*, “Words like innovative, community-relevance, responsive, and flexible are increasingly being used as criteria of museum excellence and as the basis for support.” What might this look like—in practice—for exhibitions?

That is the question our authors tackle in this issue of *Exhibitionist*, “*The Nimble and Responsive Exhibition*.” They write about processes and strategies—Kathleen McLean describes “practicing” exhibition-making with museum incubators; Sara Devine and Shelley Bernstein tell how “Comment Kiosks” at the Brooklyn Museum of Art have created deeper levels of engagement with visitors. They write about hybrids, including the Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History’s “pop up museums” (what author Nora Grant calls “part exhibition, part program, part story-potluck”) and “The Studio” at the Pacific Science Center, created as a “rapid-change, reconfigurable, hybrid program/exhibition space” to connect science content with the public.

Our authors describe new ways of responding to the needs and interests of their visitors. The New York Public Library’s “flash displays” allow it to address current events rapidly; at the Oakland Museum of California, bulletin boards help staff members learn what visitors really want to know about pressing science issues. In *XOXO: An Exhibit about Love & Forgiveness at the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh*, “responsiveness” is built in, encouraging visitors to have emotionally authentic conversations as they respond to the show and to each other.

And they write about the challenges and rewards of being on the street: the community sign-making project *If This House Could Talk . . .*, which originated in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the “Philadelphia Public History Truck” which places “the authority of inquiry within community’s concerns.” Christi Anne Hofland and Linda Norris take us to Ukraine, to explore how people responded to conflict with curation, creating public exhibitions that became “integral components of emerging definitions of national and community identity.” Our book review and critiques comment on an iBook that is as much a “nimble exhibition” as it is an innovative reading experience, and an exhibition that is as much experiment as show.

Like the authors in this issue, *Exhibitionist* also aims to be nimble and responsive, to meet the needs of our community of exhibition practitioners. For the past seven years, editor Gretchen Jennings has responded brilliantly. I look forward to continuing her tradition of excellence in collaboration with a stellar team—the *Exhibitionist* editorial advisory board, the NAME board, Liza Rawson, managing editor, and Bill Dambrova, designer.

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