

James Williams

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Experience

Designer with 20 years of experience in graphic design, art direction, and creative direction, primarily in the museum sector.

Birmingham Museum of Art

Birmingham, Alabama

Director of Design and Technology

July 2021 – present

Manage the Information Technology and Digital Media departments, overseeing a budget across three departments and leading strategy for digital initiatives and improvements. Leading the pivot away from on-site data storage to cloud infrastructure for greater flexibility and cost savings over time.

Design Director

May 2019 – June 2021

Managed the Exhibition Designer until his retirement in 2019, assuming his duties when funding for the position was frozen during the pandemic. Improved and digitized the exhibition design process, deepened collaboration across departments, and worked with the lead preparator to improve back of house operations related to exhibition design and installation processes.

Creative Director

May 2012–May 2019

Enhanced the integration of didactic materials, designing exhibition materials for more than 100 exhibitions. Deepened the integration between exhibition layouts and didactic materials, working with exhibition designer, and collaborating with curators, and education department to convey themes of exhibitions more cohesively. Created branding for internal exhibitions or extended the existing branding of traveling exhibitions, creating a bridge from marketing materials through the experience of the exhibition materials in gallery.

Graphic Designer

April 2006–April 2012

Conceptualized, designed, or art directed more than a dozen books and exhibition catalogs. Topics and themes ranged from single-artist contemporary catalogs, focused artist surveys, large group exhibitions, collection handbooks, to single donor catalogs. Collaborated with single authors, artists, and multiple author contributors. Managed book design and production process from concept through layout, prepress, color proofing, and printing; publishing and printing locally, with university presses, and international publishers.

Designed more than 50 quarterly issues of the museum member magazine, refining the aesthetic to meet museum standards, implementing 6 major redesigns, and a transition to digital-only publication. Worked with multiple editors, collaborating on redesigns to meet shifting demands, and also coordinating between curatorial and education departments on content.

Collaborated with a cross-departmental digital media team, contributing to the underlying strategy for the **smartguide**, a mobile web application for use in-gallery. Continued that strategy by extending the platform as **smartguide+** to power in-gallery interactive stations ranging from iPads to large screen touch monitors. Built multiple in-gallery interactives in collaboration with digital media team, exhibition curators, and education staff to enhance the understanding of exhibition themes and provide social and historical context in engaging ways.

Presented the development process and success of the **smartguide** at MCN 2017 session, *Cheap and Replicable: Building a New System for Digital Engagement in Small to Mid-Size Museums*, and co-authored post conference case-study published in the proceedings of COMPASS Conference 2018 highlighting the design choices of the **smartguide**.

In 2021, was promoted to museum leadership based on long-term strategic thinking. Served as Key Result Area manager during strategic planning process, leading a team of 6 to develop key outcomes to optimize the digital resources and engagement of the museum for the next 3-5 years.

Facing an aging and uneditable website during an economic downturn, and thus a budget crunch, conceptualized, developed, and launched a new museum website with a 3 person team. Continued to provide insight and feedback over new iterations and content management systems. Advanced the initiative to implement an online collection database as part of an open access initiative.

Liaised with external agency on development of new brand identity for the museum. Receiving basic logo and usage guides, established brand standards across print and digital media. Extended the brand across outdoor signage and banners. Developed and designed large scale signage installation at the Birmingham-Shuttlesworth International Airport.

Collaborated with Director of PR and Marketing on advertising campaigns, co-copywriting and designing multiple award winning marketing campaigns for exhibitions. Rebranded existing Art on the Rocks program, enlivening a popular but flagging program, elevating the aesthetic to match the maturation of the event.

Designed more than a dozen museum ball invitations, executing the vision of patrons serving as museum ball chairs each year. Delivered exceptional design suites within budget constraints to maximize fundraising returns.

Presented lectures to staff, interns, and the public on brand identities, development of marketing campaigns, and broader design philosophy of museums. Guest lectured for undergraduate classes on the process of book conceptualization, design, and production, and the role of design in museums.

Design Week Birmingham

Birmingham, Alabama

Planning Committee Member

2013 · 2014 · 2015

Served on the planning committee that established the first design festival in Birmingham. Contributed to the scope of the event. Coordinated and spearheaded the development and implementation of Design Week Birmingham events at the Birmingham Museum of Art.

Crowngraphics / TrueBlue

Chattanooga, Tennessee

Graphic Designer

April 2004–April 2006

Worked in a small design team to produce collateral material, advertising, and branding for market segments as diverse as accounting, higher education, and trucking.

The BLR Agency

Birmingham, Alabama

Graphic Designer

May 2003– April 2004

Maintained brand standards in marketing campaign, conceptualized logo and brand materials, and designed print collateral for clients in healthcare, pesticides, and fast food.

Education

Auburn University

Auburn, Alabama

Bachelor of Fine Arts, Graphic Design

Magna Cum Laude

2002

References

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