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Institution: Hong Kong Maritime Museum

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2022 Anthropology Summer Internship Report

It is my pleasure to have this precious opportunity to complete the six-week internship programme at the Hong Kong Maritime Museum this summer. During this short period, I was assigned to Education Department and Curatorial Department to work as an intern. Although there was construction at the museum throughout my internship, which is related to the upcoming Swire Marine Discovery Centre, it still allowed me to grasp the ideas about the daily operation of a private museum.

Education Department

My first 3 weeks at the museum were working in the Education Department. The experience is mainly practical and administrative, which helps me get familiar with the backstage work of a museum. Due to the construction and pandemic, there was no opportunity for us to take part in organizing educational events. My main task was handling the daily operation of Curiosity Corner, an education corner with many interactive devices. I had to check those instruments from time to time, to oversee and ensure they worked properly during the opening hours. If there was any technical issue, I have to contact the corresponding technicians and try to fix them. I was also responsible for teaching and assisting the volunteers who help us to take care of the Curiosity Corner.



Fig. 1 – A toy forklift interactive device in Curiosity Corner

The daily operation of Curiosity Corner was one of my daily tasks, I was also assigned other administrative tasks at the same time. I handled the applications for school visits, including replying to emails, confirming the information of applicants and answering the enquiries from phone calls. Moreover, I was assigned a task which was drafting the ideas for the new educational worksheets. I browsed the worksheets or learning kits of different museums on the Internet and tried to mingle some of their good concepts with our museum's theme and exhibits, in order to facilitate the students to enjoy our museum better.

Curatorial Department

The last 3 weeks of my internship were working in the Curatorial Department. I was assigned to a few important tasks regarding the upcoming renovation of the gallery. These tasks bring important practical experiences since I had opportunities to take part in the design of the exhibitions at the museum.

My first duty in Curatorial Department was doing research on sea beliefs in Hong Kong and writing a panel for it, which is going to be exhibited in the upcoming new arrangement of the B Deck gallery. The research almost took a week to finish, and the panel took two weeks to be finalized. I read lots of articles about the Tin Hau, Pak Tai,

Hung Shing and other sea deities, in order to understand the corresponding local beliefs and customs and write the panel for them. And the panel had to be informative but concise, reader-friendly and avoids any sensitivity and controversy. The word choices also had to consider different possible perceptions of visitors. It was an interesting and challenging experience, since it is different to write an essay. And it is exciting to foresee that my work may actually be exhibited at the museum.

On the other hand, my second main task in Curatorial Department was planning the new arrangement for C Deck and B Deck. Since the C4 gallery and B1 gallery are going to be swapped, I and another intern were assigned to make a plan for it. We had to rearrange a new storyline and see what exhibits could be included under the consideration of minimal changes. We measured the existing exhibits to plan the space and drafted the model and blueprint. We learned that planning an exhibition is not only about how we want to show the exhibits to the public, but we also have to consider other issues like environmental conditions, building management and the light exposure issues of the exhibits. It was an arduous task, especially the space was limited but the story we wanted to tell was unlimited, but it was also an impressive practical experience for me in learning the curating work.



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

Fig. 2, 3 – The areas of B Deck which are in the rearrangement plan

Other than these two main tasks, I also had opportunities to visit the Nomadic Art exhibition in the Indra and Harry Banga Gallery of the City University of Hong Kong, observe the process of checking the artifact's conditions and document the unpacking of the returning exhibits from Beijing. All of these experiences help me to have more understanding of the work of the curatorial department apart from doing research and designing the exhibition.



Fig. 4 – A team reinstalling the returned exhibit

Conclusion

I would like to give my gratitude to both the Anthropology Department and the Hong Kong Maritime Museum for granting me this cherished opportunity to experience the operation of a museum. Through the internship, I am not only able to familiarize

the work of the specific departments, but also comprehend how a museum operates under the coordination of different departments since the museum even organized an experience-sharing session per week for us. The practical experiences gained from the two departments are important for me to better understand my interest in the museum-related field. I enjoyed my internship and I do learn a lot about preparing an exhibition, curating and dealing with administrative work. I would like to thank all my colleagues at the Hong Kong Maritime Museum, as they are so friendly, patient and supportive. There is no doubt that it is a memorable experience for me.