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A display of an exquisite bronze item in the exhibition

I interned at the Hong Kong Museum of History from June to July in 2014. I was involved in a variety of tasks such as filing documents, researching, and outlining a future exhibition plan. This internship allowed me to participate in exhibition design and enhanced my knowledge not only on the operation and functions of a museum, but also on antiquities and archaeology.

I was placed in the Archaeology Unit, which was responsible for the Hong Kong Story permanent exhibition and some other related exhibitions, a recent example would be the Historical Imprints of Lingnan: Major Archaeological Discoveries of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao. My colleagues included two Assistant Curators, a research assistant, and another intern from CUHK. All of them were kind to talk with and generous to offer opinions and help. One of the Assistant Curators shared with me a titbit about the transportation of the Tram model inside the permanent exhibition section. It was moved to the interior of the museum before the construction work of the existing building was done, for it was impossible for that enormous real-life model to pass through any doors or windows. It really showed me the thoughtfulness of a museum curator. Throughout the time I spent with them, I also noticed their competence and skills. Although they have finished planning an exhibition, which was open to public at that time, my colleagues were unable to relieve of their hectic working schedule, as they still needed to handle administrative issues such as the message board at the end of the exhibition, repair work and maintenances, and public inquiry.

In the first week, I was assigned to work with another intern from CUHK on archive filing. I dealt with all kinds of documents, including photos and negatives of item repository, previous exhibition text and research references, local archaeological reports, record sheets of public events, newspaper cuts, speech drafts for the opening of an exhibition and so on. My job was to put them in order and to compile a table of contents for each folder. My colleague and I felt nothing but enchanted by materials that depicted the historical course of the Hong Kong Museum of History, from well-documented contents about previous exhibitions dated back to 1970s and news cuts on the shocking discovery of Lei Cheng Uk Han Tomb, to photos illustrating the construction of the present building and some production plans of other proposed projects. Those archives were true gems as they revealed to me the entire development of a museum and processes to create exhibitions, which was likely absent from museum visitors' experience but was exactly what I expected from this internship.

In addition to archival management, I was asked to outline an exhibition project which might be used as a future reference. Following my colleagues' advice, I went to the library room of the Hong Kong Museum of History to collect data as a foundation of fact and as a way to search for an interesting topic. I also needed to consider what and how I would choose suitable exhibits to present an "edutainment" experience to the public. I finished my task in acknowledgement that the museum, as a professional institute, was required to ensure it gave visitors authentic, organized, and appealing information, assisted with various types of techniques. With my attempt to propose an exhibition plan, I felt more appreciative of museum curators and their hard work which could be reflected by, but not limited to, exhibitions. Although it was quite a demanding job, it unquestionably was the best part of my internship, since I was able to apply theoretical knowledge to practice.

Another task that I was entrusted with was doing some research on exhibits. I therefore spent a considerable amount of time in the library as well as on the internet browser, reading through books and websites, and going after useful references with verification. My knowledge of archaeology and Chinese history improved. I was aware of the importance of research as well, since it was one of the responsibilities for a museum to have rich and accurate knowledge on exhibits.

Overall, this internship gave me a valuable lesson in exhibition design and a closer look at the establishment of the museum. I would like to express my gratitude to the Department of Anthropology and the Hong Kong Museum of History for granting me this precious opportunity.