

Name: Tsoi Kwok Kwan

Institution: Hong Kong Museum of History

Background

Thanks to the Department of Anthropology, I was given the opportunity to work as an intern in the Hong Kong Museum of History from the 1st August to the 26th August in 2016. I worked under the supervision of four assistant curators in the Unit of Urban and Oral History. During my internship, the Unit was preparing a forthcoming exhibiting introducing the history of toys in Hong Kong, which is expected to be launched in the early 2017.

Insights

Fortunate to be part of the team in which members are knowledgeable and friendly, I learnt many important things about the operation of the museum as well as the mission and position of a curator.

My duties were diverse, ranging from caption-editing, translation to hand-making toys and assisting in photography. For museum is the institution responsible for producing knowledge, curators are supposed to be extremely thorough about the content of the exhibition. I constantly reminded myself to be careful when I was handling different kinds of texts.

My duty in the photography room is to assist the photographer to handle different collections. Handling the collections with great care is paramount. Any loss of collection triggers a mechanism which requires one to report to the Chief Curator. The collection we are talking about may be as tiny as a plastic spoon toy which is smaller than a finger nail. Every piece of collections is attached with a corresponding code. Whenever a set of collection is drawn from and back to the collection room, we need to count every piece of collections, which appeared to be a painstaking task. Nevertheless, this procedure is necessary as historical significance is attached to these collections. I had this precious opportunity to take a glimpse on how knowledge is generated and articulated as well as how history is created in an authoritative institution. When making a selection, the curators have to consider not only the historical values of the items in each collection, but also the availability of collections of similar kinds, the coherence of the collections with the messages to be conveyed in the exhibition, size of the collections, etc.

I had a great time handcrafting a number of toys, which made me reminisce about my primary and secondary school days. The art of handcraft is very much highlighted in the history of local toys. I am deeply impressed by the wit of the children in the bygone days, who invented so many classic toys to spice up their materially deprived lives. Toys tell us a lot about the

socioeconomic situation of society. Besides what children played in the good old days, toys also inform us about the manufacturing industry of Hong Kong before 2000s, which is a requisite part of the economic development of Hong Kong.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I am truly thankful for having this precious chance to work in the museum. This invaluable experience allowed me to comprehend the operation of a museum and look into the past of Hong Kong. More importantly, it provided me with resources to reflect on the meaning of history and knowledge. I wish I could make the most of this experience and contribute to the public in the near future.