



MUSETEENS REPORT 2017

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Introduction

During the summer holidays, we joined the Museteens programme 2017, organised by the Hong Kong Heritage Museum. The programme gave us opportunities to explore the cultures of Hong Kong and learn more about heritage preservation. This report discusses the knowledge we gained from the many workshops and lectures we had attended, the experiences of being interns at the museum, and finally, our thoughts on the programme.

Highlights: Talks

One major part of the programme were lectures on different cultural topics. One particular talk was about Cantonese opera, given by the curator of the museum. He spoke a lot about the history and traditions of Cantonese opera, giving us a different perspective and changing our views of what is normally dismissed as a “boring” and “old-fashioned” topic by teenagers today.

We were first introduced to the reasons why Cantonese opera became the favourite form of entertainment for older generations of Hong Kongers. The lecture was augmented with documentaries and photographs, making for an informative yet entertaining presentation. With that said, the lecture went beyond the lecture room; we also got to see relevant exhibitions in the museum. There were also excerpts of famous Cantonese operas on display, such as 《帝女花》、《六國大封相》, and plays from famous Cantonese opera actors and actresses such as Yam Kim-fai (任劍輝) and Bak Sheut-sin (白雪仙), making us realise how interesting Cantonese opera really is. The lectures and the follow-up visits were immersive and entertaining, making these concepts and information easier to understand and visualise.

Highlights: Workshops

For us, the most significant part of the programme was a chance to visit the museum archives. This was a very rare opportunity, since it is usually closed off to the public, accessible only by security guards and museum officials. The archives stored exhibits of all shapes and sizes, from wooden furniture to postal stamps of old. The archives also prevents all kinds of dangers such as flooding or burglary, with sandbags in every entrance, and multiple security alarms in the rooms. The exhibits are stored in a tightly controlled environment, with a suitable temperature, humidity, and luminance. The archives provide a secure and stable environment for the storage of exhibits and we really enjoyed ourselves in this once-in-a-lifetime experience.

During the programme, we attended a series of workshops. Most of the workshops revolved around modern art, with an exception being the ink and wash painting workshop. This workshop was hosted by a lecturer from the Hong Kong Baptist University, and we were taught about the history of ink and wash painting and its influence on Chinese art. The lecturer also explained how traditional art differs from contemporary art and the evolution of Chinese paintings over the years. After that, the lecturer demonstrated the skills of drawing ink and wash painting and we were amazed by how lifelike the paintings were. Throughout this workshop, we had a deeper understanding on the transformation of Chinese art, and we learned that the Chinese artwork we see nowadays are the results of innovation from previous Chinese painters.



There was another workshop in which we learnt how to wrap exhibits for protecting them during storage. Of course, the objects we wrapped were not real exhibits, but we got to experience the wrapping procedure using the professional materials. In this workshop, we learnt that there are different ways to wrap the exhibits. For example, we use special containers/envelopes to store paper. These folders are made from “acid-free” paper, which protects the originals from deteriorating due to acidity or moisture. We never imagined such an attention to detail going into storing exhibits, and we think this experience is definitely one of the highlights in the programme.



Highlights: Internship

After a month of intense training, it's finally to put our learning into action. All Museteens participants were required to complete a 6-hour internship. There were several internship activities for us to pick, such as being the tour guide of the Children Discovery Gallery, in which we had to walk children through the exhibitions. Before becoming the tour guides, we had to truly understand what the exhibition was about and we did some preparation work. Though initially nervous, we managed to guide a few groups of children through the gallery in the end. The internship gave us the experience of how working in the museum is like, and we were delighted to pass on current and past cultures to the next generation.



Conclusion

This was undoubtedly the experience of a lifetime and it broadened our horizons. Not only did we gain a lot of knowledge on the preservation of culture and the history of Hong Kong (both relevant to our History and Liberal Studies courses), we also met new friends who had common interests with us: history and culture. The immersive demonstrations and lectures gave us insight on the importance of culture — tangible and intangible — and of its preservation and development. We understood after this programme that culture is a crucial factor to the success of a city or country. Without knowledge of our traditions and culture, Hong Kong will look nothing like the advanced and international city it is today. After all, culture is to be preserved and passed on through generations, and we, as the youth of Hong Kong, must protect our heritage in order to maintain our reputation as an international city with rich local culture.

We would like to thank Ms. Flora Wong and Ms. Cherry Wong for inviting us to join the programme and also the Hong Kong Heritage Museum for organizing such a meaningful programme to let the teenagers of Hong Kong recognise the importance of heritage preservation, and as the theme suggests, becoming a man of culture.

“Culture makes people understand each other better. And if they understand each other better in their soul, it is easier to overcome the economic and political barriers.” ---Paulo Coelho