2025 Anthropology Summer Internship Report

Name: LIAO KAILING

Institution: Festivals Office, Leisure and Cultural Services Department, HKSAR

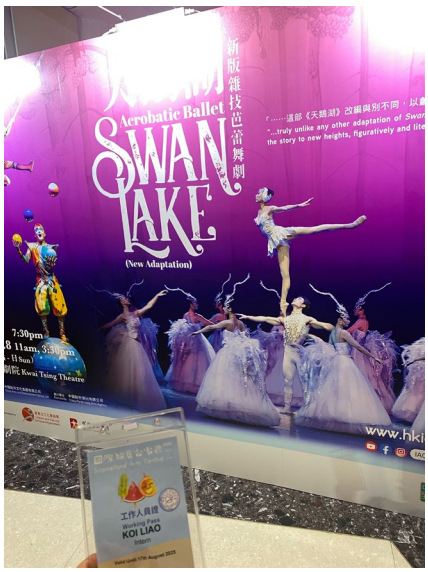
Internship Period: June 19 – August 12 (200 hours)

Introduction

This summer, I had the invaluable opportunity to complete my internship at the Festivals Office of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department. My primary role was to assist in the execution of the International Arts Carnival (IAC), an annual summer festival targeted at children and families, and to contribute to the preliminary preparations for the upcoming Asia+ festival. During this period, I was immersed in the dynamic environment of arts administration and gained a multifaceted understanding of what it takes to bring a large-scale public festival to life.

Internship Duties and Program Involvement

I was entrusted with responsibilities across three diverse IAC programmes: ‘Soul of Shaolin’, ‘the National Youth Orchestra of the United States of America’, and the ‘Acrobatic Ballet Swan Lake (New Adaptation)’. My tasks were varied and encompassed all stages of production.



During the pre-show phase, I was involved in liaising with the performing groups, confirming logistical details, and finalizing the list of special guests invited to watch the performances. This behind-the-scenes work required meticulous attention to detail and professional communication skills.

On the show days, my role shifted to front-of-house operations. Stationed at the front desk, I was the first point of contact for attendees, handling inquiries, providing directions, and ensuring a smooth entry process. This direct interaction with the audience was both challenging and rewarding, as it was crucial for shaping their overall experience. Following each performance, I also assisted with post-show duties, including clearing the venue and compiling audience feedback forms.

Beyond IAC, I participated in preliminary work for the Asia+ festival. This exposure allowed me to understand the early planning stages of a different kind of cultural event, broadening my perspective on the festival landscape in Hong Kong.

Reflection and Learning

This internship benefited me greatly, both professionally and personally.

First and foremost, the experience was defined by meaningful co-working and collaborative learning. I was fortunate to join a team of incredibly supportive and skilled colleagues, each bringing their unique expertise to the table. We collaborated closely on every programme, and I learned a great deal from their professional approach and problem-solving abilities. The office culture encouraged open dialogue; after wrapping up major tasks, we often had informal discussions where we exchanged views on various social and artistic topics. This created a comfortable environment for learning that extended far beyond mere administrative duties.

Secondly, I accumulated a rich tapestry of practical experience. Assisting three distinct programmes—spanning the spiritual power of Chinese martial arts, the grandeur of an American youth symphony, and the innovative fusion of Western ballet with acrobatics—taught me the importance of tailoring administrative support to the specific needs of each art form. I learned that an arts administrator must wear many hats: from being a diligent correspondent and a meticulous planner to a welcoming host and a efficient troubleshooter. Managing these varied responsibilities honed my time-management and adaptability skills.

Furthermore, this internship prompted me to reflect through an anthropological lens. Working on festivals that cater to specific audiences (like families for IAC) underscored the importance of understanding the "target audience" as a cultural group with its own expectations and behaviors. The process of liaising with different cultural entities, from a Shaolin troupe to an American orchestra, felt like a continuous exercise in cross-cultural

communication and understanding. It reinforced the anthropological principle of seeing from both insider and outsider perspectives—appreciating the internal logic of each artistic community while facilitating their presentation to the Hong Kong public.

Conclusion

I am profoundly grateful to the Anthropology Department and the Festivals Office for providing me with this internship. It was more than just a work placement; it was a significant period of growth. I not only acquired tangible skills in arts administration but also had the chance to observe, interact, and reflect within a vibrant cultural ecosystem. This experience has undoubtedly provided me with valuable insights and a broader perspective that will inform my future academic and career path.