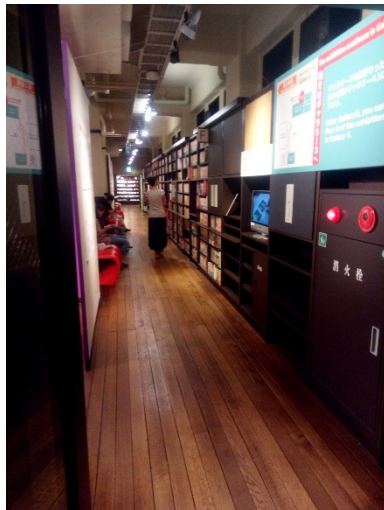




Camilla Boodle Fund ICOM UK funding report – 22 September 2019

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In September 2019 I travelled to Kyoto to attend the ICOM triennial conference. The Camilla Boodle Fund contributed to me completing a study tour subsequently which included three cities: Tokyo, Kyoto and Kanazawa. My role is Learning Manager for the David Livingstone Birthplace Project. The David Livingstone Birthplace is currently undergoing a £6.3 million refurbishment (funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic Environment Scotland and the Scottish Government).



My objectives were to learn about how Japanese museums approach interpretation, learning and engagement with heritage, both inside the museum but also through landscapes and gardens.

I visited the International Manga Museum in Kyoto, which was fascinating. It is located in what used to be a primary school, and the museum is a library/archive/exhibition space in which there were people lining the walls, reading manga and engaging with the exhibitions and events. The David Livingstone Birthplace Museum holds some graphic novel illustrations in its collection, and it was interesting to see how the Manga Museum displays similar items and how it uses reproductions – Genga (dash) – to preserve the original items. On visiting the museum, I attended a Kamishibai session, which is a traditional Japanese style of storytelling, which inspired me to think of ways this could be translated into activities relating to our collection. David Livingstone used a magic lantern slide during his missionary work, and the display of Kamishibai story-telling images was reminiscent of the use of magic lanterns to tell stories. I was amazed at the engagement level of the visitors, the interpreter was really entertaining and brought us all together (even non-Japanese speakers!) through laughter and

storytelling. The Kamishibai session is something that will stay with me, it was an invigorating and lovely experience.

I was keen to visit the Miho Museum (40km outside of Kyoto), to see how they engage the public with the outside spaces, the architecture and the collection. The setting for the museum was spectacular, albeit difficult to access (a train and a bus ride away from Kyoto). The collection on display was interesting too, but limited information was readily available about the collection itself, and I left wondering about how the collection was acquired and wanting to know more information about the collector herself. After leaving I learnt that some additional information was included in an introductory video, which I obviously missed! It made me think about the different ways that our audiences access information and that no one will look/watch/listen to everything, so making sure your key messages are communicated in different ways is hugely important.



In Tokyo I visited Miraikan, which is the National Museum for Emerging Science and Technology. It was a fun and engaging experience, with lots of interactive elements for visitors. The museum tackled a range of subjects, including archaeological excavations (in the Mammoth exhibition), androids, emotions, the science behind antibiotics and health issues. It also asked lots of questions. I appreciated the way that the exhibition and interpretation was framed right from the

beginning: 'Instead of answers, exhibits in Miraikan focus on questions, This is because the future itself is a questions whose answer may change....try to turn your answers into an action...our individual actions will become a power that will surely change the future'. This resonated strongly with themes of Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development Goals which are informing our museum redevelopment and learning activities being developed as part of that.

I also visited the Tokyo National Museum, which holds many beautiful objects. I was particularly interested in elements of the exhibition which added a layer of interpretation, including the conservation area, with the tools and techniques used for conserving the objects on display. I also learned about the power of stamps to get visitors involved in creating! It seemed like an accessible way to get visitors to think about the objects on display, learn about some of the motifs and imagery but also a non-threatening way of



creating something (often I've spoken to visitors who are terrified about drawing/painting/creating). I loved the stamp area, and so did a lot of adults visiting that day. It was a simple and effective way of engaging visitors of all ages.

As part of the study tour I undertook I also visited Japanese gardens. Todai-ji in Kyoto and Kenrokuen in Kanazawa. Both were spectacular. It was a sensory delight, being surrounded by beautiful nature and spaces, which is intended to promote reflection and slowing down of the mind. In these spaces there was little interpretation, but the maps provided were beautiful and were an essential tool for the visit.



I enjoyed the visual and sensory aspects of Japanese museums and gardens. The graphic interpretation seemed simple to read and understand, however sometimes the amount of information present could be a little overwhelming. The sensory elements included in the exhibits created accessible spaces for visitors.

I left Japan with many questions relating to authenticity too: Japanese temples and shrines are often reconstructed and items on display, including the Genga (dash) at the Manga Museum and the art in Nijo Castle in Kyoto (to name a couple of examples) are reproductions, to preserve the originals.

The combination of beautiful spaces, objects, images enabled a memorable experience of these museums and heritage sites. Some engaged with the more challenging aspects of museum work better than others. I will be taking a lot of ideas back to Blantyre and the David Livingstone Birthplace.