

## *Internship at the Wall Street Journal, Hong Kong*

– Kimaya de Silva

My internship at the Wall Street Journal in Hong Kong spanned over a period of ten weeks in the summer of 2016. My office was located in the grand Central Plaza building, Wanchai, in Hong Kong Island, on the 25th floor with a panoramic view of Hong Kong like no other. Central Plaza was also home to several top-notch international banks and so the building had a “Wall Street” feel to it. That said, the Dow Jones office had a very laid back atmosphere with an open-plan design. I felt very at home in this office and soon came to enjoy spending the long evening hours at my desk, making use of the seemingly overflowing supply of snacks.

On my first day I was introduced to the uncertainty and spontaneity that is key to the practice of journalism. My boss, Neil Western, was not in office during the entirety of my first day. Although this was surprising and slightly nerve racking I was, as a result, advised by colleagues to get myself up to date with what is going on in the world. I spent most of my first day reading the news and getting familiarised with the format and writing style of the Wall Street Journal – a much needed experience as I had trained in AP style with Mr. Jones at CMC.

I was introduced to Kathy Chu, one of the Asia corporate news correspondents, on my first day as well. I was to work with her and help her with a few projects that she was working on. She came across as an extremely busy person – you would never catch her walking at a normal pace. At around 4pm of my first day, she scurried over to my desk and asked me if I would be happy to write a quick story on an important report that

just came out, one that she had no time to report on. I was admittedly taken aback but I knew this was an opportunity that should not be missed.

I was instructed to get in touch with Bain and Company, China, who had partnered with Kantar worldpanel, and interview Bruno Lannes, a partner at Bain & Co to get some comments on the trends that they had reported. Next I had to organise an interview with an analyst from China Market Research to get some general comments on the trends. After setting those interviews up for the following day, I read through the report and press release and chose my hook: “Domestic consumer brands outpace foreign brands in China.”

My first day had taken the most unexpected turn and the following two days were nothing short of frantic. On the second night, while I was writing I emailed Mr. Jones with my lede and first paragraph and, despite the ungodly hour at which he received my message, he sent me back edits as well as some encouraging words. One of things he said which helped me throughout the internship was, “take every opportunity you get and don’t let anyone have to tell you something twice.”

After my hectic first week things started to cool down as I began working on more long-term projects. I came out with an online story on the China Real Time blog and/or a market talk snippet at least every two weeks, including an interesting look at Hong Kong’s craft beer scene. One of the most interesting projects was the luxury watch investigation that I did with Kathy Chu. It was such a great experience to go around with her and watch her determination and courage when digging out details, even from luxury retailers who would rather do anything other than speak to journalists. After a few weeks of that investigation, the story was set to come out and I was asked to find material for a

complimentary blog post. I spent a few days hovering around high-end malls trying to get consumer comments for both the big story and the blog. This was one of the most challenging experiences of the internship as it was almost impossible to get good comments from passer byers or if they did comment on their luxury goods consumption they did not want to give me their full names. Anyway eventually I was able to get at least four solid quotes and one of those was used in the main story: "Hard Times for Luxury Watch Dealers." The story did very well in its readership. The news that Hong Kong's famous luxury watch market was dwindling was major. My accompanying blog post was titled, "Luxury's pain as others gain in Hong Kong and China."

In my final week, on my penultimate day of work, four weeks after the big watch story came out, I was given the opportunity to work on a follow-up breaking news story. The Federation of Swiss Watch industry released stats showing that the USA had clinched first place, formerly held by Hong Kong, as the world's top luxury watch market. I co-authored the piece, "Hong Kong No Longer Top Market for Luxury Watches," and got my first official newspaper byline out. The story did so well in the Asia edition that it was printed in the U.S. edition on the following day. The WSJ website showed that it was one of the most read stories of the week. I ended my internship on a real high. I came out of the internship with a wealth of experience in corporate reporting as well as with the foundations for working in an international newsroom.

I am so grateful to have had this opportunity. I would not have been able to make it happen if not for the keck center journalism fellowship as well as the sponsorship. Living in Hong Kong was very enjoyable, very international and I thoroughly enjoyed the

food. The thing that was most challenging was finding a reasonable place to stay.

The writing intensive course that I took with Mr. Jones gave me a good foundation for journalistic writing and the fellowship internship prepared me well for interviewing experts and passer byers alike with relative ease. I had all the tools and I was extremely capable from my first day to get decent copy out. I would encourage future interns to take the journalism course in the spring so as to keep up their writing skills through to the summer. All I was missing at the start of my WSJ internship was confidence but Mr. Jones helped me gain some on the first night of my internship after I sent him a panicked email. For that reason I think it would be very useful for future interns from our program to have a Keck center liaison for the duration of the internship because even though one learns a lot from coworkers and editors, these internships tend to be unstructured and the intern is left very much to his or her own devices. It could be very useful to have a liaison to check in with the intern at least once a month.