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WINSTON CHURCHILL FELLOW 2012

Kids for Kids UK

RESEARCH INTO YOUTH FILM FESTIVALS AND YOUTH FILMMAKING IN ASIA

www.kidsforkidsuk.org
INTRODUCTION

This report outlines my experiences and the invaluable learning I have gained as a Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellow travelling in Hong Kong, China, South Korea, Japan and Lao PDR to research and network with Asian film festivals and community filmmaking organisation’s with a particular focus on children and young people.

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

I am a self-employed creative producer, festival director and film educator based in rural County Durham in the North East of England. Working alongside my sister and brother-in-law I co-run Jack Drum Arts, a hugely successful arts and media company which has been in business for 26 years. In addition I am founder and director of Kids for Kids UK, a small community interest company which focuses its work in the youth film festival and film education sector.

My creative work is rooted in my local community but very international in its outlook particularly as the area that I live and work in is a largely rural white monoculture with the main ethnic minority being made up of travellers. During my career in the creative industries I have worked with people of all ages and abilities, and from all walks of life, but more recently I have begun to focus a lot of my work on film and media related activities for children and young people.

In 2008 whilst attending a children and young people’s film festival in Naples I was invited by the director of the international Kids for Kids Network to set-up a Kids for Kids Film Festival in the UK to add to the growing family in the KFK festival network. So in 2009, armed with little more than my enthusiasm, Kids for Kids UK (KFK UK) began. In the first year I ran it as a project under the umbrella of Jack Drum Arts delivering a national pilot festival for children and young people from the City of Durham. The pilot was hugely successful attracting in excess of 400 young people to film and animation screenings, a competition, workshop programme and an international film screening with film professionals - I was immediately hooked on the buzz and excitement that comes with organizing such an event and very quickly began thinking about what I could do next and how best to grow the festival for the future in the midst of a recession.

Following the success of this pilot festival I was then awarded a Fellowship from the Institute of Digital Innovation, Teesside University enabling me to develop KFK UK as a stand-alone organisation. In July
2010 KFK UK became a registered community interest company (CIC) and under my vision and leadership has taken on a life of its own delivering a year round award winning programme of film related workshops for young people in County Durham and 4 annual international film festivals culminating in the most successful to date at the BFI Southbank, London in October 2012.

WHY ASIA

KFK UK has for the last 4 years been running mainly on enthusiasm and making a successful application to the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust has always been on my list of thing’s to do in terms of my own professional development as well as that of the organization I had founded. Up until now I had never had a strong enough idea with which to make an application and as this is a once in a lifetime opportunity, never to be repeated, I wanted it to be as big and as ambitious as possible.

With Europe and the USA seemingly in financial ruin and Asia rapidly becoming the new first world I was inspired to look to the East. I wanted to find out what, if anything, was happening in the youth filmmaking and film festival sector in Asian countries such as China, South Korea, Japan and Laos PDR and what I could learn from my Asian colleagues who were developing a fairly new industry in a rapidly changing environment.

Having spent half of my twenties travelling in Australia, Asia and Central America I was certainly not a novice traveller by any stretch of the imagination. However, I knew the experience of this fellowship would be vastly different to my backpacking experiences or any of the short trips I had taken in more recent years attending various youth film festivals around Europe.

The generous grant meant I could undertake an incredibly ambitious 2-month trip that would take me to some of the most technologically advanced countries in the world as well as one of the most impoverished. I would be travelling as a professional in my field accompanied by my 12-year-old son Sam and most importantly with the backing of one of the most well respected names in British History.

AIMS OF FELLOWSHIP

- To research Asian young people’s film festivals and wider community media organizations.
• To experience first hand how Asian young people’s festivals operate.
• To make strong partnerships with Asian community filmmaking organisations.
• To share learning, ideas and experiences with Asian community filmmaking organisations.
• To find new interesting ways of working with film and media to inspire young people to develop a voice.
• To develop my skills/knowledge in young people’s film festivals, filmmaking and media.
• To increase the scope of KFK UK to provide film/media activities for young people which will make a positive contribution globally as well as nationally.
• To encourage peer appreciation through the home screening of Asian youth made films and promote greater cultural awareness.
• To increase intercultural dialogue through Asian/UK partnerships.

THE TRIP

Countries Visited

Hong Kong
July 7th – July 12th Hong Kong

Mainland China
July 12th to July 16th Beijing

South Korea
July 16th – July 19th Seoul
July 19th to July 25th Busan

Japan
July 25th to July 26th, Fukuoka
July 26th to 1st August Beppu
1st August to 2nd August Hiroshima
2nd August to 4th August Kyoto
1st August to 8th August Tokyo

Laos PDR
8th August to 13th August Vientiane
13th August to the 19th August Phonsavanh
19th August to the 23rd August Vientiane
Stage one of my trip and the first port of call was a 5-day stopover in Hong Kong. Actually this amazing city was not in my original plan but during my research I had been persuaded by someone from Hong Kong (via email) that if I wanted to find out about youth filmmaking and film festivals in China I must visit Hong Kong and not mainland China as “….it has a vigorous youth and independent film movement which is worthy of your exploration. Hong Kong’s young people certainly are at a better position to make films of all sorts of themes and issues as it is a lot more free than any other place in China”.

I was immediately won over to include Hong Kong as one of my destinations however, lesson number one – the European understanding of times, dates and tight schedules is very different to the Asian understanding as what we might understand as ‘confirmed’ quite possibly might not be. Despite numerous emails including confirmations of meetings for me to attend when I arrived, 2 days before we were due to leave the UK I found out that the people I had been in communication with were not going to be in Hong Kong during the 5 days we would be there. Ironically they were going to China to make a film – the place they had told me not to go to!!

I was hugely disappointed as I did not have the time to find new contacts before we left the UK so we arrived in Hong Kong, one of the world’s most dynamic cities with not much to do except recover from jetlag, adjust to the extreme heat, sightsee and visit the one contact I had made from another source.
Meeting with Connie Lam, Hong Kong Arts Centre

I met with Connie Lam, the director of the Hong Kong Arts Centre and Kattie Fan who manages the IVFA programme the day after Sam and I had arrived in Hong Kong. Established in 1977, the Hong Kong Arts Centre is a self-funding organization whose mission is to promote contemporary arts and culture within Hong Kong and beyond. The Centre provides a wide range of programmes featuring local and overseas artists, with facilities including a theatre, a cinema, galleries, classrooms, studios, and a café and office space. As a non-profit body, they rely heavily on donations, rental income, arts course fees and box office income.

The centre promotes contemporary performing arts, visual arts, film and video arts and provides lifelong and wide-reaching arts education. It also presents conferences, seminars, art festivals and public art projects all through the year.

Alongside their arts programme they also run the IVFA from the Hong Kong Arts Centre which is an Incubator for Film and Visual Media in Asia. IVFA actively promotes and encourages creative talents in Asia, making short films, videos, animation and interactive media. With a cutting-edge vision and independent spirit, IVFA has evolved to promote different visual cultures while exploring the boundless potential of creative media. In addition to the annual competition and festival, they also curate a host of programmes under two initiatives, “Cultivation” and “Engagement”. By connecting creative
communities all over the world, IVFA aims to engage everyone in the art of creation.

Both Connie and Kattie were really interested in the work of KFK UK and in particular we had discussions around the potential exhibiting of our new video installation ‘View Point’ and for us to screen a selection of their youth made films at the KFK UK Film Festival in the autumn. I was thrilled with how the first meeting of the trip had gone and when I mentioned my frustration at all the other cancelled meetings I was given an interesting contact to follow up with a British woman who runs the Hong Kong Youth Arts Foundation.

**Meeting with Lindsey McAllister OBE, Hong Kong Youth Arts Festival**

Thanks to the ladies from the Hong Kong Arts Centre on our second day in Hong Kong I went along to Quarry Bay to meet with a very inspiring British woman; Lindsey McAllister OBE: founder and artistic director of the Hong Kong Youth Arts Foundation. 23 years ago Lindsey left the UK to travel for a year in South Asia which included a stopover in Hong Kong. In fact we could have even crossed paths as Lindsey and I worked out we were both backpacking around Asia at the same time – small world as ever.

If you want some inspiration for what can be achieved, Lindsey is just the sort of person to look to and she is proof that you can achieve almost anything if you have determination, enthusiasm and the
inclination. I certainly found my meeting with her inspiring and energising and was fascinated by her story particularly as she has achieved everything without being reliant on arts funding but instead being hugely successful at raising sponsorship from the commercial sector. Something I would like to see more of in the UK and something that I am very interested in trying to develop for KFK UK in the future to ensure its survival and development internationally.

Lindsey’s story of when she came to Hong Kong 20 years ago to stay with a friend who promised her a couch to sleep on and a few meals was just wonderful. Within two hours of arriving she realised she had found a city to call home and a blank canvas with which to try out her ideas in youth arts. I must admit I never had that feeling about Hong Kong 23 years ago when I was there but as a late starter on my career path I wouldn’t have known about a youth arts movement let alone thought up the idea to start one in Hong Kong.

With only a few dollars to her name, Lindsey made ends meet by accepting a poorly paid job teaching English and soon realised that if she was to fulfil her dream of starting an arts festival, it was now or never. She took the plunge by arranging an overdraft and worked tirelessly from her one room apartment on making it happen. Fortunately her efforts caught the eye of Chung Po-yang, co-founder of DHL International. His cheque not only covered her overdraft, but also the running of the project for the first year and beyond. What a result.

The programme has since evolved into a fully-fledged, year-round scheme offering quality instruction and non-competitive art experiences for children and young adults. The original inspiration
sprang from the observation that the arts environment for children in Hong Kong had the wrong focus: it allowed only limited opportunity for self-expression and true creativity was out the window. Today, about 94 per cent of participants are from 800 local schools, and most of the work is conducted in Cantonese.

Although Lindsey’s work is not necessarily in youth filmmaking there are many parallels to how our work has developed including having been around long enough to now have some of the participants you worked with years ago working with you as your peers! Made me think of Laura and Rob and some of the other younger artists and filmmakers who make up part of our freelance team both at KFK UK and Jack Drum Arts.

All in all a really great positive meeting. New ideas were brewing of how I could exhibit our new video installation ‘View Point’ in Hong Kong with the possibility of developing the artwork a stage further with local young people and local artists to add an Asian dimension to the piece.

Meeting with Elissa Rosati, Focus on Film

Our final day in Hong Kong I met up with the lovely Elissa Rosati, a colleague and friend of Lindsey McAlister. Elissa hails from New York and is the founding director of Focus On Film a not for profit charity founded in 2006 which was created to provide children and young people with high quality creative experiences in film and video production. The programs that she runs range from major outreach initiatives involving underprivileged children from all backgrounds, to weekly camps for international schools. Focus on Film has directly helped over 2000 children find their own voice through production of original work. The work has been broadcast internationally and shown in film festivals worldwide and we hope to screen some of the work at KFK UK in the future. Again I got a lot of interest in our video installation project ‘View Point’ and we had some interesting discussions around how to develop the project and ideas further working with local young people in Hong Kong. Lots of food for thought again although due to timing I had sadly just missed being able to see their film camp in action which was rather a shame.

Although a very short stay in Hong Kong and the initial disappointment at the cancelled meetings to contend with, it did now seem like a very worthwhile stopover on our way to Beijing. I had been slightly concerned that maybe my time would be wasted with so few contacts to follow up but as I soon learnt one meeting always leads to another, with new contacts being shared and I was really pleased to have had the opportunity to meet with both Lindsey and Elissa whilst in town.
BEIJING, CHINA

After our whirlwind stay in Hong Kong Sam and I made our way to Beijing. Unfortunately to keep costs down our flights were all with China Eastern Airways who required us to always go to Shanghai. On this particular flight we were delayed by 3 hours which was so frustrating as we only had 30 minutes when we arrived in Shanghai to pick up our luggage, transfer from international to domestic, and then check in again. However, not a problem as the 2nd flight was delayed as well – for over 2 hours!!

Finally at 10pm we arrived in Beijing. Our guide and driver were waiting at the airport for us and took us to our hotel which was pretty much right in the centre of the city about a 10 minute walk from the Forbidden City. It was late, we were tired so we unpacked and crashed for the night.

Meeting with Mr. Li Zhongqiu and Annie Liang, ASIFA

Our second day in Beijing and we had our first meeting in China with the president of ASIFA China, his assistant Annie Liang and a number of their associates at the Science and Technology Centre. ASIFA China is part of the International ASIFA association, an umbrella organisation for groups of animators worldwide. ASIFA is united in it’s desire to promote the art of animation including the sharing of information, preserving the
rights of animators, and promoting progress towards peace and understanding through a unified interest in the art of animation.

Although not directly working with young people in the same way we are at KFK UK, I learnt that ASIFA China are beginning to develop a participatory programme of work and are interested in further developing their annual festival to be more young person centred and inclusive.

When we arrived at the centre we were given an interesting tour of the building. Sam had a try of some specialist animation software that they have been developing specifically for use by young people whilst being watched by around 12 Chinese people! We also watched a very strange short 3D film in a 3D cinema without the need for glasses and then went for our official meeting. Meetings in China as I soon learnt either took place in overly big rooms with extremely large important looking tables or in restaurants. Our meeting was in a huge room with an enormous table for us all to sit round. I gave a presentation of my work with KFK UK, showed some clips of our films and the teaser of our new video installation ‘View Point’. Everyone seemed impressed and the president of ASIFA was genuinely interested enough to invite me to bring the work to the ASIFA China Festival in October 2012. Unfortunately this clashed with the dates of KFK UK at the BFI Southbank however it was flattering to be asked and we discussed possibilities for 2013 and beyond.
As well as sharing and discussing work ASIFA were also kind enough to source a huge collection of films for me all produced by young talented students. It was very exciting to take the DVD’s back to our hotel and spend the night watching these and selecting those that I would screen at KFK UK later in the year.

Meeting with the staff of the China Beijing Youth Camp

The next day I had a meeting with the China Beijing Youth Camp who are based at the Beijing Youth Palace. Despite the fact it was a Saturday the traffic in Beijing was even worse than it was on a weekday and it took Sam, our guide and myself 2 hours to get to our destination. It was, however, worth the effort in the extreme heat as when we arrived we walked into the middle of the auditions for places on the young peoples film camp. They were kind of X Factor in style with 3 judges; an actress called Miaow Miaow, the director of the film camp and a professor from Beijing University who Sam and I nicknamed Simon Cowell!!

We were given seats to sit and watch some of the auditions by the children which included a recital of an old Chinese poem, a martial arts demonstration, a song, a dance and the playing of an old Chinese stringed instrument. Its not the way I would recruit for places on any of our workshops or programmes in the UK as it seemed kind of cruel but as was explained to me places on the film camp were highly sought after and with many 1000’s of children in Beijing wanting to take part this was felt the fairest and best way to allocate the places.
After the auditions were over we were invited to join a meeting over lunch and taken to a very smart restaurant to eat Beijing Duck. Once the food had been ordered I was asked to give a presentation of the work of KFK UK and also talked a little about new ideas for the development of ‘View Point’ in Asia in 2013. Everybody exchanged business cards and my specially printed cards given to me by the Winston Churchill Trust were obviously very impressive as they were received with loud exclamations and poses with imaginary cigars – I was told Churchill is as famous in China as Chairman Mao.

Sadly I wasn’t able to meet with Mr Hou Keming, the director of China Children’s Film Festival due to him being out of town (why does that sound familiar?!) however I deemed my trip to Beijing to be a very worthwhile visit. My two meetings both had the potential of resulting in future collaborative working especially with the video installation ‘View Point’ which people seem very impressed by. The China Film Camp organisers had invited me to take a group of young people from the UK to attend their film camp in 2013 and the president of ASIFA China had shared with me a great selection of animations which I would be using for our Asian screening.

On our last day in China we visited the Great Wall and also visited the 798 Art District in Beijing. Although not strictly work related I was very taken by one of the galleries we visited and pondered on how amazing it would be to use the space to create a giant video installation of a new cityscape created by young people in Asia working in collaboration with young people from the UK.
SOUTH KOREA

Stage three of our trip was to South Korea where Sam and I would be joined by my work colleague Gareth Hudson and co-director of KFK UK along with James Shepherd a young filmmaker who won an award at the 2010 Kids for Kids UK Film Festival Competition in 2010. We met up at the airport in Seoul with Gareth and James arriving from the UK and Sam and I flying in from China. We spent 4 days in the capital city much of which was spent in our hostel putting the final touches to our Video Installation which we were exhibiting at BIKI (Busan International Kids’ Film Festival) and planning the delivery of our Cinemasports workshop.

Attending the Seoul International Cartoon & Animation Festival

I had obtained some free tickets for the 4 of us to attend the Seoul International Cartoon & Animation Festival (also know as SICAF). The festival takes the form of a series of large-scale exhibitions in a massive convention centre along with a programme of screenings in 2 commercial cinemas. The festival exists to showcase the latest in Korean and overseas creative trends with a specific platform aimed at the support of new talent and up-and-coming artists.

What I hadn’t quite realized before we arrived in Seoul was how commercially minded the festival also was. When we arrived at the convention centre on the first day of the festival we were completely taken aback by the trade show atmosphere of the event. It wasn’t quite what we were expecting and after waiting over an hour for my contact to show up we decided to investigate on our own. 4 hours later we emerged from roaming 3 floors of what I can only describe as a commercial hell. We decided to check out some of the film screenings at the partner cinema for some peace from all the noise and bright lights and to avoid spending our money on any of the many 100’s of Chinese manufactured toys that were on sale – as fantastic as many of them were shopping was not why we had come to Seoul.

At the cinema we watched a lovely selection of short animations the best being a silhouette animation from the UK and a feature animation from Spain. However, it was clear that this festival was not really in the spirit of my aspirations for KFK UK. Most audience members were adults and as trying to find the festival programmer for a meeting seemed all but impossible we decided to cut our losses and leave to spend the remainder of our time in Seoul planning for our busy time ahead in Busan.
Attending the Busan International Kids’ Film Festival

After 3 days in Seoul we caught the train to the very southern tip of South Korea to attend the Busan International Kids’ Film Festival. BIKI as it is affectionately known is a purely kids centred international film festival “of the kids, by the kids, for the kids”. Run under the slogan of “Show me your World”, in 2012 the 7th BIKI screened 70 films from 24 countries and provided educational programmes, special exhibitions and music concerts much of which is planned by a committee of children and young people under the guidance of the festival team.

On arrival at Busan Train Station we were met by a member of the festival team and Kim Sang Hwa, the festival director, arriving in 2 swish Mini cars. A bit impractical as it was a bit of a squeeze but somehow they managed to fit all our luggage along with the large box with our video installation inside AND the 4 of us into the 2 cars.

Mr Kim told us that Mini was a key sponsor providing the festival with a fleet of 5 Mini cars, all in different colours with the festival logo emblazoned on the doors. Racing through the streets of this high tech city I began to feel like we were in a scene from the “Italian Job”. Sponsorship by big corporate companies proved to play a big part in this festival although it didn’t seem to dilute the ethos of the way the festival was delivered in anyway. Certainly not in the way that I felt it had with the Seoul International Cartoon & Animation Festival.
Another festival sponsor was Guest House 601, a very swanky apartment on the 16th floor of a gorgeous high rise overlooking Haeundae Beach. All the international guests including ourselves were staying here for the duration of the festival and some of the ones who have proved to be key in developments of KFK UK since my research trip are as follows:

1. Jin Joo - director of Cinemasports, a Korean American from San Francisco whom I had invited to join me in Busan to work on the delivery of a filmmaking workshop.
2. Josep Arbiol and Ainhoa Berástegui – directors of Jordi El Mussol a filmmaking organisation linked to a primary school in Valencia, Spain
3. Yasushi Asai - lecturer in Anime from Kyoto University and a freelance filmmaker and animator
4. Chun-Huang Wang and Hui-ching Tseng - lecturers of film and animation at Tainan University, Taiwan and directors of the Tainan Film Festival for young people.

The festival venues included the stunning Busan Cinema Centre a building of architectural splendour designed and built especially for the International Busan Film Festival which takes place in October. Films were screened inside and outside the venue with workshops taking place in and around the building as well as at the city museum and on the beach.
Briefly the festival schedule over the 4 days included:

1. Opening and Closing Ceremony with feature film screenings, performances by children and young people, awards and acknowledgements.
5. Special Section – a collection of short animations about cities, culture, history and old stories from around the globe.
6. Events – seminar on media education, a poster contest, logo contest, a cinema tent, media sharing market, special exhibition and curated performances, an Anime music performance, children’s film workshops, Cine Playground, Kids filmmakers night and our very own video installation.

In addition to being an international VIP guest of the festival I had also put forward successful proposals to the festival for us to exhibit our arts council funded project ‘View Point’ and for us to deliver a Cinemasports workshop in partnership with Jin Joo, the founder director of the US based organisation.

‘View Point’ is a video art installation created by myself and Gareth Hudson from KFK UK working in collaboration with young people from County Durham. Briefly the work tells a 24-hour story of a tower block in an imaginary city landscape in the North East of England compacted
into 24 minutes. The work is a unique combination of hand drawn illustration, live action, stop motion animation, 3D CGI and video mapping.

The video installation was exhibited in the main festival arena at the Busan Cinema Centre for the duration of the festival to much enthusiasm and applause. Gareth and I gave an artist talk about the work answering questions to a crowd of curious children and their teachers about the ideas, design and construction behind the artwork. This was our first outing for the project and we were thrilled that it was received so well and that its premiere was in such a prestigious and high tech building in keeping with the content of what had been created.

In 2011 KFK UK had partnered up with the global film initiative “Cinemasports”, to programme and deliver some filmmaking challenges with groups of young people competing with their peer from around the world. Cinemasports is described as the Iron Chef of Filmmaking where teams have 10 hours to complete a movie with a list of 3 ingredients. The finished movies screen the 11th hour, that very night and are shared across the world via You Tube and Vimeo.
Our event was a new challenge within the Cinemasports realm as we were delivering it to a very young group of children with the average age of the participant being 10 years old. In addition we were working with children who had no knowledge of English so the challenge was definitely on! The workshop was delivered by Jin, Gareth and myself to a group of 32 children along with the support of a team of young Korean volunteers. In preparation for the workshop we were pleasantly surprised to find out that the festival had given the volunteers a days training in filmmaking and editing.

Split into 6 teams our groups of young Korean filmmakers really rose to the challenge that we set them and armed with ideas with which to include the 3 required ingredients of a rock, a book and jump they set off to create their masterpieces. By 5pm the films were all in, a little rough round the edges I might add but that was to be expected from such novices. We screened the films at the 11th hour at the Busan Cinema Centre to a packed house of children, parents, friends and international guests and awarded all groups with certificates for their efforts. The festival team and more importantly the festival director Mr Kim were thrilled with the workshop and the screening event.

My time in Busan was the most busy I think I have ever been at a festival and it was certainly the most hectic few days of the trip. In addition to attending feature film and shorts screenings, seminars, talks, workshops, numerous children’s parties, the opening and closing ceremonies etc, we were also very busy with the all important networking which generally takes place over dinners and drinks. Every night we were wined and dined in various restaurants around the city along with all the international guests which enabled me to learn so much about the festival staff, their functions and roles, how the
programmers sourced films, the festival budget, how it was funded, how they gained sponsorship and how best to run a festival on such a huge ambitious scale.

To sum up in one word my experience at the Busan International Kids Film Festival was profound. Having attended many film festivals over the last 10 years it has to be without a doubt the BEST I have ever been to. It’s huge, exciting, fun, thrilling, local at heart yet international in presence, full of pomp and ceremony as with all Korean events but above all else children are at the absolute heart of the festival and their enjoyment and experience is the main driver for everything that takes place.
JAPAN

After the excitement of attending the Busan International Kids’ Film Festival we made our goodbyes to all our new friends taking a high-speed boat from the port of Busan sailing across the sea to Japan and entering the country via the port city of Fukuoka.

Meeting with the Focus on Asia Fukuoka International Film Festival

Although we were enroute to the City of Beppu in Oita Prefecture I had a meeting arranged with the organisers of the Focus on Asia International Film Festival to find out if we could share any information and exchange films. Miki Matsuo, the festival programmer met with us at the arrivals terminal and very kindly helped us find our guesthouse. Once sorted with accommodation Gareth and I left Sam and James resting on cool tatami mats whilst we went to the City Hall to meet with the Festival Director, City officials and Miki’s production team to discuss festivals, films and programming.

Focus on Asia-Fukuoka International Film Festival introduces films from Asia to a largely local audience. They use film to deepen an understanding of Asia on a civic level and to promote cultural and international exchange whilst discovering and fostering new talent for the film industry.

Being geographically located closest to the Asiatic mainland with a long history of having served Japan as its gateway of exchange to the continent, the City of Fukuoka attaches great importance to its Asian ties as she positions herself in the image of an “energetic urban centre
of Asia”. Fukuoka began putting on "Asian Month" in 1990, as a means to further deepen the circle of exchanges developed through the "Asian-Pacific Exposition" held in 1989 to commemorate her centennial. Every September, "Asian Month" holds over 50 events that relate to the culture, learning and arts of Asia. Inaugurated in 1991, the "Focus on Asia-Fukuoka International Film Festival" is one of the major events of "Asian Month".

Our meeting was incredibly formal and therefore a rather strange experience for us who are more used to things being much more informal and relaxed. On arrival at City Hall we were introduced to a number of City officials who after much bowing and ceremony bombarded us with literature completely inappropriate to my research. We were given a brief outline of the festival and its history and learnt how they screened feature films from Asia with no focus on shorts or a youth programme. According to the director the organisers had no plans to change or engage with young people in any way – why change something that was already working?

It was only after our meeting with the city officials was over and we were walking back to our hotel that we got to chat with Miki in a more relaxed and honest way. Miki told us how she felt that their festival was old and tired and although successful it was only serving a very small market. The average age of the festival audience was 60+ and their engagement with young people was non-existent. She seemed in awe of what we were doing and was more interested in what we at KFK UK could teach them about the running and programming of festivals for children and young people than what they could potentially teach us.
Although not quite what I was expecting it was a very interesting meeting from the point of view of experiencing and learning how the hierarchy of positions within companies still existed in Japan. Everything about the Focus on Asia Fukouka International Film Festival was organized from the top down and there certainly seemed no opportunity for younger people to have any influence on how it could grow, change and adapt with the times.

**Attending the Beppu Arts Project**

After a nights rest in Fukuoka we travelled by bus to Beppu City in Oita Prefecture to spend 5 days in this famous Japanese hot springs resort by the coast. I had arranged a visit to the Beppu Arts Project an innovative arts initiative based in the city with a colleague of mine, Akio Hayashi, who had participated in a cultural leadership exchange with me in 2009.

Beppu City is on Kyushu Island in the South of Japan. The city is at the heart of the Beppu Project’s work whose objectives are to encompass the sociological, economical, historical and architectural aspects of the city into all the film and arts projects they deliver. Filmmakers and artists are invited to realize new arts projects, run workshops with Beppu citizens, and find ways of sharing their work with the community to
reach as many people as possible in order to make film and art accessible to everyone.

The organisation was run by a large team of very young Japanese creatives which when we first arrived seemed a breath of fresh air after our very stuffy meeting in Fukuoka. Around the city the organisation had taken over a number of spaces which they ran as artists studios including a dance studio as well as a book shop, craft shop, a café and a traditional Japanese apartment for their artists in residence which is where we were staying.

I had been really looking forward to this part of the trip however, despite the friendliness of some individuals from the Beppu team overall our experience here was not a great one for either me, Gareth, Sam or James. In fact it was the low point of the entire trip for all of us. Upon arrival we very quickly felt rather unwelcome and incredibly misunderstood in terms of why we were actually there. My colleague and contact Akio was called away to Kyoto to work on a project the day we arrived and many of the remaining Beppu team seemed to think we were there on holiday not for research. It was I believe a classic case of “Lost in Translation” and a lack of communication between Akio and the rest of the team but once my son Sam got very sick and ended up in hospital we wanted nothing more than to pack our bags and head out of town as quick as possible.

On reflection our time in Beppu was in the end to be less about
meetings and more about soaking up the atmosphere of being in a vibrant arts community. It was incredibly interesting from the point of view of how the place offered creative opportunities to artists and filmmakers from both Japan and overseas but from the point of view of KFK UK there didn’t see to be much to be learnt from the Beppu team – in fact it seemed it was us who could teach them a thing or two. Filmmaking opportunities for children and young people is in its infancy in Japan and very under developed, despite it being such a high tech country. Sadly none of the staff at the Beppu project seemed that interested in our award winning work or developing such a programme for their own young people in the foreseeable future. High-end art by renowned artists seemed to be the focus which was not really what I was interested in finding out about.

We did however have the chance to exhibit our video installation ‘View Point’ in an amazing gallery space owned and run by the Beppu Project - although there was some debate at the outset around whether we must pay for the rental of the space! I felt rather awkward about this as I had been led to believe by Akio that this was all confirmed. Now the goalposts were rapidly changing, as we even had to pay for the hire of a projector which had not been mentioned in any correspondence. Despite the hick-ups we installed the artwork for viewing by the public and delivered a mildly successful Q and A to a group of artists, students and members of the public in return for free gallery use. The installation then stayed up for the rest of the week and we were able to get some small pleasure standing outside watching people view and experience our work.
Once Sam was back to his normal self and deemed by the doctors to be well enough to travel it was with great relief that we packed our bags and left town to carry on our journey northwards to Tokyo. We decided to take some well-earned time off and travelled by Shinkansen to Hiroshima for a couple of days of sightseeing and chill out time for us and the boys.

Meeting with Yasushi Asai and Maya Yonesho of Kyoto University

Refreshed and re-energized we travelled onwards from Hiroshima to Kyoto for a few days where I had arranged a meeting with a Japanese artist, Maya Yonesho, who I met in Croatia earlier in the year at the VAFI Animation Festival. I also invited Yasushi Asai whom we had met a few weeks previously at the Busan International Kids' Film Festival to come along.

Maya is a freelance animator who lectures at Kyoto University for 6 months of the year and then spends the other 6 months travelling in Europe delivering specialist animation workshops using a fascinating technique she has developed using rice paper. Yasushi is also a lecturer at Kyoto University teaching Anime and in his spare time makes his own animations; one of which we saw and loved in Busan.

We met the two of them in the beautiful old Geisha district of Kyoto and went for a traditional Japanese dinner where we enjoyed
discussions around styles of filmmaking, animation, future collaborations and possible cultural visits whilst eating sushi and sashimi and drinking the odd glass of saki. Inspired by the style of animation that Yasushi creates Gareth and I formally asked him if we could collaborate together on the creation of the KFK UK Film Festival Ident to which he enthusiastically agreed. Both Maya and Yasushi also agreed to let me screen their brilliant animations at the KFK UK Film Festival that I would be delivering later in the year at the BFI Southbank in London.

Meeting with the Kodomotachino Tokyo Kinder Film Festival

Founded in 1992 by Mr Mitsuo Tahira, Tokyo Kinder Film Festival worked with Renate Zylla, the Director of “Kinder Filmfest Berlin,” the children’s film section at the Berlin International Film Festival to develop in its early stages. Every year, their programmers visit Berlin to search for films and animations from around the world to introduce to Japanese audiences. The team contacts filmmakers, film productions, and government agencies to bring a selection of films and their creators to Japan for the summer’s big event.

Our schedule meant I would already be in Laos when the festival was actually due to take place however I had asked if we could still meet with Mitsuo Tahira, the festival director and his team. The 4 of us went to meet them at their festival headquarters – a golf shop in a suburb many miles out of the centre of Tokyo. Having checked out the festival website many times before our meeting I was sure we would be visiting a huge festival office with hordes of staff and volunteers so was pleasantly surprised to realize that actually the Kinder Film festival was not that different to KFK UK just 20 years older. Here was a hugely successful festival that had been going for 20+ years being run by a
very small yet committed and talented team from a minute office of a businessman who sold golf clubs for a living.

I soon learnt that the festival had been grown from the passion of Mitsuo, the director, who wanted nothing more than to create a space and place for children to have fun and be entertained by film. He didn’t expect to make a living from running a festival as many years of experience had taught him that it was almost impossible to do this. His passion for film and children was obvious and it had ensured the festivals survival for it to be now recognized as the best children’s film festival in Japan and renowned the world over. Mitsuo was also the first and only person I met on my trip who truly understood what my research was about, what I needed to learn and why I had felt the need to undertake it in Asia.
We shared our work with Mitsuo and his team in a very informal atmosphere surrounded by golf clubs and golf clothes. They were enthusiastic and entranced by what we showed them particularly enjoying some of our short films made with young people from County Durham. I was then able to learn about the Kinder Film Festival, the history, development, the programme, the partnerships, the sponsors, the judges, the audience and the venues. Mitsuo and I learnt through our conversations that although very different in size our organisations did in fact have many shared aims including a strong desire for international collaboration and partnership working to enhance future festival programmes and promote greater cultural awareness amongst children in both the UK and Japan. By the end of the meeting I was so sad that we were unable to stay and actually experience the festival for real as I just knew it was special and would have been an experience on the level that Busan had been.

Timing was one of my biggest frustrations throughout this trip as festivals are time restricted with fixed dates and I had realized very early on that without a private jet it was impossible for me to visit all the various festivals taking place in the countries I had identified. I had decided to focus on visiting a small number when working out my schedule but missing out on the Kinder Festival is my biggest regret of the trip.

**Meeting at Dwarf Studios**

Matsuo had very kindly offered to arrange for the four of us to be able to visit Dwarf studios, the producers of a number of hugely successful children’s animation programmes for Japanese TV. Dwarf Studios were also the creators of Komaneko the Curious Cat a delightful stop frame animation for early years and the mascot for the last 10 years of the Kinder Film Festival. After wandering around the streets of yet another suburb of Tokyo we finally found our way to the studio which was tucked away in a side street. We were able to meet with the manager of the studio, observe some of the team in the actual production of a top-secret new animation in their studio AND hold and cuddle the original Komaneko character!!
Despite not expecting them to agree to my request for permission to screen an episode of Komaneko at KFK UK later in the year due to the company being a more commercially minded operation I was thrilled when they gave me permission and rather flattered when they asked if I would also help with distribution in the UK. Watch this space...

Our time in Japan was now over and the third stage of our trip was to begin with Sam and I flying to Laos PDR for the final leg of my research whilst Gareth and James returned to England.

**LAOS PDR**

Sam and I flew into Vientiane the capital city of this communist country squeezed in between China, Vietnam, Thailand and Cambodia on a rainy and cool morning direct from Bangkok. We were staying with some old friends from the UK who were currently living in Laos. Tessa Bunney, a successful British photographer was undertaking an Arts Council of England funded photography project working in partnership with the British Charity MAG (Mines Advisory Group) and had located her family for 6 months to the capital in order to make the best of this exciting opportunity.
I had very few contacts in Laos as it had proved extremely difficult to find out what, if anything was happening in my field of research from the UK. So on arrival I was still very unsure if my time here was going to achieve anything concrete and had resigned myself to Laos being my “wild card”.

**The Lone Buffalo Foundation**

One of the few contacts I had managed to make in advance from the UK was with an English Charity called the Lone Buffalo Foundation. I had literally stumbled across a blog written by Gareth Carter who with his friend Explore Tour Leader Mark Steadman had set up LBF in 2010 to honour the legacy left by an inspirational local man, Manophet, who dedicated his whole life to helping others. The community project is based in Phonsavanh, Xieng Khouang Province, in the north of Laos.

Following their friend Manophet’s sudden death, Mark and Gareth vowed to continue his good work by setting up a school in Phonsavanh offering free English lessons to young people. Under the direction of an energetic western teacher, Nick, the Foundation now manages two classrooms and trains local teachers. The project believes in sport as an incentive to study and manages football teams for both boys and girls and a small gym. Another important role of the Lone Buffalo Foundation is to raise awareness of the tragic legacy left from the Vietnam War, which leaves the majority of the province still scattered with cluster bombs.
The project creates a unique environment where young people can study English, play sport and develop life skills together - for free. A considerable proportion of students come from the Hmong minority group. In this developing nation, the ability to speak English gives young Laotians a great opportunity for careers in business and tourism. Shortly after Manophet’s passing in 2010, the Foundation raised funding to take a group of young footballers from the school to compete in the Gothia Cup in Sweden, the largest youth football tournament in the world. They returned home with the Fair Play Trophy, a fitting tribute to the Manophet’s legacy. The movie On Safer Ground (available early 2013) tells this story of triumph and resilience rising from nations tragic past, through the eyes of a group of footballers living in one of the world’s most bomb contaminated places.

Gareth had very kindly put me in touch with Mark who had agreed by email for me to visit the school as part of my research. I met with Mark in Vientiane to discuss the impending trip and the pros and cons of flying or making the trip north by road. The flight was 1 hour whereas a road trip would take up to 10 hours. I chose the road trip for the challenge, the experience and to ensure that we got to see some of the countryside outside of the capital city. Mark helped me locate and hire a suitable car and driver in order for us to make the journey and 2 days later we set off on our trip.

Travelling to Phonsavanh in the North of the country was truly amazing and after 10 hours we arrived in what I can only describe as a dusty one street cowboy town. Quick showers and we headed over to the Lone Buffalo school just outside of the main part of town where Nick Williamson (from Yorkshire) the resident English teacher was delivering one of his many classes to a group of Hmong ethnic minority young people. Once introductions were made I gave a presentation to the young people about the work of KFK UK and Jack Drum Arts as well as showing them a number of short films made by kids from the North East of England.

The next day Mark had arranged for us to go out with UXO Laos – the government department that were in charge of removing the unexploded bombs.
The director of the regional office gave me these facts before we went on our day tour:

Lao PDR is the most heavily bombed country, per capita, in history

Approximately 25% of villages in Laos are contaminated with Unexploded Ordnance (UXO)

More than 580,000 bombing missions were conducted over Laos

Over 2 million tons of ordnance were dropped on Laos by the Americans between 1964 and 1973

Cluster munitions or ‘Bombies’ (as they are known locally) are the most common form of UXO remaining

More than 270 million bombies were dropped onto Laos

Up to 30% failed to detonate

Approximately 80 million unexploded bombies remained in Laos after the war

All 17 provinces of Laos suffer from UXO contamination

41 out of the 46 poorest districts in Laos have UXO contamination

Over 50,000 people have been killed or injured as a result of UXO accidents in the period 1964 – 2008

Over 20,000 people have been killed or injured as a result of UXO accidents post war period

After our tour around the depot we departed to a small village about 15km outside of Phonsavanh and on arrival were marched up to a large field directly next to the village houses where an all women team were out working hard in the midday heat looking for the dangerous UXO’s. Here we were given more facts and figures, a demonstration of the equipment that was used to detect the UXO’s and to my surprise shown a number of ‘live’ UXO’s around the field that had been discovered that morning including some cluster bombs and a large rocket.
Whilst taking photographs I was suddenly told that we had to depart the field very quickly. Lots of shouting ensued through a loud hailer as we were hurriedly escorted off the field and into the yard of a small wooden house for safety. Chairs were brought out for all the village children that had been rounded up and we were then treated to what I can only describe as the loudest firework display I have ever seen as the women then proceeded to blow up a large number of cluster bombs and the rocket that I had spotted, and photographed earlier.

Once the explosions had taken place I chatted with the women’s team through an interpreter and learnt that in 1 week whilst working in this field alone they had discovered over 180 UXO’s. Sam, my son was also able to interview some of the local village children and find out from a young persons perspective of what it was like to grow up with the on-going threat of UXO’s being in your back yard. It was an incredibly moving experience beyond anything I have the words to explain and I was at one point very overcome emotionally. The defining moment of that day however was when one of the little girls who lived in the village asked Mark, Sam and I “what would you do if the bombs were in your country?” It was a question that none of us could comprehend or answer and one that Mark and I have discussed on many occasions since.

The remainder of our time in Phosavanh was spent at the Lone Buffalo School where I worked with 2 young people on the creation of short films about their lives and filmed a greeting for the KFK UK 2012 festival with a class of Hmong young people. On returning to Vientiane later in the week I had a couple more meetings including one with some
local filmmakers who had set up the Laos New Wave Filmmakers Group and the organisers of the Vientianale Film Festival where I learnt more about the development of the film industry in Laos and that of film festivals.

My research trip had now come to an end which I felt was rather frustrating in terms of my trip to Laos as things in this country had been so slow to organise and 2 weeks was clearly not enough time to make the connections or meet up with the people I had hoped to. After some discussions with Mark from the Lone Buffalo Foundation I decided before I even stepped on the plane to travel back to the UK that I would return later in the year using the remainder of my research grant to pay for a flight. My plan was to attend the Luang Prabang Film Festival and more importantly make a second visit to the Lone Buffalo Foundation where I felt that I as an individual could offer something useful.

Additional Trip to Laos

So… in November 2012 I returned to Laos this time leaving my son at home and travelling with Jin Joo, the director of Cinemasports who I had met and worked with earlier in the year in Busan and who had since been to the UK to work with me on the delivery of a programme of work for KFK UK in both London and County Durham.

Luang Prabang Film Festival

The Luang Prabang Film Festival (LPFF) is an annual celebration of filmmaking in Southeast Asia that aims to educate Lao people about film as a means of cultural expression and communication, and to support a nascent local industry and art form. Since 2010, the LPFF has supported and engaged local filmmakers seeking to develop the
domestic industry and encouraged Southeast Asian filmmakers to contribute to an exchange between regional film industries. Our main reason for visiting Luang Prabang was to attend this festival. I had hoped that I would be able to meet with Gabriel Kuperman the American man who had founded the festival but from email conversations between us it seemed that he was not that interested in finding out about KFK UK or sharing with me his vision of film festivals for Asia.

However despite the lack of a meeting it was a great productive and interesting week with Jin and I attending a number of feature film screenings, film shorts programmes, a workshop and Q and A with a meet the director session. The most inspiring event was the outdoor screening that took place near the craft market every night. A huge cinema screen had been erected and films were projected for free throughout the festival. It was impossible to count how many people were there each night but I would say in the region of 1000+ came along to watch films ranging from comedies to thrillers to musicals and even a horror. Although I enjoyed the films themselves I enjoyed more the watching of the faces of the local people who seemed so enthralled and delighted to see films on a big screen. They were a loud noisy audience, laughing, talking, shrieking and at times screaming but the most appreciative I have ever seen at a film festival. It is possibly worth mentioning here that in the whole country there are only 3 cinemas so this experience was something unique and amazing for Laos’s people.
The Lone Buffalo Foundation

Once the festival had finished Jin and I headed up to Phonsavan to visit the Lone Buffalo Foundation. Over 5 days we worked with 25 young people from the Hmong Ethnic minority group on the production of a series of short films. Although initially our aim was to create work inspired by the theme of ‘dreams’ as in the call for film entries by the Vientianale Film Festival we decided this was too hard a task for the group. After much debate and discussion we opted to work with the young people to create some short promo films which would showcase their town and would back-up work they were doing with their English teacher Nick.

It was an extremely hard task delivering these workshops and a huge learning curve not only for the young people but also for Jin and I. Making the films required us to teach the young people about filmmaking from a knowledge base of zero. They had no cultural references to refer to as young people in the west do, are unfamiliar with video cameras, digital cameras and most had never used a computer. However, despite the obstacles we all had to overcome our young filmmakers produced from scratch a number of fabulous short films about their town and the different things that they thought would be of interest to visitors.
At the end of the 5 days when the films were all edited we had a world premiere at the Lone Buffalo School and presented our newly trained filmmakers with certificates of achievement and words of encouragement to continue the work once we were gone. It was a wonderful experience for Jin and I especially when one of the young people stood up and very nervously thanked us for coming to Phonsavanh to teach him how to make films – he said “… it is the best thing that has ever happened to me….” Of course I am sure that is not the case but it was incredibly moving for us to be thanked in such a way and to know that our efforts had been appreciated and enjoyed so much.

Vientianale International Film Festival
Back in Vientiane later in the week I met up with one of the organisers of the Vientianale Film Festival to discuss the possibility of getting the films created by the young people from Phonsavanh at their festival in late February 2013. When I screened the films to Ding interestingly he appeared to not be that taken by them, which I quickly realised, was because young Laos people want to find out about the world and are not interested in films made in Laos that document life as it is. However, if I agreed to curate some other shorts for their festival from Asia and beyond and run some workshops at the festival he would he said ensure that the Lone Buffalo Foundation films were screened and that the young people would be welcome to attend.
OUTCOMES AND LEARNING

The outcomes and learning from this life changing trip have been so wide ranging, immense and exciting on all levels that I feel as if I am still running to catch up with the developments and opportunities it has created for me since it started a year ago. Some general ones are listed below but this is by no means a complete list, as things seem to be happening on an almost weekly basis, which are all a direct result of my fellowship.

- New networks and partnerships with film festivals all over Asia and beyond
- A new partnership with Cinemasports based in the USA
- Ideas for film programming in spaces beyond the constraints of a cinema
- Ideas for festival programming beyond film to include music and performance
- Ideas for innovative workshops and events
- New ways in which to ensure young people are on board with the planning and fully involved in the delivery of KFK UK
- Opportunities to attend other festivals in Asia and beyond
- Opportunities to screen KFK UK films at other festivals
- Invites to festivals to be a keynote speaker
- KFK UK put on the international map

One of the questions that I was asked at my interview for the Churchill Fellowship was whether I felt that being awarded one would help me to be taken more seriously by my peers as a credible player on the film festival scene. I believed it would but thought this may happen after the trip not before. So imagine my surprise when within 2 weeks of being able to publicly announce that I had been awarded the Winston Churchill Fellowship the BFI (British Film Institute) offered me the amazing opportunity to take the 2012 KFK UK Film Festival to London. Although there was no cash funding on the table as part of the offer they offered to provide me with their wonderful Southbank venue for free. It was a hugely exciting and momentous occasion for KFK UK, the festival that I had founded and built up from nothing was now finally being recognised as important in the annual festival diary. Mark Reid the Head of BFI Education with whom I met to discuss the partnership stated that it was in fact the international connections that made KFK UK different from other youth film festivals that existed in the UK and was undoubtedly the reason why he was interested in bringing KFK UK to London.

My experiences at the Busan International Kids Film Festival and my meeting with the Kinder Film Festival team in Tokyo has greatly
influenced my thinking, approach and programming of KFK UK. As soon as I returned from the trip I began planning the delivery of KFK UK Film Festival at the BFI and introduced a new programme at the festival screening films and animations made for children and young people, adopted a festival mascot inspired by BIKI and the Kinder Film Festival designed by the animator Yasushi Asai. Children were centre stage of KFK UK welcoming guests and giving the speeches to a packed audience of young filmmakers from all over the country and overseas. For the first time ever I filled the cinema screenings and feedback from the festival has repeatedly stated that children and young people felt included and appreciated like never before.

Although a highly experienced film educator when it comes to the facilitation of filmmaking workshops for children and young people my experience of delivering the Cinemasports workshops at Biki in South Korea and at the Lone Buffalo Foundation in Laos have greatly influenced and changed my approach to workshop planning. Many individuals that I met whilst on my trip have contributed to this new way of thinking but the person who has had the most impact on my professional development and learning has been Jin Joo from Cinemasports. His approach, ethos and working practices are ones that I will use in my work for years to come both in partnership with him and with others that I work.

Many interesting opportunities have come my way since the trip including an invite to help curate aspects of the Vientianale Film Festival in Laos in March 2013 where I will also run some filmmaking
workshops and host a screening of the films made by the young people from the Lone Buffalo Foundation. I was invited to be the keynote speaker at the MICE Film Festival in Valencia, Spain in January where I gave an important closing speech to an audience of film educators from all over the world. It was a nail-biting experience for me to give this speech but confirmation that I have an important contribution to make to festivals both at home and abroad. KFK UK has been invited back to the BFI Southbank for the 2nd year running and I have also received invites for KFK UK to partner with film festivals around the world including BIKI, the Kinder Film Festival, the Austin Film Festival in Australia and the Vientianale International Film Festival in Laos PDR.
Closer to home KFK UK has been commissioned to share the results of my research with a programme of film work touring County Durham, we have been included in the Festival of the North East Programme, I have secured exhibition space at the Durham City Gallery and developed a new partnership with the Arts Department of Northumberland who want their own KFK UK Film Festival and Cinemasports events in 2013. Jack Drum Arts of which I am a director has recently applied for capital funding for a solar powered caravan which if successful will provide a much needed cinema resource for rural areas of the region. KFK UK will be at the heart of this initiative ensuring that the voices of young people from all over the world are screened to new audiences and that we are able to inspire through film.

On a personal level the experience has given me lots of confidence in my professional skills and experience and affirmation that in terms of international working I am probably one of the most well connected individuals working in the field of children and young peoples film festivals in the UK. Although I was already well connected in Europe, through this research trip I have now made lots more new contacts with a large group of professional people from all over the world who all share my passion for children and young peoples filmmaking and film festivals. We are an international family of film educators who believe in the power of film to change lives and who are committed to ensuring that we share our unique cultures, not only in our own
countries but across the world. It’s inspiring and exciting to know that I am part of this network of film educators and living as I do in rural South West Durham where I often feel very isolated from my peers, it’s comforting for me to know that I am part of such a strong network of professionals.

To sum up (if that is at all possible) the experience has given me the confidence to believe in myself, to think big for the future and to keep going despite a shrinking industry in the grip of the biggest recession my generation has seen. In fact I believe now more then ever that there is a need to provide our children and young people with a film festival to be proud of, where they can showcase and share their films and watch the work of their peers from around the world. I am in the process of applying for European funding to develop KFK UK into an international film festival that will not only include a competition for children and young people as in previous years, but a programme of film screenings, workshops, events and film and media education to ensure that it is a festival of quality and size equal to those that I experienced in Asia. I hope Europe and UK funders will believe in my abilities in the same way that the Churchill Trust have.

To end my report I would like to share with you some wise words from Dame Liz Forgan’s final speech as Chair of Arts Council England, 15 January 2013 that I quoted in my own keynote speech at the closing ceremony of the MICE Film Festival in Valencia on January 21st. Her words describe very well what drives me to do what I do and why I am so passionate about children, young people and film.

“The arts, the expression of our culture, are as deep a need in us as food, shelter, sex and security. We must have them. We must use them to express our human nature and our social existence. They are the way in which we communicate beyond the grunt and the whack.”
EXTRACTS FROM SAM AND JAMES' BLOG

Day One in Beijing by Sam
This morning when I woke up I was still very tired and it took me half an hour to get out of bed! My mum had her first meeting in China so I had to get changed and have breakfast quite quickly. We went in our car with our driver and Miracle our guide to the Science and Technology Museum to meet with some people from ASIFA which is an independent animation association. It was fun as I got to have a go on this cool whiteboard using an animation programme called Flip Boom. I made my own animation while everyone watched me which was a bit embarrassing as they kept taking pictures of me.

Once the meeting was over the business people took us for dinner in a really posh restaurant where we had Peking Duck, fish with pancakes, lotus flower and prune juice. It was all delicious especially the duck skin which you ate hot with some sugar and it melted on your tongue. The people from ASIFA were really friendly and have invited my mum to come back next year to do some work with them. Hope I can come too!

From 9 Days in Korea by James

Today was the day we left the comfort of our climate controlled and westernized penthouse apartment and became intrepid explorers who would go out and discover/experience the unknown. In other words we (ME & Sam) were going to a homestay with one of our Korean friends from the festival who we had been going to workshops and
screenings with. We didn’t know what to expect at first: we could have gone and been abducted by aliens for all we knew. When we got there any worries or misconceptions were blown away. We played some video games, played mini baseball in their living room and the 2 of us even tried to show them how to play cricket (it didn’t go as well as planned and the ball ended up hitting me in the face more than once!). I got a good night’s sleep, even if our room was hotter than the sun by the morning (looking forward to having air-con again...).

When we woke up we were rather hot. We had a traditional Korean breakfast of rice, noodles, strips of juicy (and strangely sweet) meat and a plate of Kimchi. After that we headed to the cinema centre for the day of Cinemasports being run by Helen, Gareth and Jin. Our film was meant to be a serious story of friendship and learning to be accepting of others: it ended up like a Charlie Chaplain comedy, with a theme tune to match! We went to the evening screening and it came as no surprise to the group, that our film was awarded “Best comedy”. Later we went to a café with our homestay hosts and had a Korean summer desert (a delicious combo of red bean, crushed ice and cream. Then we settled down once again for another gruelling night without cool air...
**Last Day in Beppu by James and Sam**

Today we went for a walk out along by the sea and then met with a lady called Junko who ran the international cultural office in Beppu. She craftily conspired with Helen to get us dressed up in Yokata (Summer Kimonos) and then we had to learn a Japanese dance. Both James and I were mightily embarrassed and when we had done our bit we quickly put on our shorts and t-shirts so we wouldn’t have to do the endurance dance down on the beach for 2 hours!! Instead we went to watch 100’s of people all dressed in their Yokata’s dancing for hours to live music. At the end there was a brilliant firework display. A good day out.

**One day in Tokyo by Sam**

Today we woke up really late and that was good in its own way because it wouldn’t be as warm when we went out. First we took a monorail to the other side of Tokyo and went to see this massive moving robot (it only moved its head) which was called Gun-dam we then went in to hell (a huge shopping mall) it was good on some parts but really the only good part was the arcade not the shopping mall. But I did buy some Star Wars Light Saber chopsticks which are awesome. We then tried to walk back across the rainbow bridge but we failed as we couldn’t find the way to get on the bridge so we admitted defeat and we took the monorail back and our day was complete when we had a wonderful dinner of curry in Shunjuku.
Arriving in Laos by Sam

Now it’s just my mum and me as Gareth and James have gone back to the UK. Mum and me flew out of Japan to Laos with an overnight stop in Bangkok which was okay but I just wanted to get to Laos as quick as possible. After a night in a hotel in Bangkok we took a plane to Vientiane. When we arrived in Laos it was raining lots which was actually quite nice. Ian my mum’s friend was at the airport waiting for us and we got our first tuk tuk ride which was really cool. When we reached our new home in the centre of town I thought this was also C.O.O.L as it was an old style wooden house. We met friends that we hadn’t seen in a while, Tessa, Ian and Noah who is 7. But I did not feel very well again and I was really really tired so the rest of the day was boring until we played Uno when we went out for a dinner of sticky rice and hot hot chilli prawns.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed in some way to my research trip both before I left helping me with the all important references and research to those I met along the way in Asia and have met since the trip finished. To name you all here puts me in danger of missing out important people so YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE AND I THANK YOU ALL for your help, kindness, generosity and inspiration.
LINKS

Kids for Kids UK – http://kidsforkidsuk.org/
Jack Drum Arts – http://www.jackdrum.co.uk/
Hong Kong Arts Centre - http://www.hkac.org.hk
Hong Kong Youth Arts Festival - http://www.hkyaf.com
Focus on Film - http://www.focusonfilmhk.com/
ASIFA China - http://asifa.net
China Beijing Youth Camp - http://www.beijingfestival.org
Seoul International Cartoon and Animation Festival - http://www.sicaf.org
Busan International Kids’ Film Festival - http://www.biki.or.kr
Fukuoka International Film Festival - http://www.focus-on-asia.com/
The Beppu Project - http://www.beppuproject.com/
Tokyo Kinder Film Festival - http://www.kinder.co.jp
Dwarf Studios - http://www.dw-f.jp
Vientianale International Film Festival - http://www.vientianale.org
Lone Buffalo Foundation -
http://www.facebook.com/lonebuffalo?ref=ts&fref=ts
On Safer Ground Extended Trailer -
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2ov-1Uxlko
Luang Prabang Film Festival - http://luangprabangfilmfestival.org/
Lone Buffalo Foundation Films on KFK UK Vimeo Channel -
http://vimeo.com/album/2188238
View Point Video Installation on KFK UK Vimeo Channel -
http://vimeo.com/album/1985083/video/49155076