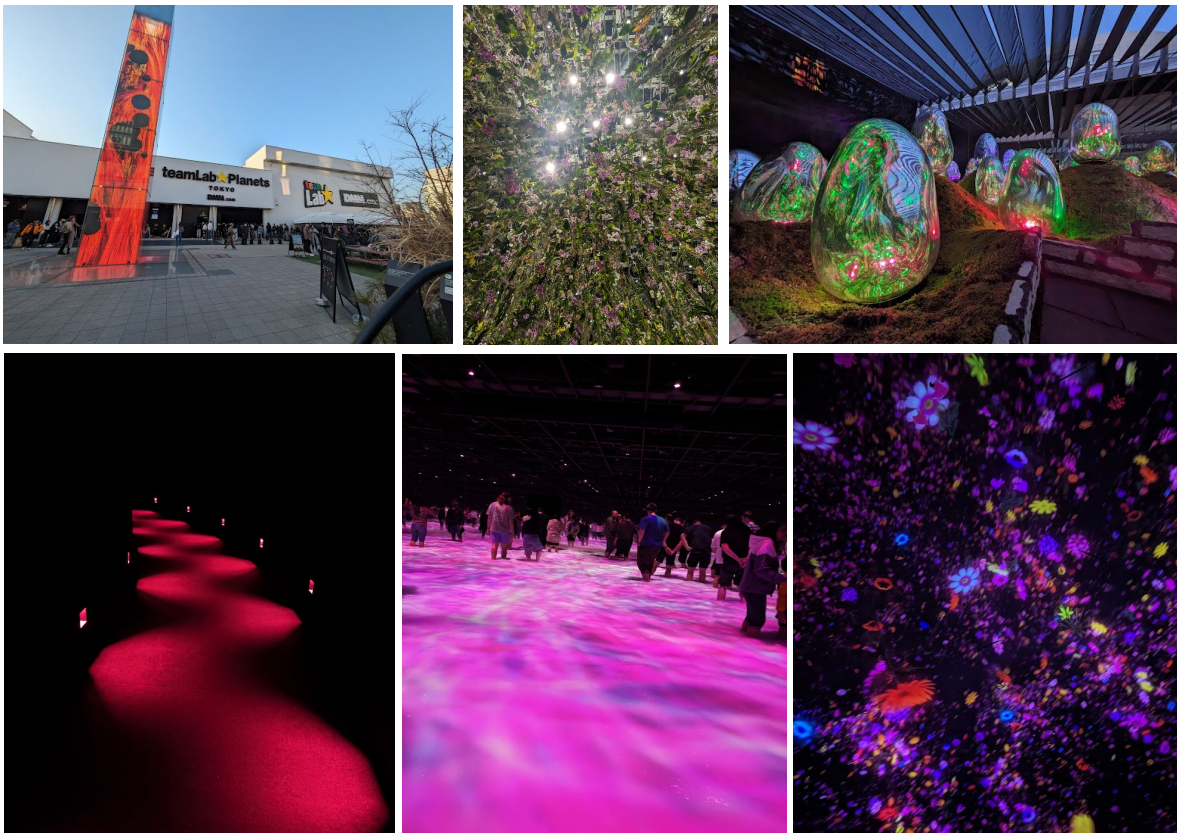


**Swiss-Japanese Chamber of Commerce &  
Swiss Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan  
Scholarship Fund**

**Year in Japan:**

**Final Report  
Work experience in Japan**



By Miriam Flück,  
Scholarship Recipient Intake 2023/2024  
From Tokyo, Japan

## 1. Introduction:

When I first arrived in Japan as part of the Swiss-Japanese Chamber of Commerce and the Swiss Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan's scholarship program, I brought with me a strong personal interest in art, culture, and intercultural exchange. But I also brought a clear professional ambition: to gain firsthand experience working in Japan's creative sector and to build a meaningful bridge between two cultures I care deeply about.

My academic background in Arts Management provided me with an essential framework for understanding the institutional and strategic dimensions of cultural work. Alongside this academic foundation, I gained practical experience in customer-facing and event-driven environments. In previous roles, I had the opportunity to work in sales at the Läderach Chocolate Event House, in hospitality at the Congress Center Mannheim in Germany, and in staff coordination at events such as Art Basel and event organisation at the Fantoche International Animation Film Festival Baden. These experiences further fueled my curiosity about how large-scale cultural initiatives are organized and how visitors experience them — particularly in the intersection of art, culture, tourism, and hospitality.

Even so, working in Japan represented a significant next step. I had long known the work of teamLab — the internationally renowned art collective for blending technology, nature, and interactive installation. I had visited some of their exhibitions previously, and the thought of contributing to their mission not only peaked my interest, but also felt aligned with both my professional goals and personal values. I saw this as a rare chance to gain practical experience in a globally respected cultural organization while deepening my understanding of Japanese working culture from the inside.

Making this transition was not without personal challenges. The start of my employment coincided with a period of significant change in my private life, as I found myself living alone in Tokyo for the first time. Nevertheless, I was determined to grow through the experience and to take full advantage of the opportunity provided. It felt important not only to develop my language and professional skills, but also to reflect honestly on the role of art and culture as a force of connection.

This final report offers a reflection on the second half of my scholarship stay in Japan, focussing on my time working at teamLab Planets in Tokyo. In the following sections, I describe my professional experiences, share insights into Japanese workplace culture, and reflect on what I have learned.

## **2. About teamLab Art Collective & teamLab Planets**

### **2.1. teamLab: Pioneers of Collective Digital Art**

Founded in 2001 in Tokyo by Toshiyuki Inoko, teamLab is an interdisciplinary art collective known for blending artists, programmers, engineers, mathematicians, animators, and architects to create immersive digital experiences (teamLab, n.d.-a; Du, 2020). Describing themselves as “ultra-technologists,” their work dissolves the boundaries between art, technology, and nature, inviting “collective creation” and visitor co-participation (teamLab, n.d.-a; Du, 2020).

### **2.2. teamLab Planets: A Body-Immersive Phenomenon**

teamLab Planets opened in Toyosu, Tokyo in July 2018 as a fully “body-immersive” museum. Visitors are encouraged to explore barefoot through water, mirrors, and multidimensional spaces, becoming participants — not mere observers — of the art. The exhibition space spans approximately 10,000 m<sup>2</sup> and includes various major artwork zones and two gardens (teamLab, n.d.-b).

In 2023, teamLab Planets was awarded Asia’s Leading Tourist Attraction at the World Travel Awards—becoming the first Japanese site to earn this recognition. Furthermore, it also earned a Guinness World Record as the most-visited museum dedicated to a single art collective, drawing 2,504,264 visitors worldwide between April 2023 and March 2024 (Business Wire, 2024; Bloolooop, 2024).

### **2.3. 2025 Expansion: New Exhibits, New Interactions**

On January 22, 2025, teamLab Planets expanded with several notable new spaces: Athletics Forest, encouraging movement-based exploration; Catching and Collecting Forest, which integrates educational augmented reality; and Future Park, a collaborative digital creation area. These additions increased the museum’s scale by approximately 1.5 times, reinforcing its position as a global cultural destination (Business Wire, 2024; Bloolooop, 2024).

### **3. teamLab's Significance in the Art & Creative Field**

#### **3.1 Innovation at the Intersection of Art and Technology**

teamLab has redefined the boundaries of contemporary art by dissolving the line between observer and artwork. Known for its “ultra-technologist” approach, the collective ingeniously merges disciplines — from programming and architecture to physics and design — in a model of multidimensional “collective creation” (teamLab, n.d.-a; vanSchneider, 2019). Their process is less hierarchical and more exploratory: internal “catalysts” form dynamic teams that self-organize around projects, emphasizing peer recognition and creative autonomy rather than top-down leadership (Ocula, 2023; vanSchneider, 2019).

#### **3.2 Global Recognition and Cultural Relevance**

teamLab's impact stretches far beyond Japan. Projects like teamLab Borderless in Tokyo and its new digital space, finest Phenomena, have set the global standard for immersive museums (Palm, 2025). Critics argue that these multisensory environments challenge traditional exhibition formats, inviting visitors into experiential narratives that feel more like collective rituals than passive consumption (Carollo, 2024; vanSchneider, 2019). The success is not limited to visitor numbers; it marks a shift in how art institutions approach engagement, storytelling, and technology.

#### **3.3 Democratizing Art through Immersion**

By removing sharp distinctions between viewer and installation, teamLab promotes an inclusive, nonverbal form of collective expression. Visitors are empowered to participate, explore, and shape meaning — fostering what one journalist described as “shared wonder” accessible across cultures and age groups. The group's work transcends language barriers, engaging with archetypal and emotional content in ways that conventional museums rarely do (Carollo, 2024; The Archive Magazine, 2021).

#### **3.4 Influence on the Art-Tourism-Technology Ecosystem**

teamLab has further influenced the “experience economy” by creating art that is inherently commercial and globally mobile. Projects are designed for ticket revenues, brand partnerships, and digital expansion — yet the collective remains committed to its artistic purpose. Shifts in digital arts, such as immersive, responsive environments, are now largely defined by teamLab's model, which encourages cultural institutions worldwide to rethink interactivity, collaboration, and audience connection (New Yorker, 2022; plusmagazines.net, 2021).

## **4. Work Experience at teamLab Planets**

Starting work at teamLab Planets in Tokyo marked a major shift in my daily life and professional routine. Having previously worked in customer-facing and event-related roles in Switzerland, I felt both eager and anxious stepping into the fast-paced environment of one of Japan's most well-known immersive art spaces. The transition from language school to a dynamic workplace was intensified by personal changes in my life — I had just moved to a new apartment in Tokyo, living alone for the first time after the end of a long-term relationship. In this context, beginning part-time work at teamLab Planets offered both a challenge and an anchor — a new structure to build on.

### **4.1. The Role and Responsibilities**

I joined PLANETS Co., Ltd., the company operating teamLab Planets, as an art attendant, part of the operational team assisting visitors through their journey inside the exhibition. My role combined front-facing customer service and back-end operations. The museum is unique in that it is designed to be a multisensory experience — “Body Immersive,” as teamLab calls it — and this meant that working there required a high level of attentiveness, communication, and adaptability.

Each day, I was stationed inside one of the various artwork spaces, where I would welcome and guide guests, ensure safety and etiquette protocols, and answer questions. With over 70% of visitors coming from abroad, the ability to switch between Japanese and English quickly became essential — particularly when giving explanations about how to engage with the artworks respectfully and meaningfully. Sometimes, I even used German or Swiss German, depending on the guest. The customer base was incredibly diverse, and I often found myself translating not just language, but expectations and behaviors between cultures.

In addition to guest interaction, I handled behind-the-scenes responsibilities such as maintaining the space, checking and preparing equipment, and supporting logistical needs. These backstage operations, though largely invisible to visitors, were essential for the seamless functioning of the immersive experience. The professionalism and precision behind such a high-volume attraction impressed me — and gave me a new appreciation for the effort required to keep a large-scale creative operation running smoothly.

### **4.2. Growth and Evolution within the Role**

Over time, my responsibilities expanded. When the museum reopened in January 2025 with several new exhibition areas — including the “Catching and Collecting Forest” and “Athletics Forest” — I was part of the transition team, adapting to the new layouts and flow of guests. I had the chance to familiarize myself with these new installations from the start, which allowed me to contribute during a key moment in the museum's evolution.

One milestone for me personally was being selected as a featured staff model for recruitment materials during this expansion. Appearing in internal promotional images used for new staff hiring not only felt affirming but also signalled that my efforts and attitude had been recognized by the management.

Another point of pride was being asked to handle announcement duties in a specific position — a task typically assigned to Japanese native speakers or fluent staff that has been working for a longer period there than me. B

While the job itself is largely structured and hierarchical — a common feature in Japanese companies — I came to understand the logic behind these structures. Promotions or pay raises, for instance, follow clearly defined pathways, often tied to seniority, tenure, or leadership roles.

### **4.3. Language and Communication in Practice**

One of the most rewarding aspects of working at teamLab Planets was using language in real-time, high-stakes interactions. Whether I was explaining safety instructions to a group of overseas visitors or resolving issues with guests who had specific accessibility needs, I found myself constantly shifting between Japanese and English, relying on formal expressions, customer service phrases, and cross-cultural sensitivity.

Informally, I also had many opportunities to engage with coworkers during shift changes or on the way home — small but meaningful interactions that helped me develop my listening and speaking skills. These exchanges, while casual, were also important in creating a sense of belonging. Although the work itself could be solitary as each attendant works mostly alone in a specific space or position during the day.

The staff team was diverse, composed of both Japanese and international members, many of whom were drawn to the job by a shared passion for art, hospitality and tourism with contact to foreign, but also Japanese guests. This diversity created a supportive atmosphere in which we could learn from one another and navigate linguistic and cultural challenges together.

### **4.4. Learning and Broader Reflections**

Working at teamLab Planets gave me a much deeper understanding of how major cultural attractions in Japan operate, particularly those that blend tourism with art and experiential design: to allow visitors to immerse their bodies in art, transforming their perception of space, nature, and connection.

My background in arts management helped me appreciate the curatorial and strategic aspects behind the exhibition, even if my role was mostly operational as an Art Attendant. I was reminded of the importance of creating accessible and emotionally resonant cultural experiences — an insight I hope to carry with me into future roles.

## **5. Cultural and Personal Development**

### **5.1. Living and Working Independently**

Living alone in Tokyo — a city that is simultaneously highly connected and deeply individualistic — offered a different rhythm from life in Switzerland. I found myself balancing practical responsibilities such as daily necessities, work shifts, and daily commutes, all while continuing to study Japanese and trying to maintain my physical and emotional health, even when the days sometimes felt long or emotionally heavy.

Particularly during the early months of my work at teamLab, I often had to switch quickly between different mental modes — from attending Japanese language school in the morning, to working in an emotionally and physically engaging art space until late evening. It was a tough rhythm, but one that ultimately strengthened my resilience and helped me build routines that grounded me.

### **5.2. Cultural Integration in Everyday Life**

While I never really experienced “culture shock” in the dramatic sense, my awareness of Japanese cultural norms and expectations grew significantly. I became more attuned to the nuances of indirect communication, nonverbal cues, and expectations around politeness and professionalism — particularly in customer service and workplace hierarchy. Compared to Switzerland, where workplace communication tends to be more direct and egalitarian, the more formal Japanese structure required me to adapt my speaking style and behaviour to different contexts.

These differences also extended to concepts of time, hospitality, and aesthetics — all of which are central to life in Japan and are deeply embedded in both everyday interactions and artistic expression. For instance, the Japanese approach to space and sensory design, as reflected in teamLab’s work, continues to influence how I think about visitor experience and the subtle emotional cues that shape our interactions with the world around us.

### **5.3. Language Growth and Communication Skills**

One of the most noticeable areas of personal growth has been my improved fluency and confidence in Japanese. While I still have room for development my daily use of Japanese in work contexts has significantly expanded my vocabulary and refined my listening and speaking skills. It was often in the quiet, unscripted moments — exchanging small talk with colleagues before or after a shift or navigating a guest’s question in real time — that I noticed how far I had come.

Being immersed in a bilingual work environment pushed me to switch fluidly between languages, translating not just information but tone, intent, and cultural nuance. These moments helped sharpen my sensitivity to how language shapes relationships and

how different communication styles can either connect or distance people from one another.

#### **5.4. Support Systems and Self-Care**

Maintaining a sense of balance and emotional health was not always easy, especially with long shifts, irregular hours, and the mental load of navigating life alone in a foreign language. I learned the importance of small, consistent self-care practices — cooking healthy meals, getting enough rest when I could, and trying to stay connected with family and friends in Switzerland.

Work also gave me a social anchor: while teamLab's staff structure meant that most positions are carried out individually during exhibition hours, I found community in shared commutes, breaks, and occasional staff events. Over time, I developed warm relationships with both international and Japanese coworkers.

## **6. Reflections & Outlook**

If there is one quiet but powerful realization I take from this part of my Japan journey, it is the value of keeping steady and deepening the trust in myself: that I can adapt, grow, and contribute meaningfully, even when the circumstances are uncertain or emotionally difficult. Living and working in Japan has given me not only language skills or cultural insights, but also a new understanding of what resilience looks like.

Looking back on the past year, the experience of living and working in Japan has shaped me in ways that are both visible and internal — from improved language skills to a more grounded sense of independence, to an evolving understanding of what kind of roles and environments would allow me to grow and contribute meaningfully.

### **6.1. Professional Growth Through Immersive Practice**

Working at teamLab Planets offered me a direct window into Japan's cultural sector — not from a theoretical or observational standpoint, but through daily hands-on involvement. What made this especially rewarding was the alignment with my own background and interests: having studied arts management in Switzerland and worked in event production, museum ticketing, and cultural promotion, I was now embedded in a live, high-volume art environment where aesthetics, guest interaction, and operational precision intersect daily.

This experience reinforced my belief in the power of cultural spaces — not only as entertainment venues, but as platforms for sensory and emotional connection, and cross-cultural dialogue. Interacting with guests from all over the world, I realized how central hospitality and atmosphere are in shaping cultural memory. My responsibilities, though seemingly operational, allowed me to actively contribute to creating a positive experience for visitors — from simple conversations to helping someone connect more deeply with the immersive exhibition.

### **6.2. Expanding Self-Awareness**

The structure and rhythm of life in Japan — particularly Tokyo — is markedly different from what I had known before. Yet rather than resisting these changes, I learned to flow with them. At times, this meant adapting to long hours and protocols.

A key learning for me has been the importance of clarity and self-reflection when it comes to professional development. While the position I held was an entry-level one, I treated it as an opportunity to grow within its structure and observe what lies behind the scenes. It taught me patience, attention to detail, and a deeper appreciation for how large-scale cultural projects are planned and maintained. It also sharpened my ability to adapt — linguistically, emotionally, and practically — across changing circumstances.

The abroad in Japan experience brought many transitions, but also the teaching on how to remain composed and constructive even during difficult periods — and how to carry that sense of quiet resilience forward.

### **6.3. Looking Ahead**

Having recently accepted an offer to continue at teamLab Planets full-time, I view this as an extension of a journey rather than a conclusion. While I see this as a temporary chapter, it allows me to remain in Japan for a bit longer, continue improving my Japanese, and deepen my understanding of cultural work in a Japanese context.

In the medium term, I see myself transitioning into a more strategic or curatorial role — ideally one that brings together Swiss and Japanese culture. This could include museum programming, international cultural exchange, sustainable tourism initiatives, or creative event curation. I want to contribute not only by “preserving” culture, but by supporting new ways for people to experience and shape it.

Long-term, I would like to become a cultural bridge: someone who facilitates mutual understanding, collaboration, and respectful enrichment between two countries I now feel deeply connected to. Whether that takes the form of public programming, institutional cooperation, or something more entrepreneurial remains to be seen.

### **6.4. Final Thoughts & A Message for Future Scholarship recipients**

Reflecting on the full arc of this journey—from enrolling in language school to earning a full-time position—I recognize how pivotal this year has been in shaping my professional, cultural, and personal identity. I am deeply grateful to the Swiss-Japanese Chamber of Commerce and the Swiss Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan for initiating and supporting this scholarship program.

To future applicants or recipients: I encourage you to fully embrace the challenges and nuances that life in Japan offers. It may not always be easy—and emotional or cultural adjustments often come layered with professional shifts—but these are the periods when growth occurs. Approach each meeting, exhibition, and conversation with both openness and determination. Take careful notes on what inspires you and where you feel that spark—in work, community, or learning. Stay curious, reflect daily, and work steadily. The transformation often comes quietly, but it becomes clearer over time.

This year abroad has given me not only a broader global perspective, but also a deepened commitment to fostering understanding, creativity, and sustainable cultural exchange. I look forward to applying this mindset—whether in Switzerland or Japan.

## References (Sections 2. And 3.)

Antara News. (2025, February 27). *teamLab Planets (Tokyo, Toyosu) achieves approximately 130% year-on-year increase in ticket sales following major expansion* [Press release]. <https://www.antaraneews.com/news/346593/teamlab-planets-tokyo-toyosu-achieves-approximately-130-year-on-year-increase-in-ticket-sales-following-major-expansion-visitor-stay-time-also-sees-significant-growth>

Bloolooop. (2024, July 15). *teamLab Planets in Tokyo sets Guinness World Record for visitor numbers*. <https://www.bloolooop.com/immersive/news/teamlab-planets-tokyo-guinness-world-record/>

Business Wire. (2024, July 11). *teamLab Planets TOKYO recognized by GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS™ as the most visited museum (single art group)*. <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20240709556561>

Carollo, E. (2024, August 29). *Artist collective teamLab is pushing wonder in a post-pandemic world*. *Observer*. Retrieved from <https://observer.com/2024/08/artist-collective-teamlab-review-borderless-tokyo>

Du, D. (2020, February 11). *Digital art collective teamLab*. Harvard Business School Digital Initiative. <https://d3.harvard.edu/platform-digit/submission/digital-art-collective-teamlab/>

Japan National Tourism Organization. (2023, September 13). *TeamLab Planets receives accolades at the World Travel Awards* [Press release]. <https://www.japan.travel/en/ca/news/team-lab-planets-award/>

*Ocula*. (2023). *teamLab Planets TOKYO is a phenomenon*. *Ocula Magazine*. Retrieved from <https://ocula.com/magazine/spotlights/teamlab-planets-tokyo-is-a-phenomenon-what-is-it/>

Palm, E. A. (2025, April 16). *Inside teamLab Abu Dhabi, the art collective's most ambitious project yet*. *Artsy*. Retrieved from <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-inside-teamlab-abu-dhabi-art-collectives-ambitious-project>

vanSchneider, T. (2019). *The sensory and surreal worlds of teamLab*. *DESK Magazine*.

teamLab. (n.d.-a). *About teamLab*. <https://www.teamlab.art/about/>

teamLab. (n.d.-b). *teamLab Planets TOKYO DMM.com*. <https://www.teamlab.art/e/planets/>

World Travel Awards. (2023). *Asia's Leading Tourist Attraction 2023: teamLab Planets TOKYO*. <https://www.worldtravelawards.com/award-asias-leading-tourist-attraction-2023>