

UMMU - New Perspectives

By Katja Brinkmann

After several years of preparation, an intensive artistic exchange project between Mongolian and German students took place in spring and summer 2023. The UMMU project (Ulaanbaatar - Mainz, Mainz - Ulaanbaatar) enabled a lively encounter and artistic collaboration in both directions: Design students from Mainz University of Applied Sciences first visited the Mongolian Academy of Fine Arts in Ulaanbaatar - art and design students from Ulaanbaatar came to Mainz a little later. The project was a great and formative experience for everyone involved: "I appreciated every single moment ... it was a life-changing and once-in-a-lifetime chance." (B.Emujin/ Mongolian Academy of Fine Arts)

Background and planning

When I traveled to Mongolia again in early 2023, I had already taught twice for a year as a painting lecturer at the Mongolian National University of Arts and Culture in Ulaanbaatar. From the very beginning, there was great interest in Germany in my work as a visual artist in Mongolia. As early as 2020, my colleague Prof. Kirstin Arndt (Mainz University of Applied Sciences) and I, supported by my Mongolian colleague B. Altantovch, carried out the first artistic collaboration between Mongolian and German students using digital means. Further projects followed under the title UMMU (Ulaanbaatar - Mainz, Mainz - Ulaanbaatar) and resulted in photo series, videos, paintings and a cookbook in German-Mongolian collaboration.

After getting to know the different requirements, interests and needs of the students, we planned an extensive exchange for summer 2023 under the title "UMMU - New Perspectives". My colleague Bolormaa Algaa, a lecturer in design at the Mongolian Academy of Fine Arts, also showed great interest in the exchange and showed great commitment, so that we now worked as a team of three on the implementation of our project.

After a preparatory seminar at both universities including digital meetings in spring, an 11-day study trip of 15 German students with Prof. Kirstin Arndt to Ulaanbaatar was to take place in June and shortly afterwards a 12-day study trip of 15 Mongolian students with the lecturer Bolormaa Algaa and myself to Mainz, Frankfurt and Düsseldorf. In both places, the students were to work together in German-Mongolian teams in a workshop.

The conditions for students at the two universities were very different: The Mongolian Academy of Fine Arts in Ulaanbaatar is part of the Mongolian National University of Arts and Culture, the only State Art Academy in Mongolia. The courses of study range from painting, graphic arts, sculpture, "Mongolian painting" (painting based on Mongolian traditions) and monumental painting (artistic techniques for commissioned art) to applied arts such as leather, ceramic or metal art. In the field of design, graphic design, fashion design, free graphics and photography are taught. The curriculum is still essentially based on the socialist-influenced structures from the time of the Mongolian People's

Republic (1921-1990). It is a school-based education based on an academic-classical curriculum and teaching takes place on a yearly basis in fixed class groups.

The students from Mainz University of Applied Sciences came from the Communication Design (Graphic Design) course program, where Prof. Kirstin Arndt teaches free design. Here, teaching takes place in a course system and the students meet other fellow students from different semesters in each seminar. The teaching methods are based on western pedagogy and focus on experimental and free work.

At Mainz University of Applied Sciences, the seminar, including the trip, was open to all interested students as a semester offer, only the number of participants was limited.

In Ulaanbaatar, we selected the participants based on suggestions from various class teachers. They came from different departments and year groups, which we hoped would not only make the project more visible within the university, but also enable us to use the full range of the university's offerings (workshops, techniques) and at the same time show students the potential of cross-departmental cooperation. Thanks to the support of the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) and Mainz University of Applied Sciences, we were able to acquire sufficient funds on both sides, so that the financial means of the students did not play a role in the selection process. In addition to personal interest and commitment, a good command of English was another prerequisite for participation, as the exchange took place in English.

In addition, the cultural, social and societal conditions of the students in both countries were of course very different. For example, Mongolian students often do not own a computer, but only a smartphone. There was little knowledge about the other country, especially on the German side.

The preparatory workshop (in Ulaanbaatar: February to May 2023)

In the spring semester in Ulaanbaatar and summer semester in Mainz, preparatory workshops were held at weekly meetings at both universities. For the Mongolian students, both the interdisciplinary collaboration and working in teams was a new experience. I still remember the moment when we asked the students, who hardly knew each other at the time, to get together in small groups for the first time: Everyone sat there frozen, without looking to the right or left, and we had to do the division ourselves. But after just a few weeks, I saw posts on Facebook showing students from different departments working together at the weekend. And the new friendships are still being cultivated today!

The topic of the workshop was also new to them: As a starting point for the joint artistic work, we had planned to use materials typical of the country that we could obtain free of charge as well as materials that had become unusable (waste). On the one hand, this saved us the expense of materials, while at the same time we wanted to promote an examination of topics such as recycling, consumption, sustainability and the waste of resources, which are widespread in Germany but have so far only been a limited part of public awareness in Mongolia. Recycling is hardly an issue in today's society, even though the traditional way of life of the nomads did not know anything like waste. Traditionally, nothing was left behind when a yurt was dismantled and everything that could still be recycled was put to further use.

The research, exploration and procurement of the materials was part of the preparatory seminar. The second step involved experimenting with the material in teams and trying out different ways of using it. The choice of media and techniques was free - a new experience for the students, who usually work strictly in their subject-related medium.

The Mongolian students were initially irritated by the topic, as they associated garbage with dirty, broken things that you don't touch. But their image changed as soon as they began their initial research and reflections, and they started experimenting happily. This resulted in playful objects or installations that students from different departments developed together, such as jewelry made from papier-mâché, soaps made from animal fats and bones or a small theater stage in a disused microwave. More abstract ideas, such as the small, (almost) worthless banknotes in Mongolia or data waste, were also discussed.

During the preparatory phase, we also researched artists who work with leftover materials and each student had to introduce a Mongolian or international artist of their choice in the form of a presentation. At the end of the preparation period, we met with the German students several times via Zoom to get to know each other, present our research and give alternating presentations on regional and artistic topics.

Now we were eagerly awaiting our visit from Germany.

Workshop in Ulaanbaatar (June 4 to 14, 2023)

In the early morning of June 4, Bolormaa Algaa and I welcomed the fifteen German students and Prof. Kirstin Arndt at Ulaanbaatar airport. Even our drive into the city, which took us past a few yurts and gave us a first impression of the vastness of the Mongolian landscape, was a great experience for those who arrived.

The first personal meeting of all the students took the form of a walk through Ulaanbaatar. The Mongolian students introduced the sights of the city and the first conversations quickly began. The day ended with a joint dinner in a vegan restaurant, as almost all of the German students were vegetarians or vegans, while many of the Mongolian students were trying vegan food for the first time.

The workshop began the next day. It was already semester break in Mongolia and we had a large room in the Monumental Painting class to work in, as well as the courtyard to use in the summer temperatures. After speed dating and an impulse workshop in which the students created brochures that were randomly passed around and worked on by several people, the Mongolian students presented the large quantities of leftover materials they had collected: Shredded paper from print shops, plastic bottles, discarded technical equipment, wood scraps, but also found objects from the Art Academy such as oil paintings left behind, as well as typical Mongolian items such as silk fabrics and other textile scraps from surrounding sewing workshops that produce traditional clothing (deels), waste from meat production and other animal products such as bones, fats, raw wool, horse hair and much more.

Six German-Mongolian teams of three to eight students were formed according to their respective interests in the materials. Now the process of reaching an agreement on the development of a work began. Any creative, artistic or experimental process was possible. Everyone worked outside of their usual practice and with materials that they had not previously used in their creative work. What was important to us was the free, open character of the project and the development of a work as a team, in which everyone could contribute their skills and abilities.

Prof. Kirstin Arndt, Bolormaa Algaa and I were very pleased to see how well and intensively the students worked together right from the start. Not only that, they also laughed a lot together! And so they created impressive and sometimes very large works in just five days:

A snake-shaped object more than 10 m long and filled with paper shredding was created from scraps of fabric. The sewing work was actually supposed to be carried out in the tailoring workshop of the fashion design course. As this could not be used due to a power cut, the Mongolian students - used to such surprises - quickly organized a hand-crank sewing machine and sewed the lengths of fabric by hand in evening shifts



A team discusses the next steps for completing their sculpture in the courtyard.

In the courtyard, a large papier-mâché sculpture was created on a core of plastic bottles, which, after long discussions about the appropriate color scheme, was sprayed with silver paint (exceptionally not a Leftover material) and then carried through the city to meet passers-by. - Another team built several sculptures from electronic waste, which were presented as an installation in combination with a canvas painting (also a Leftover). - An experimental woven picture was created on a 3 x 1.50 meter wooden frame, in which bones, raw wool, paper and silk remnants, among other things, were used - as a homage to Ulaanbaatar. "The materials as well as the whole weaving work reflects the character of the city of Ulan Bator: A chaotic mix of modern and tradition and yet everything fits together." (Jule W./ Mainz University of Applied Sciences). - Others were inspired by fashion design and created a two-piece consisting of a skirt and top, with a painted portrait as the eye-catcher. - Another team was inspired by the traditional Mongolian appliqué technique and made an oval picture depicting a female figure from many small pieces of silk.



A large woven picture is created from different materials.

There were many discussions within the teams. Initial results were presented and discussed in interim presentations. The development of the work was also accompanied by individual discussions between us teachers and the teams.

The students learned a lot from each other through joint decision-making and the exchange of opinions. The Mongolian students found the great openness and free thinking of the German students to be particularly positive and inspiring. The fact that the German students were always open to their suggestions and naturally tried them out was a new and important experience for them. "Every time I suggested something, they said 'Why not?'. I learned from my German friends to express myself more clearly." (B. Uurlan/ Mongolian Academy of Fine Arts). Gewöhnt an das hierarchische Verhältnis zu ihren Lehrer:innen, die tendenziell wertend antworten, hat ihnen die Wertschätzung ihrer Meinung durch die deutschen Studierenden Vertrauen in die eigenen Ideen verschafft. Umgekehrt schätzten die deutschen Studierenden die Fähigkeiten der mongolischen: „*Im Team kam auch zum Vorschein, wie unterschiedlich in der Mongolei gelehrt wird. Während wir dazu angehalten werden, möglichst frei zu denken und zu arbeiten, werden dort kaum Freiheiten gelassen. Dafür werden Fertigkeiten gelehrt, von denen wir nur träumen können.*“ (Alina P./ Hochschule Mainz)

The opportunity to work with a German university teacher like Prof. Arndt also seems to have offered the Mongolian students an enriching perspective: "I had the opportunity to immerse myself in the world of art while learning from a university teacher from another culture and another country." (Ts.Nominsondor/ Mongolian Academy of Fine Arts)



The sculpture is finished

We spent one morning at the Zanabazar Art Museum, where the German students were given an insight into Mongolian art history. But the German students found it particularly exciting to get to know the city not only through tourist routes, but from its everyday side “in such an honest and versatile way” (Luna W./ Mainz University of Applied Sciences), both through their stay at the university and through the joint shopping and material purchases and other activities. They found the city to be full of energy and lively, but also noticed the negative aspects, such as the high level of traffic congestion. “The inspiring thing about the city was the contrast between tradition and modernity, naturalness and artificiality as well as the influence of neighboring countries.” (Alina P./ Mainz University of Applied Sciences).

Of course, we also took a trip to the countryside: we spent two days at a camp in Terelj. Even the journey in four minibuses over gravel roads and through rivers was pure adventure for the German students! We went on a day hike to Gunjin Sum, the ruins of a Buddhist temple from the 18th century. Some students took the opportunity to collect more material for their weaving picture, while another became a model for a photo series with the top and skirt combination created in the workshop.

Two days in pure nature, with overnight stays in yurts, communal meals, evening campfires and, above all, no cell phone reception. This was also a new experience for some of the Mongolian students, most of whom had grown up in the city. The excursion into the vast landscape left a lasting impression on the German students in particular and was one of the highlights of their trip.

At the end of our stay, we presented the results of our workshop together with a photo documentation in the B Contemporary Art Gallery, the exhibition space of a large studio building in which over 150 Mongolian artists work. In this way, our project also found a public outside the university. The interest was so great that the presentation, which was originally only planned for one evening, was spontaneously shown for a whole week. Many more visitors came and we were delighted with the consistently positive response to our project!



Performance during the exhibition opening at the B Contemporary Art Gallery, Ulaanbaatar

The exhibition was opened with a performance by one of the student teams, in which their snake-shaped object was used and accompanied by a Mongolian student on the yatga (Mongolian zither). Speeches and acknowledgements were followed by a discussion with the audience in which the students talked about their joint work and experiences. When asked what they could learn from each

other, the answers were unanimous: for the Germans, it was particularly impressive that the statement “That's not possible” did not apply to the Mongolians and instead (and mostly successfully) ways were sought to make the seemingly impossible possible. The Mongolian students, on the other hand, were particularly impressed by the time planning of the German students.



Group photo in the B Contemporary Art Gallery

After a final dinner together, we had to say goodbye to our guests from Germany, but everyone was looking forward to seeing them again soon in Mainz!

Workshop and visits to Mainz, Frankfurt and Düsseldorf (July 22 - August 2, 2023)

On July 22, Bolormaa Alгаа and I flew to Frankfurt am Main with 15 Mongolian students, for many it was the first flight of their lives. We were picked up by some students from Mainz and welcomed with a small picnic at the youth hostel in Wiesbaden (the youth hostel we had originally booked in Mainz had canceled at short notice). Even our first walk in the evening through the city with its wonderful art nouveau villas and historic buildings was like a first visit to a museum for many students. They were equally impressed by all the greenery in the city!

The next day, a Sunday, we all met in Mainz for a joint city tour that the Mainz students had prepared. A big hello at the reunion with all the students and Prof. Kirstin Arndt! Highlights included the windows by Marc Chagall in the parish of St. Stephan, where we were also able to experience an organ performance, and Mainz Cathedral with its rich decoration of sculptures, altars and paintings from different eras. Most of the Mongolian students had never seen such architecture before. Also impressive was the Gutenberg Museum, one of the oldest printing and type museums in the world, where you can see the original Gutenberg Bible as well as a wide variety of printing tools and products from pre-Christian times to the present day.

Then the five-day workshop began at Mainz University of Applied Sciences in Holzstraße. The Mongolian students immediately liked the functional building from the 1950s with its high, bright rooms. The poster exhibition in the hallway was particularly popular with the design students. We all met in Prof. Arndt's class, a large common room with lots of workstations.

In Mainz, an artistic work is now to be produced under the new conditions of this location, with different materials, workshops etc.. Here, too, we began with an experimental warm-up exercise in which the students worked together in German-Mongolian teams of two.



Warm-up exercise in German-Mongolian teams of two

The Mainz students then presented the leftover materials they had collected for the workshop: In addition to packaging material, plastics, old clothes, metal scraps, a discarded lamp and a broken television, there were large quantities of crown caps and aluminum tubes from tea lights that a student had collected during her job in a bar, as well as sample books of carpets and sofa fabrics, remnants from the work of a student's father and much more. The materials were different from those collected in Ulaanbaatar. On the one hand, the Mongolian students found this stimulating, but on the other hand they were irritated that all these materials were considered 'waste'. The discarded clothing, for example, seemed clean and almost as good as new to them.



Warm-up exercise in German-Mongolian teams of two

A tour of the university familiarized the Mongolian students with the library, the PC pool and the workshops and showed them the various work opportunities. Compared to the traditional and simply equipped workshops in Ulaanbaatar, they encountered a different technical standard here.

As everyone already knew each other from Ulaanbaatar, six teams of three to six people quickly came together in new constellations to work in various media such as sculpture, images, installations and digital.



Welding in the courtyard

One team worked in the welding workshop and the Mongolian students were very impressed by the high-quality equipment. Under the supervision of the workshop manager, the “Safe space” was created in the courtyard, a large walk-in sculpture made from leftover pieces of square metal tubing, which was then partially covered with fabric. Four of the students had never held a welding machine before and for all of them it was a new approach that opened up new perspectives on sculptural issues. – The second team worked with materials that are rarely found in Mongolia: Crown caps, aluminum tubes from tea lights, foam chips for packaging and the like. They were strung into long chains and then hung from the ceiling in an oval shape to form a kind of curtain. The result was an interactive spatial installation that produced sounds when set in motion. – Another team worked with plastic materials from packaging and carried out a variety of material experiments such as gluing, folding, melting and ironing. In the end, an installation on the theme of “Childhood dreams” was created using an old TV. – The next team created several bags and a large abstract patchwork picture from the various scraps of fabric, carpet, leather and tarpaulin. There was great joy about the electric sewing machines that were available! – One team developed a kinetic object from the old lamp, focusing on light, movement and material contrasts. - The university's computer pool was also used: Sound recordings of various waste materials and their image scans were used to create an audio collage with images, which was then presented as a video installation.



We teachers in conversation with a team

"In the second workshop, everyone was able to benefit from their experiences from the first and try out new things. "After experiencing the process and the teamwork, I think I was more ready for the second workshop. I felt that I was more courageous and innovative ... " (B.Urlan/ Mongolian Academy of Fine Arts). The Mongolian students found working with materials that were originally regarded as garbage very stimulating and inspiring. It encouraged them to engage with the different cultures and societies of the two countries as well as with the topics of "environmental awareness" and "dealing with resources". "I learned that the possibilities of materials to make an artwork are never limited but endless. This workshop taught me to find beauty even in waste." (B.Urlan/ Mongolian Academy of Fine Arts)

The Mongolian students were once again impressed by the German students' time planning. Developing a plan first and not just starting to work, estimating beforehand what is and is not possible in a certain period of time, was an important realization for them that they wanted to implement in the future. Some even started planning for their next year!

At the end of the week, we set up the works for the final presentation in the foyer of the university. During a tour, each team presented their work and explained the development process, revealing both the similarities and differences in approach.



Final presentation at Mainz University of Applied Sciences

When Prof. Kirstin Arndt opened the exhibition in the evening, other students, teaching staff from the university and friends and acquaintances of the German students attended. We spent the evening talking to many interested visitors.

The workshop in Mainz was flanked by other program items: We visited the painting class of Prof. Anne Berning at the Mainz Art Academy, where we learned a lot about her studies, the curriculum and her working methods in conversation with the students.

In contrast to the Mongolian study system, students from all disciplines first attend a common basic class and then look for a professional class, whereby the choice of professor is free. Students from all semesters then work together in one class, with the emphasis on independent work. This is accompanied by individual and group discussions as well as events on current positions in art, guest lectures and excursions. It was interesting for the Mongolian students to get to know these teaching

concepts. Conversely, the students from Mainz were very curious to get to know the Mongolian students and learn more about them and their art studies. We then visited other classes and were given guided tours of the printing, metal and wood workshops. Some students spontaneously expressed their desire to work here in the well-equipped, modern workshops.

A highlight of our evening program was the 'Countryside Trip with Barbecue'. We took the train to a nearby village, where we boarded a covered wagon pulled by a tractor and were taken to a piece of land belonging to the parents of one of the students. There we spent a wonderful and lovingly arranged evening with wine and barbecue in the middle of nature.

After completing the workshop, we went to Frankfurt/Main for a day to visit museums and exhibitions. In the Schirn Kunsthalle, the students were able to take part in a guided tour of the "Plastic World" exhibition with questions and comments in line with our workshop theme. After visiting the imperial cathedral with its imposing architecture and rich art, we were able to view the comprehensive survey show of an important contemporary artist, Rosemarie Trockel, at the Museum of Modern Art.

Everyone agreed that the subsequent visit to the Städel Museum, one of Germany's most important art museums, was one of the highlights of the trip. The collection includes paintings and sculptures from the Middle Ages to modern and contemporary art. Here, the Mongolian students had the rare opportunity to view the paintings of the old masters, which serve as models in their lessons and which they only knew as illustrations in books or on their cell phones, in the original and to study technique, colors and surfaces. One student asked me which of the paintings shown here were originals? Because in Mongolian museums, works and exhibits are often only shown as replicas or copies. When I replied in surprise: "All of them!", he immediately stormed off ... The three hours until the museum closed were far too short to see everything, but everyone came out enthusiastic and happy with lots of new impressions. We ended the day with dinner in a typical Frankfurt Äppelwoi pub in Sachsenhausen.

We spent the last three days in Düsseldorf. The program included a visit to the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen: At the K20, the students were able to see major works of classical modernism in the original, mostly for the first time. "I had never seen any paintings by Picasso, Kandinsky or Dali in person before so I gasped at every one of them. It was a dream come true." (N.Munguntsooj/Mongolian Academy of Fine Arts). At K21, they gathered many new impressions and information about international contemporary art. At KIT (Kunst im Tunnel), mainly younger artists show their work and the students saw a different kind of exhibition in this special place, a remnant of a tunnel.

Some used the time to visit other museums such as the Hetjens Museum/German Ceramics Museum, which shows the universal history of ceramics from its beginnings to the present day from many cultures and eras. After visiting the Asian section, one student commented: "As if I had been to Japan and China too!" This statement becomes understandable when you consider that Mongolian museums almost exclusively present Mongolian culture and history.

We gained further insights into art studies in Germany with a visit to the tradition-steeped Düsseldorf Art Academy and its imposing building. The tour was led by Erik Mikaia, himself a recent graduate and colleague of Prof. Gereon Krebber, who had invited us to his orientation class. We

visited other visual arts classes and some workshops. It was interesting for the Mongolian students that Erik Mikaia came from Georgia and had also initially studied at a socialist-influenced art college in his home country. Mikaia, who also invited us into his large communal studio, talked about his experiences of moving to Düsseldorf and his artistic development from figuration to abstraction, emphasizing the positive aspects of his path.



Tour of Düsseldorf with Professor Raimund Strecker

On Monday, Prof. Raimund Stecker, art historian and professor of art history at the Hochschule für Bildende Kunst Essen, invited us on an art-related city tour. He had already been to Mongolia once and was immediately willing to meet the students at my request. During a very lively and entertaining tour of the city, he showed us works of art in public spaces from different eras and told us about the social contexts that make Düsseldorf a special city of art. A detour to one of Düsseldorf's typical old town pubs, where many works of art were hanging on the walls, rounded off the exciting afternoon.

Equally exciting and cordial was the meeting with Dr. Gregor Jansen, Director of the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, who had already been to Mongolia twice at that time and was preparing an exhibition with Mongolian artists for the summer of 2024 at the Kunsthalle. He told us about the history of the institution and guided us through his current exhibition, which presented works by six international female artists from different cultural backgrounds and was therefore of particular interest to our students.



Guided tour of the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf with director Gregor Jansen

Our final evening also took place in a typical old town pub. It was a very warm evening, to which the Mongolian artist Oyusuvd Undur-Orgil, who has lived here in Düsseldorf since her studies and shared her experiences with the students, was also invited. There were many thanks, gifts and hugs that evening. After an intensive time together, it was time to say goodbye, because the next morning we were off to Frankfurt Airport and the following morning we landed back in Ulaanbaatar, exhausted but happy.

Summary

Everyone at the university was talking about the project after our return. In addition to the professional development, such as the exchange of skills and techniques and the experience of teamwork, the encounter between different cultures was a key quality of the project. The students from both countries met each other with great openness and curiosity and benefited from the different perspectives and knowledge that everyone brought with them.

"I think we have inspired each other in different ways. We learned from each other that talent happens on multiple levels and that it's important not to compare yourself, but to team up with people with different strengths to create a much more complex work together than alone." (Alina P./ Mainz University of Applied Sciences)

"It was an incredible opportunity for me, and I genuinely appreciate the time, effort, and expertise with German students. The workshop allowed me to learn new skills and techniques and inspired me in ways I never expected." (O.Javzanpagma/ Mongolian Academy of Fine Arts)

"I was particularly impressed by the cultural exchange between two completely different countries and how well it still worked to work together on artistic projects and benefit from each other." (Alina P./ Mainz University of Applied Sciences)

"Through this project, I got to experience what it means to think out of the box. Exchanging the different creativity, culture and tradition between German and Mongolian students was truly an eye opener which broadened my vision of art." (B.Urlan/ Mongolian Academy of Fine Arts)

"Despite initial language barriers and different specialist knowledge, we were able to create great, large, joint projects in a very short time!" (Jule W./ Mainz University of Applied Sciences)

"It was an amazing experience and learning process for all of us which leads to personal and professional growth." (Bolormaa Algaa/ Dozentin, Mongolian Academy of Fine Arts)

From the first joint preparatory meeting to the end of the second workshop, we were able to observe how the Mongolian students underwent significant personal development. They have shed their shyness about working together and have become more open, curious and self-confident. We also received feedback from some teachers that previously rather introverted students were now more talkative and approachable, which we were very pleased about. *"I have learned to express myself and my opinion. The German students have taught me to be more confident with my ideas."* (Ts.Munkhjin / Mongolian Academy of Fine Arts)

The stay in Germany has made the students realize what a wide range of opportunities are open to them for the future. Although many of them had already wanted to study abroad beforehand, they had previously focused more on Russia or China, influenced by their teachers. Now they are also interested in Europe. Three students started learning German immediately after their return in order to continue their studies in Germany after graduating in Mongolia. Others wanted to further improve their English language skills. Encouraged by their experiences, some students have since taken part in other art projects abroad, while others are currently spending a semester abroad in Europe.

The interdisciplinary collaboration has also encouraged students to look beyond the boundaries of their own subject. The museum visits have increased their interest in both general and country-specific art history: they also attend art history lectures at the Mongolian National University or work in other specialist departments such as ceramics in order to expand their own repertoire.

Interdisciplinary and transnational friendships were formed between the students and many of the German and Mongolian students are still in contact. There is great interest in further exchange and this is also supported by positive feedback from Mainz University of Applied Sciences. Longer-term cooperation between the universities in Mainz and Ulaanbaatar would be desirable, and we very much hope that the universities will continue to pursue this possibility.

For me personally, who is connected to both German and Mongolian culture, the whole process was an exciting and intense experience. Receiving the visitors from Germany in Mongolia on the one hand and then showing my culture to the Mongolian guests as a visitor in my own country was incredibly fulfilling and gave me many lasting memories.

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