

ABROAD



Design processes and artefacts are locally and globally effective. KISD pursues a determined strategy of internationalization – cross-cultural phenomena and processes covering projects with international partners and guests.

ABROAD publication highlights the university's international affairs and tells important, personal stories.

ABR AD

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Preface

March 2020 was fully booked with international activities at KISD. An International Exchange Project with Chiba University and Japanese students visiting Cologne. The annual MEDes workshop with over 70 students and staff from our European network. But then everything had to be cancelled or moved online due to the pandemic arriving in Europe back then. Due to Covid physical short-term mobility did not happen in the last one and a half years.

Despite the pandemic KISD kept being international. Collaborative international projects took place online. Students were eager to travel and study

abroad, gain new perspectives and experiences. This publication realized by the International AG – one of the working groups at KISD – is sharing some of these insights our students gained abroad and at KISD.

Being mobile and studying abroad changed within the last years, even before the pandemic. KISDies reflected on their ways of traveling, tried to go by bike, train or hitchhike instead of flying to their destination. Students reflect on choosing carefully the country, city, field of design as well as language and culture and aim in combining all these. Or sometimes just like the city or the beach or a specific food favorite.

No matter what was the reason to go abroad, listening to these stories and experiences is a great lesson learnt. Learning about partner universities and study options, finding out about feelings and personal growth, seeing how tiny little cultural phenomena effect daily lives and on the long run realizing how this amazing personal experience has an impact on the world around you.

Lisa Janßen
International Relations Officer



3 decades of internationalisation at KISD

Internationalisation is a continuous process – and KISD is engaged in this process with passion and success. Looking back shows three decades with different characteristics in this process.

The first decade (Fachbereich Design) was about exploring international opportunities, inviting colleagues from abroad and starting to set up joint projects and activities. It always helped us to see how others perceived KISD – and invite others to share perspective on design with us.

The second decade started 2002 when KISD emerged – making a programmatic statement for internationalisation. More and more courses and projects were conducted in English, the MEDES program was one of the first Master programs in Germany and another opportunity to increase our network and explore formats we could embed in our curriculum – just to mention our ISPs, jointly run by two schools, run in two countries. Additionally, global projects like the Cultural Library were created, running for years, with partners worldwide. And we esta-

blished the International Committee and were happy to get two new colleagues dedicated to support the international activities - both abroad and at home.

In the last decade, we opened our MA program for Double Degree programs, explored new formats like the KISDs-studio Venice or the Global Design Initiative. We developed various new formats, increased our international activities in the Cumulus network and supported the process of internationalisation at the TH Köln to develop an institutional strategy for the whole University (launched this summer).

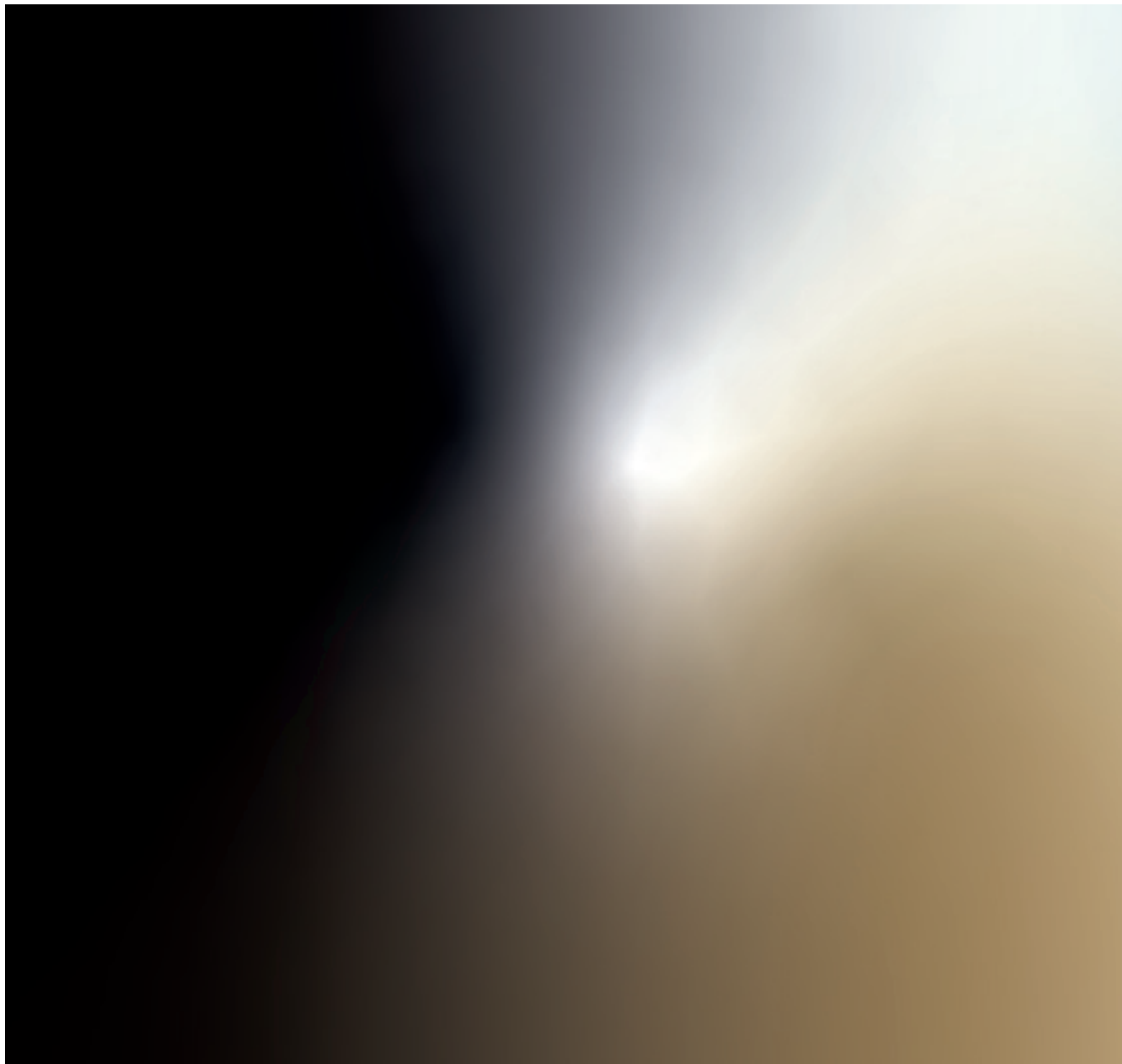
Looking back at more than hundred projects, around 1500 exchange students we are aware how relevant internationalisation is for KISD. For the future, we want to consolidate activities and intensify collaborations with existing partners, but in the same way understand internationalisation as an activity to constantly question ourselves and the relation to the world around us, combining reflection and action, with multiple perspectives. International students at KISD - exchange and degree seeking students - are essential for KISD. Our international and intercultural activities - both globally abroad and at home - are relevant impulses for the ongoing transformation of our curricula.

International AG

During the summer semester of 2021 the International AG of KISD started working on this publication about international stories from students from all around the world coming from and to KISD. We met weekly and developed a concept for the whole magazine. We started to interview students, gather answers about emotional topics with the help of a survey and took pictures of the interviewed students. The main focus was on displaying emotional stories especially during the worldwide pandemic and also highlighting individual experiences connected to personal growth as well as gaining international and

professional design knowledge.

Later on, smaller groups worked out different approaches on how to display the complexity of spending time abroad. After we decided on a final concept and again worked in smaller teams. The first was the group that contacted all students willing to give interviews and conducted those. The second was the photogroup who was in charge of portraying the interviewed people. And lastly the design group worked on the content structure, the general corporate look of the publication, the photo editing to finally put everything together.



With the experience of staying abroad students also enter a rollercoaster of emotions. Some of these emotions felt new, some familiar. We wanted to know the stories students had to tell when they think about emotions such as joy or anger in regards to their study abroad. To visualize this rollercoaster we selected some of those insides into the feelings of students. In the following pages they are joined by colorful gradients that are loosely based on the emotional color wheel by psychologist Robert

"We were in a small ex-fishing village called Siglufjörður on a school trip and our assignment was to explore and find inspiration for a short project. I found the assignment a little weird and I couldn't find anything for a project but instead I climbed the mountain next to the village and being so high on a snow mountain was a very joyful experience."



EXPLORE



Leon Vogler
— BA Integrated
Design, Cologne

Sept 2020
— July 2021
Ramat Gan, Israel

Leon Vogler wanted to go to Israel without using a plane.

Hey Leon! Can you give an introduction on yourself first, please!

My Name is Leon Vogler, I'm 25 years old and I just turned 24 when I went to Israel. Originally I'm from Germany.

Which country did you choose for your exchange and why?

Initially, I wanted to go to Spain, and I set everything up to go to Barcelona, so everything was arranged and then I met my girlfriend. By the end of August, I spontaneously decided to give it a shot to go to Israel because that's where she is from. And it worked out to go there I mean that was the major reason for the decision, but I was also very excited about the university and this country. I also thought I can easily visit Spain anytime soon if I went to Israel.

How long did you stay in the exchange country and at which university did you study?

I ended up staying for one year pretty much and I studied at Shenkar in Tel Aviv. There I did my fifth and sixth semesters.

What was your study subject?

My major was in *Visual Communication* but I also took some classes in what I would call *Economy and Design* and I went there during my bachelor studies.

Which method of transportation did you choose when travelling to and from the exchange country?

I wanted to go to Spain which is close to Germany, and I could reach it by train or by car because I didn't want to fly for environmental reasons. And then when I thought about going to Israel, I thought it actually might be possible to go there by land and then maybe by sea because I knew I wasn't going to be able to go through Syria and Lebanon, so I just started hiking from Spain.

I was there on vacation and then I just started travelling. Sometimes I took trains. I took a train in Italy and from Bulgaria to Turkey. And then I took a ferry to Cyprus because I wanted to take a cargo ship or something from Turkey to Israel. But once I arrived at the Port, the people there didn't want to take me on the ship to Israel, so I went to Cyprus.

I had to go to Northern Cyprus which is under Turkish occupation. This was difficult because I couldn't go to Israel. I had to travel to the south where I theoretically could go. There was a port that they operated five years ago, but they closed it. I tried to see if I can go from the marina but the guy kicked me out. So I couldn't really hitchhike to Israel. I then found out how to resolve this issue of going from Cyprus to Israel and vice versa. I found a guy on a platform who offered to take people on his boat from Israel to Turkey, and I talked to him. It was all going to work out, but then the pandemic happened and there wasn't really any way to just hitchhike through Europe and Turkey – so we flew back.

Did the pandemic influence the studies or just the way to get home?

In the first semester, there wasn't really a pandemic. I mean, people started talking about it in January, I think. But in Israel, it only arrived in March, which is when the second semester started. And in a sense, it affected the study.

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Which cultural custom amazed you in your exchange time?

One, for example, is the fact, that soldiers walk around the streets with machine guns and sometimes they don't even wear a uniform. The people who are local, know that they're soldiers, not just a random guy who might just shoot people because they have been to the Army themselves. That was very interesting. Also, I guess maybe that everything is very expensive, like going out and living is expensive.

With cultural customs, there were not so many differences, because I lived in Tel Aviv, and I think it is a lot more European. Then, for example, in Jerusalem, there are more differences. For example, the presence of religion and conflict is much more apparent. I guess another thing that I'm thinking of now is that it's such a small country compared to Germany.

Were there any traditions that amazed you or were new for you?

I think there's two that stand out to me. One is the Shabbat dinner, which is always on a Friday. It's very common for people to either celebrate it in their home to make sure they have dinner together. But most people even go to their family, even if they live in a different city. The other thing was Jom Kippur, which is a day. I think it's the holiest day in Judaism at the end of the year or the beginning of the Jewish year. And it's a day of repentance, I think, where people ask for forgiveness, but not necessarily to God, but to the people that they may have wronged. The beautiful thing about this day is that everything stands still like cars aren't allowed to drive for example. It's the one day of the year when you hear children in the streets, everybody is cycling on the streets and even the highways! Everything's just very quiet and calm, but also very happy in a way. It's a very, very magical day. I really like it as a tradition.

How well did you speak the language of your exchange country? Did your fluency or language skills improve during your stay?

Yeah. I met my partner a few months before I went on the exchange, and she already taught me a little bit of Hebrew. She taught me the Alphabet and a few things to say. So I already knew some things when I went to Israel, but my stay there obviously improved it massively. There's still a lot of things that I don't understand, but I can have a decent conversation, and I can read and write Hebrew. I also tried to learn Arabic and only understand very little of it, because I didn't have much contact with the language. Not only is it difficult to learn but having to learn two languages at the same time was incredibly challenging. But I managed to learn a little bit of it which was great!

So you basically learned all this, during one and a half year?

Yeah.

Wow, that's really impressive!

How did the meaning or the role of design differ in your exchange country or university in comparison to your home country or university?

I think the understanding of design itself was very similar in many ways, maybe a little bit less conceptual and more practical in terms of university here and there. I think the bigger differences were in the way of teaching. I felt that there a lot of professors were specific about their opinion on your work and what you should do. For Instance, you create three drafts, and then they say, continue with this one instead of helping you decide yourself without actually telling you which one they think is better. And I think in some ways it's really good because sometimes I feel

like it's good to really know what the teacher thinks is great. And then, later on, you can still differentiate yourself from that or distance yourself from that and do your own stuff. But I think if that's the only way of teaching, then it's also more difficult to learn to stand for what you think is good. I'm glad that I had this experience in this different way of teaching, but I'm also glad that I had the way of teaching that is practised at KISD.

And what about your personal understanding? Did it change after the exchange? The personal understanding of design in general?

I think my understanding and focus on design didn't change so much. But I took a liking to type-design, scripts, and language in design. And because I also took an illustration class, I started incorporating painting, illustrating, or this approach of creating a design into my workflow, which I didn't do before.

Did you make new friends during your exchange? If yes, are you still in contact?

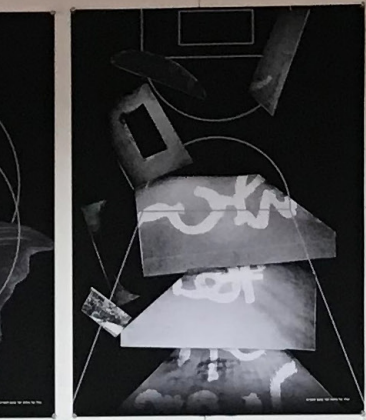
Yes and Yes. I mean, I also was lucky enough to have a lot of my very good friends from KISD in Shenkar and that was amazing. I think it also inhibited me a little bit from making new friendships and also, the fact that I lived there with my partner. I think if you're in a situation where you really need to make friends, you make more friends and maybe you might create stronger bonds.



» But I did make friends and I'm still in contact with them. «



Visual Communication class at Shenkar.



Anecdote: My way to Israel

It was mid-September that I had already made the decision to try and get accepted at Shenkar, but because it was last minute, I didn't have an answer yet. So, I said, okay, if they accept me, then I'll go. But then my friends and I wanted to go to Spain for the holidays. I wanted to stay there because where we went was close to Barcelona. That's where I was supposed to go and so I just packed all my things and went on this holiday. I knew I wasn't going to go back to Germany, but I also didn't know if I was going to Israel or Spain. We were there for a week or so, then my friend said, okay, so we're heading home now. What about you? And I didn't really know because I was hoping that it would work out with Israel, so I didn't look for an apartment in Barcelona or anything. So, I was like "yes, I think I just have to make a decision now!"

Then I decided that even though I didn't have a confirmation yet from Shakar, I would start hitchhiking there. I was like "well, worst case, I'll just find a job and do a gap-semester or something." So, I just started hitchhiking and it worked surprisingly well. Sometimes I would pause in cities like Belgrad for a day to see the city and do nice things.

Later when I arrived in Istanbul, that's where I got a call that I would be accepted. But it took a very long time, and I was already more than halfway there when I found out that I could study there, which was amazing. That's also when I started thinking about how do I actually get to Israel? I looked up for a ship connection, that's where I realised "puh, maybe it's not going to be so easy!" I went to a Port in the Mediterranean Sea of Turkey where I could only go to Northern Cyprus. There, I also realized I couldn't go to Israel. But in Cyprus I tried a lot of things, I went to the official Port, then I went to the marina with private people. I just wrote a sign *Tel Aviv/Israel* and hoped that people would take me because I knew that Israelis go on holiday in Cyprus, but that didn't work out. I even went to the Jewish community in Larnaka, but they didn't let me in. They were like "do you want to come to pray or what do you want?" I was like "no, I just want to ask people if they can take me to Israel on their boat" and they said, "no, you can't come in." I wasn't sure if I should just stay another week, trying every day to hold on to this idea of not flying there, or just be realistic and take the flight, which is what I had to do in the end. When I arrived at the airport, I didn't have a study visa because I just got the confirmation. I knew that I would be able to go to Israel on a tourist visa for three months. So, I thought, that they can't really say anything. Like, what would they say? So, I just have the story that I would enter as a tourist and leave as a tourist. I arrived there and in the passport check, they asked "what's your purpose of travel?" and I said "tourism." They started asking me questions like "what do you do?" and I would say that I am a student. Then they said "when did your se-

mester start?" and I was like "I think it started last week." So, my story started to crumble a bit. Of course, it is not a good idea to be inconsistent in what you say. He started asking about who am I going to stay with? I told him that I would stay with my girlfriend. He went on and asked, "how much money do you have on you?" I didn't actually have a lot of cash on me, maybe 50 Euros, but I had a card. So, they were like "okay you do a break semester and you're going to stay with your girlfriend... you should come with me now." He took my passport and told me to wait in this room. I think I waited for an hour, while I was waiting there, I was like "fuck, should I maybe just tell the truth?", because it might not be the end of the world, just to say "look, man, I'm planning on studying here, I already have the confirmation, but I thought it'd be easier to get in as a tourist." But then I was like, if I tell him that I lied to him, I don't think he's going to be very happy. That was really stressful because I didn't know what to do, but I chose to stick to the story, but I didn't even have to in the end, because there was a different guy who started talking to me in German and asked me some questions. It was an easy conversation and no problems, he put a stamp on my passport and wished me farewell. Then I was in.

Did you study with the tourist visa the whole time, or did you change?

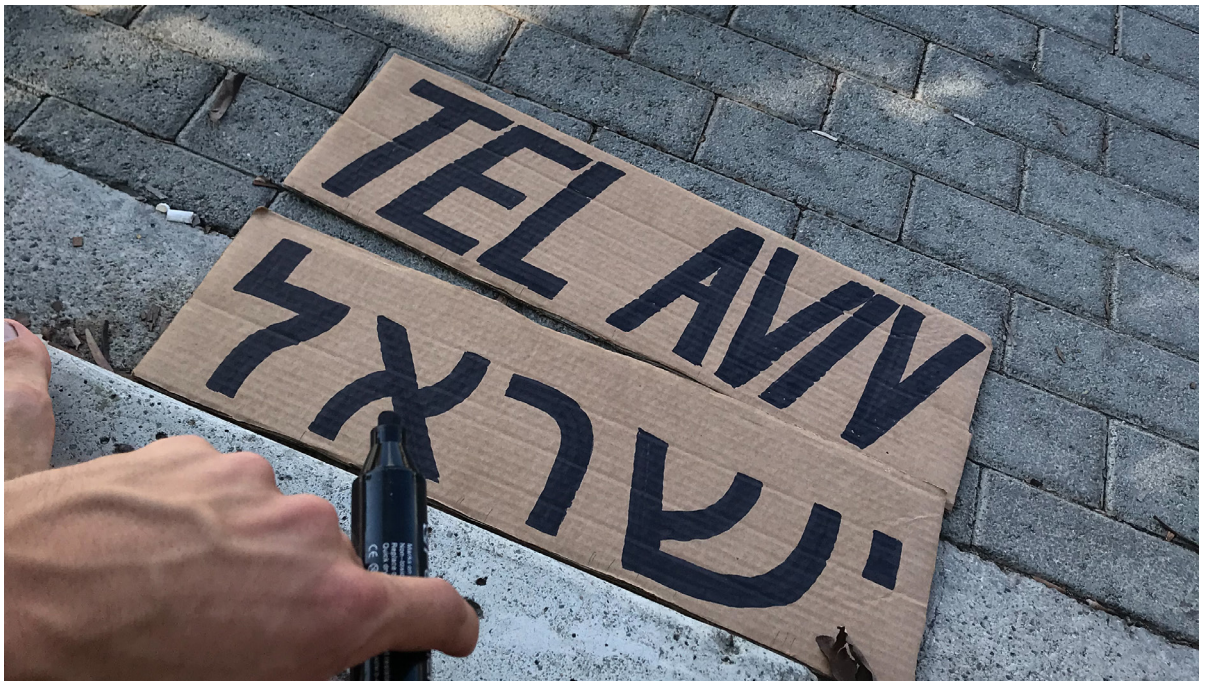
No. When I arrived, I got a tourist visa. I got a study visa later on. And it was actually surprisingly easy. Even when I said that I would like to stay longer it was super easy to extend the visa.

Did you want to stay longer, or did you want to go back to Germany to continue with your studies there? Would you have preferred to stay there?

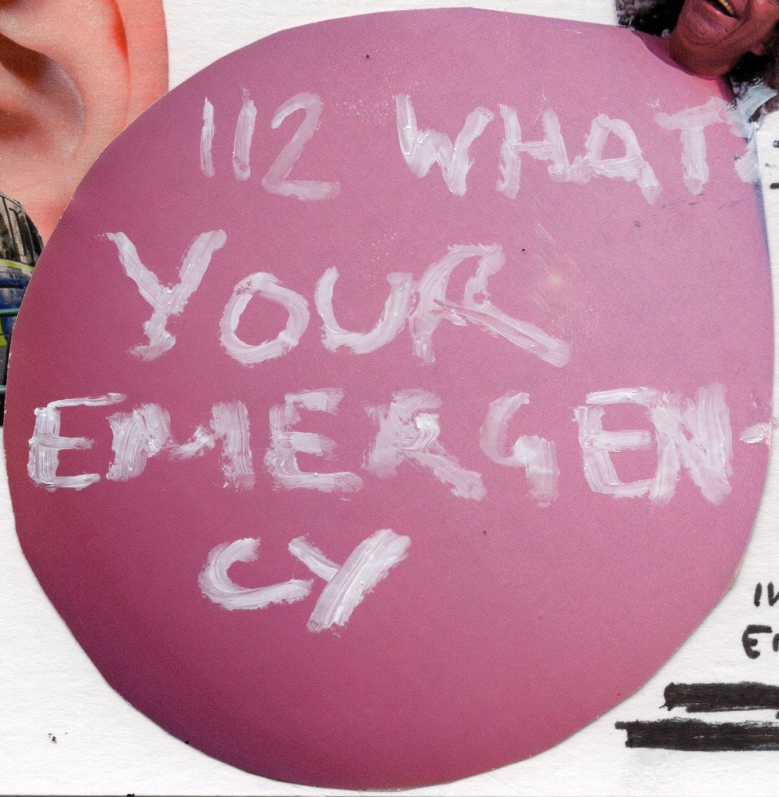
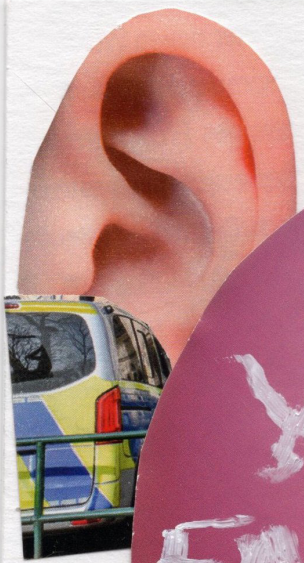
I think I was ready to go back. Initially, the plan was for my girlfriend to graduate, which she did in July a year ago, and then because of Corona restrictions, we de-

cided to stay a little longer because we couldn't really travel so much. I think I was ready to go home, but I also could have stayed longer, I guess. But it was just sort of like it was very convenient for us to go. There is a chance that I will probably write my bachelor thesis about the role that language plays in the manifestation of power structures and multilingual regions, which Israel is a great example for, but also the transfer of typeface from one script to another, like Latin to Hebrew, for example. That would also be amazing to do there. So, I might go back for a few weeks, or months or something.

*Interview by
Stefanie Viere*



"I knew I wasn't going to be able to go through Syria and Lebanon, so I just started hitchhiking and I started in Spain."

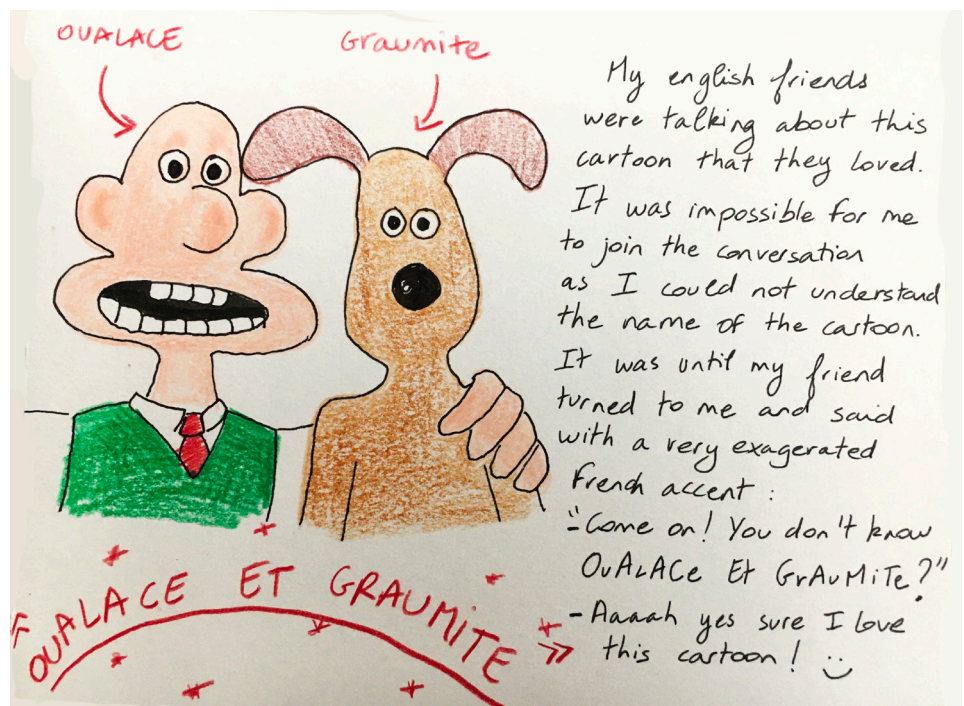


WHEN I CAME TO GERMANY, I GOT A WELCOME TEXT FROM MY PHONE PROVIDER TELLING ME THAT "IN CASE OF EMERGENCY CALL 112". I THOUGHT THAT THIS WAS REFERRING TO THE PHONE COMPANY AND PROCEEDED TO SPEAK WITH THE EMERGENCY SERVICES ABOUT NOT HAVING ANY 3G SIGNAL. AFTER A COUPLE OF MINUTES THEY RESPONDED WITH "THIS IS FOR AMBULANCE AND FIRE SERVICES"...

IVE NEVER FELT SO EMBARRASSED....



In order to be able to tell particularly unique and juicy stories about stays abroad and time spent in another country, we have launched a call for Secret Postcards as part of this publication. This gave people the chance to submit a format, which is completely anonymous and free in the design to tell about adventures in other cultures, scandalous stories or cultural misunderstandings.





Alicia Shao
— BA Integrated
Design, Cologne

April 2014
— Feb 2018
Cologne, Germany

Alicia Shao came for the bread, then found a career goal and direction afterwards.

Going back to the first day when you came here to your apartment. How did you feel? What were your first thoughts when you came to Germany?

What's your name? How old are you and where are you right now? How old were you when you did your exchange?

My name is Alicia. I'm 28 years old and am currently in Denmark. I was 19 when I first started my exchange at KISD.

Why did you choose to come to KISD?

Well, it seems to be a string of lucky coincidences. I had this opportunity to go abroad, and at the time, a lot of my friends were German, and they always talked about sparkling water and German bread. And I was just really interested in seeing those things for myself. So I applied for a couple of different universities and KISD was one of them. Only after I applied, I realized that KISD had Professor Mager, who was a really prominent figure in service design, which is also an area that I was really interested in.

So I guess I was really lucky that I came for the bread, but then found a career goal and direction afterwards.

Yes and I also think that German bread is the best!

It really is! Once when I went home during the study, I took a lot of German bread with me. I sneaked it into New Zealand, and I had a friend who was from Germany at the time, and he almost proposed just because I bought him a loaf of German bread. So it has a lot of power.

How long did you stay here in Germany?

I stayed four and a half years. I've been studying at KISD for about three and a half and I did my bachelor there.

So, my first apartment was in Efferen. And on my first day, I was picking up the keys from the student office, but I couldn't find the office, and they were only open till one o'clock. So I went to the wrong place at first, and I was really worried that I wasn't going to collect my keys in time to have a place to live that day.

So, I remember it was so hard. I had two suitcases and I was just coming from New Zealand, and I was dragging around and trying to run on the streets to make it to the office in time. And one of the suitcases wheels, broke, so I was carrying it in a really weird way, and there's people, like, stopping their car. To tell me that you're carrying the suitcase wrong. It was just very chaotic. I was sweaty. And when I finally got the keys I went into the student housing, and I was just, I guess, relieved at the time. It had some really standard IKEA furniture.

I had three flatmates at the time, and everything really felt so new. And I was really relieved to say "Oh, okay, this will be my life now."

Did you stay at that apartment?

No, that was the first place I stayed. I was there for about a year. And then I moved out of the student house and started living in other places.

What was your favorite food from Germany that you can remember? Or maybe food that you can't eat anymore because it's only from Germany.

I mean, this might not be the answer that you look for, but there is that Döner Kebab place just in front of Chlodwigplatz and I missed that Döner so much. There's nothing that compares to that

Döner. In the nordic region they are expensive and tiny and pathetic. And I missed that Döner a lot. So that's definitely one. The second thing is, I guess there's that little gelato place just outside of KISD and when I just got there, I guess eight years ago, the cones of ice cream were like, one Euro.

And sorbet was 90 cents. And I watched how the price increased over the years. I also really missed it because the ice cream man always waved at me as I walked by.

He does this with me, too!

Maybe this is just a strategy. It's very effective. I spent a lot of money there.

Was there a culture shock that you had when you came here?

I feel like there was a lot and that is hard to choose from. Just one, I guess maybe one. This might not be shocking, but I remember that my friends and I did a project together with Professor Brandes, who used to be at KISD teaching Gender and Design. And our project was selected for an exhibition in Hamburg. So, we had to go to Hamburg and present the exhibition and all of that but of course, we were really poor, well I was really poor. So, I went there on a BlaBla Car on the way there and back. And on the way back to make conversation with a German man, I said, Oh, you have a really cool car. And I think he understood it as I was cold. So, he just looked at me and turned up the heater in the summer. So maybe that's not really a culture shock, but that's just a moment that I realized, oh, they're very attentive. They take things very seriously and are just really funny in an unexpected way.

Also, I remember the first day we had at KISD. The Fachschaft had a welcome party. I don't know how it is right now, but back then they had the student council representatives and they bought two crates of bananas and two crates of beer. We were sitting in the lecture hall, and they gave everyone a banana and a beer. I was very shocked because there were just bananas and beer. Drinking is not a big part of my life at least when I was in New Zealand

Which method of transportation did you choose when traveling to and from the exchange country? And why?

and also drinking in the lecture hall during school time wasn't something I was familiar with. So, it seems very normal for everyone else. They were just cracking open some beers with their lighters. Another thing: being able to crack open beers with anything you find, that was also like, well, you have a special gift! So that's maybe a really big culture shock. And I think I still have a photo on Facebook of me holding a beer and banana saying, look! Yeah, that's really fun.

From New Zealand to Germany, I obviously had to take a flight. And it was really long, I think in total it was 26 hours, including all the transfers, it was about 37 hours to fly over. So that was really exhausting. But once inside Germany, I think within the city of Cologne all trams and public transportation was free for students and it's so nice. I think at some point my friends convinced me to get a bike. So, in the summer we were also biking.

Which culture custom amazed you?

I noticed how within German culture there seems to be really interesting things that are so different from each other. Like people are so diligent and accurate to the things that they do and then Carnival comes and then everyone's drunk. So I just think that these kinds of contradictions make them so human and so fun. I also remember the Maibaum. The first of May you have to give people a tree that you like. So obviously on May 1st there were trees everywhere.

And then a couple of weeks later, they were people with cleaning supplies to clean off all the things that they left. So I just thought they're very romantic, practical, and they're very serious and very relaxed at the same time. So these kinds of traditions just made them really human, really fun.

How well did you speak the language? Did you learn some German?

So, this is maybe a bit of a shame because I was in Germany for quite a while, but I think I only took two or three German courses. I finished two. But for some reason, I was always really scared of German. At the time I had different excuses for why I didn't want to learn but in retrospect, it was just because German seems really intimidating to me.

I'm not very good at languages, to begin with. Grammar in particular is something I struggle with which is something German has a lot of. I think maybe the other reasons are that everyone has been very friendly, besides the public offices of Köln. Everyone in the university was having to talk to me in English, which made me feel comfortable only knowing English. So I never had the urge to learn more about the language, which is really a shame, because wouldn't it be nice to say that I speak German now? I think there are some things I can do very fluently in German, like ordering a Döner for example but that's all which is something I regret.

Now that I think about it, the other reason was that I was 19 when I left home for Germany. It was the first time that I had so much freedom in my life, I could do whatever I wanted. So I spend most of my time drinking with friends, going out and partying. So, when we have so much freedom, learning a language doesn't seem appealing compared to sitting at Aachener Weiher with a beer.

So that's why I think even if I tried to learn it, I still don't have the self-discipline to continue with it, because I was 19, stupid and spend that time doing things that you thought was fun. Actually, when I think about it, if I sacrificed all the time, I spent having fun learning German. I don't know. Maybe it would have been more beneficial in the long term, but I was very happy in those moments where I was drinking the sun.

How did the meaning of design change for you when you came

here? Did it even change for you?

Yeah, it really did. Well, in New Zealand, I studied *Graphic Design and Advertising*. So, I just thought design was about aesthetics. It was about making pretty things. But then I went to KISD and saw a whole spectrum of projects that people were working on. I think the range of projects I can do changed my mind, because just talking about what interaction design is or what motion design is not as effective as seeing it being applied.

At the time, that was when I was at KISD I saw projects where people make corsets for penises to raise awareness for equal rights. I saw people making beautifully poetic but useless objects just for the sake of having this machine interaction. So that really extended my understanding of design, that it wasn't just about making pretty things, but it was something about producing a way to solve problems. As I got more and more into the specific area of service design, I realized that actually solving problems is also not the most important part.

Design is really having the empathy for people to define the right problem to solve because you can solve a problem in a lot of ways that is not design related, but how to define the right question. What is the thing we want to solve? That requires a lot of understanding of people, to research and to design. So that's now my understanding of design. Maybe someday I could go back to understanding design as making pretty things. But at the moment, I think KISD has made my understanding of design quite concrete in the sense that it is about solving the right problem.

Did you make some friends here?

In Cologne my friends were also international students at KISD at the time I started. I'm really grateful for that because all these people are still my friends. So, I really think those are some lifelong friends. What I have noticed though is that the first group that I came with was the one that I was closest to. We had a strong connection that after a while it can feel like, who are these people coming

into my house? As more students come and go every semester. It was for this reason that I became less involved with the new internationals. But, yeah, most of my friends were at KISD and then through them, that's how I established my social network in Cologne.

Do you want to share a *Funny-Friendstory*?

Yeah. I don't know if it was just one thing. I mean, life is just made of so many small moments that make it special. During my first semester before everyone went back to their home country, we were so close that entire time. We would just go to each other's houses without having to tell them, just open the door and go in. Then the last week before everyone goes back to Mexico, Italy etc. we just spent the entire week, like, drinking, saying goodbye, and crying.

It was nonstop. We were on the other side of the Rhine all the time, and it was sunny. And it was just like this. There's a sad group of students drinking because there's always people there to say goodbye to. For some reason, it just seems really poetic in my mind because it was so distinctive to say okay, now we're a part of each other's past. But they had played such a prominent role in my life at that moment.

Do you have any advice, that you would have loved to have before coming to KISD to give other people going to KISD?

Regarding academics, one thing I had struggled with was the amount of freedom that I was given. Like, there were no rules. You just enter projects, and it doesn't matter what level you are. I think that was more difficult for me and maybe for others as well. I don't know because I lack that foundation.

It's like if you gave someone who doesn't know how to play football a ball. Okay they can kick it but they won't shoot it to score a goal. But if they knew the rules. They

would know what they should do with the ball and how to score a goal. Having these rules are what makes the game more fun and gives the player a clear objective. I think it's the same with design, if you come to KISD and you already have a good understanding of what you believe as a designer you can make the most out of having this freedom. If you were like me where you lack a foundation, it might be difficult because then you have to try to figure out what the rules are in that space of time.

Regarding social life – I think people should just sit at the Gute Stube more, eventually someone will come to talk to you if you're feeling lonely. Here you can make close friendships. And, yeah, I was a different person when I started at KISD. I think I was quite intimidated by people where I would be thinking "Oh, my God, these Europeans are so cool with their cigarettes and the coffee in the morning." But now I would say "don't be afraid they are just people they also poop and have their heart broken." And if you don't want to talk to people at KISD, just sitting there and observing everyone is also very interesting.

Oh yes, we all love Gute Stube!

Yes, really! Originally, I was only going to be at KISD for one semester and then I would go back to New Zealand. But it was the social aspect that made me stay and I've stayed in Europe ever since. So, I guess in that sense, I'm really thankful for the people at KISD, the Gute Stube, the people I have met and the things that happen there, because without those I would have gone home and I would have lived a different life.

Interview by Nabelah Shahid



HOME

"When my friends visited and by showing them around, I realized that I felt at home."

FRIENDS



André Freiha — BA Integrated Design, Cologne

Sept 2019
— July 2020

Tokyo, Japan

If you can open yourself up to unexpected surprises, then it's a great experience.

Hi, Andre. Thank you so much for agreeing on telling us a little bit about your experience abroad. Why don't we start with a little introduction of yourself. How old are you? Where are you from? And so on.

Yeah, sure. I'm Andre, 23 years old. Originally, I'm from Germany, and I spent the last year as an exchange student in Japan at Musashino Art University in Tokyo.

Sweet! And why did you choose Japan?

It's actually a long story because during the end of my high school years, I actually got into the Japanese language and I started studying it, as in taking classes.

So you speak Japanese?

Yeah. I wouldn't say fluently but like at an intermediate level. At Musashino I was studying Japanese joinery so, therefore, I used my experience at KISD in woodworking to my advantage. Every morning when you walk to your classroom, you pass the other workshops. Since everything is behind glass, you can actually see what other people are doing. It was really amazing. We were separate from the rest of the campus and the other courses of study. And you were just surrounded by people of different crafts.

So cool! I can relate to that because I did an apprenticeship to become a joiner as well. Japan is world-famous for its woodworking skills, crafts, and these sorts of things. I mean, their tradition is basically built on woodworking and also iron and steel manufacturing.

Yeah, definitely. And what was really nice about Musashino is that they have a whole department as a separate building for all these traditional crafts, as in not only woodworking, but also metal working

or glass blowing or working with bamboo.

Sweeeeeet!

And it's all under one roof. And yeah, every morning when you walk to your classroom, you pass the other workshops. And since everything is behind glass, you can actually see what other people are doing. And it was really amazing. We sort of separate from the rest of the campus and the other courses of study. And you were just surrounded by people of different crafts.

And how were the classes? Was there an introduction, or a goal you should achieve? Is it like KISD where you work on your project and develop different ideas of your final outcome? And then you decide which way you want to go? Or is there something set in the first place?

Sort of both. How they do it is, they separate the classes by the year. So you have first until four year students and each year has their own classroom where they actually connect on the side of the room. So you have basically a corridor which leads through all the classrooms. And of course, in your first year, you start off small, by building a little tool. And this is where you also get all of your workshop introductions and things like that. But when I first arrived there, I had an introductory meeting with all the professors and the workshop assistance. They put me in, I think it was in the third-year class in wood design, as they call it.

So basically the same as you are at KISD, right?

Right. And yeah, you have these fixed assignments, which is what every class has to do during the specific year. So, these sorts of things are already set. They're laid out for you. But then you have this bit of freedom in what you build. So, my first assignment was to make an armchair. It was quite funny. I came in one morning and they were like, okay, here you are. We're going to put you in the third-year classroom. Then I went up there and my class consisted of maybe eight, so I didn't have to first meet a lot of people. And it was

also all in Japanese, more or less. I have one workshop assistant. His name was Yo-jiro and he had been living in America for quite a long time and so he knew English. But he was more or less the only one who knew English there at a professional level.

So was there a language barrier as well?

Yeah! In the beginning, it was big, like, of course, having learned Japanese for three years prior to that, I got a bit of an advantage. And I didn't come empty-handed. What you do in Japan is what they call "Jikoshoukai" where you introduce yourself to everybody, and then they introduce themselves to you. And after that, I was at a loss for words. But the funny thing is, the guy to my right, his name is Kei. He immediately just stuck out and shook my hand. was like:

» Hey, I'm Kei «

» Let's be friends! «

And so, Yeah, we've been best buddies since day one. I was lucky. I had a really warm welcome in the class.

And at the end, how many assignments did you do?

You were there for one semester or one year?

One year, two semesters. So we had an armchair. And then what was it? It was... Gosh, I already forgot.

You're thinking about so many things, and your assignments are not part of that. Then we had some random object out of wood, which also could have been an artwork, then something for a living room. Again, also an object or a piece of furniture.

working in this culture, really strong working ethics, or how would you describe the work ethic within the University?

Right. So I can only speak for the Department I was in, and it was pretty, good. So, in the beginning, we had a briefing, right? We talked about what to do, and then we had different brainstorming. We went to a chair museum, which was on campus to look at different chairs to get inspiration. Then we had to present models and mock-up sketches. But then we were progressively left to ourselves to work on our ideas. And then we also had two times at which we could use the workshop downstairs, as the machine room with the table saw and thickness planer and stuff like that. Our classroom was actually just filled with workbenches and hand tools. So, the rule is, if you can get your stuff done during the workshop time, the time when you were allowed to use the machinery, you would just go on and use hand tools. I think in the beginning, during my first assignment, I was there a lot! I came in at nine, and then I left at nine when the department was closing.

Wow, that's a long day, isn't it?

Yeah, but there was so much to see and so much cool stuff to learn. And also I have to admit: I came there and I felt the impression of doing something good. And so I put a lot of effort into it. It was also a lot of fun just hanging around with your classmates in the workshops. And it wasn't really like, you know, sometimes you hear these sort of horror stories where people would sabotage each other and there would be a lot of jealousy going on, or what have you. And that wasn't the case for this class. We were all just friends and helping each other out. Having a laugh in the shop, it was really cool!

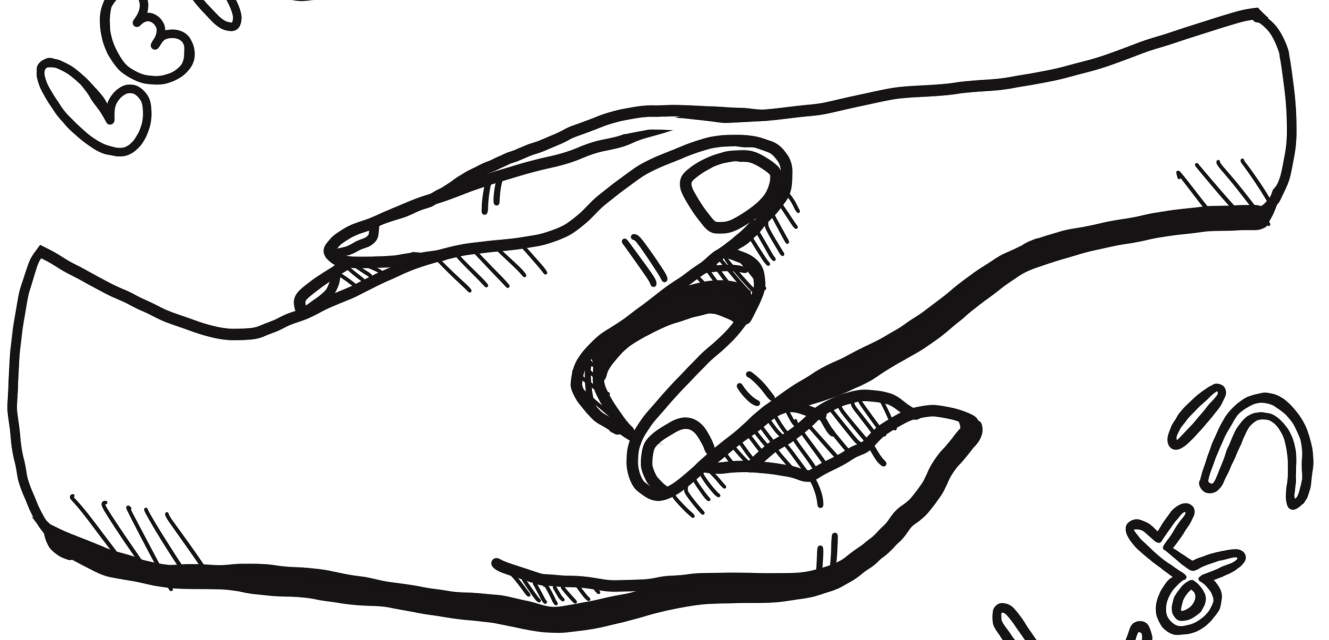
Nice, okay, perfect!

And how was the actual class? Like, how was it like, how many hours did you spend in the workshops? And was it like you could

36 imagine Japanese people studying or



LET'S BE FRIENDS



友達になりましょう



小丸七
ラーメン

KIRIN
キリンビール
ラーメン
餃子
岐阜屋

長老
そば

串焼き
1本100円OK!!
1本100円

So, the more time you spend within University, the closer you got with everybody else?

Yeah, right! And then we also had these... there's a word for it. They call it Nomikai, which means basically a drinking meeting. And we had a couple of those. It was nice! We just went down to the workshop, had a barbecue on gas stoves, which were used to bend wood. And then just got drunk in the seminar room with all the professors and all the other people.

Sounds just like KISD!

Yeah! It was a lot like KISD in different ways. And so I felt really welcome these first times and so I didn't have a big culture shock, actually. Like coming there: I'm not a person that has jet lag. So on the first day when I was there, I went out with my bicycle, explored the city and wanted to do as much as I could!

So you got around by bike?

Yeah! In the dorm, where the international students stayed, we got a free bike, which we could borrow and just ride to school with or right around the town.

Cool and the dorm was on campus or where was it located? And how big is the city? Because I imagine cities in Japan – because they don't have a lot of space, so they built all these high rises and so I imagine every city a little bit like Tokyo or whatever, you know? How was the city? Which city was it again?

Fair enough, it was Tokyo but yeah, to be honest, I'm not sure how it works because you have the prefecture Tokyo and then metropolitan Tokyo. But you also have smaller cities, or maybe you call them villages. The town where I lived in was called Kodaira, which was West of downtown Tokyo – A lot further west! It was closer to the mountains and nature, surrounding the Tokyo Bay Area, if you will. So it wasn't anything like you would imagine Tokyo to be. A lot of smaller houses, families, lots

of green actually, little fields which people would tend to. I think people from Tokyo would call this a countryside. Ah and I forgot to mention that the dorm was not on campus. It was like a ten minute bike ride away, but pretty close.

And you said it was with other internationals, right?

Yeah.

Okay, cool! But did people from Japan live there as well? Or were there people from all over the world? In like the majority of the people you were living with in the international dorm, where were they from?

They were Japanese. Funny story: It was actually a dorm exclusively for female students. But they would also put the international students in there. On the first floor and ground floor. On the first floor, it was exclusively female students. And as a male, we were told on our first day that we couldn't even go up to the first floor.

Okay and this is for regular students as well, the same procedure?

Yeah. The rules were pretty strict, but I guess the dorm manager would also just turn a blind eye on some things. You got pretty close in the end. Actually, I went out for dinner with him a couple of times. So, Yeah, he lived there with his wife as well. It's kind of cute.

Cool. And you told me earlier before we did this interview that you were working in a bar or in a restaurant as well. How was this experience? Because you said at the beginning you had a little bit, like, this language barrier, and then suddenly you are with a bunch of random people in a restaurant and you need to serve them. And how was this for you?

Yeah, exactly how you said it. It felt weird and it was crazy. It was actually after my first semester and I got

more and more comfortable with Japanese as I also had classes. So my classmates would also just teach me more and more words, because I had to speak it! I couldn't really use English, that would have been a huge nuisance for everybody else. And it was cool.

But then I was like, okay, I'm a bit settled here and now I want to work. I want to maybe support myself for a bit. And then I went out to look for a job, and I applied at different places. I wanted to do something design related first. But as my Japanese wasn't that good, I didn't get replies from many of the companies that I applied to. And yeah, at some point, I just went out and sent out applications to anything, and the restaurant actually was interested. So I went there for an interview, and they were the highest paying job out of all the things that I applied to. I had another job interview at a place where they were doing stuff for escape rooms. They build all the props, and everything. It would have been interesting but I picked the restaurant because they were paying me more.

Haha, lucky you!

se high class dishes and fine dining, if you will. And there I was – having no clue what to do, or how the restaurant works, not knowing the different menus they had, not knowing how to write down the orders of the customers and feeling like a bother to every single one of my coworkers. But somehow they didn't fire me.

Yeah, lucky me! And they actually were patient with me. And slowly got me used to everything. It was stressful because I also had a walkie talkie in my ear, like an earpiece, which would also be used to communicate with the kitchen or the bar to order the drinks for customers and stuff. And during the first time, I was just completely ignoring what was being said on the earpiece and I was doing my thing. Haha. I don't know. My boss was cool. At some point I had screwed up so badly, I was going to him begging for forgiveness. And what I knew was adequate in Japan. And I was asking like, look, this doesn't seem to work out. Maybe it would be better if I just quit this job. And he's like: Oh, no. I'm surprised you see it that way. Just get used to everything and it will get better!

How was it price wise, is it comparable to Germany, or was it a little bit more expensive when it comes to living expenses? What would you say?

It was in some parts more expensive than Germany. But for instance, going out for dinner or eating at a restaurant is cheaper than actually cooking stuff on your own in Japan. So there are many places where you get well fed for what would be five euros here. So that was really affordable. I was also going bouldering a lot in Japan, and that was one of the more expensive things. So I guess I wanted to get some more money to do that. And then I ended up at this restaurant. Somehow the interview worked out. At first I was hoping they would put me behind the bar and I could serve drinks or something. But during the job interview, the boss told me: Okay, we're going to use you as a waiter. And so the first couple of times I was working there and it was just imposter syndrome. I was standing there, having no idea how to work in a restaurant. It was not even like a normal restaurant. It was one of these fancy places in Shibuya. You know, they would import meat from America and have the-

Nice, that sounds sweet.

Did you find time to travel around in the country as well? And what would you say about the people in general were they all very patient and nice to you?

How was meeting people you weren't at school or at your job with?

I did travel a bit! And I also met up with an old friend, Satoshi, whom I had first met here at KISD when he was doing his exchange here. So we got around. First I explored Tokyo because there was so much to see. And then I went outside more and more. And I was also bouldering. So I was meeting new people in bouldering gyms. And I think if they see that you are trying your best to communicate with them in their language, they are patient with you and they will help you out. Okay sometimes you can see, they do have some prejudice against you. But I met so many people who have maybe never seen a foreigner before in their life. And so they

didn't know how to react. But yeah, in general, I would say I had just a great experience with a lot of people!

It sounds like you had a great experience. What you told us about your job. It sounds super great. I think in Germany it would have been a lot different. And also, with your classmates and the bouldering room, that sounds pretty cool. So, you had a friend before, and obviously you are in contact with this person. Have you met people that you are in contact with, that you just met in Japan, and now you are still in contact and writing some emails or whatever.

Yeah. Another girl from Musashino Art University, we got pretty close. I told you about Kei my best friend there. He would organize these camping trips with all the people in my class. We were spending time together a lot, actually. I met people from other departments, and we went out on weekends for a hike or going to an Onsen, one of the traditional bathhouses built on top of hot springs, or just going out for a drink or something to eat.

Okay, well André thank you very much. Unfortunately, our time is over. I think there are still a lot of open questions but I really hope that people, when they read about your interview or see your face, that they will come up to you and ask you whatever! Is there anything more you want to add or say?

Well, I have been asked by other people who also wanted to go to Japan. What they should do or if there's anything to be careful about. And what I would tell people is: First of all, start learning the language now! Because through that, you also get a sense of Japanese culture and you can see if that's something for you or not. And don't get intimidated by the Japanese characters. It's actually not a hard language to get into. And then think about if you have the right mindset to go to this country. It's different in a lot of ways, culturally. And the best mindset you can have, in my opinion, is to not have any expectations at all. And to just go there and soak it all in. Take it all in and just be open to new expe-

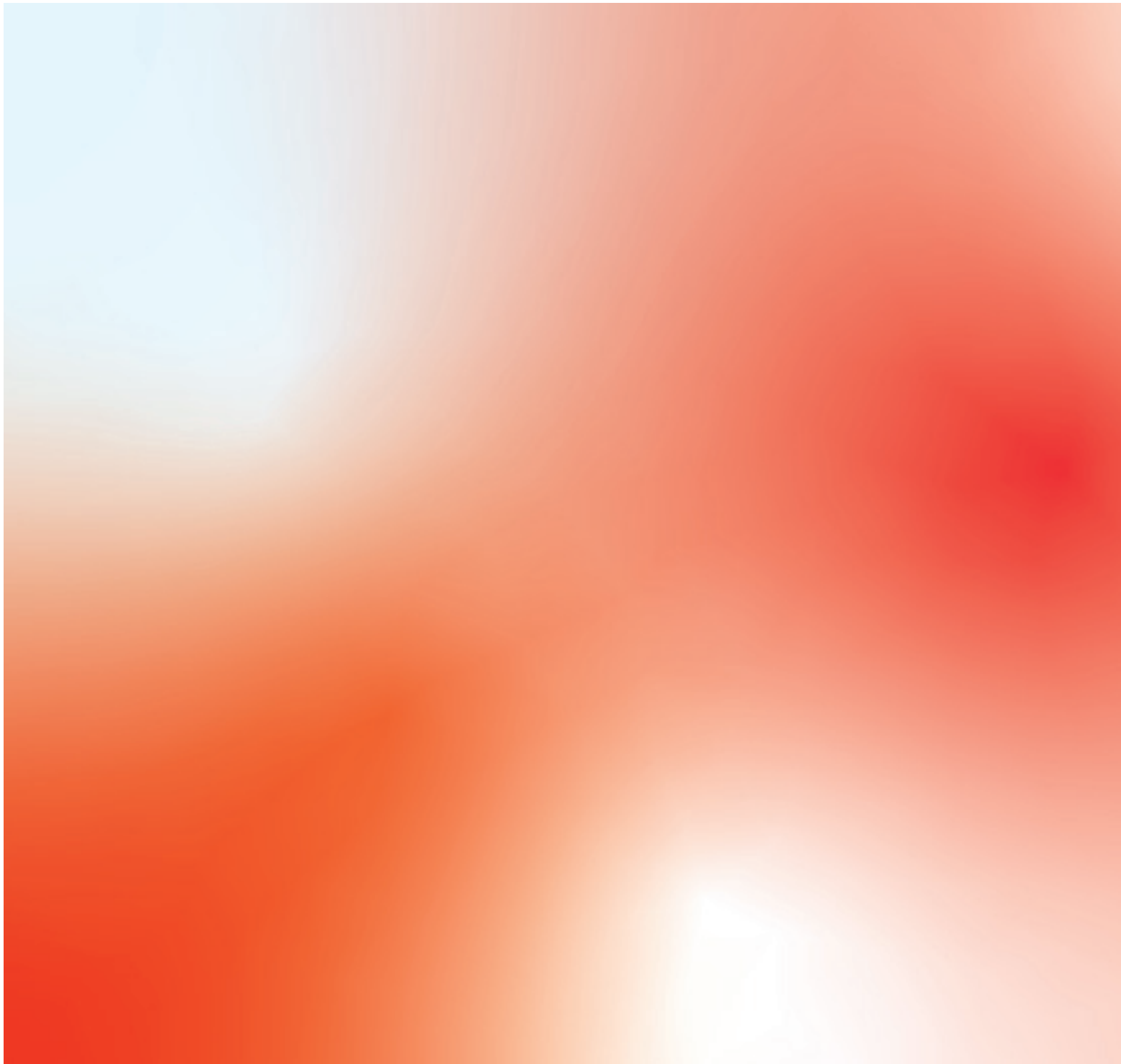
riences. And that might be something for some people and others couldn't do it. And that's also okay. But yeah, think about it! If you can open yourself up to something different or unexpected surprises, then it's a great experience. And especially important experiences don't always have to be wonderful experiences. They can also be difficult or stressful at the moment. But then you discover that these experiences got you somewhere. And that's what I learned over there. It's not always about having the greatest time, but it's also about, like, seeing what your limits are.

» It's not always about having the greatest time, but it's also about, like, seeing what your limits are. «

*Interview by
Benjamin Bräuer*







"Falling in love with my boyfriend."



Sarah Pearson — BA Exchange at Köln International School of Design



from Auckland
University of Tech-
nology, New Zealand

Sept 2019

— Feb 2020

Cologne, Germany

Sarah Pearson wanted to visit a different country to step out of her comfort zone.

Maybe you can introduce yourself?
What's your name?
How old are you now? When did you do your exchange?
And where?

Ok. Hi, I'm Sarah. I am now 21, turning 22 soon and when I did my exchange in Cologne I was 20 years old.

Which method of transportation did you choose when travelling to and from the exchange country?

Well as much as I would have liked to sail from New Zealand to Germany, it was not really an option – I had to fly from New Zealand. It took me three flights to get there and like thirty hours.

So how long did you stay in Germany?
Maybe you can tell us a little bit about why you chose KISD and how you liked it in the end.

So I stayed in Cologne for five and a half months and I was told about Cologne from a friend that studied the same degree as I did. And she said it was really awesome and that she had a lot of fun and the school was just really great. And you know, it offered a lot of opportunities for her and in sort of widened her knowledge of design. She said that it changed her way of thinking about design. So that was kind of a thing that influenced me. And it was something I had thought about doing for a while. Ever since I started uni, I thought it would be really cool to be able to go on an exchange and go to a different country to step out of my comfort zone.

And do you remember the stops you took?

I went from New Zealand to Australia, Australia to Abu Dhabi, and then Abu Dhabi to Frankfurt and I then had to take a train from Frankfurt to Cologne.

Which project did you like the most that you attended at KISD?

I would probably say when we were in Taiwan and we worked with the taiwanese students. And I really enjoyed doing the monopoly project in Venice with the German students and getting to know the culture really well.

Wow. And that all with a probably big suitcase.

Yeah, I had a pretty big suitcase.

Which culture costume amazed you in your exchange country and why? Maybe also just a thing people do in Germany that you didn't really know and thought it was cool.

The christmas markets. I mean that one has to be the biggest thing probably. Cause that was just amazing. In New Zealand it's nothing like that. I didn't really know about a lot of traditional German culture on Christmas, like the traditions you have: Drinking Glühwein and eating amazing food. I really miss it so much.

I think that was like the best thing for me, when we were told to do a project that involved cultures. We were really encouraged to talk to people and learned about the culture and really understand the people involved. So that was really a good skill that I learned. That I like sort of use at home in New Zealand.

And a sad thing:

Last Christmas, there were no Christmas markets. So everybody is hoping that they're gonna be back by the end of this year.



I think the biggest difference was, which is related to the christmas markets, that everywhere you went people were together. That's not really possible in New Zealand because everyone lives so far apart. So you can just walk out on the street and someone will be. There were like groups of people singing. Or the Cologne Carnival. You can not skip Carnival. That was really cool.

Oh yeah! That was pretty much inspired to go with the german. It's just ordering food.

Yeah Carnival is like the one thing that sets cologne apart also from all the city around. The biggest Carnival party is happening in Cologne. Maybe, regarding to your Christmas markets experience. What was your favorite food you ate there? Or snack? Do you remember?

There was some bread with cheese in the middle.

Yeah! I think I know the name, but... I will, maybe I will look it up.

And I like those potato-pancake.

They are called Reibekuchen. Those are great!

How well did you speak the language of your exchange country? And did your language skills improve during your stay? And are you still using a little bit of German, now that you're back in New Zealand?

It is really hard to keep up with german. But I didn't know pretty much anything when I went to Cologne. So I learned a lot, but it was more understanding the people.

By the end of it I could sort of get the gist of a person's conversation. If I was on a tram I could understand what they were saying. So that was kind of exciting because I could see my comprehension was improving.

I remember you ordering at a Falafel

48 place in german.

How did or does the meaning and importance, also the role of design, differ in the exchange country in comparison to your university in Auckland? And do you have a different understanding of design now that you've been abroad and came back to New Zealand?

Yeah definitely. It has influenced what I do in design now. I think my biggest take away was the system design aspect. I feel like Germany in general, like the school, they are very good at looking at the whole system and who is involved.

I really liked the Service Design aspect and think it's kind of what I looked at more in New Zealand, like looking through the user journey. And the style – I feel like what I learnt there was not just designing a beautiful object but designing it in a package, so everything about it looks good – good graphics, good everything, how you present it, like it kind of comes in a whole package rather than just a *stand-alone-object*. Which I think I learnt from doing the exhibitions and showcasing my work in the KISD studio.

Yeah, I feel the same. It's more like a realistic approach where you have to consider everything. Also the story behind it and stakeholders. Just always keep in mind the big picture.

Which really makes sense, because it's integrated. So everything about it, even if you studied, like doing what we did, what was more like interface and system design, sort of intertwined disciplines.

Oh yeah, 100%. Yesterday actually I did a workshop on mycelium.

Really cool, right now its growing for fourteen days and then we'll put it in the mold and this one girl who's doing her master thesis on bringing together the different biomaterials and creating a platform for it, she wants to make a bench out of mycelium.

I want to try mycelium so bad.

Yeah maybe you will get the chance in your master studies. Because the materials, I don't think they're that expensive, it just takes a lot of time and you have to be really cautious and hygienic, because if there are any germs in the mixture it won't grow. And also the moisture has to be right. I'm excited to see how it worked out. It was really cool and it was also the first event at KISD in like over a year.

Did you meet/make any new friends during your exchange? And are you still in contact?

Most of the friends I had were in my classes. And the international students I made friends with quite a lot 'cause we kind of stepped out of the little circle of international students. Yeah I'm still in touch with them. Not as much as I would like but one time we did a group call and I woke up at three in the morning. So it's really cool having friends from all over the world, like in Hong Kong and everywhere I don't know, I can only think of Hong Kong. I think some of them are still in Germany. Also Portugal.

Did you take your time to travel and explore Germany or the countries next to it?

Yeah I did get to travel a lot, which was really cool. We took a really spontaneous trip to Belgium and I visited Brussels with some friends. And went to Italy 'cause I had some friends there. I also went to Venice for a project at KISD. And to Austria I went with a German band and played folk music in the alps, in the mountains, that was pretty cool. I wish I had seen more of Germany because I only really got to see the west side. I went to Würzburg a lot 'cause my cousin lives there. And Hamburg, well I kind of just passed through but I mean Eastern Germany. I can't remember the name though.



Eastern Germany?

Near the baltics sea.

The baltic Sea is in the north.

Ah no! Not eastern!

Yeah maybe if there's a chance to come back you could see the east of germany. I went to Dresden one year ago and visited the Elbsandsteingebirge.

I haven't been to Berlin, which I really want to go to next time.

Yeah, you'll get the chance.

I went to Munich, which is a big city but enjoyed being there a lot.

Yeah, quite different to Cologne.

Cologne is special though. It's like, got this really, I don't know. The culture is just so open and free.

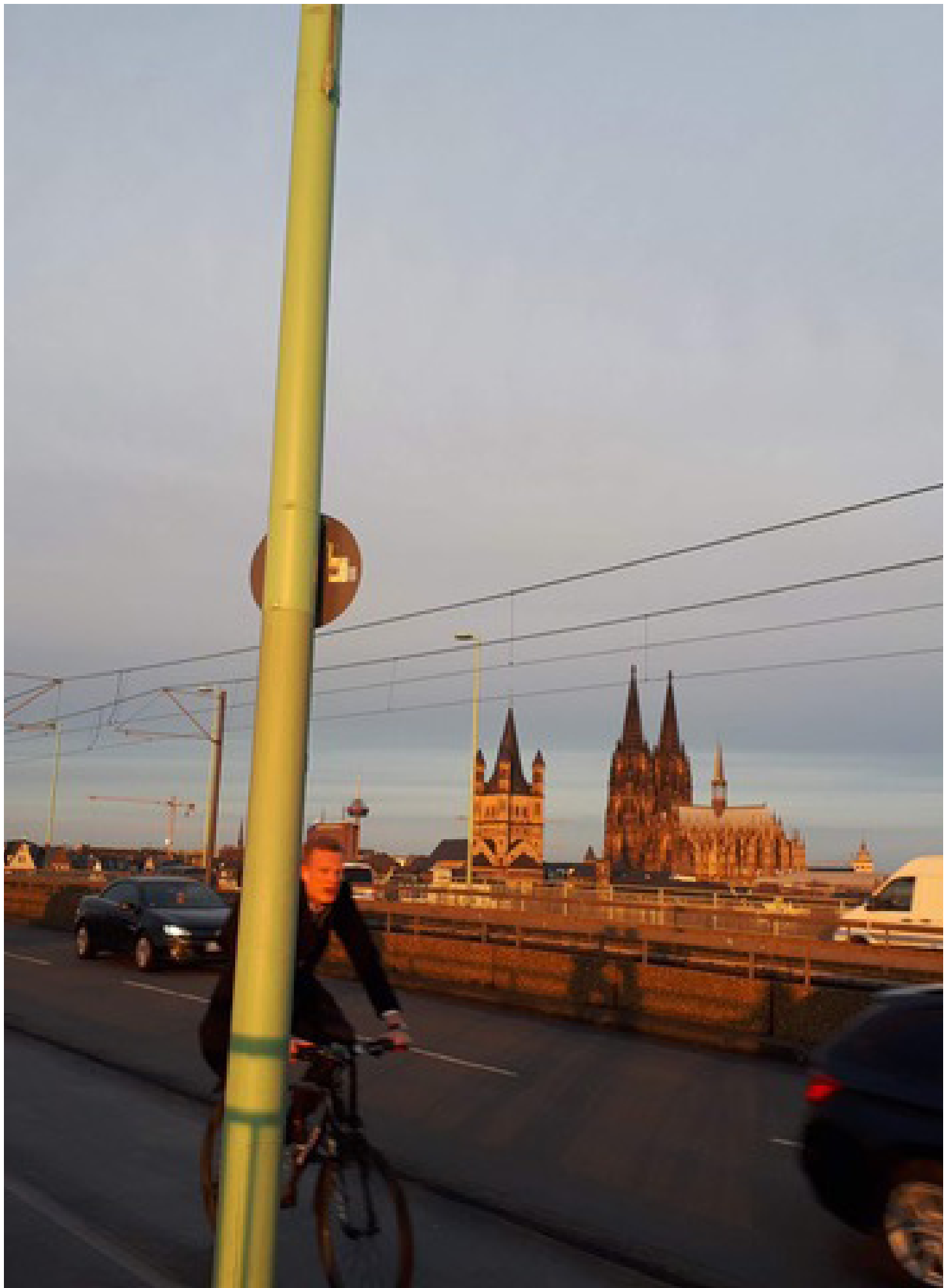
Is there a funny, or interesting or meaningful story to tell? Anything that you would also pass on to people who want

to do an exchange
in Cologne or any-
thing in general you
would like to add?

I definitely find my carnival pretty funny!
Watching people chasing up in costumes.
And like doing all the traditions around the
carnival like how people lock arms with
each other. Is that like something? What
else? I don't know, it's hard 'cause just so
much happened and it was all really great. I
really loved it when we had the internatio-
nal Christmas party. And you got different
food from different countries.

*Interview by
Clara Schmeinck*

» Not to forget the good
music, good vibes ... «





"In general, since it is the first time in my life that I live alone, I gained a lot of trust in myself. I feel that I have grown a lot personally and that I am now less afraid to do things by myself."

GROWTH

Sahar Amrianan

— BA Integrated Design, Cologne



from Israel,
Berlin, Cologne

For the introduction can you tell me your full name, which country you are from? For how long you've been in Germany and what drew you to Cologne or Germany for studying here?

Okay, my name is Sahar, like the Sahara desert, without the A.

laughing

Yeah it's hard for Germans to say my name because there is an r in the end and it starts with S, so my name here has become *Sacha* for some reason.

Ah yeah true, I've never said it like this, because I've first heard how you pronounce it.

So, I guess this is the first culture shock that I had to really explain how to say my name. In my German course, it was a little annoying, so I started to put my name with a *scharfes S* in the beginning, even though there isn't a word starting like this, for the people to say the β sound. My name is Sahar, I'm from Israel, I've lived in Germany for three and a half years. For around four months I lived in Berlin and then I moved to Cologne. I was travelling in Europe and India a few years ago and when I came to Germany to visit some friends, I found out that it's possible for me as an foreigner to study here without paying so much money. I've always had the wish to live and study in a different place because I still have the idea to go back to Israel to build my family there, but first I wanted to get this experience in a different place in the world.

And what do you think drew you to Germany, just the cost of study here or also because you just thought it was a nice country?

So that's one of the reasons that I moved in the beginning to Berlin when I was travelling and visiting a lot of friends, and I really liked it. It was really open and kind, because it was summer, it was really colourful,

fun and the great atmosphere that I felt in the moment. Out of all the countries that I was travelling to I felt really good in Germany. So I went back to Israel, collected some money, worked for like 8 months or something and came back to Germany.

So initially when you once were in Germany you thought: "Oh, this is a place I could imagine living in" and then you made the decision? Interesting. Let's move on to the next question, what is a culture custom that amazed you or stunned you and why?

I can say that the first thing that really shocked me, was when I found a flat in Berlin through a friend and I was there for like two days and went to the supermarket. I didn't know that there's plastic dividers during checkout that separates my shopping with someone else's that I needed to place. So, I got screamed at in German and I didn't understand what I did wrong. Someone behind me tried to explain in broken English that I have to place this divider that separates my shopping from the others. In Israel you just say to the cashier, "yeah, I'm until the cereal, or until this" and it's not a problem. We don't really have this divider, so this is I guess the first thing that was like:

» Okay, there is more order here in Germany. «

I think in Berlin the people are a little bit rougher, in a way.

Yeah of course.

Now that I'm more aware about life in Berlin I realize that where I was staying was not like the centre of Berlin. I think that's why the people spoke to me just in German because in the centre of Berlin it's pretty international and you can manage with English if you wish. Because I only stayed there as a tourist it was just like a first small impression of the city.

Crazy! I'm sorry that the people treated you so bad, it's not really an issue here for me. Usually you just leave a little bit space so the cashier knows.

Yeah, like you said there was this discount supermarket, I went to later on where there wasn't busy, and everyone left some space when they put their stuff to show its their shopping. I guess I didn't really leave so much space the first time I went? I don't know, it was a funny situation.

Haha welcome to Germany.

Regarding the language, how well did you speak German once you arrived here, and did you do anything to work with your language skills?

So, when I arrived, I knew zero, like really nothing and then I find out there is a lot of words that are similar or exactly the same in German as Hebrew. I think there were 200 words. And I was like 'ah cool' I know a few words already in German without learning. So, I took a really short class in Berlin, and I didn't know if I would stay in Germany. Then for some crazy reason I moved to Cologne, and I really enjoyed it.

I took another course and afterwards started to work in an ice cream shop as an ice cream seller.

Awww cool.

At *Schmitz*, you know this?

At *Schmitz*?

with enjoyment
yeah!

I was in charge of serving the ice cream and I used to go every Saturday to Neumarkt with the pink car and sell ice cream.

Ahh that is so cool, I live just across the street from *Schmitz* at Aachener Straße, cuteeeee. I love the little cars they're so cool!

So this has as well helped me but when I was working I didn't have time to study so I learned by doing it.

Of course, that's the best way!

Yeah, after a year in Germany I was still not happy about my German, but I managed to get a job in a synagogue as security. One of my demands was that they paid for my German course, so I was working and

studying all day every day. It was for half a year, like 8 in the morning until 12 is school and from 1 till 11 at night I was at work. All of this was too much so, I left the course. I still wanted to study in a German university. That's why I wanted to learn the language. Once I reached to B2, and the beginning of C1, that was when I started to think "what should I apply in the university?" Then I found out about KISD and it's so amazing and it's actually in English so yeah.

Really great! Interesting evolving from taking classes and then also smart move to connect it to your job and make them pay for it and now being able to also study in English. It's really great.

Regarding your friendships, would you say you're more in contact with the people you met as friends here in Cologne or the people in Berlin? And are you still in close contact with the people and friends in Israel?

Yeah so, it's quite funny because before I moved to Germany I was working as a medic for groups that come to Israel for travel. I was the medic, security or whatever they need and two weeks before I moved to Germany there was a group from Germany. In the area of Dortmund. I met a girl there and it was really nice. She stayed a few days longer and then she went back. Not much happened between us. It was a beautifully brief summer love. And then I started to travel in Europe before I came to Germany, and I met her again. She was living in Dortmund, and I was living in Berlin. Actually, I have a lot of friends in Berlin, but I came one day here to Cologne to visit her sister or something and I met a friend that was travelling with her in India here in Köln.

Woah okay.

Yeah, she was randomly here, and I stayed for another night just to be with her. I met with her again and she introduced me to a lot of her friends here in Cologne. One of her friends in particular I really connected to. She told me, you know if you want to move to Cologne, there is a room free in my flat. I was like: "I don't know, I just started living in Berlin." After like a week or two I moved into Berlin, I was like: "Yeah, why not." and I just moved to Cologne.

Cool!

And the friends that I gained here in Cologne are much closer to me now. This girl who I met in Israel and has moved from Dortmund to Cologne is now my girlfriend. Of course, I still speak people in Israel on WhatsApp every day but it's really more family than friends.

Did they ever visit you in Germany?

Yeah, one friend came specifically to Cologne, but all the others went to different places in Europe. For instance, some came to Amsterdam, so I joined them later on during their vacation there. They would typically go to places like Amsterdam if they had a choice on where in Europe, they wanted to have their holidays. So, I would just join them because Amsterdam's not so far away from Cologne. They typically come because I'm in Europe and they say, why not to make it a holiday and see you at the same time.

Yeah of course it's great to connect it. And you are now probably an expert of Cologne, you can show them nice places!

Not so much actually, I know Cologne, but not so much, like I think I should know after three years.

Me too me too, I've almost been here for two years, but I never really did the touristy stuff, I only stayed in some areas like Südstadt and in the Belgium quarter, where I live. I never really go to the museums as well which I think is not that good because the museums are so great and every first Thursday of a month you actually get to go in for free.

Yeah I've heard about it, I did it one time only.

I did it also one time I always try to do but never works out.

Same. So as well after a year and a half kind of that I was living here a year, a year and a half my mom and my sister came to visit and it's the first time I went inside of the Dom.

Yeah I always never went inside until friends came to visit.

Yeah, I actually live super close to you, I live on Zülpicher Straße, which is close to the Stiefel and next to Bahnhof Süd.

Oh, my sister also lives there. She lives in Dasselstraße.

Ah yeah, when I look out from my window, I can see Dasselstraße.

Oh, okay wow, so where you live is really central.

Yeah, I also know little bit of Ehrenfeld but not really enough for me to say much.

I know, because you have everything in your quarter, you don't really need to go far. That's the Cologne experience, you have like own little village area.

Time for your last anecdote: Can you think of a funny or interesting story, that you like to tell or anything you would like to share since you've arrived?

Hmm, woah this is actually hard to think about. It's a little bit sad but in the end it's beautiful, why I like Cologne. *Uhm*. Okay so I think it was two years ago, there were two friends visiting me. I was traveling with them in India, and I met a friend who now lives in Amsterdam. She was living in Cologne at the same time as me and we were with 10 people who were sitting in a kitchen. We made food and everything. Then there was a house party where there were like I think 200 people from either India or Berlin. It's apparently a big event every weekend that can have 300 people, so I made a lot of friends from these parties. It's a little bit sad because this friend that came from Amsterdam, she came to Cologne because it was Friday and on Saturday, she had a wedding to go to. And we just told her "Hey you want to come with us to this party?" and she said why not. So, we went to this party and after like an hour the poli

ce came and said: "This party is too much, you need be stop this" and we said: "No problem we can all go home." So, we turned the music off and everybody started to leave but one of the police got out his walkie talkie and said in German: "Things have escalated here, we need more people."

Reinforcements,
yeah.

We all heard him and some of us told him: "Why are you lying, everyone is going home." Anyway, we started to leave and there was a lot of police, like five cars full of officers and they start to push everyone, spray tear gas and a lot of people got arrested, including this friend of mine. In the end she didn't go to the wedding.

Because she was
arrested?


Yeah, like they pushed her, and she dropped her bottle of beer and they accused her of throwing a bottle of beer at them, so they arrested her and a few others. Everyone else, like 200 people stayed by the police station all night and bought a lot of food and clothes waiting for the ten people who got arrested to come out. They eventually did and when each person came out, we all gave them food, new clothes to get changed and be refreshed as we all sat in big groups until we knew everyone got out. We all knew nobody did anything wrong and that there was no point of them being arrested in the first place. However, that was the beautiful part of Cologne, everyone didn't really know each other very well but we still stuck together and formed a community to help each other out. We were also very worried because the police said our party was a *politically left-wing party* as an excuse for the arrests and treatment towards us when it was just a normal party. So, it started as a lovely occasion of meeting new people and forming a community and it was funny because everyone was incredibly intoxicated or high. However, it quickly turned into grim situation with the Police. In the end though we turned it into something beautiful by coming together and helping out everyone who got arrested.

Yeah like a rollercoaster of emotions.
Nice story! Really, really interesting.
Okay, thank you very much for the interview!

Thank you!

*Interview by
Clara Schmeinck*





"When the sirens went off in our first month and rockets were flying through the sky. To witness war close enough to feel it change the atmosphere in the streets was intense and very sad."

INTENSE



Laura Gomez Sandow — BA Integrated Design, Cologne

Feb 2020
— July 2020

Auckland, New Zealand

Laura Gomez Sandow is passionate about motion design.

During her studies at KISD she was very active in the field of Motion Design. To deepen her knowledge and concentrate more on that field of expertise she decided to spend a semester abroad in at Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand.

Hey Laura, can you give a short introduction about yourself?

Hi. My name is Laura and I'm 23 years old and when I did my semester abroad I just turned 22.

Which country are you from?

I'm originally from Spain. I came to Germany when I was ten years old. My mother is German, so it wasn't hard for me to adjust because I grew up bilingual.

Which country did you choose for your exchange and why?

I went to New Zealand because I thought that if you have the chance to be somewhere for half a year then you can fly really far away. So it's worth putting effort in it. New Zealand is safe and manageable. And if you still had time, you could have flown to Asia or Australia, because it's not far from there.

How long did you stay in the exchange country and at which university did you study?

I would have originally spent four months in AUT plus a few months to travel. In the end, I spent three weeks on site at the university and attended the rest via the online semester.

In which Semester were you in, when you studied there?

I was in my 6th semester. At the university, however, I started in the 1st semester because the course is rather special and it was better for me to start from scratch.

What was your study subject?

The course was called Digital Design and because I'm passionate about animation and the like that was the right thing for me. The subjects were wide-ranging. Besides 3D-Animation we also had Game Design, Cinematography and the theoretical part. But animation was my favorite.

Where did you live in your host country?

That was my biggest concern. I asked around at KISD and luckily at that time we had some exchange students from New Zealand. I contacted them by email. And one was actually looking for an apartment in Auckland as well. So we got together and in the end we both ended up in a shared flat. The apartment was also only 10-15 minutes walking distance from the university. Alternatively, there was also a campus but I thought it was good to live with a local because you get to places that would be more difficult to find that way. The lockdown in Auckland started at the end of March and unfortunately I had to leave in the middle of April.

Is there any typical food you ate in New Zealand?

There is no typical New Zealand dish because New Zealand is very multicultural. You have influences from Asian culture but also from all corners of the world. What I tried was Manuka honey. I also ate peanut butter with jam, which I never ate here in Germany before. And I missed the German bread at some point.



Which method of transportation did you choose when travelling in your exchange country?

I walked very often because I lived centrally and everything was within easy walking distance. For longer distances, I took the bus.

Which cultural custom amazed you in your exchange time?

The people of New Zealand are very laid back, super friendly and open-minded. When you get off the bus you say *Thank You* to the bus driver. But I also liked their dialect. It was a mixture of British English and Australian English.

How well did you speak the language of your exchange country? Did your fluency or language skills improve during your stay?

Definitely! Because of the international environment, you had a lot of English dialects and you got into the language very well. But I also met people from Spain and Germany who I would speak to in my native languages.

How did the meaning or the role of design differ in your exchange country or university in comparison to your home country or university?

If you compare the universities they are both very different. AUT was very school-like in its teaching methods. KISD is not. But I didn't think it was bad in principle. We had small classes of no more than 25 people and were supposed to work independently on our assignments. In the end the work was also graded and the pressure was therefore higher. It helped me because I was very productive at the time. But of course you were forced by the pandemic to stay at home and work.

Did you make new friends during your exchange? If yes, are you still in contact?

That's a difficult question although I met new people these contacts were taken away from me by the pandemic. I'd a close contact with my roommate but she also distanced herself by time because you could potentially get infected and she was worried about it. But with some exchange students I did a lot during my time on site. We even had a reunion about zoom the other day.

*Interview by
Murat Weidemann*

I told my roommate and her boyfriend that I was going to meet people at a bar later. She told me to be careful because there were junkies out at night. The city made a safe impression to me so I doubted it. Later from the bar on the way home the only people I saw were a young couple. I thought that was so funny that I was warned. So I felt very safe there.

Another story was: Four of us rented a car and wanted to explore the Auckland area. One of our group had been to New Zealand before and knew a little bit about some hot-spots, so he recommended an area with hot springs. It was very nice not crowded either,

very idyllic, pure nature. Months later in Germany, I saw a report on Galileo about these hot springs where people catch diseases from animals that can also lead to

death.





LOST

"There is a big, abandoned bus station in Tel Aviv. They planned for it to be the biggest mall and place to be in the city (google it, it's really interesting and has like 10 or 20 floors going down into the ground). But that didn't work out and now it's a lost place where random vendors come and put up their stands in the empty halls and sell hamsters, iPhone cables and sandwiches. The architecture is so confusing, that sometimes you end up using a staircase – and for a lot of people without shelter, these staircases are used as toilets. Going through those I was fucking disgusted!"

CONFUSING



Catalina González
Flores
— BA Integrated
Design, Cologne

from Lima,
Peru

Catalina Gonzáles Flores was expecting some hybrid formats but sat in front of a zoom-screen instead!

Hey Catalina, would you like to give a short introduction about yourself?

First of all, I am not an exchange student but a regular student here at KISD who has had basically, the same experience as other internationals. My name is Catalina Gonzalenz Flores (I have two last names). I'm from Peru and I am living in Cologne, studying Integrated Design at KISD.

What cultural custom amazed or stunned you when you first came to Cologne?

I could tell you a very precise example because I went to a German school in Peru, so I already learned that German people are the complete opposite to Latin American people. German people are usually organised, they like to do everything on time and are really punctual, we are not. That was a complete cultural shock for me at first.

But specifically, I was completely shocked by the shopping experience when I went to buy food in Cologne. In Peru the supermarkets are really nice, and everyone wants to spend a lot of time there, you can get free food. The cashier is really nice and takes her time. I was completely shocked by the checkout experience in Germany. Everything went so fast, I didn't know what to do and the cashier asked me if I was going to put the food I bought in my bag or not.

Another thing is that I talk very loudly and that's also a stereotype from Latin America, Latin American people talk very loudly. When I am on the bus or in the train everybody is looking at me and some people even told me to talk quieter. In Latin America, for example on Sunday it's a day to go shopping, to eat something, all the families go out and do something and here Sundays are completely different. Nobody does anything, everything is closed, and I feel like I miss my Sundays. But it also has good aspects, for example you can take your time, do sports, or stay home with your family.





How well did you speak German when you arrived in Cologne? Where did you learn it and how did you learn it?

I was at a German school in Peru so that meant all my courses were in German. After I left school, I got the degree C1. In Peru, we say *Muttersprache* to that but that's definitely not the case. I can understand everything because I graduated with *Abitur*, learning for example chemistry and mathematics in German. That means I can understand everything but to talk it's really difficult. I can talk in a very formal way in German but when I talk to people that are my age, I tend to use so many formal sentences and I feel like I can't fit in the conversation because I talk formally or not that fast, so I feel sometimes like I can't make a comment like I would in Spanish. I would say my German skills are ok, I can communicate with everyone.

How did the meaning of design differ from your home country to Cologne? What do people think about design? Is it regarded as a subject worth studying in university?

That's an interesting question. I think in Peru you don't have the option to study something like Integrated Design. You can only study design at two universities in Peru. One is graphic design, the other one is product design, they are really specific. Product design is offered by a school that focuses on the art aspect of design. What's different here in Cologne is that for example, I am really interested in the art, science, and social aspect of design which I am able to pursue here.

If you talk to people in Peru and tell them you are studying design they will tell you that it's only for aesthetic reasons or to decorate a house as an interior designer.



bit of Spanish. I think that is why we became friends. There are so many people that come from Peru or Latin America who live in Germany. I would say during the lockdown I was socializing more with people that came from Latin America. I would like to get to know more German people because then I would also improve my German.

Now we are already at the last question: Would you like to tell me a funny story that could go in the cultural shock direction or a totally different direction?

Sure. I went to visit one of my best friends, she lives in Marburg. I went there two or three weeks ago. I don't have the kind of money to buy an ICE ticket, so I instead took a 5 hour trip on public transport. I left my house at 8 am and the first bus I had to take, I missed it because the buses here come too early like one minute before. Then I missed my train, I had to take the train one hour later from Cologne main station. Then at my last stop, I had to change trains one more time and mistakenly took the train in the opposite direction, the same way I was coming from before. I had to get off in a small village and I had to take another train and finally arrived at Marburg. I arrived three hours later so it was like an 8 hour trip instead of a 5 hour trip.

Are you still in contact with your friends in Lima? Do you feel like you are in closer contact with the friends you have in Cologne? And how did you make friends in Cologne?

I feel like this question is of course going to be answered differently because of Corona. I came here during the lockdown. Actually, I had one week without a lockdown and then everything was closed and I couldn't make friends. But I live with one of my best friends from Peru and we spent time together. I made friends in a seminar called "Branding the city" because we worked together really closely and prepared a big presentation. We would do regular meetings and personal meetings online but we couldn't meet each other. It was difficult. I made one friend, Maijane, who was also in the International AG with us this semester. We met last semester because we attended the same AG. Her mother comes from Colombia, so she can speak a little

I can tell you that you're not the only one having had such an experience. You can't really rely on the KVB as well as the DB and when you have a bus or train connection, it's almost certain that you will miss one of them. It's really crazy.

It's so difficult. I definitely have more stories, because of the coronavirus pandemic. I have a visa and not a European passport. To get the visa I had to prove that the university will be hybrid and not online. Of course, the semester was online, so I had to come here and do my classes online. I came here two weeks before the semester started, and I booked my apartment and everything else online. I did an online inspection of the apartment. I didn't know anything about Cologne before I came here and moved here. The apartment is nice and big, but the landlord is not the nicest person.

We fight on WhatsApp. He is pretty aggressive. One time he texted me and asked if he could come to the apartment and sleep here because he didn't have a place to go. But maybe the funny story is that I came to Cologne in the hope the hybrid classes would be offered by KISD but in the end everything was online so I could have stayed in Peru.

But the time difference would have been a problem.

Yes, that's right. I wanted to visit my family over the winter break, and I stayed there for 8 weeks. We had summer and it was really nice. And then I had the option to postpone my ticket because of corona and I kept postponing it until the semester began. So, I had to do online classes from Peru, I had to wake up at 2 am or 3 am and it was a bad experience. But I got to stay with my family for longer.

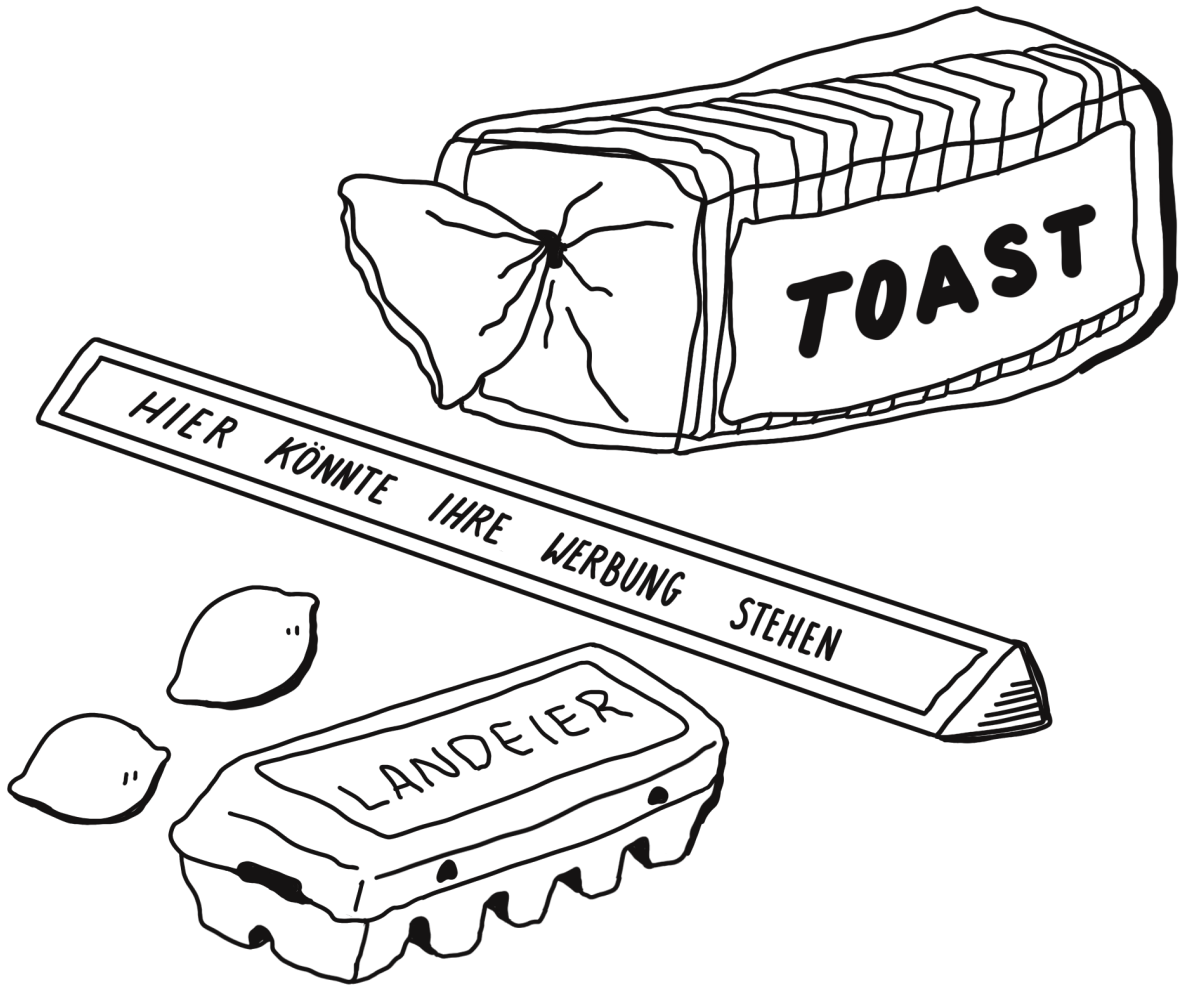
Where is your apartment located in Cologne?

In Deutz. I didn't know anything about Cologne and that there is a right and wrong side. But it's not that far from university.

What is your favorite food here in Cologne?

I am vegetarian, so I can't eat everything that is typical German with meat. When I was at my school in Peru I loved Currywurst and thought it was so good. I also loved the desserts and the pastries here. I think it's amazing that you can get great desserts or baked goods at Kamps for example. I also love Italian food like pizza which I have usually once or twice a week.

*Interview by
Clara Schmeinck*



So, one of the first days here in
Köln, I just met my new flatmates.
To start connecting with them,
I organized a dinner all together
and ~~cooked~~ cooked Pizza for them,
as every true Italian should do.
Unless to ~~tell~~ how shocked
I was when ~~they~~ they had the

ADDACITY of telling me "nice,
but I prefer the German one."

First and biggest cultural
shock of my semester abroad.
and from this starting point,
everything after was better.



Sept 2019
— July 2020
Cologne, Germany

Aslihan Toglukdemir
— BA Integrated
Design, Cologne

from Istanbul,
Turkey

Aslihan Toglukdemir started her studies in product design. She loved the interdisciplinarity at KISD and became a regular student.

So, it was not really Germany, but more the school that was interesting for you.

Yes. We had like five more schools in Germany, but KISD was my only choice. Some other possibilities were Italy or Spain but, in the end, I decided to go to KISD.

Hey Aslihan! First of all, some general information: How old are you and how old you were when you did your exchange?

I'm glad you did. So at first, you didn't plan to stay, right?

No, not at all.

Hello. I'm Aslihan Toglukdemir and I'm from Turkey. I studied *Product Design* in Istanbul for two and a half years. Then I did my Erasmus studies in Cologne for two semesters. One semester was during the coronavirus pandemic, at that time, I wanted to get transferred to KISD. Now I'm a regular student and I have a background in industrial design and product design.

So, you just wanted to do a semester abroad, right?

Yes. And that was a big decision for me because this year was supposed to be my graduation year from product design. I decided to become a regular student at KISD. So, I started from the beginning of the second year. Instead of graduating, I kept studying at KISD. That was a very big decision. I just feel like I'm going to improve myself more in this school. And you're also pretty much free to select whatever project you want, which gives a lot of freedom to you and your learning process.

So you're in your bachelor's degree, right?

Yeah, I'm in my fourth semester now.

And why did you decide to go to Germany from Turkey?

In my former Erasmus studies, it was a very spontaneous decision for me, actually. TH Köln, like Köln International School of Design, was my only choice for Germany because the school itself was really interesting for me. I only studied product design and didn't know many things about graphic design, major design or photography and it sounded really exciting to me. I was like:

Which cultural custom amazed you or did you find most interesting when coming to Germany at first?

I mean in Cologne, it was the beer-drinking, because when I came, it was pre-pandemic, and everyone was just drinking beer on the streets. And that's the thing, that amazed me the most because I've also been to other countries and in my country, people don't drink that crazy. So, the beer-drinking culture amazed me a lot. Additionally, there was also how most German people, know English. That is actually pretty important.

» Okay, I have a chance to just try out different disciplines of design. «

And yeah, it went pretty well. That was the main decision, like my main interest for the school was to have those fields of design all together.

Like many countries, people do know English, but they are not that practical. But any Germans you speak to know English, which allows you to communicate very easily. That was a positive part for me.

Right. But did you learn to speak german?

Yes, I did.

How did it improve? Did you do a language course?

When I was doing my Erasmus studies, I didn't learn German. But after I got transferred, I took an intensive course for one month. Then I started to talk. Now I'm doing a B1 German course, that's going to finish in two weeks. I mean, I've been in Germany for one year now. During that time, I haven't travelled to Turkey. So, I tried my best to challenge myself to speak German with my German friends. Otherwise, it's really hard to learn it from just a language class. So, practice is important.

Well, do you have a plan yet, for how long you're going to stay in Germany?

jects at KISD were in english language. So, I also had many german friends. But during Corona, I couldn't make so many friends because of the online courses. We couldn't meet up. But in my first semester, everything was fine.

I have no plan. I don't know if I will do a master's, but I'm mostly focused on improving myself. I don't even know yet if I'll work here.

You're right. And about design, can you say, is there a different meaning or a different role for design in Germany, then in Turkey? Is there a different style in Turkey?

I mean, in Germany, you have more freedom than in Turkey. You also have more business opportunities to get a design job. Particularly in the field of gender and design. I'm not saying that Turkey is an oppressed country, the design field is improving. However the technical techniques on product design was invented in Germany and with the Bauhaus and stuff. I think the freedom in design and ability to express yourself are important which is what Germany provides. I also wanted to go to Italy for a school. Italy and Germany are competing in design. But in Italy, it's more focused on the aesthetical part of design. In Germany it's more like the mental and practical part. Which is what I like about product design.

So, you don't even know if you want to go back to Turkey or just stay?

I don't know, I really don't know. I just want to take my time and just see the opportunities around me. You never know what's going to happen!

It's already the last question. Do you have anything funny or interesting or meaningful? Like a story to tell from you being abroad and studying abroad? Or anything else you would like to tell?

You know, the guys on the scooters and they're like, putting huge music boxes on it. One guy, he just talked to me from Grüngürtel, the beginning of the Telekom tower, he stopped me until the end of Aachener Weiher he walked with me.

» And the music was like: boom, boom, boom. «

I was just taking a walk. And then the people around me, they were just like, laughing. And I'm like: "What the fuck am I gonna do?" He was just following me. And then he was like, shaking his head and I was like, *mhm*. He just followed me with his huge music box on a scooter. That was pretty weird for me and also funny.

Did you make friends very easily here or was it kind of hard for you?

Yes. That was not hard for me. I mean, when I came, we were 40 international students and most of the pro-

Wasn't it uncomfortable for you?

It was daylight. The day was really sunny, and people were in the park and that guy was just following me. I don't know why.

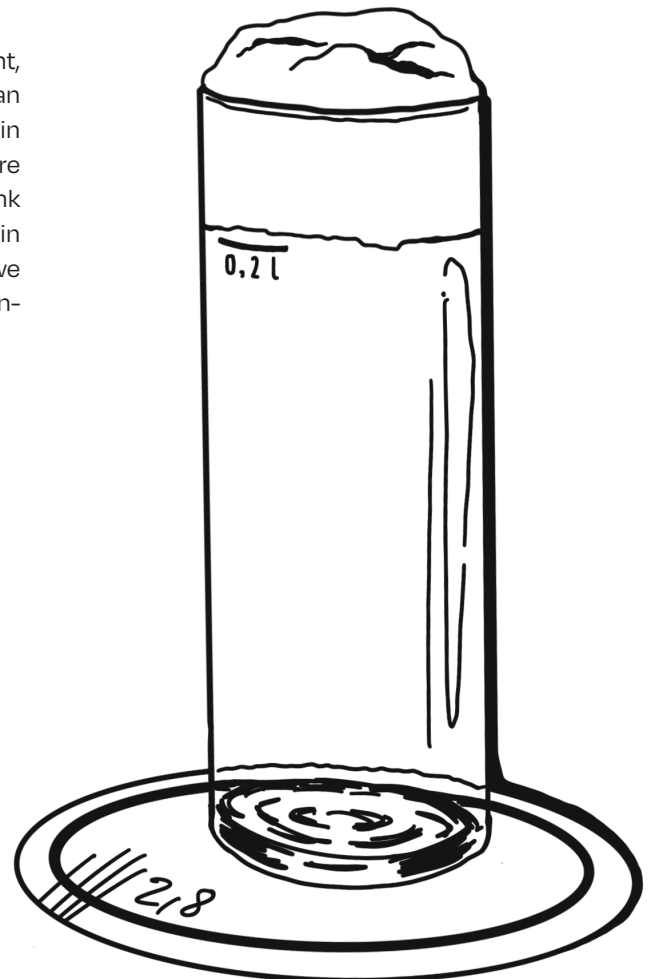
Do you have a favorite german food?

I mean, it's mostly meat. I don't eat meat. But what's the name of it? The potato fried thing. I tried it at a festival. They just try it's like a piece of, like, potato patty. And I made it at home for, like, five times, we did it together. Super delicious. But it's mostly, like, Wurst. So, I tried vegetarian Wurst. I was in Bayern. And there's, like, the Weissbier. And I didn't know that it was, like, traditional to have the beer and eat the Wurst with the other hand.

Oh, I didn't know that, either. So you talked about drinking beer, do you like the german beer?

I like German beer. I mean it's a bit light, especially the Kölsch but I prefer Belgian beer. German beer is good, especially in Bayern, the flavour was stronger and more intense. It's like empty alcohol to drink Kölsch. During my winter semester, in 2019, we were drinking Kölsch so that we wouldn't get too cold. It was just like drinking tasty water.

*Interview by
Lina Uellendall*





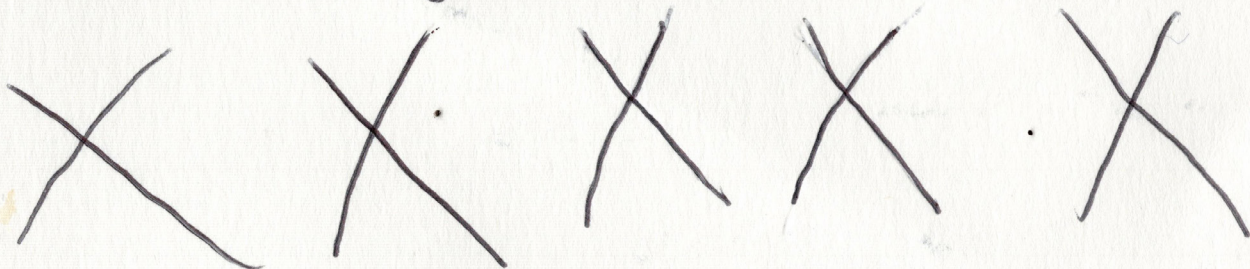
Köln



IT'S SO DIFFERENT THE LIFE AND STUDY
BETWEEN JAPAN AND GERMAN
THE STUDY IN THE KÖLN.
KIDS ALSO FOCUS ON A LOT OF
SOCIAL PROBLEM

IT'S SO NEW EXPERIMENT
FOR ME.

racist
immigration office



March 2021
— July 2021
Cologne, Germany



Lilli Koskinen
— BA Exchange at
Köln International School
of Design

from LAB University
of Applied Sciences,
Lahti, Finland

Hey! What's your name, how old are you and where do you come from?

My name is Lilli Koskinen and I come from Finland. I'm 23 years old and my home school is in Lahti, Finland. It's quite near Helsinki and there I study Service Design as this autumn I will start my fourth and final year. It's going to be exciting times then, I will be graduating next year.

You're in your bachelor's degree, right?

Yes. Bachelor.

Why did you choose to go to Germany or to this specific school?

Actually, I think the most important kind of reason was that Birgit Mager is here as a service design professor. My school really wanted a connection to KISD because of my study programme. This particular study programme I am in was founded 3 years ago and I was among the first group of students to be in it. So, my home university wanted to have a connection to an amazing service design programme. This is something KISD is known to provide. They also wanted a German speaking student to come here and make this connection. This is one of the biggest reasons why I am now here.

Because you already could speak German?

Yeah. Actually, I lived here for two years when I was six years old. So, I attended school here and can speak German. Of course, it's not the best anymore but I will try and keep it on my mind.

And how did it happen that you lived here for two years?

My dad had a job here, he works for a company that had a sister branch or something like that in the North Rhine-Westphalia state. Every now and then they sometimes

Lilli Koskinen was super happy when she was able to test her designs on the streets and talk german.

changed the workers between the countries. And it just happened that my dad was here, where he was worked was actually quite near to Koln, he worked in Wuppertal.

So, a lot of things came in place and it was kind of perfect to come here.

Yeah. Yeah. I don't know. It just felt like I really like Germany and I've always wanted to come and live here and maybe also study. It was a perfect opportunity.

And how did you come here? Like which method of transport did you use? Just plane.

Yeah, plane. I flew from Helsinki to Düsseldorf.

And what was your first culture shock moment? I mean, you already lived here before.

I think even though I've been travelling a lot all around the world, this was my first time travelling alone with two huge suitcases. Really early in the morning at the airport I was trying to figure out how to get to Cologne and was very hungry. So, I found a bakery, but my card didn't work. That was my first culture shock since you really have to have cash here in Germany and I'm not used to that. In comparison Finland is more digitally aware, where we pay by card much more often.



But you're totally right. In this case, Germany is so behind.

I really do hope it changes. I'm super afraid of withdrawing money from the machines because my friend's card once got stuck inside the ATM machine. Now I literally don't have any money because I'm too scared of putting my only card in the machine. So, I hope I will survive the next two weeks with the lowest money possible.

How would you say design, or the role of design differs from Finland to Germany?

I feel like it's kind of similar. If our schools are compared to one another, I feel like they're super similar to the working methods and focussing a lot on projects. I think one difference is that I had to do only one test at my home university. Apart from that, I think the working methods and the ethics, are almost the same.

When you first came here, was it hard for you to make friends?

I had already chatted with a few of the new international students from Italy and Hungary in advance. So, I knew a few people and wasn't that scared of it. I was kind of confident that because we're all in the same situation that we would quickly make new friendships. Therefore I wasn't worried about making friends.

And do you think you will stay friends or is it hard because they're all from different countries?

Maybe the connection will not be as good as it was here but I feel like with the people closest to me I will stay in contact and maybe we will do some trips together somewhere. We have already planned that some of the girls are coming to Finland since they have never been there.

But yeah, we will see. It really depends on how the pandemic is going within the next few years. But of course, in all of our lifetimes, I guess, we will have a connection.

Well, that's already the last question I have, but is there some other story you can tell? Maybe a funny, interesting, meaningful story about your semester abroad here? Or anything else you would like to add, you think is interesting?

I feel like the main thing for me when doing the exchange was also to learn German. I haven't been speaking it in so many years and I feel like that was kind of the goal for me when I came here. But during the first few months I noticed the studies here are only in English. Of course, I'm not speaking with anyone in German and also in general the other exchange students don't speak it. So, I was kind of the translator in the groups. That was kind of funny. But then I felt that I really wanted the connection to the other students as well because I only meet them online. So, it was super hard to get to know them. With the project »Mobile Participation for the citizens of Cologne« we had to do a physical prototype, so we actually went to KISD and built it. That was how I was able to properly meet other students. First, we talked in English because there were also some other exchange students that didn't speak in German. But then there were a few days where the international students weren't there and that was when I was in the mood to speak with the German students as they all spoke German to each other. It was so nice when I was speaking to them. I felt like now this is the thing that I really wanted to come to see and have this experience. I wasn't afraid to speak in German so that was kind of the thing that I was excited to do.

I think that was one of my happiest moments because I realised, I'm now in Germany, in Cologne, speaking German with other German designers. It was a super happy moment for me.

Did you also take a German class over here?

No, not a German class on learning German and its Grammar. But I attended a class that was taught in German, the »no-code web design« project. I think it has been going on well. But of course, sometimes for example this week my brain

just doesn't work well in German so I prefer to talk English.

I just remembered, you were the first one from your University to go here. Was it hard to get to that point or what did you have to do to get to that?

Yeah. Basically, I think the first thing when I contacted the school was in January of 2020. I emailed Birgit Mager. I emailed her something like:

» I would really like to come to study there. Is it a possibility? «

She gave me all the information but right afterwards Covid hit. At that time, I was already applying to other programmes because I wasn't sure if I would get in. Of course, because it wasn't a partner school, I couldn't apply through the usual application form. So, they were already going to send me to Milan, Italy. But I gave all of the information about KISD to my teacher. Then summer and autumn passed where I couldn't study abroad, and I haven't heard anything from my teacher. Then we contacted KISD again. Within a few weeks I got the new application forms from KISD and they made the contracts. I was super nervous and stressed out since I didn't think it would happen.

I just remember that time wasn't the nicest for me. Cause they just said you've done everything and now you have to wait. So I waited and waited but nothing happened. Suddenly I got the email in December that I've been accepted. That was such a huge relief, but it was quite a year, to wait and go through this application process but I would do it again since I like being here at KISD.



Late night meeting point

Whilst everyone expects you to be so totally open towards the new culture and you ought to be so interested and integrated in all these fun things and events, I just wasn't.

The people in France's capital (and my welcoming Uni) were very nice - on the surface of course - but honestly...

Coming from Germany the nightlife I was introduced to just couldn't keep up with what I have been spoiled to know from back home.

Instead I just preferred to stay in Uni until the early morning when no one was there.

I just worked and worked and worked right next to the beautiful coffee machine and the door man,

the greatest of all possible company
- with only few words we sipped
coffee after coffee, smoked ciggy after
ciggy night after night in the entrance
hall of the Mori

out of sight of the
surveillance cameras...

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