

What does the future look like, or feel like, from the perspective of a yak in the coal mining district of Khovd? A Mongolian root extracted, illegally traded and sold internationally as a pharmaceutical product? Or the toolkit of an urban shaman, securing economic fortune for professional women in Ulaanbaatar?

*Five Heads (Tavan Tolgoi): Art, Anthropology and Mongol Futurism* brings together the work of five anthropologists and five artists/collectives researching and responding to the dramatic rise and fall of Mongolia's mineral economy. Drawing from ongoing fieldwork in Mongolia conducted as part of Rebecca Empson's ERC-funded project [Emerging Subjects](#) at UCL, the artists in this exhibition examine crisis as a space for the emergence of new possibilities. The exhibition runs September 1st – 15th 2018 at [greengrassi gallery & Corvi Mora](#), London, with a subsequent showcase focussing on processes behind the exhibition on display at the UCL Department of Anthropology from Oct 1st – Nov 23rd 2018; an accompanying [publication](#); and associated events hosted in collaboration with [Arts Catalyst](#).

More about Five Heads:

In 1964, at a time when Mongolia was suspended in the social and economic stasis of Soviet rule, Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan seized upon Ezra Pound's definition of the artist as "the antennae of the race," claiming "the power of the arts to anticipate future social and technological developments by a generation and more." Indeed, art (or perhaps the synaptic negative space which exists between art and anthropology) has taken on antenna-like properties in the context of Mongolia, where the need to rapidly re-think the impacts of mineral extraction and economic chaos is pressing and real, and where a resurgence in shamanic practices—often explained by shamans themselves through a language of code and telecommunications—can itself be thought of as a kind of radar or antennae capable of reaching through time, ensuring future fortune in the face of *agsan* (the invisible and chaotic forces of transition).

Nested within what might be described as an "aesthetics of estrangement" (Castaing-Taylor) or a process of "optimal distortion" (Neilson & Pedersen) are proposals for alternative maps and re-surfaced trajectories that shatter a teleological timeline of progress, staking territory instead for speculative thought and practical forms of human-nonhuman reciprocity. As global cores and peripheries exchange places and rehearse histories of empire formation, *Five Heads* explores geontological emergence, (post)capitalist futures, and alternative strategies for creative survival in the present.

Dolgor Ser Od and Marc Schmitz ' biennial project *Land Art Mongolia* initiates critical conversations and creative experiments engaging with land art and social practice in rural Mongolia. In response to Rebecca Empson's toolkit of ritually-infused materials used by women in Ulaanbaatar to secure future fortune, the duo are assembling their own archive of objects and substances that act as transportation devices to a place beyond the humanly-known and knowable, a realm they are calling *North of the North Pole* .

Baatarzorig Batjargal and Nomin Bold re-situate Bumochir Dulam's ethnographic account of a "spiritual cleansing" of the Mongolian Prime Minister—amidst other documents of environmental protest—into the traditional ethnographic genre of "One Day in Mongolia" painting. *MNG* (Batjargal, 2018) illuminates many different aspects of daily life at once. Figures of the Mongolian "wolf" economy tangle through a cosmos of polluted yurt cities, and figures from Mongolia's rebel River Movement battle psychedelic visions of environmental collapse.

Deborah Tchoudjinoff 's *Baigala* consists of five immersive VR "visits." The work enables gallery visitors to mount a saddle and experience the tangible impact of mineral extraction in western Mongolia, where much of anthropologist Lauren Bonilla's work on extractive atmospheres—exploring the phenomenological registers of Mongolia's economy (e.g. "dustiness")—has taken place.

Yuri Pattison responds to Hedwig Waters' research into salvage economies along the Mongolia-Chinese border. His *pick, press, fang feng (the new economy)* explores the transfiguration of the medicinal root Fang Feng (which translates literally as "Guard Against Wind") from a recognisable organic object in Mongolia into a western pharmaceutical product.

Tuguldur Yondonjamts and Rebekah Plueckhahn have been taking walks together through Zuun Ail, an area of Mongolia's capital city that in Rebekah's words forms an "economic topography" where "failed investment, diverted funds, changing possession rights can be speculated on or explained using the physical landscape as a guide." Tuguldur's work *178-291, 875-953, 3006-3106 (Mirror Princess)* connects Zuun Ail with the Mongolian epic poem Khan Kharangue, which the artist has translated into the binary music of the morin khuur (a two-stringed instrument also known as "darkest dark").

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