

**EXCHANGE REPORT****Name**

Yukang Yang

Year and term for exchange

2020 Fall

Exchange university

The Oslo School of Architecture and Design (AHO)

Degree programme

Master in Architecture

Rewarding Exchange Study Life in Pandemic Year

Before departure

My interest in the exchange program is one of many reasons that I chose KTH in the first place. AHO is on the top of the list because I would love to further embrace Scandinavia culture. I have always known it is an excellent architecture school, though I needed more information to make up my mind. Thus, I talked to an exchange student from AHO about the study life there several times. I was convinced by his descriptions that I would have an instructive term there.

2020 was a tough year for everyone. Everything has been full of uncertainty since the pandemic broke out. I was lucky that the exchange program was not cancelled. Although the application for the Norwegian residence permit was not without difficulty, it was finally successfully processed before departure.

Upon arrival

I arrived in Oslo 10 days before the registration day at AHO because of the quarantine requirement. AHO has a very connected student union. They hold several warm-up events for incoming international students to quickly know about AHO, Oslo, and Norway. We were grouped according to majors and studios. It is a good chance to meet up with classmates from the same studio before school starts.

Financials

The scholarship that I received from KTH is very helpful since the prices in Oslo are generally higher than Stockholm. However, the food in the school café is affordable for students. It's a good choice for lunch if you do not have time to prepare food.

Accommodation

AHO is responsible for international students to get accommodation from SiO (a similar organization like SSSB in Stockholm), but you have to apply before the deadline. Due to the pandemic, all new arrival international students are allocated to the same student accommodation village. It is a bit far away from my campus, but there is a chance to make friends from different countries and universities. The accommodation is fully-furnished with kitchen utensils as well. The rent is slightly more expensive than Stockholm.

University and studies

Different from KTH consisting of many departments, AHO is a professional college, particularly for architecture and design. The school is like a family where everyone is welcomed. I often receive emails from other studios and teachers about invitations to lectures and presentations. Students from

different studios would love to share information and help with each other. I have the feeling of engaging with not only my studio but the whole school. The school is a community for everyone. The studios for master programs at AHO cover a wide range from tectonic to landscape and are all taught in English. The website of each studio shows the interests and selected projects from previous students. Each student could apply to three studios and would be allocated according to preference. Moreover, there are wood, plastic, and metal workshop introductions for new students. You are allowed to use workshops only after attending all these introductions. The workshops are very big and well-organized. There are different machines and tools to fulfil various needs.

Courses

The credit system of AHO is similar to KTH. You are required to enrol in one studio course (24 ETC) and one elective course (6 ETC).

I chose In Transit studio focusing on a collective centre - in emergency contexts - used for temporary accommodation, provision of assistance, and protection of displaced persons. It was a completely new field for me and reignited my passion for architecture since it made me rethink the roles and responsibilities as an architect. During the whole semester, the teachers invited a series of people to make guest lectures for us. Some of them are studio alumni, some are from local government and organizations, and some are architects from Denmark, Spain, China, etc. They talked about their work and research giving us huge inspirations. I appreciate these platforms for dialogues with people from different backgrounds and cultures. The teachers are very responsible for students. I get helpful and positive suggestions in mid-term review and every desk-crit. Their comments push me forward with better efficiency and confidence. Therefore, I am very thankful for all three teachers and their efforts.

The other course that I enrol in is Norwegian Architecture. It provides a structure for understanding the development of Norwegian architecture throughout history as it is mirrored in contemporary practice. It is a weekly one-day course, divided into a half-day online lecture and a half-day city walk. Teachers lead us to visit the buildings and areas that we talk about in the lecture. It provides us a better understanding of the topic, not only with history and theory, but also the physical perception. It is a highly recommended course for international students who are willing to explore the history of Norwegian architecture.

City and country

I lived in Stockholm for one year and got used to Swedish culture. Norway and Sweden share a lot of common cultures. Thus, I did not experience the sense of strangeness when I arrived in Oslo. Language differences are one of the crucial indicators to create cultural shocks. However, Norwegian and Swedish are both North Germanic Languages. Street signs, goods in groceries, buildings in the city are all similar. As an architecture student, I am excited to see many new projects in Oslo, such as Barcode, and the Fjord City. They represent the spirit of the city - a young, energetic, creative and comprehensive Oslo.

Leisure and social activities

Because of the pandemic, most of the activities at AHO were cancelled. Before the situation got worse and courses transferred online, students in my studio had several times of happy hours. They were precious leisure time with classmates.

Norway is famous for its fjord. You could enjoy the fjord in Oslo. It is an unforgettable memory when I sat on the roof of the Opera House, enjoying the sunshine and admiring the fjords.

Other recommendations and observations

I strongly recommend participating in the exchange program, no matter which country and university you go to. It is not only a great opportunity to experience a new environment, but also a unique chance to think about things you have overlooked before.