

REPORT AL RIENTRO DELL'ESPERIENZA DI SCAMBIO - A.A. -

_Cognome	ZHOU
_Nome	CHENGJIN
_Matricola	891964
_Anno di corso	2.LM
_Corsi di studi	DESIGN PER IL SISTEMA MODA
_Sezione	M1
_e-mail	zhouchengjin95@gmail.com
_Sede di scambio	VYSOKA SKOLA UMELECKOPRUMYSLOVA V PRAZE
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_Semestre svolto all'estero	2°

Testo

This is the best exchange experience ever in my life.

I went to Prague in the end of February. It was still very cold there. Actually I have been wearing the winter clothes there until the end of May. My host university is called VYSOKA SKOLA UMELECKOPRUMYSLOVA V PRAZE and the short version is "UMPRUM". It's an artistic university located in the city centre nearby Vltava River. There are couples of benches along the river and some little gardens where you can take the sun bath and enjoy the wind during the spring.

UMPRUM has its own dormitory which is about 15mins far away by tram but I didn't apply for it successfully because it was full. So one of my friend told me maybe I can try with the dormitory in other universities. I tried one and I got the place. The rent was really cheap, around 200 euro per month per bed in a double room.

My first day in school was impressive, I stepped inside the building and I suddenly fell in love with it. The classes are organized by studios, and each studio is one room or more. For example I chose Ceramics and Porcelain Studio which is located on the second floor, the zero floor and the underground. But each of them has different usage. The one on the second floor is for having lesson as well as some meetings. The one in the zero floor is a workshop for doing the Ceramics and Porcelain, there are plenty of machines inside as well as a kitchen equipped! The one on the underground is for plaster mould casting. Each of the student has his own keys to access his studio which means we have the freedom to come to school and do the project whenever we want during the school open period! On the first day I met all my classmates and professors. We introduced ourselves briefly and talked about the general syllabus for the whole semestre. They are really friendly, kind and knowledgeable. And the most important point is that they speak English very well! We had 4 exchange students in our studio and we become very good friends in the end of the semestre as well as some local students.

I think I can make a list about why I love there. It can be divided into five reasons: People, Environment, Teaching methods, Opportunities and Consumption.

First, People. Czech people seems cold in the beginning. But actually no! They are just shy to communicate with strangers and they need time to get closer to you. And gradually you will realize the frozen heart is melting and there is fire inside. Generally Czech people cannot speak a lot of English but people in our age can speak very good English. And people who can't speak English are willing to help you as well! Sometimes we just need a little bit patience to explain them

what we want. After they understand you they will help you for sure. In addition, People there are willing to know about you, about your culture, your story and opinions towards different things. They are also willing to share theirs with you. I think I prefer these deep conversations more than just one polite Hello. There is one boy in our class from east of Czech Republic. He is one of the most impressive persons that I met in Czech Republic. He can't speak perfect English but he always tried his best to talk to me even most of the time we need to use our hand gestures. We had conversation about his small village, He told me he had two motorbikes there and he rides it to pick up the mushrooms in secret place. His father just brought 5 small ducks home last weekend. He had two cats, one was dead and the other has problem with its front teeth. He also showed me how to dance Tango and Polka. And a lot of interesting things that no one told me before. I was shocked and deeply moved that in this unfamiliar country There are persons who like to talk to me with the front teeth of his cat! Such warmth!

Second, Environment. Prague is a beautiful city located in the middle of Europe. There are mountains, rivers, parks, old buildings and a lot of cultural museums. Living and walking in Prague is a pleasure. You will always find amazing secret places there. Outside Prague is also charming. There are a lot of national parks located in Czech Republic. I always go there with friends for hiking or just chill during the weekends. I am a person who did everything slowly, especially in Prague, I felt like I had all the time and I didn't have to be rush. Prague will give you this kind of slow and wonderful life. I can spend all my afternoon just lying on the grass outside my university with friends and enjoyed the sun and breeze.

Third, Teaching methods. Compared to Polimi, UMRUM has an more artistic way of teaching. This is what I looked forward and enjoyed. We had consultation with the professors twice a week. During the consultation, the professors will speak to exchange students first and then the regular students. (We didn't have many students in my studio, for each grade, there were only 3 students who were enrolled. so in total we had around 20 students from the first year of bachelor to the last year of master.)We had to prepare our ideas and showed the progress to him. And he will give us some comments and helpful advices. Maybe once or twice a month, we had guest lecturer from other universities or known Ceramics artists to give us lectures as well as sharing the experiences. Sometimes the lesson will be held in Czech but the classmates were really helpful. They translate everything one by one to us at the same time when the person spoke in order that all of us can absorb new knowledges. In the end of each semestre, we had a presentation as well as an exhibition opened to the public. So for the whole semestre, we have to prepare this project with one specific topic. This semestre, the topic was "Ritual". As shown in the consultation, everyone has different idea about ritual, and professor helped us to improve our ideas, to enlarge it and lead us to the road to find what we wanted, I really appreciated it, because as i knew, some professors that I met before judged our ideas as good or bad and then maybe force us to follow his ideas even we don't want to. So I felt really grateful that I had such an amazing professor! Sometimes he was like a kid joking with us but when we needed him, he always had strong brain and abundant experience to show us the way. For the other courses, we have a lot of choices of workshops except our main studios. For example, I chose Lithography which is a traditional way to print. we just need to register ourselves on the list attached in front of the door and that's already an appointment. The professors working there are so kind and always with smile on their faces. In the end I did twice the stone grinding and three times the printing. The outcomes were quite satisfactory. Except this, I also chose bookbinding, Czech language and figure drawing. They were all high quality lessons worth going.

Forth, Opportunities. Except the final presentation, we also had a cooperating project with one brick factory. We had to design some Peripheral products for them which would be made from bricks. In addition, we also had chance to go to Keszthely for one week, a city in Hungary where

we can do the wood firing for Ceramics and Porcelain. They had only 6 quotas and I was so lucky to be one of them. We spent one week in Hungary with the professor and students from MOME together. We had unforgettable memories there. Everyday a group of people cooked for all of us and the others took charge of the kilns as well as transporting the wood sticks. After finishing all the missions, we drank together also with the professors in local bar. Everyone was spontaneously lovely. I mentioned before that in the end of each semestre there will be one exhibition which is opened also for the public. I really like this idea. It's like a ceremony for both professors and students. After working hard for the whole semestre, this is the time that you can show your outcomes, not only for just a mark, but also for obtaining opinions from people from different areas which helps you improve yourself and get more inspirations. It's a challenge as well as an opportunity.

Fifth, Consumption. The price for everything in Prague is quite affordable. I paid for the 3 months transportation ticket for around only 14 euro. There is a little bar in the underground of our university where you can get the meal for less than 4 euro and some snacks and drinks at around 2 euro. Czech is the paradise for beer, on average the small beer costs 1 euro in bar. What's more, if you have the ISIC card, you can have a huge discount for train and some of the restaurants.

I can't face the truth that it's already the end of my exchange period. People here, who I spent time with, made friends with, drank with, talked to and laughed with, as well as me, may continue our lives without meeting each other again in the future. This is an amazing adventure for me, I harvest a lot. Good time always comes to an end, but memories last forever. Thanks to Polimi, Thanks to UMRUM, Thanks to Prague, Thanks to everyone who made up my life.

Autorizzo al trattamento dei miei dati personali ai sensi del Decreto Legislativo n. 196/03 da parte del Politecnico di Milano.

Firma _____

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be '周成伟' (Zhou Chengwei), written over a horizontal line.