

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](#).

Curated by Hermione Spriggs

Nomin Bold & Baatarzorig Batjargal | Bumochir Dulam
Yuri Pattison | Hedwig Waters
Dolgor Ser Od & Marc Schmitz (with Nomadic Vitrine) | Rebecca Empson
Deborah Tchoudjinoff | Lauren Bonilla
Tuguldur Yondonjamts | Rebekah Plueckhahn

Feat. Mongolian Rapper "Big Gee" ([link](#))



[QR code links to video interview with Mongolian rapper Gee]

Website: fiveheads.art

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 geo-ontological 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 Tchoudjinnoff’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”).

More about the publication:

Launched in tandem with the eponymous exhibition at greengrassi and Corvi-Mora, the publication ***Five Heads (Tavan Tolgoi): Art, Anthropology and Mongol Futurism*** (Hermione Spriggs, Ed., Sternberg Press, 2018) features visual documentation of multiple art-anthropology exchange processes, ethnographic texts, and further written contributions by Hermione Spriggs & Rebecca Empson, Richard Irvine, Simon O’ Sullivan, Uranchimeg Tsultem and Tsendpurev Tsegmid that introduce contemporary Mongolia as a dynamic site for conceptual and creative experimentation.

In the essay section of this book, the Green Horse Society tells a history of art and culture newly untethered in post-Soviet Mongolia; an early style of ethnographic art known as “One Day in Mongolia” painting provides a canvas for urgent environmental protest; Mongolian hip-hop and nationalist poetry become ciphers for thinking through deep time; and space is opened up for what Simon O’Sullivan terms the “art-anthropology probe head” to do its important work.

link to the book on publisher's website: <http://www.sternbergpress.com/index.php?pageId=1845&l=en&bookId=739&sort=year>

Events:

The exhibition *Five Heads* launched ceremoniously at greengrassi & Corvi-Mora on August 31st, with introductory speeches, vodka libations to bless the artworks on show, and a *Morin khuur* ("horsehead fiddle") performance by London-based Mongolian musician Victor Nyamdavaa. Subsequent events are planned in collaboration with the cross-disciplinary art and research centre [Arts Catalyst](#), and (unless otherwise stated) take place in their exhibition and project space at 74-76 Cromer Street, Kings Cross, London WC1H 8DR.

5th September: New Subjectivities in Mongolian Futures

A conversation between Arts Catalyst's artist in residence Tuguldur Yondonjamts, artist Hermione Spriggs, Professor Rebecca Empson and Dr Bumochir Dulam reflecting on the social and economic impacts of accelerated economic growth in Mongolia; and launch event for the publication *Five Heads (Tavan Tolgoi): Art, Anthropology and Mongol Futurism*

Link to event: <https://www.artscatalyst.org/new-subjectivities-mongolian-futures>

13th September: In Conversation: Tuguldur Yondonjamts and Denis Byrne at the UCL Institute of Archaeology

Link to event: <https://www.artscatalyst.org/conversation-tuguldur-yondonjamts-and-denis-byrne>

Wednesday 19th September, 6-9pm: Opening Reception, Tuguldur Yondonjamts: An Artificial Nest Captures A King + Investigations into the Darkest Dark

Mongolian artist Tuguldur Yondonjamts will be in residence at Arts Catalyst's Centre for Art, Science and Technology during September and October 2018, undertaking research and creating an evolving exhibition of new and existing work.

Link to event: <https://www.artscatalyst.org/tuguldur-yondonjamts-residency-and-exhibition-arts-catalyst>

10th October: Workshop – The Infrastructure of Fortune: Extraction and Resistance, led by Mikhail Karikis and Rebekah Plueckhahn

Led by artist Mikhail Karikis and anthropologist Rebekah Plueckhahn, this workshop invites artists, curators and researchers to share case studies and present projects that address contemporary forms of extraction. Together we will collectively reflect upon their social, ecological and affective consequences.

Link to event: <https://www.artscatalyst.org/workshop-infrastructure-fortune-extraction-and-resistance-led-mikhail-karikis-and-rebekah-plueckhahn>

Five Heads is part of the European Research Council-funded project *Emerging Subjects of The New Economy*, led by Dr Rebecca Empson in the Department of Anthropology, University College London, ERC-2013-CoG, 615785



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