

Global  
Assembly  
Beijing 22

# Climate Change **Community Mosaic**

Raising awareness of climate change  
A mosaic mural in Beijing, China





**Raising awareness  
of climate change**

# A mosaic mural in Beijing

Community projects play an important role on the path to emissions neutrality, the central goal of the Paris Climate Agreement, which 192 countries, including China, have signed.

In parallel with the **UN Conference of the Parties, or COP26**, on climate change, which took place in Glasgow, the **Global Assembly** called for artists around the world to come up with creative responses that reflect people's hopes and fears for a world threatened by climate change.

It aims to raise awareness through art projects and mobilise society at a grassroots level - in every household and community - to protect the environment by changing the way we use our natural resources.

The submitted artworks will be brought together on the **#Cultural Wave** website managed by the **Global Assembly** and will form a global digital gallery accessible to everyone.





Beijing, 8 December 2021

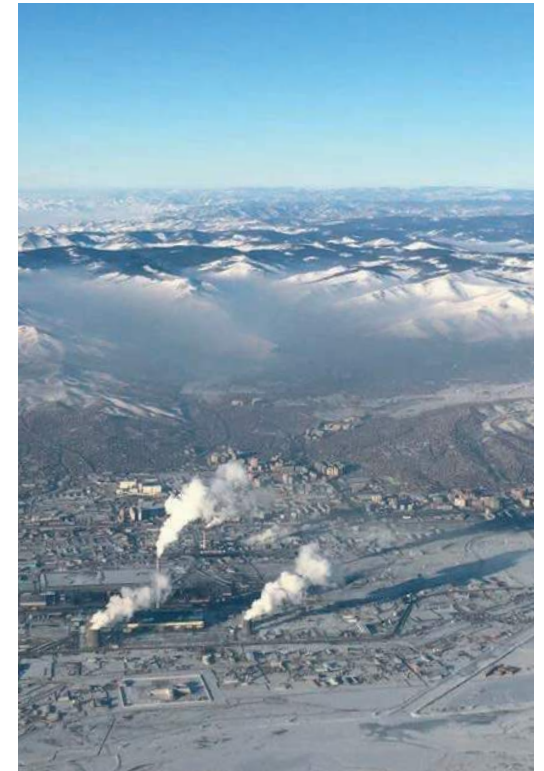
## The first Community Assembly in China

Captured by the idea of giving people a voice at a grassroots level, Gertrud Muller, Kersten von Sohlern, Annalize Heyns and Diana Constantinescu came together as an informal team in Beijing and organised the first **Community Assembly** as a part of the worldwide Global Assembly.

### A snapshot from my life

Based on photos submitted before the workshop, participants each talked for 1 minute about how they had personally experienced climate change in their everyday lives, and how they perceived the impact.

**The pictures show:** food waste ends up in landfills, pervasive use of plastic cutlery, increasingly heavy rainfall and severe flooding in the streets of Beijing and many major cities in China, air pollution related to heavy industry in Ulanbaator ... presumably the list has no end.



Beijing, 8 December 2021

## Community Assembly at MosaicMoments Studio



Lively discussions followed in group dialogues. Participants were encouraged to put topics related to biodiversity in their own words and to see these topics from others' perspectives.



Initially Gertrud Muller, the moderator, explained the handsignals to the participants for non-verbal communication during discussions. This was particularly useful since our group was composed of 15 participants from China, Germany, Austria, Romania, England, South Africa and Japan. Sissi volunteered as Chinese-English translator.





# The artistic interpretation

## 10 Symbols and their meaning

The symbols we settled on represent the visual ideas that most participants resonated with. Each symbol creatively reflects an urgent need to reinforce the protection of our environment and preservation of global biodiversity.

<b>Eye</b>	= Attention, witness, mindfulness
<b>Hands</b>	= Protection, action, education, harmony, community
<b>Dove</b>	= Peace, the basic foundation
<b>Turtle</b>	= Longevity, land and water ecosystems, connection
<b>Tree</b>	= Clean air, harmony, biodiversity, strength
<b>Coral</b>	= Start of the marine food chain
<b>Water</b>	= Source of all life, movement
<b>Moon</b>	= Cycle of life, ebb and flow
<b>Star</b>	= Universe, hope
<b>Sun</b>	= Energy, life



**Coral - start of marine food chain, finally contributes to stable human food source**

珊瑚——海洋食物链的起点，最终为人类稳定食物来源做出贡献



**tree - clean air, harmony, biodiversity**

树木——干净空气，和谐，生物多样性



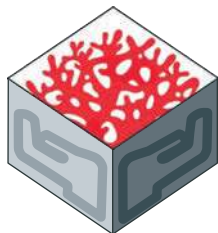
Beijing, 19 January 2022

## The location and the design process



### Concept and idea

In order to generate maximum attention, the team searched for a wall surface freely accessible to the general public. Initially, the external wall of a traditional house in a typical Beijing alley (called "hutong") offered itself. The house was being converted into a gallery. In discussions with the architects and owners a striking design feature emerged: **the cube**. This idea inspired us in a significant way.



**Gertrud Muller**, the mosaic artist, immediately associated the cube with "**Rhombilli**", a well-known pattern in ancient Roman mosaic, which could form a basic structure for the mosaic. Based on the idea of superimposed symbols on the cubes, supported by two protective hands on the sides, designer **Kersten von Sohlern** did a computer simulation of the design concept. The arrangement of the tiles simultaneously creates a striking 3D-effect similar to the familiar technique in **MC Escher** artworks.





**The symbol I chose** to make is the symbol of water or sea wave. I chose it intentionally because there is a phrase called 上善若水 (*shang shan ruo shui*), meaning the best kindness is like water. It benefits the universe in a gentle or even formless and flexible way. The theme of the whole project is about climate change awareness, so fundamentally it's about overcoming fear, spreading love and hope. I think the symbol of water just fits so well.

Lynn from China

I am very honoured *to be able to participate in this very meaningful project today and make my small contribution to this project. I believe this will be a very beautiful work, and I really look forward to seeing the finished product which is the result of all our efforts. I hope that such a beautiful work can bring some inspiration to more people, especially each of us can make a small contribution to the meaningful theme: environmental protection. I hope our work can arouse people's interest and empathy with us.*

Yingli from China

*I am very glad to join this project, it is very meaningful not only for us, it's also for others who finally are looking for opportunities to contribute ... I really enjoy doing this ... I appreciate the team work, which is great. We don't know each other and you bring us together, we get to know each other and in the future we can communicate definitely with all of you.*

Tong L. from China

**It's a great time** to reflect on what we were thinking our aims were and to see this come in action. At the same time it was fun to learn a new skill.

Anna from U.K.

I love the idea behind it. It's basically a community project for a bigger purpose for peace and sustainability which are both really, really important topics at the moment. I love that we all come together.

Leonie from Germany

**Dove is** a universal symbol of peace, friendship, unity and sanctity. I hope the blue dove which I created can send a message to people and let everybody realise the situation of climate change crisis and our earth needs each of us take good care. Blue colour represents hope. I hope the blue dove can bring people hope and can fly freely in the fresh air and blue sky.

Ningning from China

**From words to action**

Beijing, 7 February 2022

## Mosaic technique and preparation for workshops



### From words to action

The **Gaudí technique** lent itself to the execution of this concept in small group workshops with multiple participants. **Antoni Gaudí i Cornet (1852 - 1926)** was an architect from Spain who is considered to be the greatest representative of Catalan Modernism. He introduced a new technique in his art and architecture, namely the use of ceramic tiles. This involved using broken material or smashing tiles to render a random shape. Afterwards they were reassembled to create novel designs.

We started off with a trial and made some prototype mosaic panels to see whether our concept could be realised. The trial was successful, so we could go ahead with the series of workshops as planned.









March 2022, six work days with six groups  
**The mosaic workshop method**

**Team spirit and collaboration**

The participants were guided to make a single part of a cube that consisted of three separate mosaic panels. They had to organise themselves and decide who would take on which task and help each other until completion of their cube. On three consecutive weekends, a total of **20 cubes**, some with super-imposed symbols and some blank, were created and joined together to form a large core mosaic.

For participating families, it offered valuable shared time. Everyone enjoyed the calm, creative atmosphere of the studio and the meditative nature of the manual activity producing a tangible piece of art. The cross-cultural collaboration brought people together and initiated new friendships.





I really enjoyed it because it's a community project. Mosaic brings people together and we're doing something meaningful. Fiona Liu from China





A new location

## The Beijing German Embassy School campus

When the external wall in the hutong that we initially scoped for the installation of the mosaic was no longer available, the German Embassy School offered a prominent wall at the campus entrance.



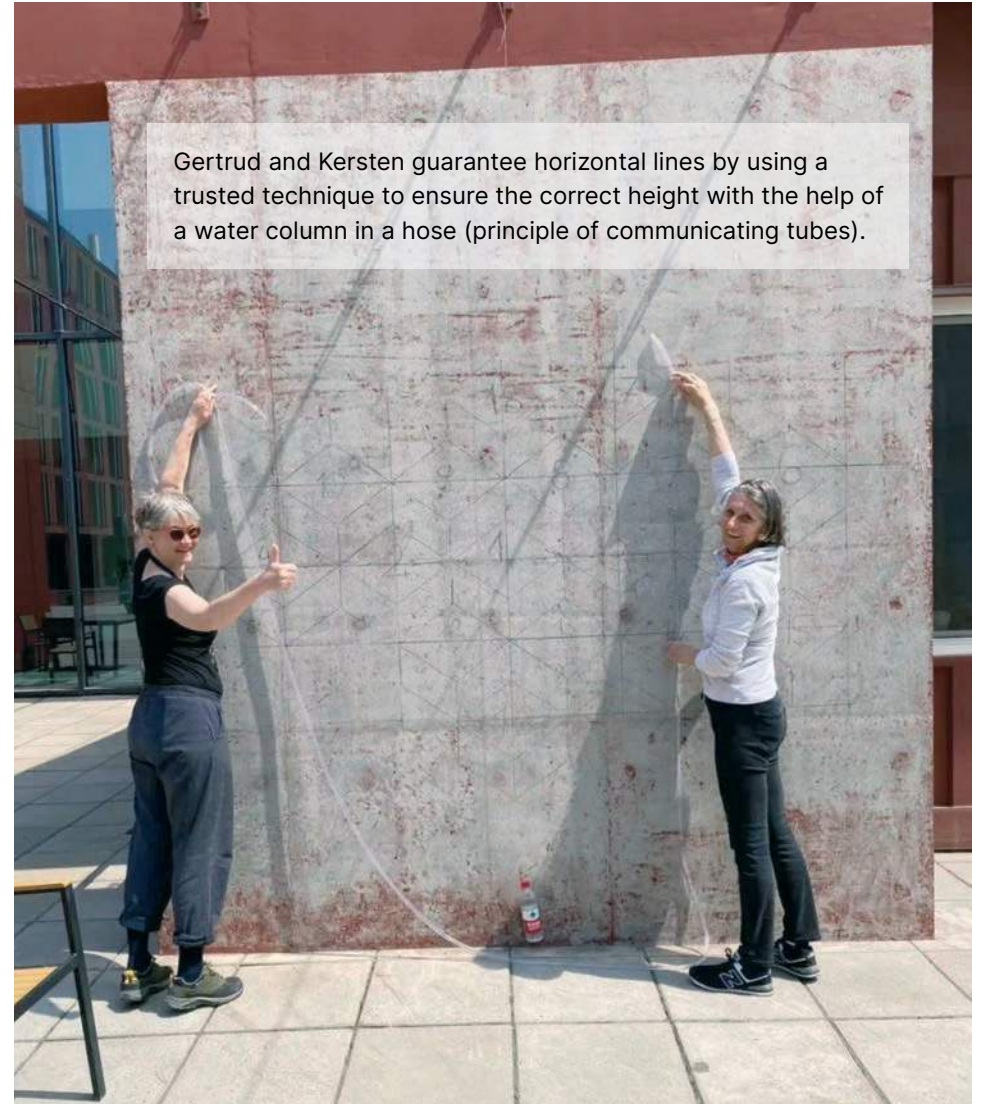


Beijing, 18 April 2022

## Installation Day 1 - Preparation



School helpers sand down the wall.



Gertrud and Kersten guarantee horizontal lines by using a trusted technique to ensure the correct height with the help of a water column in a hose (principle of communicating tubes).

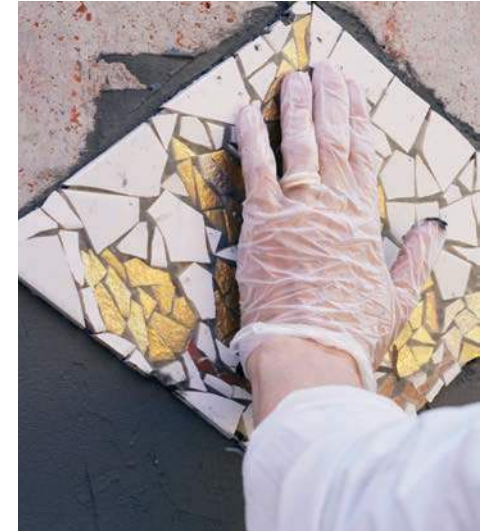


Beijing, 19 April 2022

## Installation Day 2 - Assembly

On the following day, Gertrud, Kersten, Annalize, Sissi and Sylvia Lang (art teacher), installed the prepared tiles on the wall.

We had to work quickly to position the tiles correctly before the cement dried. Thereafter we waited for a day to ensure that the core mosaic dried properly and the tiles bonded with the wall surface.









Beijing, 21 April 2022

## Installation Day 3 - Completion

Many hands were needed to fill the grooves between the tiles. Using our fingers, we sealed each gap to avoid water penetration. Lorenz and Fiona came to help us that day. Afterwards, the surface of the tiles was carefully cleaned and the colours shone brightly again.





... you work on these mosaics so very detailed and carefully, and this is how we should care for the creation and environment, that we work and handle it carefully. Many small details make a bigger image, like many small actions make a world.

Lorenz B., from Germany





Beijing, 21 April 2022

## The inauguration of the artwork

On the evening of the same day, the ceremonial unveiling and handover of the completed mosaic to the German Embassy School took place. In her speech, Annalize Heyns emphasized the extraordinary potential of mosaic to create a collective whole from many small, inconspicuous pieces. She underlined our hope that the final installation of the mural would not be the end of the project, but indeed the beginning of new ideas and activities around climate protection.

The school's director Dr. Merzhäuser and Katharina von Knobloch, the representative of the German Embassy Beijing, praised the project as a new pulse for the school community in the spirit of the student movement "Fridays For Future". The speeches were translated into Chinese by Lynn.





Gertrud Muller handed over three ceremonial tiles to the director Dr. Merzhäuser, thus placing the artwork in the school's hands.







**The Climate Change Community Mosaic** on the German Embassy School campus in Beijing was created by 55 participants from 7 countries over 6 months, currently covering an area of approximately 3.5 sqm.



# Pedagogical impact

Our experience from implementing this group mosaic project with more than 55 participants (adults and children aged 10 and above) proved that this process has particular educational value in the following areas:

## 1. Raising awareness of climate change

- learning about climate change in group discussions
- applying this awareness in a production process
- transferring consciousness to independent behaviour

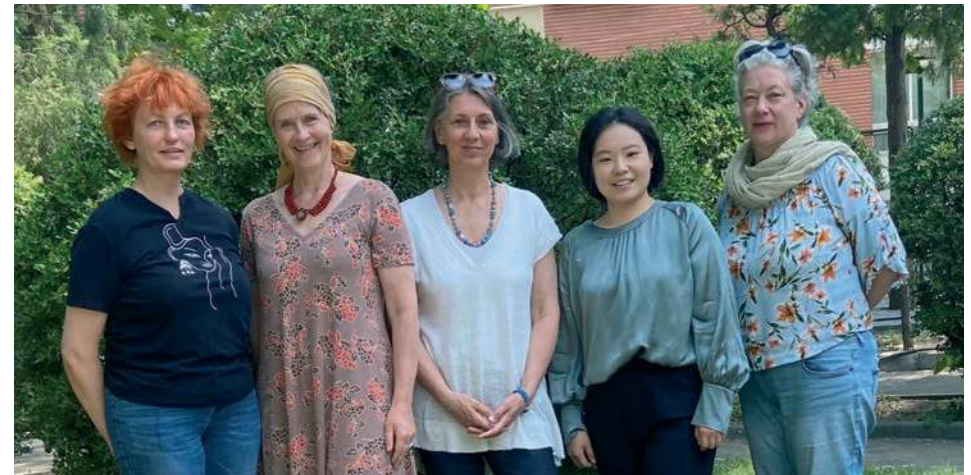
## 2. Team spirit and collaboration

- preparing a work plan and coordinating activities
- working together on designing and producing one tile (i.e. break, assemble and glue material)
- experiencing team collaboration, the individual contributes to a greater whole
- forming a common identity
- building a cultural bridge and connecting with people without the use of language

## 3. Learning a new craft skill

- learning to break raw material and arrange shards to form a tile
- upcycling, the use of leftover tiles
- repairing, contributing to a sustainable lifestyle

The mural was designed in a way that additional parts could be produced and added later during, for example, a project week or, as part of a curriculum.



**Community Assembly Team:** Diana Constantinescu, Gertrud Muller, Kersten von Sohlern, Fiona Liu, Annalize Heyns (left to right)







## Special thanks

to all the participants who worked with so much dedication, passion and joy on this project, as well as the German Embassy School Beijing, in particular to Sylvia Lang and Lorenz Bührmann for their active support.

We are delighted that this community project found the ideal home at an intersection of intercultural education. Right from the start, it was our intention to establish an awareness of climate protection and extend it to future generations.





# Student voices



The mosaic shows many representations that point to the current situation in the world. The step-like arrangement could represent the ups and downs in life.

Emily, class 7

Here are my thoughts about the mosaic: I think that the whole artwork stands for community (because of the hands). I think it is about conservation or nature in general (because of the plants, the turtle and the night sky). Also, the mosaic was made in 3D, but I don't know what that means.

Isabelle, class 5



I find the mosaic very beautiful and interesting, I especially like the different images of nature in the individual cubes and the idea behind it. When I see it like this, it makes me start to think.

Sarah, class 6





## Imprint

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More information on [www.globalassembly.org](http://www.globalassembly.org)



