



State of the Arts

Arts Management and Health

There are various points of contact between arts, culture and health – not only in the course of the pandemic months.

Focus starting on page 17



Stay safe and healthy!

Since the pandemic, the topic of „health” has received extremely heightened attention – also in the arts and cultural sector. The fact that arts, culture and health are more closely related than one might initially assume is not only evident from the hygiene measures with which cultural institutions are supposed to help contain the pandemic. For example, cultural institutions also played an important role in spreading vaccination campaigns in certain regions of the world. But even before COVID-19 and beyond, there have been various points of contact between art, culture and health: for example, visits to museums prescribed by doctors or cooperation between cultural institutions and hospitals are no longer uncommon. Likewise, various art forms have proven their worth as therapeutic measures. But the topic of „health management” and corresponding measures must also gain importance in the arts and cultural institutions themselves. After all, in order for employees in the arts and cultural sector to feel good, they must first and foremost be healthy - both physically and mentally. On the following pages we present approaches and experiences of arts practitioners from different regions of the world who put the many connections of „health” in and around the field of arts management through their paces. With this mixture of academic, practical and also very personal contributions and interviews, we would like to give you insights into this wide field of topics and encourage you to draw one or the other (new) connection between art and health yourself - be it in your arts and cultural institution as well as for your own well-being as an arts professional.

State of the Arts

Dirk Schütz
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Kaleidoscope

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BOOK REVIEW

Cultural Policies in Europe: a participatory turn?

Cultural institutions and initiatives are implementing participative formats for quite some years. But still, cultural policies in Europe focus on participation rather rarely both regarding their own decision-making processes as well as the institutions they support.

by Vera Borges

https://bit.ly/review_cultural_policies_europe

**Arts management education at pandemic times.****An example from Brazil**

The pandemic has brought a lot of challenges to trainings and programs dedicated to the organization of culture. An experience from Brazil shows how such programs can adapt to their theoretical and practical character to digital formats.

by Leonardo Costa and Renata Rocha

https://bit.ly/CP_course_Bahia_COVID

SOCIAL MEDIA NEWS

**Arts Management Network**

22. Sept. • 🌐

At least in the UK, data suggest an ongoing class crisis in the arts, based on a complex blend of social inequalities, labour market failures, and discrimination against working-class people.

BOOK REVIEW

Arts Leadership in Contemporary Contexts

Like society, the arts ecosystem is in a state of constant evolution. The book "Arts Leadership in Contemporary Contexts" underlines how arts leadership moves alongside these evolutions and is indispensable to every organization.

by Karl Schwonik

https://bit.ly/review_arts_leadership

SERIES ON DIGITAL FORMATS

Knowledge, learning and education

Before the pandemic, it did not occur to many arts and cultural institutions that they could – or even had to – generate revenue online. This has rapidly changed. What can organizations learn from the experiences of the last months?

by Kristin Oswald

https://bit.ly/Paid_online_formats

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES

Living in Germany as a U.S. American

Studying and working in Germany for an extensive period of time gave Nicole Vasconi the space and opportunity to reflect on the U.S. arts and cultural sector – especially compared to other models and experiences of arts management – to better see its various positive and negative aspects from a wider perspective and derive from this experience better decisions for her professional future.

by Nicole Vasconi

https://bit.ly/AM_USA_Germany

Reconnect

Hybrid approaches engaging the public across genres and regions

By Petya Koleva, Milena Berbenkova, Yulia Bardun

This article presents and briefly analyses three recent stories from three different regional contexts in Europe that demonstrate the positive impact of innovating connections with the audience. It discusses the values of hybrid approaches to arts and culture marketing, and the benefit of resilient practices of co-creation and cross-sectoral collaboration.

March 2020 marked the beginning of a very challenging period in human history. On top of already exacerbated issues with global climate change and political crises, a health emergency ‘brought the world to a stop’. As many business sectors depending on travel, public events and gatherings, the art and culture sector was heavily affected.

Some large organisations were able to quickly adjust thanks to availability of funds and diverse expertise and due to the fact, they had been preparing for the digital shift already. One such example is the free access to virtual tours at Le Louvre. By contrast, small and micro-organisations and individual artists, which constitute the majority of entities in the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) in Europe, had to find their own way of managing and keeping audiences engaged in this new environment as documented in many studies, Bulgaria including.

On a personal level, people across the world became disconnected and disengaged. Even personal relationships underwent deep transformations: becoming more digital where possible or suffering a state of ‘loss’ when this was not the case. Trust was heavily tested.

In this time period presenting multiple challenges, new opportunities arose out of the need for connection and community. This article presents three cases of reconnecting through art and culture in 2020 and 2021. These demonstrate two positive aspects:

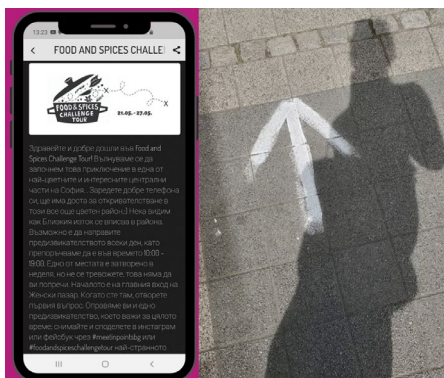
- > Economic impact on the cultural sector and new value chains utilising business to client (B2C) connections and business to business (B2B) networks
- > Skills and tools enhancing hybrid offers (online and on-site)

Case 1: Microincubator for reconnecting with the audience

The project “Reconnect: Audiences and Cultural Content in the Digital Environment” was developed in 2020 by Intercultura Consult and three creative cultural producers with support of the National “Culture” Fund of Bulgaria. This was the first microincubation project in Bulgaria focusing on strengthening the capacity of CCI organisations to address the challenges of remote and hybrid cultural production. The partners had realised the importance of creating new types of art and cultural experiences for audiences online. The problem was to develop offers most suitable to the needs of their core audience and even have the potential to increase their reach to new members of the public.

The project fostered a micro incubation process consisting of three key phases: research, creation, and validation. The research phase included:

- > an analysis of the current digital audiences of the creative partners;
- > an online survey of the general public, collecting over 700 individual responses;
- > four focus groups with representatives of the general public to address the specific needs of each cultural organisation.



Meeting Points: Food & Spices Challenge Tour mixing digital app and immediate spatial experience (left)

Puppet Theatre “Malle-Malle” a hybrid event for the youngest public (right)

© Intercultura Consult 2021

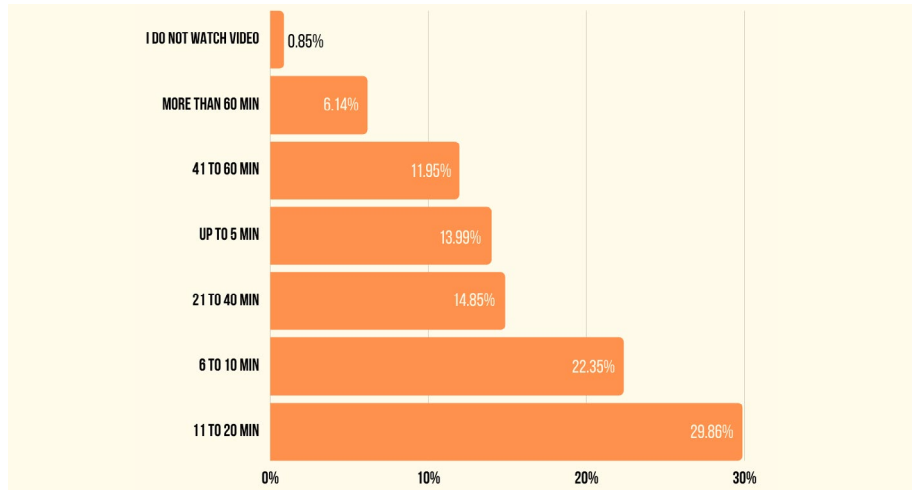
The creation phase, informed by the research phase and expert input, followed with special experimental and innovative offers. The experiments were assessed for their impact on the audience in order to validate the results.

At the end of this journey, the creative partners of the project have reported that their experimental pilot activities have indeed supported their strategy to move into the digital domain:

- > They have achieved a significant increase (up to 30%) in their online audiences by applying methods of audience analysis and development with the support of experts in the project.
- > The ante- and post-prototype analyses contributed to improving their skills in reaching wider audiences, which ensures the sustainability of the results.
- > The new connections established between the partnering organisations, as well as two public workshops have contributed to strengthening the business approach and the creative vision of 3 to 7 organisations.
- > For the cultural and creative scene in Bulgaria as a whole, the key results of the research have offered new and (for the moment) unique findings regarding the preferences of the public on types and modes of digital culture they favour most. There is fresh data on preference for live versus online offer in music, theatre or museums but also very detailed insight per age and place of residence.
- > The research intelligence provided the partners with insights on dispositions and choice by specific types of cultural content: children's events, cultural tours, and contemporary performance arts.

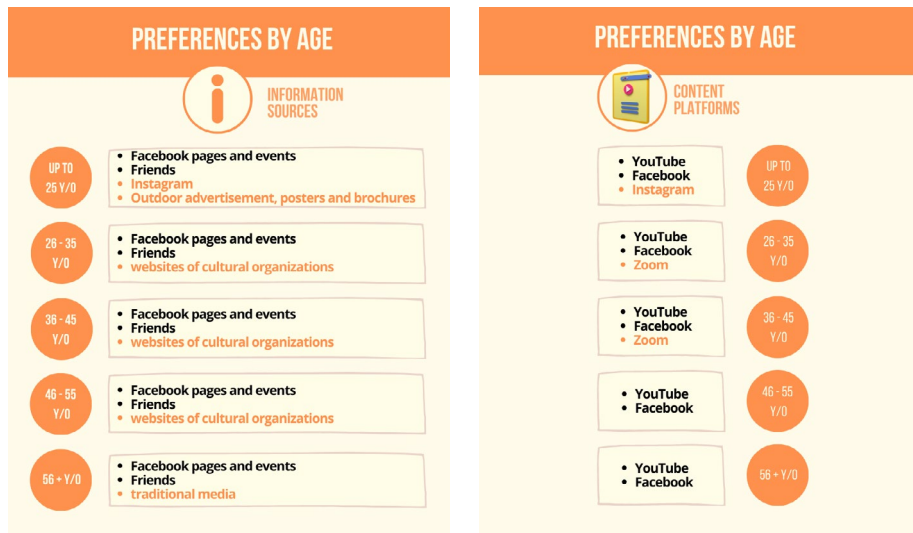
One important finding of the study conducted is the preferred length of video when it comes to cultural offers online. The result is vital as it distinguishes culture related 'video' time from video consumption in general. The dominant guidance regarding online marketing stresses the limited attention span of people and a need for very short video content (1 min). The public who were surveyed have indicated that when it comes to art and culture there is clear preference for longer videos, of up to 20 (30%) or even 40 min (15%).

Another crucial finding is the fact that people younger than 25 are eager and seek more diverse sources of information on cultural offers. Their preferences for staying informed also include offline media and direct channels of communication distinct from the avalanche of social media information they consume daily. Cultural offers online are effectively to be promoted also offline.



Graph 1: Preferred length of videos, Public survey for Reconnect: Audiences and Cultural Content in the Digital Environment, Intercultura Consult 2021

Results on choice of platform through which different age groups engage with cultural content validated some of the expected generational divides. For instance, Instagram does attract the younger public more also when it comes to streaming cultural content online. However, the study revealed emerging new opportunities. Local platforms, such as Urbo in the case of Bulgaria, that were previously mainly used by cultural/ creative organisations as an online ticket sales point have acquired a new business role and are now offering (ticket-based) direct streaming of cultural content from artists to audiences (B to C). Since these local platforms for ‘cultural’ marketing were already reaching the right target groups their new position has been well received by the public. Another very important finding is that the sites and social media channels of cultural providers (artists or organisations) are seen as the ‘validation’ tool regarding the quality of the offer and being consulted regularly by one-third of the surveyed public. They are also considered important channels to enrich the online cultural experience. Most age groups, starting with those 26 years-old and over, are keen to read about arts and cultural experiences, they are interested in details around the core offer. In other words, any blogs, reviews, interviews with the artists or other information about the context of the art work, the respective cultural tour, or museum item, etc., can only raise the public interest in the offer, and serve to maintain its credibility.



Graph 2: Preferred information sources, Public survey for Reconnect: Audiences and Cultural Content in the Digital Environment, Intercultura Consult 2021 (left)

Graph 3: Preferred platforms by age, Public survey for Reconnect: Audiences and Cultural Content in the Digital Environment, Intercultura Consult 2021 (right)

The finding that people are willing to pay for high quality online content was valuable in revealing the two main reasons:

- 1) a unique offer that is not available near them for direct cultural participation offline, and
- 2) an online cultural experience of extraordinary quality that is well communicated and backed by sound technical features.

Additionally, the study found that online cultural participation brings to the public an added value in terms of flexibility regarding the time of engagement and more freedom for the individual to test less known offers or attend experimental culture and creative work.

The microincubation process continues in a new format in 2021-2022: led by Intercultura Consult and supported by the National “Culture” Fund of Bulgaria again. The new project involves partners from around Bulgaria that seek to evaluate and expand their relationship with the audience. Organisations from Gabrovo, Cherni Osam, Elin Pelin and Kostenets will venture into new experiments that would relate them to key targets in the community in the project “Time Perspectives: Long-term Benefits of the Culture – Audience Relationship” 2021-2022.

Case 2: A green deal, cultural participation for resilience

The global pandemic has accelerated a very clear trend for people from the developed post-industrial world to seek a green deal, moving out of the big cities and seeking cleaner environments. They literally move to the greener areas nearby; they become digital nomads who move temporarily, or they 'simply' become green tourists seeking a rich local-to-local tourism offer. This is a chance for new services/ offers to appear mixing the 'outdoors' and 'together' dimensions of cultural practices.

Due to this expanded interest, in 2020, a small guest house in the Vishtynets Upland hosted 1600 people. Additionally, other hospitality-related sites have also reported a big inflow of visitors. However, earlier in 2020, when the hosts could not welcome visitors, one owner started delivering local farmers' food to the big city. She launched a project to raise funds for the conservation of an abandoned house in the centre of the village of Krasnolesye in the Eastern part of the Kaliningrad region close to the borders with Poland and Lithuania. This is how Natalia Doborvolskaya's 'pie' became very popular and in August 2021 the building was covered with a new roof.

In 2021, together with the cultural manager Yulia Bardun who has also invested in the local region and previously cooperated with the Vishtynets Nature and History Museum on a number of cultural projects, Natalia piloted a mixed experience tourism offer culture/ nature. The goal was to inspire the residents of 11 villages of the Nesterovsky District to learn about environmentally friendly use of local plants, about creating local products and developing a participatory- gastronomy cultural offer.



Searching for first greens in the forest under the guidance of the forester and farmer Alexander Samsonkin © Yulia Bardun (left)

Dimasch Khasanov, the chef of one of the best restaurants in Kaliningrad cooking together with Prokhor Dobrovolsky from the village of Dmitrievka © Elena Masko (right)

The 2021 demonstration pilot of “Tastes of Vishtynets Uplands” was based around the tourist expectations in terms of food quality, modern design, and showcasing the advantages of local products in terms of health benefits. With a standard of living lower than in other parts of the Kaliningrad region and a rather high unemployment in rural areas, the Vishtynets Upland presents opportunities for such activities. All that was needed was new knowledge, skills, equipment, partners and experimentation. The solution was to activate the potential of the region in terms of production and sale of local organic food by mixing this with cultural participation.

The value proposition for the guests is a series of eight 2-day interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral workshops involving biologists, ecologists, experts in history, culture, gastronomy and local residents. They learn and discover together natural and cultural resources; they cook and build new ties. By September, 2021, four workshops were implemented involving 450 participants, of which roughly 40 local residents (aged 10 to 80) participated on a regular basis.

The key result from the first stage of implementation is the validation of its high relevance: for the local community, for diverse partners and the professional gastronomes. The diversity of expertise was a clear asset as it brought together ecologists, biologists, farmers, gardeners, and historians / journalists plus some famous chefs.

A very valuable dimension is reported to be its ‘cultural value’, in other words: the informal collaboration on equal terms that creates a good atmosphere for connections and cooperation and has contributed to the learning process.



*Kids exploring local plants through microscopes under the guidance of the Nature Park Vistynetsky team
© Elena Masko*

¹ Chef Ershov's Instagram posts reflect on this experience. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CSWPEv4sqMG/>.

The project and its focus on local community development, tourism and gastronomy attracted great media attention. The largest regional media published materials about the project and its organisers, reaching 45,321 people in the Kaliningrad region promoting the idea of using local products and the development of gastronomic tourism.

Some unforeseen, additional activities and assets have emerged:

- 1. Additional cultural offer:** Accompanying workshops for children were organized from the second workshop onwards. During each workshop for several hours, under the guidance of the staff of the Nature Park “Vishtynetsky”, the kids studied the local flora and fauna through a microscope.
- 2. Professional offer for the chefs:** Ivan Shaldyshov, a creative chef of one of the leading restaurant chains in Kaliningrad (Britannica Projects), invited to the second workshop four fellow chefs. Free of charge, they joined the master class and created a very spectacular, engaging event. In the third workshop the rising star chef Pavel Borisenko, running a trendy gastro pub (Salt) and restaurant of seasonal food Seasons in Kaliningrad, contributed to the valuable experience. Roman Ershov, the owner of another local food restaurant Telegraph located in the seaside resort town Zelenogradsk, brought his team to almost all workshops. Finally, they suggested their interpretation of what Vishtynets food could taste like.
- 3. Interaction with the locals:** The chefs also established personal links with several local residents, whom they met through the project. As a result, they started new experimental projects with kombucha and sauces prepared from elderberry flowers and elderberry juice. The lesson learned - star chefs are eager to learn from local residents about herbs and traditional use in this two-way knowledge sharing process.¹
- 4. Social innovation, cross-sectoral offer:** Both local residents and visitors/experts have reported to being motivated for new collaborations, starting a gastronomy club, seasonal food festivals and local gastronomy master-classes.

The demonstration project “Tastes of Vishtynets Uplands” is partnering with cultural organisations such as the Vishtynets Nature and History Museum (NGO, Krasnolesye), the Kaliningrad region public Nature Park “Vishtynetsky” and with private guest houses “Shelden” and “Lesistoe life”

² The global recorded music market grew by 7.4% in 2020 driven by streaming, especially by paid subscription streaming revenues, which increased by 18.5%. IFPI issues *Global Music Report 2021*, <https://www.ifpi.org/ifa-issues-annual-global-music-report-2021/> (Accessed Sept 27, 2021).

³ This case study was developed in conversation with Elisa Calosi, project manager at IIPM.

⁴ Matera in Italy and Plovdiv in Bulgaria were the twin 2019 European Capitals of Culture <https://www.euronews.com/culture/2018/01/19/matera-and-plovdiv-2019-european-capitals-of-culture> (Accessed Sept 27, 2021).

⁵ Source: <https://culturalfoundation.eu/stories/the-new-gospel/> (Accessed 14.09.2021).

as well as engaging local residents as volunteers. The list of partners is constantly expanding. It has received support from the international research company Corteva Agriscience in the framework of training and grant program from women-farmers TalentA in Russia.

Case 3: The politics of hybrid culture, a documentary premiere online

The pandemic COVID-19 blocked most of the opportunities for culture organisations to engage with their audiences directly, however the period has seen growth in revenues from online film and games consumption as well as music². This case is about an interdisciplinary project that addressed and engaged the audience via a political campaign, public events, performances, and a film. However, the film release could not happen as it was supposed to.³

The film “The New Gospel” by director Milo Rau was realised in Matera, one of the two 2019 European Capitals of Culture⁴ and premiered as a special event at the Venice International Film Festival 2020. The synopsis would normally tag this film for the ‘typical art film marketing’ strategies, meaning select public, sophisticated interaction and debates. ‘It narrates the powerful message of the political activist Yvan Sagnet fighting for the rights of migrants who came to Europe across the Mediterranean to be enslaved on the tomato fields in southern Italy and to live in ghettos under inhumane conditions. The director and his team return to the origins of the gospel and stage it as a passion play of an entire civilization. In Matera, in southern Italy, where the great Jesus films from Pasolini to Gibson were shot, an authentically political as well as theatrical and cinematic “New Gospel” emerges for the 21st century. A manifesto of solidarity with the poorest, a revolt for a more just, humane world.’⁵



THE NEW GOSPEL
© Fruitmarket/ Langfilm/
IIPM/ Armin Smailovic,
<https://rivolta-della-dignita.com/movie-the-new-gospel>
(both)

⁶ Germany: www.dasneueevangelium.de; Switzerland: www.dasneueevangelium-film.ch (accessed 14.09.2021), Belgium: www.ntgent.be/en/productions/rivolta-della-dig-nita-the-new-gospel (accessed 30.09.2021).

Due to the pandemic, the film release and the expectation of the director, producers and distributors had to shift from a strategy of direct encounter to digital communication and online distribution. In 2020 the film was released in Germany and Switzerland with some special events (on and offline) in other countries.⁶

In Germany the cinema release took place only digitally. The movie was launched some weeks before Christmas on the webpage www.dasneueevangelium.de and was available until April 2021. The viewer could not only buy a ticket and watch the movie online, they could also choose which cinema in Germany will receive a part of the ticket sales. This was a good strategy to combine the need for digital offers due to the pandemic with support the local cinemas that were also closed. During the digital release over 10.000 tickets were sold in Germany.

In Switzerland, the producer and distributor decided to postpone the cinema release and to wait for the re-opening of cinema houses, which at some point was no longer imaginable. On April 1st both the German and French cantons started “The new Gospel” release in e-cinema. As of April 19th, with the re-opening of the cinemas, the Swiss release became a hybrid format. Together the digital and analogue release sold over 11.000 tickets, with an insignificant difference between the audiences reached. It is possible that the high number of physical audiences viewing the film in the cinema theatre was a result of the considerable online hype already garnered. Reviews from the critics have been positive of the film.

Synergies were created here and a communication strategy developed that could reach as many multipliers as possible: media, cultural and political organisations, but also religious, church and migrants associations, those working with refugees, those with focus to eco and fair consumption. This is another important factor that contributed to the success of the cultural offer online.

In conclusion, what next?

In 2021-2022, Intercultura Consult continues work in a new microincubation process that involves different types of cultural organisations again involving them in the design of a co-creation process. The demonstration project “Tastes of Vishtynets Uplands” continues in the coming months and is

expected to lead to spin-off initiatives as discussed above. Producers of documentaries are likely to stay tuned for the important ways in which hybrid distribution can deliver a complex cultural message.

An element essential to all the presented examples is that they are possible in partnership and that new and constantly updated competences and skills need to be mixed. The authors would like to recommend all CCI organisations to reach out and build closer relations to organisations that support the local cultural ecosystem. Some of those organisations maybe of the CCI scene itself but some may come from different sectors. Earlier this year, another article reflected on the benefits of CCI cross-sectoral collaboration and innovation projects and initiatives within and outside the Northern Dimension region. There is a clear need to pursue such forms or collaboration and it is important that there is public policy channelling support to empower them.

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Dr. Petya Koleva is an international expert based in Sofia, over the last 18 years nurturing international research and collaboration, engaging with arts organisations and with cultural policy makers. She is the founder of Intercultura Consult (2004), a specialised consultancy developing synergies between arts and innovation.



Yulia Bardun is a cultural manager, curator and trainer with over 15 years of professional experience, specifically in the contemporary arts framework in the Nordic-Baltic region. Her efforts were fundamental for strengthening the contemporary arts sector in her native Kaliningrad region. A new area of interest are rural areas and communities.



Milena Berbenkova is an audience analysis and development specialist. She coordinated the project "Reconnect: Audiences and Cultural Content in the Digital Environment" and is now the manager of "Time Perspectives: Long-term Benefits of the Culture - Audience Relationship". She has international experience and knows the CCI sector very well.



Arts in Health in America

Managing Arts Programs for Health and Well-Being in Healthcare and Community Settings

By Patricia Dewey Lambert

The global COVID-19 pandemic has been economically devastating for artists and arts institutions. In the United States, the closures of theatres, concert halls, and museums due to COVID restrictions has been even further exacerbated by ever-widening economic disparities and significant social unrest. Across the nation, there is much discussion of widespread mental health issues, and an array of institutions and community leaders are exploring new programs and strategies intended to support health and well-being. Arts managers are envisioning new forms of engagement in the health arena to be vital to their community engagement mission, to securing funding streams, to demonstrating their relevance to audiences, and to sustaining their recovery. The field called “arts and health” is garnering new levels of interest and respect.

Just as the arts have long served instrumental roles in the support of other social needs like education and economic development, the arts have always contributed to the health and well-being of individuals and communities. In America, arts organizations like museums, symphony orchestras, theatre companies, and dance companies are now jumping onto the “arts and health” bandwagon, but arts managers are often entering this field without awareness of the robust field of arts in health scholarship and professional practice that already exists. For arts managers everywhere, many excellent resources are readily available to inform the development and implementation of arts programs intended to support health and well-being. This article briefly introduces the American field of arts in health, and provides an array of key English-language resources that will be helpful to arts managers in any country.

What is arts in health?

An excellent definition of arts in health was developed by the former Society for the Arts in Healthcare in 2012:

> [Arts in health] is a diverse multidisciplinary field dedicated to transforming the healthcare experience by connecting people with the power of the arts at key moments in their lives. This rapidly growing field integrates the arts, including literary, performing, and visual arts and design, into a wide variety of healthcare and community settings for therapeutic, educational, and expressive purposes.

The term arts, health, and well-being is commonly used for this field in the UK and Australia; the World Health Organization is initiating a new initiative named arts and health; and the generally accepted term used in America is arts in health. Regardless of the term used, this is a large academic and professional field that engages the arts in support of health and

HOW TO DISTINGUISH THE PROFESSIONS THAT ENGAGE THE ARTS IN HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Arts in Health: A broad and growing academic discipline and field of practice dedicated to using the power of the arts to enhance human health and well-being in diverse institutional and community contexts.

Arts in Public Health: The domain of Arts in Health that refers to using the arts within community health or public health contexts.

Arts in Healthcare: The domain of Arts in Health that pertains to using the arts within clinical settings. Frequently used synonymously with the term Arts in Medicine.

Creative Arts Therapies: Six well-established and regulated health professions that “use distinct arts-based methods and creative processes for the purpose of ameliorating disability and illness and optimizing health and wellness. Treatment outcomes include, for example, improving communication and expression, and increasing physical emotional, cognitive and/or social functioning” (www.nccata.org).

Expressive Arts Therapy: A professional field that “combine(s) the visual arts, movement, drama, music, writing and other creative processes to foster deep personal growth and community development” (www.ieata.org).

Sources: Lambert, Lee, & Sonke (in press); and modified from NOAH (2017, p. 9), Center for Arts in Medicine (2016), and Sonke et al. (2017)

¹ *Distinctly named art therapy, music therapy, dance/movement therapy, drama therapy, poetry therapy, and psychodrama.*

well-being. The field includes numerous disciplines, including the creative arts therapies¹, expressive arts therapy, and arts in health. In addition, architects, interior architects, and landscape architects engage in this field in their important work in healthcare design. Many other fields closely related to arts in health include recreational therapy, occupational therapy, medical humanities, arts for social justice, and creative aging. Across this field, researchers and practitioners approach health as defined by the WHO, as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO website).

Designing arts organizations’ arts in health programs

When arts managers begin to design arts programs and activities to support health and well-being, they must recognize that they are entering into a well-established field. For many decades, the arts have been intentionally employed to support health by enhancing the healthcare experience, promoting public health, supporting community well-being, and fostering resiliency of medical professionals. Those engaged in this field work in partnership to achieve goals in five areas:

- > The arts support an “environment of healing” in healthcare settings through healthcare design, art displays, and music performances in lobbies.
- > The arts provide patient care through both clinical services and an improved patient experience.
- > The arts support professional caregivers (medical staff) and family caregivers through “caring for caregiver” programs.
- > The arts and humanities are increasingly being included in health sciences education, and arts-based resiliency programs are frequently provided in healthcare settings to care for medical professionals.
- > The arts are increasingly being used to improve public health. Examples include using the arts to communicate health information, arts programs to support healthy aging, caring for military and veterans’ populations, addressing health care needs of people with chronic illnesses, and responding to the opioid epidemic. (National Organization for Arts in Health, 2017, p. 8-9).

However, in many of these arts in health programs, considerable confusion exists regarding the credentialing and scope of practice involved in the creative arts therapies, expressive arts therapy, and arts in health. While it is certainly possible for arts organizations to hire or partner with licensed creative arts therapists, most of the programs being developed by arts managers are intended to more generally support community health. Examples include museum programs for Alzheimer patients and their families, dance company programs for people with Parkinson's, and symphony orchestra programs where musicians play for patients and staff members in local hospitals. These kinds of programs offer arts-based activities that support patients' health and well-being and contribute to an environment of healing. There are significant differences in these arts in health programs when compared with the clinical work of creative art therapists. In the creative arts therapies, there is a medical diagnosis for a patient and an individualized treatment plan provided by licensed and credentialed art therapist, music therapist, or dance therapist. It is, therefore, imperative that arts managers working in the arts in health domain do not refer to their organization's work as "doing arts therapy."

While it is certainly possible for arts organizations to hire or partner with licensed creative arts therapists, most of the programs being developed by arts managers are intended to more generally support community health.

In America, the National Organization for Arts in Health currently serves as the primary national professional association that is devoted to field development and professionalization of the arts in health domain. With its mission "to unite, advance, and serve the field of arts in health" (<https://thenoah.net>), the organization focuses specifically on professionalization of artists working in healthcare or in public health, and administrative leaders for arts in health. From 2016 to 2021, the NOAH's Professionalization Committee developed three basic documents upon which ongoing professionalization initiatives will continue.² The next steps in the Committee's work are to develop training materials for artists and arts managers, and to establish a system and organizational structure to provide a new nationally-recognized credential, the Arts in Healthcare-Certified (AIH-C).

² These three documents are the Code of Ethics and Standards for Arts in Health Professionals, and a Core Curriculum for Arts in Health Professionals.

³ This Health Evidence Network synthesis report is the most comprehensive review of global academic literature to date, referencing over 900 publications, including 200 reviews covering over 3,000 further studies.

⁴ Research database: <https://arts.ufl.edu/academics/center-for-arts-in-medicine/research-database/>.

How to get started as an arts manager in the arts in health field

The rapidly expanding field of arts in health presents many opportunities to professional arts managers around the world. Many communities already have programs and initiatives that integrate the arts within health-care facilities and in public health/community health activities. Similarly, there are an increasing number of educational programs and offerings to develop professional skills for this field. Our global public health experience in responding to COVID-19 and in recovering from the community trauma caused by so much suffering and death has reinforced the important role of the arts in supporting health and well-being. Even if an arts manager is not yet involved in the arts in health field, she will likely be drawn into this field as these initiatives continue to expand.

Even if an arts manager is not yet involved in the arts in health field, she will likely be drawn into this field as these initiatives continue to expand.

Fortunately, existing scholarship from which arts managers can learn is robust. In November 2019, the World Health Organization published a scoping review on the evidence of the arts in improving health and well-being (Fancourt & Finn, 2019).³ This massive study reviewed scholarship of arts activities in five broad categories as they support arts and well-being. These arts programs included a wide array of engagement in the performing arts, visual arts, literature, participation in community cultural events, and digital arts. Examples of strong arts programs led by innovative arts managers – and the health impact of these programs – are readily available in existing publications. The research database⁴ overseen by the University of Florida’s Center for Arts in Medicine provides a frequently updated list of peer-reviewed English-language publications in this field.

In sum, if you are an arts manager interested in joining the movement to engage the arts in support of health and well-being in healthcare and community settings, please take some time to inform yourself from the well-established foundation of research and professional practice in this field. The first step is to read through some of the key references available online. Professional networks in this field can be found in many coun-

tries, and leaders in this field tend to be very generous with sharing their expertise. Some good places to start your exploration of English-language resources are listed in the box below.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Key websites

- > International Expressive Arts Therapy Association
- > National Organization for Arts in Health
- > National Coalition for Creative Arts Therapies
- > The Center for Health Design
- > University of Florida Center for Arts in Medicine

Key introductory white papers / reports to download

- > *[Australian] National arts and health framework (2013)*. Endorsed by Australia's Health Ministers and Cultural Ministers.
- > *Creative health: The arts for health and wellbeing (2018)*. United Kingdom: [All-party parliamentary group inquiry report](#).
- > *Fancourt, D. & Finn, S. (2019)*. What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being?: A scoping review. Health Evidence Synthesis Report 67. World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe.
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Museum Visits on a Doctor's Prescription

A Path to Positive Health?

By Marjelle Vermeulen, Ellen Loots and Pauwke Berkers

“Go see the museum”, said the doctor. Does the phenomenon of ‘doctors prescribing museum visits’ signal the breakthrough of art’s positive impact on health beyond its biomedical aspects (Smid & Wydoodt, 2016)? Or is it just a fad? Is it a pretended quick fix to mitigate the feelings of isolation and alienation experienced during a pandemic? Or is a referral system becoming part of culture-based welfare services? What are the implications and opportunities for arts management?

Considering health as an individual’s ability to adapt and take control in life (Huber et al., 2011), the concept of Positive Health has been adopted by policymakers and practitioners to help people find ways to cope with the challenges in their lives (Stekelenburg et al., 2016). Positive Health entails physical and mental health and centralizes around the notions of autonomy and meaningfulness.

Art has been considered to be the means par excellence to achieve this goal. Over the world, interventions are organized with the purpose of contributing to health-related ends (Sonke & Lee, 2015; Thomson et al., 2018). Even if sporadic still, doctors prescribing museum visits as a means to add culture to the care regimen are becoming more common. Experiments have been taking place, by example in the Dutch museum field, to make people with medical issues experience health benefits.

In our ongoing research at Erasmus University Rotterdam, we disentangle the cause-effect relationships between arts participation and health, specifically Positive Health. A Theory of Change allows us to identify the expected impact of specific arts-related interventions on specific health-related outcomes.¹

¹ This text benefits from interviews with representatives of the museums in the Netherlands that are referred to.

Positive Health and art

The concept of Positive Health came into being as an approach to health alternative to what the World Health Organization in 1948 defined as health: a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Such a definition would qualify a large share of the current world population as 'unhealthy' owing to considerable numbers of people aging with chronic illnesses. Machteld Huber therefore pled for a reformulation of health that emphasizes the resilience and the capacity of individuals to maintain and self-manage several aspects of their health, rather than have them chase rainbows (Huber et al., 2011). Positive Health's broad perspective of health entails six dimensions:

- 1) Bodily functions** include feeling healthy and fit, without physical complaints or pain (IPH, 2021). The evidence that passive and active arts participation have positive effects on someone's physical condition is growing (O'Neill, 2010). Specifically, attending cultural events such as art exhibitions, museums or theatres leads to self-perceived improved physical health and vitality.
- 2) Mental well-being** refers to being able to remember things and concentrate, and to being cheerful, accepting oneself and feeling in control (IPH, 2021). For example, women with breast cancer were found to experience the effects of art therapy on their coping mechanisms and feelings of being in control, which are important preconditions for mental well-being (Öster et al., 2006).
- 3) When individuals experience *meaningfulness***, they experience a life in which they are grateful, pursue ideals and feel confident (IPH, 2021). Research demonstrates that people with dementia experience feelings of self-confidence, owing to the sense of participation that is aroused by taking part in museum programs that overcome the limitations of their short-term memories (Mittelman & Epstein, 2009).
- 4) Research shows that happiness is strongly connected to someone's experience of *quality of life***. The Museum of Modern Art in New York collected evidence that people become happy because of the openness, laughter, emotions and conversations that are being aroused by museum visits (Mittelman & Epstein, 2009).
- 5) Social participation** (experiencing social contacts, the support of others and a sense of belonging) works in two directions: it is a health-related effect of attending cultural events, but also a means of nurturing other health dimensions. Attending cultural events

has the potential to improve visitors' perceived social functioning and to mitigate their feelings of loneliness.

6) Someone's *daily functioning* includes elements such as taking care of oneself, knowing one's limitations, adequately managing resources such as time and money, and being able to ask for help (IPH, 2021).

Designing suited and mediated interventions for each group and each intended health outcome

Programs aimed to have a positive impact on physical and mental health and well-being must be tailored to specific needs and abilities of targeted groups and individuals. With its 'Unforgettable' program, the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam organizes guided tours for people with dementia and their relatives during which memories, associations and stories are being evoked and shared. The Head of Education and Inclusion of the museum observes that the program could only be attended by people with reasonable good health conditions, and in the company of caregivers and trained staff members. In order to alleviate the barriers experienced by care homes when they take part in activities on location (they are labor intensive and require a budget and trained staff), the Stedelijk Museum is exploring alternative programs that could take place in the care home, and in that manner are more inclusive. The Head of Public Programmes & Learning of Mauritshuis in The Hague realizes that, although health programs aim to be inclusive, a cognitive distance to the exhibitions can have negative effects, for example when individuals of bicultural backgrounds cannot relate to the artworks. This is also reflected in research: art activities in palliative care settings can have a positive influence on individuals' well-being, but equally may impose challenges when well-being is negatively affected, when experiences are incomprehensible or impeded by logistic hassle related to accessibility (Rodeyns et al., 2021).

Programs aimed to have a positive impact on physical and mental health and well-being must be tailored to specific needs and abilities of targeted groups and individuals.

With its 'museotherapy' program, the Montréal Museum of Fine Arts is a frontrunner in the domain. Innovative activities address various groups with special needs. Creative workshops intend to enhance the self-esteem and socialization of young adults living with speech and auditory process-

ing disorders, or develop feelings of belonging and positive body image of people with eating disorders. For this, the museum joins forces with the medical field. Crucial for these programs to become successful, is specialized mediation. These programs require a deeper form of public engagement than regular customer service does. The museum management must offer training to employees to adequately welcome vulnerable groups, for example with train-the-trainer programs (O'Neill, 2010). It requires learning-by-doing to understand the needs, develop effective activities and train museum and heritage professionals in these new roles.

Institutional partnerships between art and health

Only profound partnerships between the art and health fields can eliminate the practical and mental barriers that impede impactful museum experiences. The Senior Education and Interpretation of Centraal Museum Utrecht explains that good relationships are needed to bring individuals with health problems physically to the museum. A referral system (for example, by doctor's prescriptions) can take up this role. It is a system "that links members of the health service or voluntary organizations with staff in cultural organizations, so that the former can refer their patients/ clients/ members to the latter" (O'Neill, 2010, p. 27). Becoming 'referral-ready' requires that museums need to put in place accessible and efficient methods that enable health institutions and voluntary organizations to refer people to museums. Clear booking procedures and a good network of contacts at both sides are key. Logistic solutions are helpful as well. For example, the Dutch healthcare organization AxionContinu arranges the transportation of patients for their 'Friday Museum Day'. To install partnerships between art and health, both sides should have confidence in the quality of the museum activity and the hospitality that can be foreseen. Museums can learn from each other.

To install partnerships between art and health, both sides should have confidence in the quality of the museum activity and the hospitality that can be foreseen.

In the Netherlands, cultural prescriptions programs are a relatively new modality and only recently adopted by museums as the Rijksmuseum and Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and Van Abbe Museum in Eindhoven. The Head of Public Programmes & Learning explains the motivation of Mauritshuis to

engage with cultural prescriptions: “If the mission of a museum is to make everyone to feel at home or be given the opportunity to be touched and inspired, also through online modalities, then the idea of ‘accessibility’ requires the museum to remove any mental or physical barrier.” Doctor’s prescriptions may serve as a means to overcome the mental and physical distance to the museum.

“If the mission of a museum is to make everyone to feel at home or be given the opportunity to be touched and inspired (...) then the idea of ‘accessibility’ requires the museum to remove any mental or physical barrier.”

At the European level, the Art & Well-being project with Romanian, Slovenian, Belgian and Italian partners explores the potential of art to enhance individual and community well-being. Within a pilot project, tickets for pre-selected cultural events are made available to be redeemed in exchange for prescriptions distributed by care providers as an additional care treatment. It will be the first time that a systematic approach to cultural prescriptions is applied and analysed on its effectiveness. Such insights are needed to understand the conditions for strong partnerships between art and health and to aptly include cultural prescriptions into national systems of culture-based welfare services.

The way ahead: assessing the impact

Museum management practitioners are developing pilot projects to address the specific health needs of various groups and adapt their activities and hospitality services to the interests and abilities of end users, supported by educational and logistic efforts (Rodeyns et al., 2021). Convincing evidence of the impact of art on health is needed still to establish enduring partnerships between institutional art and health partners. Research that demonstrates how and why art contributes to public health and well-being (Daykin et al., 2017) faces challenges. First, studies that attest the positive impact of art on health are at times prone to reversed causality. Is arts participation contributing to health, or are healthier people taking part in cultural activities? Second, the generalizability of the effects and impact of arts-based interventions on health is limited, due to the singularities of such interventions, participants, and health dimensions.

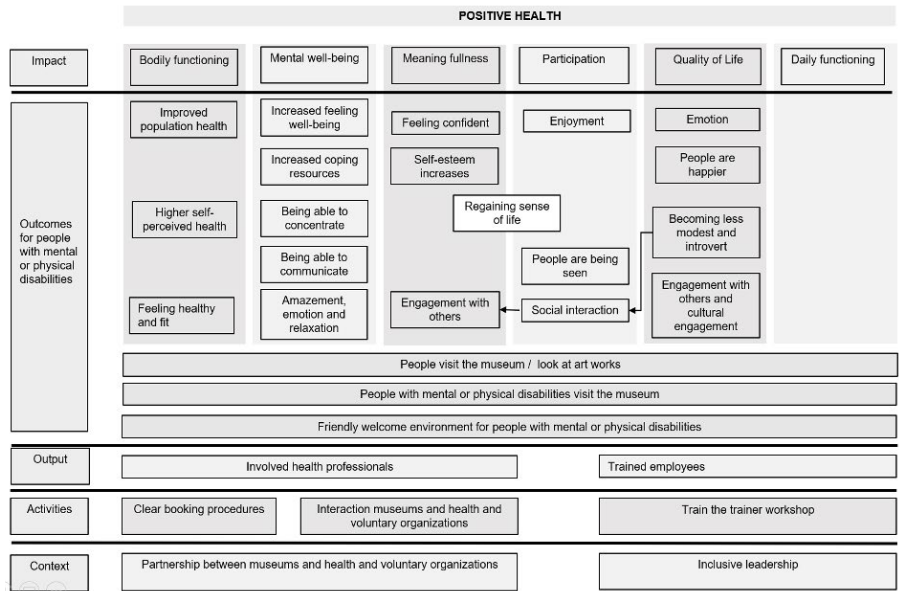


Figure 1: Theory of Change of expected causal relationships between museum activities and Positive Health

Our Theory of Change (figure 1) visualizes the expected causal relationships between museum activities and their intended health effects. Concretely, based on interviews and existing research, it frames the rationale for referral/cultural prescriptions to evidence of Positive Health outcomes. For example, we theorize that quality of life can be positively influenced when individuals are able to engage with culture and other people, which makes them happier, closer to their emotions and possibly less introverted. Measuring the impact of art on Positive Health can occur in various ways, including longitudinal studies in which patients are being followed over time (Johansson et al., 2001), randomized control trial methods (Bygren et al., 2009) and other ways of collecting self-reported data on individuals' physical and mental conditions (Wilkinson et al., 2007). Joining forces and developing mutual understanding of each other's goals are the first steps that museum management and the health sector must take for creating a real impact of art on Positive Health. By virtue of pilot projects and impact assessments that realistically indicate how and why art contributes to dimensions of Positive Health, both sides may realize that they are closer to each other than they think. It takes two to tango but also to bring culture-based welfare services one step closer.

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Life as Heritage

Health in the Agenda of Brazilian Museums During the Pandemic

By Beth Ponte

Museums play a significant role in the cultural ecosystem around the world, because of their capillarity, institutionalism, and diversity, especially in the face of social transformations and challenges. During the pandemic, the museal sector produced useful knowledge to cope with the crisis for all segments of culture. As the first spaces to reopen, they led the discussion on health protocols and economic impacts of the pandemic, such as regulations and research produced by the International Council of Museums (ICOM). In addition, they played a key role as a space for research on coronavirus transmission that served as a reference for the ongoing cultural recovery.

Furthermore, projects and actions in museums in different parts of the world during the pandemic have shown us what the role of the cultural sector may be for preserving people's health and life. For Lucimara Letelier (2020), former institutional director of the Modern Art Museum of Rio de Janeiro and creator of the Museu Vivo movement, the pandemic demonstrated that "museums can bring life when death is so present in everyday life. (...) And this moment reminds us of the responsibility of museums regarding the heritage, (for bringing) an expanded notion of heritage. Life as a heritage."

Projects and actions in museums in different parts of the world during the pandemic have shown us what the role of the cultural sector may be for preserving people's health and life.

This reflection is even more important in a country like Brazil, where the coronavirus and the criminal mismanagement of an anti-scientific government were responsible for the deaths of more than 600,000 people. In a context like this, the preservation of life is up to everyone, and this includes, or should include all museums.

Fortunately, since the beginning of the pandemic, we have seen some inspiring initiatives in Brazil that show how actions related to the defense of life and health promotion can be a way for museums to maintain, expand or build new forms of social relevance for their communities and territories. In this article, we will present three examples of actions developed by different agents of the museal sector in Brazil, related to communication strategies; community engagement and mental health projects and use of spaces to support vaccination campaigns.

Brazilian museums in defense of life

In Brazil, the relationship between the cultural sector and health is still quite incipient. Accordingly, there has been a lack of national evidence-based research projects on the benefits that the arts can offer to health promotion. However, the theme has gained some prominence during the pandemic and the museum sector has contributed to this debate through different activities.

MUSEUMS, HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Museums and galleries have long been actively involved in discussions about art's relationship to health. We selected a few examples of networks, studies, and institutions worth knowing in this matter:

The **National Alliance for Museums, Health & Wellbeing**, a consortium funded by Arts Council England, ran from 2015-2018. The initiative became then the Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance, a national membership organisation representing everyone who believes that creativity and cultural engagement can transform our health and wellbeing.

The award-winning research project **Museums on Prescription** was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and led by Professor Helen Chatterjee from 2014 to 2017. It influenced the participation of museums in 'social prescribing' policies (a primary care practice consisting in referring patients to social activities instead of or as complementary to more 'conventional' forms of medicine).

The study Understanding the Social Wellbeing Impacts of the Nation's Libraries and Museums, by the **Institute of Museum and Library Services**, examines the role of museums and libraries in promoting social wellbeing – in particular, community health – in communities across the United States.

The **Montreal Museum of Fine Arts** has occupied a pioneering role in incorporating art therapy in the museum strategy, in a new concept known as museotherapy.

For example, in May 2021, the **Brazilian Committee of ICOM** (ICOM Brazil) launched the campaign #MuseusPelaVida (Museums for Life), an ongoing action to mobilize museum institutions to disseminate content encouraging the vaccine and the adoption of prevention practices for COVID-19. According to Renata Motta, president of ICOM Brazil, the main motivation for the campaign was the perception that during the pandemic “museums could not be oblivious to the reality in which they are included”. Contributing to this motivation were the results of the ICOM Brazil survey conducted in 2020 with museum audiences. The research states that the audiences expect museums to be more engaged with social agendas.

The idea for the campaign came about in March 2021, when the pandemic completed its first year and when it was still unclear how quickly the vaccination would take place. “So, we thought: how an organization like ICOM Brazil could call museums for an action, inviting them to be more visible and more active at this time?” Renata Motta explained in an interview.

According to Renata Motta, president of ICOM Brazil, the main motivation for the campaign was the perception that during the pandemic “museums could not be oblivious to the reality in which they are included”.

The #MuseuspelaVida campaign was launched on May 10, the week before the International Museum Day (May 18). More than creating and disseminating a simple hashtag, it stimulated the museums to create content about the pandemic involving their collections, to promote digital events and to engage their audiences through content focused on encouraging vaccination and pandemic prevention practices. To elaborate the campaign, a counseling group was formed with the participation of two science museums (Museum of Life/ FioCruz) and Museum of Microbiology/ Butantã Institute) and representatives of the Brazilian Network of University Museums. These partners were responsible for creating a repository of texts and materials about prevention of COVID-19, made available on the ICOM Brasil website. The ICOM Brasil team also produced a toolkit, with a campaign logo and a guide for museums.

The campaign had spontaneous participation of dozens of museums throughout Brazil, of all sizes and types. In the first two months, there

¹ During the vaccination period, the museum space was partially occupied by the work of the vaccination team. It recently reopened to the public as the vaccination schedule met its goal (by the end of September/21, 99.4% of the adult population of Rio de Janeiro was vaccinated with the first dose against COVID-19 and 61% with full immunization).

were about seven hundred publications, 1.7 million people reached, 46,800 interactions on social networks. For Renata Motta, the campaign showed that every museum could do something to defend life. “Our campaign sought to respect the diversity of Brazilian museums and was strategic in its format, considering that most of the museums were closed and did not have staff and or financial resources to develop more complex actions in the fight against the pandemic.”

Beyond social media: museums as vaccination site and community support centers

The ICOM Brazil campaign shows that virtual action, through social media content, could be a viable way for museums to participate in the fight against the pandemic. However, even with the programming suspended and closed for visitation, some Brazilian museums sought to engage more directly and beyond social media. This was the case of two important museums in Rio de Janeiro: the Museu da República (Museum of the Republic) and the Museu da Maré (Maré Museum).

The Museum of the Republic (Museu da República) is a historical museum located in the Catete Palace, former presidential residence (before Brasilia became the capital of Brazil in 1960). It is linked to the Brazilian Institute of Museums and the federal government. Closed to the visitation since March 2020, the Museum operated between February and June 2021 as a vaccination site for COVID-19, through a partnership with the Municipal Health Department and the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz).¹ In 4 months, more than 100,000 people were vaccinated in the museum by



Guided tour at Museu da República with museologist Andre Andion Angulo
© Oscar Liberal

² *Marielle Franco, – an elected councilwoman, black, mother, lesbian, and human rights defender, who was murdered in March 2018 – lived also there. The murder of her was a barbaric crime with political motivations and that to this day remains unclarified. Brazil and the international community are still waiting for the answer to the question: Who killed Marielle Franco?*

the team of the Manoel José Ferreira Municipal Health Center, located in the same neighborhood. The initiative took people for the first time to the museum – and not just those who went to get vaccinated. Doctors and interns of the vaccination team had the opportunity to participate in guided tours in the museum, conducted by museologists.

The case of the Museu da Maré (Maré Museum), also in Rio de Janeiro, is a remarkable example of how museums, regardless of their size, may be relevant to their communities in times of crisis. The Maré Museum was created in 2006, as one of the projects of the Center for Study and Solidary Actions of Maré - CEASM. In the museal typology, it is what is called a “community museum”, created with the aim of preserving and sharing the history, heritage and memory of residents and their territory. The museum is located in the Maré neighborhood, a complex of 17 favelas in Rio de Janeiro’s Northern Zone, where about 140,000 people live.²

Right across the Museum Street there is a public community health center, with whom the Museum had a basic relationship, as well as with other public health centers located in the neighborhood. However, as Luiz Antonio Oliveira, co-founder of the Museum, explained in an interview, the museum’s relationship with the health as a topic changed radically with the arrival of the pandemic: The museum suspended its activities on March 16, 2020, shortly after the pandemic arrived in Brazil. As soon as they became



Museu da Maré © Naldinho Lourenço, Attribution, via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

aware that a civil society collective was conducting a communication campaign about the pandemic in the neighborhood, the Museum team decided to support the initiative through voluntary work and with financial support to help in the purchase of paints, tracks and sound car used to communicate to the Maré population the ways to protect themselves from COVID-19. This initiative gave rise to the Frente de Mobilização da Maré (Maré Mobilization Front), a collective of ten organizations in the neighborhood, of which the Museum was a central agent for receiving donations and raising funds for other actions. “We were not protagonists, we always saw ourselves as partners of a great action,” says Luiz Oliveira.

Between May and November 2020, the Museum centralized the donation of more than 8,000 food and hygiene kits, aimed at more than 4,000 families in the community. The Museum’s warehouse and administrative areas were made available to the campaign team and to store the donations. The museum team, composed of twenty people, also participated in the registration of families and the organization of logistics for the distribution of donations, which were delivered to the families’ homes. In addition, the Museum shared information on its social networks and promoted online debates about COVID-19 prevention.

“... all the work we do in Maré has a lot to do with our life and because of that the Museum should be open to any social demand that is socially relevant. Even if simply, we are always trying to focus on the necessary issues.”

Because of this work, the Museum created in 2021, with financial support from the Fiocruz Foundation, the Maré do Bem Viver (Living Well Maré) project. This provides psychosocial support to 150 families in the community, in addition to informing and enabling access to public health services and creating therapeutic groups to address issues such as grief, anxiety, chronic diseases, and others. The project lasts 10 months, during which a multidisciplinary health team with psychologists, social workers, nutritionist, and doctors will support family members and strengthen the museum’s relationship with healthcare institutions, which will support the project’s actions. “Before the pandemic, the Maré Museum did not deal with public health”, explains Luiz Oliveira, “but all the work we do in Maré has a lot to do with our life and because of that the Museum should be

open to any social demand that is socially relevant. Even if simply, we are always trying to focus on the necessary issues. That's how we understand the issue of health at the time of the pandemic.”

Conclusion

These examples show that, as a catalyst for transformation, the pandemic can also be an opportunity to broaden our understanding of the social role of museums. The pandemic is not over and there is still much to be done to deal with the consequences of this moment on the health, both physical and mental, of a vast number of people around the world. The question remains: What can museums continue to do?

Unfortunately, we know that these initiatives were still an exception among the more than 3800 Brazilian museums, and it is hard to predict the extent to which these examples and their effects have changed the Brazilian museum landscape or will change it in the future. But that is precisely why they are worth sharing: they should serve as an inspiration and a call for action for all the museums in a still much challenging period of our history.

Through the integration of health as an important and transversal agenda for culture, museums and other cultural organizations can help themselves and society in a future in which the pandemic is not our main collective challenge in the long run. To enter and navigate the unpredictability of our future, there will be no social relevance that does not start from the understanding of life, of each of us and of the planet, as our main heritage.

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Breathing Through the Pandemic

Performance Arts Challenges and Responses to the Mental Health Implications of COVID-19

By Helen Rusak, Renée Newman, Frances Barbe, Peta Blevins and Talisha Goh

Starting with a series of state-wide lockdowns in March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic presented a series of severe disruptions to the Australian cultural and creative industries. Further, the ongoing effects of the pandemic, such as economic downturns, changes in consumption patterns, and new health and social distancing requirements continue to shape the ways in which audiences engage with creativity and culture. In this regard, the performing arts in Australia are an industry that has been particularly affected by pandemic containment measures such as event closures and cancellations. Which experiences artists and cultural workers in particular have had in connection with this, was investigated by a project that was conducted by researchers at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA), Edith Cowan University during 2020-2021. It focused on responses by the performing arts community to the disruption caused by COVID-19 and the effects upon the arts workers health and wellbeing.¹

WAAPA is well positioned to engage with industry through the various advisory committees and industry links through the arts management course coordinated by the lead investigator and through performance course links of the investigators in performance research. In addition, we would like to acknowledge that this research was conducted on the Country of the Whadjuk Noongar people with the full understanding that Noongar people have been contributing to the cultural landscape for tens of thousands of years. We pay our respect to custodians past, present and emerging, and extend this to all First Nation Peoples.

The Purpose of Research

The purpose of the research was to inform Government policy and arts industry stakeholders in an environment that has faced major disruption to the delivery of programs and performances, as well as to advance knowledge, by:

¹ The research findings will be launched in December and available on the WAAPA website under research <https://www.waapa.ecu.edu.au>.

- 1.** Examining individual and industry responses and adaptations to COVID-19 and the challenges confronting the performing arts sector
- 2.** Understanding the value of the arts industry in WA and how it plays a role in the development of place and community
- 3.** Providing a framework for government policy in response to the needs of the sector to ensure a sustainable arts ecology into the future

We aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the live performing arts sector in WA responded to COVID-19 resulting in these outcomes:

- > Devise innovative approaches to the telling of artists and arts workers lived experience through case study and filmic representations
- > Capture the mental health and well-being of individuals from the sector through primary data gathering
- > Gain greater insight into the sector's response to COVID from case studies of key arts organisations
- > Provide recommendations for WA government from the findings of the research

Methodology and procedure

A mixed methodology was employed involving both traditional qualitative and quantitative data gathering and analysis as well as creative research methods involving:

- > Survey questionnaires and focus groups and semi structured individual, paired, or small group interviews investigating mental health and wellbeing of performing artists and arts workers.
- > In depth case studies of selected major, small to medium and independent arts organisations.
- > Secondary data including research into cultural policy, economic and social impacts of COVID upon the arts.
- > Content analysis including websites, media documents and research relating to the response from the arts community to the pandemic.
- > Filmed interviews of five performing artists – interviewed by professional actor, ABC radio broadcaster and storytelling expert Andrea Gibbs and filmed by professional filmmaker Fionn Mulholland resulting in the production of five short films providing insight into the lived experience of performing artists during the pandemic.

¹ Drug abuse in this context is understood as the use of illegal drugs, or legal drugs beyond prescribed use (Maxwell et al., 2015, pp. 107–108).

Mental Health in the Performing Arts Before COVID-19

COVID-19 has exacerbated social, economic, and mental health problems long-recognised throughout the performing arts sector before the pandemic. Prior to COVID-19, performing arts workers had been identified as a population with higher rates of anxiety, depression, and substance abuse than the general population. Working in the performing arts can be socially isolating, due to a culture of individualism, high competition, and fleeting work relationships. (Kegelaers, Jessen, Van Audenaerde, & Oudejans, 2021; Maxwell, Seton, & Szabó, 2015; Robb, Due, & Venning, 2018; Van den Eynde et al., 2016; van Rens & Heritage, 2021). Similarly, issues such as alcohol abuse were reported to be much higher in performing artists than the general population. For example, a 2013 survey of actors found 11.6% of men and 6.7% of women presented as “high risk” or “likely dependent” in their alcohol consumption (Maxwell et al., 2015, pp. 105–107). Additionally, drug abuse was found in 78.4% of a sample of actors (Maxwell et al., 2015, pp. 107–108).² Actors have acknowledged this culture surrounding alcohol and drug use, which could be used as a means to network or bond with colleagues, but had the potential to impact on health and work performance (Robb et al., 2018).

Criticism and bullying within the internal power structures were found to affect the mental health of entertainment support workers.

However, such a culture is by no means isolated to acting: As research by Van den Eynde et al. (2016) report higher rates of mental illness and substance abuse performing artists in Australia compared to the general public, due in part to the high amount of competition, perceived risk, and abuse of power. These factors may lead performers to hide their perceived weaknesses, resulting in further isolation and exacerbation of mental illnesses. Further, criticism and bullying within the internal power structures were found to affect the mental health of entertainment support workers, and hard physical labour coupled with unpredictable schedules and long shifts impacted the wellbeing of technical operators. Overall, 38% of surveyed entertainment industry workers were reported to have a mental health diagnosis, with depression and anxiety being most common. In this sample, 44% of performing artists reported moderate to severe symptoms of anxiety (compared to 3.7% of the general population) and 15.2% reported moderate to severe symptoms

of depression (compared to 3% of the general population) (Van den Eynde et al., 2016, pp. 79-83). The findings indicated specific occupational and cultural factors in the performing arts led to increases in symptoms of mental illness and substance abuse, concluding that, even prior to COVID, the Australian performing arts industry was in severe distress.

Situation in the performing arts during the pandemic

The economic position of performing arts workers has been disproportionately devastated by the pandemic. Therefore, it is no surprise that the mental health and wellbeing of individuals working in the sector has been seriously impacted. The economic impact of COVID-19 and subsequent ramifications have been a focus of media reporting, documenting the feelings of panic and loss due to the pandemic, and the sudden cancellations of festivals, concerts, and events when lockdowns started in March and April 2020 (Boland, 2020; Brunt & Nelligan, 2020; Caust, 2020; Fairley, 2020). Later in the year, media focussed upon how this economic devastation caused stress and deterioration in mental health across the sector (Donoughue & Jefferson, 2020; Flore, Gaylor, & Hendry, 2020). The loss of work, economic uncertainty, loss of occupational identity, and sense of purpose can lead to demoralisation and depression (Fisher et al., 2020). The Government “JobKeeper” support offered by the Australian Government from April 2020-March 2021 required evidence of regular employment which is not typical in the performing arts sector. Also, the scheme did not allow those with multiple income sources to apply which is also common in the arts. This effectively excluded many performing arts workers who derive income from multiple, casual streams of work (Throsby & Petetskaya, 2017). A lack of appropriate subsidies and support for performing arts workers furthered artists’ sense of being “overlooked” by the government, while those who were able to apply for Government support were hit by its discontinuation in March 2021 (Donoughue & Shneier, 2021; Poloni, 2021; Scully, 2021).

The loss of work, economic uncertainty, loss of occupational identity, and sense of purpose can lead to demoralisation and depression.

As COVID-19 cases increased and lockdowns were re-introduced throughout the country in 2020 and 2021, performing artists and audiences voiced their fatigue, anger, and disappointment at repeated cancellations, continued

uncertainty, and the losses of work, business, and careers (Elsworthy, 2021). Continuous uncertainty and lack of appropriate support for performing arts workers, combined with doubt about the sector's future throughout the pandemic has taken a toll on the mental health of the whole sector. Increased investment in mental health support for artists that meets the specific demands of the performing arts sector is warranted.

Conclusion

The creative sector is entrepreneurial (Campbell & Rusak, 2021) and resilient, and nurturing it has potential for economic growth, bringing with it not only wealth-creation, but also growth in non-financial societal benefits. In the context of a post-pandemic recovery, it could be argued that the social benefits are in fact more important than the financial benefits.

The research found that the arts sector in WA was devastated by the lockdowns and captures in perpetuity the lived experiences of artists during this exceptional time of COVID 19. The response to our research indicates a broader shift in the culture of performing arts as individuals openly discuss how their mental health has been shaped by the nature of the industry, the extreme stresses caused by the pandemic, and their willingness to help each other out and support to their fellow artists and communities.

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Dancing for De-Stressing

Arts Participation and Young Adults' Psychological Wellbeing During COVID-19

By Anna Bernadska, Giesela Grumbach, Linda Campos-Moreira, Maristela Zell, Lisa Hollis-Sawyer

In this article, we focus on the psychological wellbeing of university students in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our findings discuss the factors that affect the well-being of young adults, how they participated in the arts, and the benefits of arts participation.

Following Huppert (2009), we define psychological wellbeing as “feeling good and functioning effectively” (p. 137). Feeling “good” involves a wide range of emotions from happiness to motivation and engagement; while “functioning effectively” refers to having a sense of direction in one’s life, being able to achieve goals, and experience positive relationships (Huppert, 2009). Arts participation defined in broad terms refers to a combination of arts attendance, art learning, personal art-making and performance, and engagement in arts through electronic media (Novak-Leonard & Brown, 2011).

Background

There is growing evidence that arts participation is beneficial for young adults’ mental health and psychological wellbeing. In clinical settings, arts-based interventions supplement the treatment of mental health conditions of varying degrees of severity. The reported benefits of such interventions include self-expression and self-discovery that aid young adults’ psychological and social recovery (Van Lith et al., 2012). In particular, music, is known for alleviating stress and anxiety and reducing depressive symptoms in a wide range of patients, including individuals with difficulties in verbal expression (Archambault et al., 2019). Similarly, creative writing, drawing, and painting are effective for self-reflection and processing negative emotions associated with past trauma (Synnes et al., 2020). There is also strong evidence of the positive effects of voice movement therapy in treating young adults with complex mental health conditions (Martin et al., 2013).

In non-clinical settings, creative workshops, theater, film, and engagement in visual arts are used for psychosocial rehabilitation of young adults and as a safe outlet for youth struggling with homelessness and substance abuse (Ersing, 2009; Tyson & Baffour, 2002). Such programs improve young people's self-esteem, self-regulation skills, social functioning, resilience to adverse events, and overall wellbeing (Archambault et al., 2015, 2020; Macpherson et al., 2016; Rapp-Paglicci et al., 2011; Wood et al., 2013). Furthermore, arts-based interventions in non-clinical settings help to reduce mental health stigma among young adults while increasing their engagement in mental healthcare (Cole et al., 2018). In addition to guided interventions, there is evidence that young adults tend to engage in creative activities on their own as a way of coping with mental health crises (Tyson & Baffour, 2004).

Arts-based interventions in non-clinical settings help to reduce mental health stigma among young adults while increasing their engagement in mental healthcare.

Our study adds to this literature by highlighting the benefits of arts participation for young adults during the COVID-19 pandemic. Research shows mental health and overall wellbeing of youth worldwide declined during the pandemic. Adverse effects included feelings of loneliness and isolation, heightened anxiety, depression, and increased instances of harmful behaviors and substance abuse (Glowacz & Schmits, 2020; Horigian et al. 2021; Liang et al. 2020; Romm et al., 2020; Shanahan, 2020).

Data and Methods

Data for this study were collected in the spring of 2021 as part of a larger National Endowment for the Arts-funded project exploring the role of arts participation in students' college experience and academic success. Undergraduate students from two medium-sized public universities situated in the Midwestern United States were invited to take an online survey. The institutions selected represent diverse student bodies. The sample consisted of 435 undergraduate students (7.9% freshmen, 10.4% sophomore, 29.2% junior, and 52.4% seniors). The sample demographic characteristics are presented in the table below.

Table 1: Sample demographic characteristics

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS	N = 435
Gender	
Female	297 (68.3%)
Male	96 (22.1%)
Gender non-binary, transgender, gender fluid	14 (3.2%)
Preferred not to disclose	28 (6.4%)
Race/Ethnicity	
Latine/x	138 (31.7%)
White	117(26.9%)
Black/African American	80 (18.4%)
Asian	47 (10.8%)
Mixed/Multicultural/Other	25 (5.8%)
Missing	28 (6.4%)
Major/Areas of Study	
Humanities/Social sciences	177 (40.6%)
Science	55 (12.6%)
Business	51 (11.7%)
Arts	49 (11.3%)
Education	26 (6.0%)
Community health and nursing	17 (3.9%)
Undeclared/Undecided	55 (12.6%)
Missing	5 (1.1%)

The research team surveyed students to learn about arts participation and student experiences during COVID-19. Narrative data were analyzed by four coders using an open and axial coding approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) consistent with qualitative methods. Initially, 30% of responses were coded to establish a coding scheme. Then, the coders used a comparative approach to identify salient concepts across all responses. Finally, the concepts were refined and grouped in larger themes. The inter-coder reliability was calculated at 90%. In the section below, we present preliminary results relevant to the focus of this study.

Findings

Effects on mental health

Over 60% of students in our sample commented on feeling disconnected, isolated, alienated, and left out during the pandemic. Some students mentioned experiencing “much more stress” during the pandemic and described themselves as “feeling emotionally stunted and mentally unhealthy.” Lack of focus and motivation to learn was also a common response as evidenced in the following quote: “I feel completely burnt-out and lack motivation.”

Loss of identity as a college student, diminished sense of belonging to the university community, inability to use campus support services, disrupted academic routines, and personal challenges were identified as factors affecting students' wellbeing. Campus closures and the transition to remote learning made students feel that they were "missing out" on the real college experience. Students commented on how they missed college resources and infrastructure, interacting with peers, socializing before and after classes, attending campus events, and walking on campus grounds. To put it in one student's words, "It hurts to see the inviting campus empty and without my resources down the hall." Or, as another student put it, "I feel very alienated from the university like I'm not even in school anymore. I miss both the academic and social environments of being at the university, and I wish it was safe to go back." Senior students reminisced about past college expediences, "I felt like I lost my community and struggled to put it back together through online means." First year students felt they were denied the opportunity to develop a bond with the university. As one new student described it, "It is hard to feel connected because the only university I've ever known is my bedroom." Some students explicitly attributed their poor mental health to the inability to attend campus services and support groups in person.

"It is hard to feel connected because the only university I've ever known is my bedroom."

Further, students reported feeling stressed and worried about succeeding academically in an online environment. Students reported that online classes limited their ability to communicate effectively with professors and peers, and made it harder to work on group projects, do homework, access books online, manage their time effectively, and establish academic discipline. Worries about academic performance were also expressed, "My grades have slipped tremendously, and I don't have enough credits to be in my right grade level." Another student wrote, "Being remote is exhausting and I feel like I cannot learn anything." These concerns compounded the feeling of being misunderstood, isolated from peers, impersonal, and feeling "invisible" to professors. As one student said, "I had one class where we never turned our cams on. The professor would never recognize me outside the class."

Lastly, students described the challenges they faced outside the classroom, including taking care of sick loved ones, worrying about being infected by

coronavirus, losing a job, experiencing financial setbacks, having to move out of the dormitory, not having a safe place to study, and dealing with pre-existing health conditions and disability that were made worse during the pandemic. These findings are consistent with other reports indicating the pandemic worsened mental health of college students in the United States by disrupting their lives, support systems, and academic routines (Lederer et al., 2021).

Effects on and through art participation

When asked how COVID-19 affected their participation in the arts, most students commented on the inability to attend live events, perform on stage, and practice art in a group setting. The loss of studio space for making art, including painting, ceramics, printmaking, and design, was also reported as a negative outcome of the pandemic. Students described the change in emotional terms as “disheartening,” “huge,” “severe,” “hard,” “horrible,” while recollecting the memories of attending theater performances, comedy shows, museums, concerts, and outdoor events. What students appeared to be missing the most was social experience associated with in-person attendance of art events and participation in collective art making, such as performing in a band or a choir. As one student commented, “Art is fun when collaborating and usually the more the merrier, however, under social distancing rules, collaboration is harder to accomplish.”

“Since I was stuck in the house for most of quarantine, I spent a good amount of time creating.”

At the same time, some students discovered that they had more time to engage in arts at home during the lockdown. As one student noted, “Since I was stuck in the house for most of quarantine, I spent a good amount of time creating.” Some students used technology as a replacement for live events. They reported viewing art events on Zoom “from the convenience of their homes” and using the Internet and social media for learning about arts and art-making, including playing musical instruments. Other students chose to be “hands-on” and use “what they have” to make crafts, produce videos, write and record music. One student described their experience, “I turned my closet into a recording booth. Being able to record whenever I feel like has made me participate more.” Students also found comfort in making crafts, doing makeup, crocheting, sketching, drawing, painting, making

collages, and jewelry. Yet, other students were writing, playing musical instruments, singing, and dancing. The data suggest that young people used art as a means of coping with stress and to improve their mood, “I dance for de-stressing, to upbeat my mood, and feel happy” and another student stated, “Art is my way to de-stress.”

Limitations and Conclusions

One limitation is that male students and first year students were underrepresented in the sample. A larger and more representative sample may help to broaden the generalizability of the study. Also, including focus group data would deepen our understanding of arts participation. Future research may focus on comparing students’ experiences in the arts by type and frequency of participation and exploring which aspects of arts participation have the most potential for improving wellbeing.

Nevertheless, our preliminary results support existing research about the negative psychological effects of the pandemic on college students and highlight the increased opportunities for some students to engage in art making and attend virtual art events. Our findings suggest that participation in the arts offered students comfort and relief from stressors and sadness.

Colleges and universities should consider integrating art in guided health interventions using resources of university wellness centers, counseling programs, and collaborating arts organizations.

Consistent with prior research, our findings highlight the potential of art to serve as a medium for self-care. Colleges and universities should consider integrating art in guided health interventions using resources of university wellness centers, counseling programs, and collaborating arts organizations. Universities should also promote art among students not only as an avenue for creative self-expression but also as a means of healing. Another recommendation is to explore how arts participation can be infused with instruction to support student development. Infusing arts participation into all aspects of students’ collegial experiences has practical implications for addressing students’ mental health and psychological needs in times of crises.

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Leadership and many business principles are embedded in the practice of Tai Chi. Accordingly, Tai Chi can greatly improve leadership performance and attitudes while building the capacity for establishing and fostering a healthy organizational culture. To understand how this can be accomplished, Stan Renard talks with Yang style Tai Chi master practitioner and teacher Sifu¹ Nameer Kirma.

Leading with Flow

Lessons Learned from Tai Chi

An interview by Stan Renard

Dear Sifu Nameer Kirma, what is Tai Chi and what are the benefits practicing it?

T'ai Chi Ch'uan is the full name, which translates to Supreme Ultimate Boxing or Fist (Koh, 1981, Man-Ch'ing and Smith, 2011). It is an internal martial art that has long roots in Chinese history, tradition, and culture related to health as well as self-defense. The two main styles of Tai Chi are Yang style Tai Chi, which is what we do, and the Chen style Tai Chi, which is older (Hao and Xu, 2015). Tai Chi has been relegated more recently as an older people activity, but it is beneficial for all age groups and as a way for people to come together as a community and practice together (Bratun and Asaba, 2008). It is important to have a good group to practice together because there is feedback that happens between the students doing the Tai Chi form. This enhances the level of awareness of self, surroundings, and connectivity to others (Ramachandran et. al, 2007). Due to its slow meditative nature Tai Chi has several benefits: It can improve your focus and concentration. Deep breathing helps with improving blood circulation and reducing tension (Kuramoto, 2006, Bu et. al, 2010). The different postures and movements can enhance flexibility, balance, and awareness of your body mechanics and surroundings (Cf. Figure 1). Studies in medical journals have suggested that it can also help with lowering blood pressure, management of diabetes, and in some cases also reducing chronic pain (Bak et. al, 2012, Li et. al, 2012, Burschka et. al, 2014, Miller et. al, 2020). Finally, it is a comprehensive self-defense system (Man-Ch'ing and Smith, 2011).

¹ Sifu (in Cantonese) or Shifu (in Mandarin) is title for a skillful person or master teacher (Dell, 2005).

What are the overall principles of Tai Chi?

One of the main principles is attaining rootedness and centeredness in the body, the self, and the mind. In Tai Chi, we refer to the mind as the general, where the mind dictates the flow of the movements in the body connected with the breath. So, your mind is guiding your movements. It is your responsibility as a leader of yourself to move with the flow of the form naturally in a continuous manner and without punctuation points in the movements. You become less a master and more of a guide. So, separate movements dissolve in the process. You move from that center and try not to overextend your intent and energy beyond your sphere of influence. The Tai Chi symbol designates the complementary energies of yin and yang (Wolf et. al, 1997). Yang being expanding, outward, substantial, and yin being insubstantial, contracting, and containing. The balance between yin and yang is where Tai Chi gets its name and through this balance you attain centeredness (Cf. Figure 2). Of course, it is also about the interplay between those two energies, a “give and take” of sorts, which is a central component of the Tai Chi practice. This is evident, for example, in keeping your head up while sinking your torso. The yielding-to-follow concept applied in two-person exercises called push-hands is another one. In solo practice you take time from your schedule to invest in the Tai Chi work - and that is a give and take. You take the motivation and turn it into work, give and take, especially in our schedules these days.

Does Tai Chi have applications that can be used for leadership training?

Yes. Tai Chi can be used to train leadership skills beginning with the solo form. It requires that you, the person, be a leader of yourself, be responsi-



Figure 1: Sifu Nameer Kirma demonstrates the “Single Whip” (left)

Figure 2: Tai Chi Symbol (or Yin Yang Symbol) (right)

ble for yourself, be dedicated to the work, but also apply your intent to the movements and the flow. Thus, Tai Chi can help with leadership starting with self-understanding (Chen and An, 2009). Another aspect of leadership is outside the Tai Chi form with push-hands exercises. Push-hands are two people drills either choreographed or free style (Chen et. al, 2010). The basic idea is that two people understand the energy that is interplaying between them. One must 'listen' to the other person's energy through contact. It is a physical type of communication where 'listening' is an important aspect of the practice, where by understanding yourself you can interpret the energy that the other person is inputting into this relationship. By being able to listen, by being able to apply the other person's energy, you can put yourself in a position of leadership. An important concept here is that of yielding-to-follow. That is s a very important concept in Tai Chi and in push hands. You yield to that energy, but you follow up by complimenting it, deflecting and counteracting.

Is there always a leader or is leadership shared?

In performing the Tai Chi form, the senior students, usually most advanced, are put in the two front corners and they dictate the pace of the whole group. Going into the right direction the person on right would be leading. Going towards the left direction, the person on left would be leading. So, they are the distinct points of leadership if you want in that setting, but they also become blended as part of the group. There is synchronization that happens among the group. Sometimes it is difficult for an outsider to ascertain who the leader is in a group that has been practicing for a while.



Figure 3: Sifu Nameer Kirma demonstrates "Play the Pipa" (left)



Figure 4: Sifu Nameer Kirma leads his class practicing "Brush Knee Twist" (right)

There are no obvious milestones or rewards in Tai Chi such as a belt system. Then, what are the goals of practicing Tai Chi?

There have been attempts to put a belt system in Tai Chi, but traditionally that is not looked favorably upon. The reward is more internal. It is you finding the best place where you can be centered, seeking to open more layers into yourself (Cf. Figure 3). As an internal martial art, it is appropriate that the rewards in Tai Chi also go beyond self to being part of and contributing to a community. And that goes from the teacher, the leader in the group, to the senior students, to even the beginners because they are also contributing by their presence. So your presence in the group, aside from the social aspect of it, has a very positive impact for the whole group (Cf. Figure 4). A lot of it is internal but that community interaction is also essential.

In your experience, what are the main motivators for people to persevere with their practice of Tai Chi?

To have self-motivation and a drive are important factors, but they are not the only ones that contribute (Roeser and Peck, 2009). A lot of people come with different expectations, even though they have the drive. After a while it does not suit them because they are not able to open their mind to the possibilities that are to come. And that brings a very important aspect in Tai Chi learning and practice: “faith” – not in the religious sense in this case. It is about the faith in oneself and the ability to unravel the layers of this art that we call Tai Chi. This interplay between the person and art is really a major motivating factor. And it does not necessarily always correlate with self-motivation. Those who stay with it want to see what comes up next. They have a deep desire or force to learn, to understand, to open, to understand better the work, to understand oneself and understand oneself within the process (Posadzki and Jacques, 2017).

You also have a leadership position, and it probably comes with its share of challenges. How is Tai Chi helping you in your professional life?

Much of what we learn consciously and subconsciously in Tai Chi spills into everyday life and situations at work, where there is potential for conflict with different personalities interacting. For me, one of the main things that I have learned from Tai Chi is being able to take a deep breath and work from my center rather than allowing the situation to take control of me. Taking that breath, taking that moment, and centering yourself can play a big role in understanding that what people are throwing at you comes from their point of imbalance. That understanding comes from push hands training because much of the physical work manifests itself from

that emotional center that a person is emitting. How a person pushes, how a person stands, how a person walks, how a person looks at you. All that stems from an emotional center different people have. Understanding that from my own sphere of influence, I become less critical, and that helps defuse a situation rather than add fuel to the fire.

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