

Editorial

Online Art Projects

During COVID-19

Bussakorn Binson* Executive Director

This volume 22 of the Journal of Urban Culture Research was published during the Covid-19 pandemic, so as Chief Editor, I would like to consider the current arts event scene in terms of how it impacts what artists are doing.

In a time of crisis, people's well-being is of paramount importance, socializing among art lovers is not possible. People are unable to meet and do social activities together, face-to-face. Consequently, those events related to art and culture, such as visual art, performances, music, and exhibitions have been cancelled, and those that were not cancelled moved online. And the artists, of course still had to find ways to express themselves, and many have done this by transforming the above face-to-face format into online activities.

All forms of online art and cultural events that have appeared in recent months reflect the creativity associated with what some call the “new normal” way of life. For instance, I would like to share some examples of online art projects during the pandemic which were undertaken by several groups of doctoral students from Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts at Chulalongkorn University. These art-related projects aimed to reduce the stress people feel in society when they must quarantine at home.

The 'Smile' project enabled participants to send photos of people smiling to a project manager via the social media platform Facebook. Team members then assembled thousands of smile pictures from participants and created a video clip accompanied by a song composed by the group. The aim was to show how to create a program in which happiness or rather the feeling of happiness can help participants overcome the stress of being afraid of the pandemic, or the loneliness caused by not being able to meet friends for a long time.

* Bussakorn Binson, Executive Director JUCR, Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand.
email: bsumrongthong@yahoo.com.

On the creative arts side, another interesting project was an unusual fashion show. It was designed to invite people stuck in their quarantined homes to look for everyday items found all around, such as pots, pans, broomsticks, and bed sheets, and then use these items to decorate their bodies and walk like a model in their house. Participants were encouraged to create a video clip or still photographs and send them to an administrator using Facebook. Team members then creatively edited and mixed these fashion video clips and photographs to entertain participants and their families and friends on Facebook and Instagram social media platforms. This project became popular among fashion lovers as it provided entertainment for those stuck at home and an opportunity for fashion designers to display their creativity.

For the performing arts, one team created an interesting dance project. Using one song/tune, participants were encouraged to create their own choreography for a dance based on the tune they were sent. Participants made their own video clips, which were edited together by the team. The resultant video combined all the various dances into one artistic vision. This kind of artistic project enables those people who are interested in dancing to share their ideas and productions together on social media without having met in person. It was very relaxing to see one's own work combined with the work of others.

One project focused on music and movement, for which participants were asked to submit video clips of 'natural movement' in everyday life that would 'fit' with music provided by the project manager on Facebook. Movement such as playing music by hitting a glass or a bottle of wine with chopsticks to present and explore different tonality, tapping eggs in time to the music, using the body as a musical instrument, brushing teeth according to the rhythm of music and so on. The production combined the video clips of different participants in time to the music.

Another interesting project showed how art can be utilized to raise awareness of proper hygiene in everyday life during the current Covid-19 outbreak. Participants joined the project by sending video clips or still photographs of themselves acting creatively when following pandemic protocols such as hand washing, wearing a mask and social distancing. They sent their clips and stills to the project manager for editing before publishing the results on Facebook. The production, which emphasized fun and humor, not only entertained, it also helped create a sense of togetherness during difficult circumstances.

Sharing work of arts in an online space was the focus for another project which encouraged participants to submit their artworks, created under the theme of Covid-19 prevention. Once the works are submitted, they will be kept and exhibited on a social media platform. The project's aim is to reduce the stress caused by the pandemic by opening a space for artists or art lovers to present and showcase their creative work.

The above projects are examples of art-based activities that present a challenging opportunity for art students to be creative and use their artistic knowledge to design online art projects that comfort and inspire those who are stuck at home for extended periods of time. Artists must be adaptable, and these projects show how art can help people in society in a time of crisis.