

Editorial

Art as Soft Power

Bussakorn Binson⁺ Executive Director

In the midst of the current crises that has entered the human world there are three sides – three wars. We have a pandemic affecting the mind, emotions and feelings of souls in our global society, an enlarging territorial war in several countries and an all-inclusive war of potentially irreversible global warming. Humans and nature are being pushed to their limits of adaptability.

The world's population are now considered vulnerable and at risk of mental and economic breakdowns. When people are affected by war stimuli, climate disasters, or Covid-19 they can be motivated to heal one's fragile heart. Medicine cannot cure poverty just as modern technology is unable to restore the inaccessibilities experienced by the underprivileged.

'Soft Power' as set by Joseph Nye mentions three pillars – political values, culture and foreign policy. The culture of art reflects the emotions, values and opinions of the artist as manifested in their painting, performances, music etc. Art is a multi-layered vehicle of communication that reach and connect to people in many ways.

Art and music therapy approaches can reach one's heart in many ways; as form of a listener, a singer, a viewer, a creator – a participant has spread to all continents. For example, at Chulalongkorn University in its Master of Arts in Music Therapy and Master of Arts in Arts Therapy programs aims to address this need with skilled graduates as music therapists or art therapists to treat citizens burdened with emotional, mental or social challenges. While the origin of art and music therapy occurred in the West it can be adapted and effectively applied as a healing tool worldwide. In our previous volumes of the Journal of Urban Culture Research, there are many interesting articles on music and art that clearly demonstrated the healing benefits of music and art therapy approaches through research.

Locally here in Thailand one month after the Nongbua Lamphu shooting (Oct 6, 2022) in which 37 victims were killed by a 34 year old recently fired policeman facing drug charges; our Mobile Art Therapy group (from the Emili Sagol Creative Art Therapy Research & Innovation for well-being Center, Chulalongkorn University)

⁺ Bussakorn Binson, Executive Director JUCR; Dean, Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts; Chair of FAA-Emili Sagol Research and Innovation for Well-being Center Chulalongkorn University, Thailand. Co-Director: Urban Resilience Research Center, Osaka Metropolitan University, Japan & Chulalongkorn University, Thailand.
email: bsumrongthong@yahoo.com website: <http://pioneer.chula.ac.th/~sbussako/index.html>.

held art therapy workshops for the survivors to mitigate their lingering trauma. The activities consisted of event drawing, drama, movement and music. See Youtube.



Figure 1. Left, Nong Bua Lamphu nursery school has been "broken" by a murderer. Over 20 children killed. Right, *Event Drawing*: A art therapy session for survivors of the school's "killing field" in Nov. 2022 conducted the Art Therapy Group of FAA-Emili Sagol Research & Innovation for Well-being Center.



Figure 2. While individual *event drawings* hang as a backdrop, a group music therapy session is held with angklung instruments. Right, a survivor's *event drawing*.



Figure 3. Another *event drawing*, left. Right, the art therapy group with participating survivors..

In conclusion, when the world is in turmoil from crises, it is a matter for each human being to find a way to heal themselves from the suffering caused by that turbulence. If the leader of each country could offer more attention and support to art and culture as well as encourage the use of it to bolster social well-being, we would have more *Soft Power* to heal our fragile physical & emotional world.