

Jing Yang

Benefit-oriented Socially Engaged Art

Two Cases of Social Work Experiment



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Jing Yang

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ABSTRACT

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Over the past half century, numerous art practices have expanded the field of art production across disciplinary boundaries and become more involved with non-art social institutions and organizations. These practices are often undertaken beyond the conventional venues such as galleries and museums. Focusing on dealing with social and political issues, these practices depend on, and value, the collaborative participation of people in communities. This unprecedented tendency has changed all aspects of art making, perception and distribution. These practices together demonstrate a multiform and contingent nature. Under the umbrella term “socially engaged art”, there are a variety of projects that differ from each other based on their purposes and, consequently, working methods. This dissertation sets forth the concept of benefit-oriented socially engaged art (BOSEA). Based on in-depth case study of the *Art for the Disabled Scheme*, and the *Art and Culture Companions*, this dissertation develops a better understanding of benefit-oriented socially engaged art practices within the framework of socially engaged art and their position within the whole scene of contemporary culture and art. Benefit-oriented socially engaged art practices aim at bringing benefits to individuals and communities through art-based services. These practices are often ignored and excluded from art discussions due to their practical purposes and functional mechanisms. This research reveals that although situated on a fuzzy territory between art and non-art, between art and social work, benefit-oriented socially engaged art practices still embody aesthetic value. The blossom of these projects reveals a new thinking about the relationship between contemporary art and society – art is used as a service to enhance the well-being of people, and a new way for artists to adopt creativity for providing holistic solutions in order to make social change on the grassroots level. The study of benefit-oriented practices points to an open future for art, and reveals the possibility to synthesize different research paradigms into a more unified worldview based on new understanding of the function of art and artists.

Keywords: benefit, socially engaged art, service, social disciplines, social work, aesthetic tension, artworld

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FIGURES

FIGURE 1	I Wanna Stand Up!	82
FIGURE 2	Effortless 1.....	83
FIGURE 3	Effortless 5.....	84
FIGURE 4	Tang’s Scars	85
FIGURE 5	Crutches	85
FIGURE 6	Imagery	86
FIGURE 7	Colourful Home	86
FIGURE 8	Disabled Students Displaying the Postcards Featuring their Artwork.....	89
FIGURE 9	Age group of the Art and Culture Companions Volunteers...	112
FIGURE 10	Volunteers’ General Participation in the Arts and Culture.....	112
FIGURE 11	Volunteers’ Previous Voluntary Activities	112
FIGURE 12	Three types of Mixed Serious Leisure Enthusiasts	116
FIGURE 13	Learning how to Describe Contemporary Artwork to Blind People.....	130
FIGURE 14	Participants are Preparing their own Exhibition at the Jyväskylä City Library	131
FIGURE 15	Participants are Preparing their own Exhibition at the Jyväskylä City Library	131
FIGURE 16	Participants in Art Exhibition and Discussion	131
FIGURE 17	<i>Kuplivat</i> Members in Performance at the Theatre	132
FIGURE 18	<i>Leidit</i> Group’s Exhibition at the Jyväskylä Central Hospital...	132
FIGURE 19	Participants Visiting Art Exhibition.....	132
FIGURE 20	The Territory of Socially Engaged Art.....	141

TABLES

TABLE 1	Instruction Units, Locations and Student Number	56
TABLE 2	Five Aspects of Multiple Benefits.....	72
TABLE 3	Interviewed <i>Art and Culture Companions</i> Volunteers	114
TABLE 4	The <i>Art and Culture Companions</i> Participants’ Principal Involvement	116

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FIGURES AND TABLES

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	11
2	LITERATURE REVIEW ON ART AND SOCIAL ACTION	15
2.1	Social Engagement in Contemporary Art	15
2.1.1	Social Sculpture	15
2.1.2	Happenings.....	16
2.1.3	Connective Aesthetics	17
2.1.4	Relational Aesthetics.....	18
2.1.5	Art as Activism.....	19
2.1.6	New Genre Public Art.....	20
2.1.7	Dialogue-based Public Art.....	21
2.1.8	Dialogical Art.....	22
2.1.9	Site-specific Art.....	23
2.1.10	Littoral Art	24
2.2	Development Course	27
2.3	Central Issues of Socially Engaged Art	28
2.3.1	Community	28
2.3.2	Conversation and Collaboration.....	30
2.3.3	Participants	32
2.4	Art in Social Work Research.....	34
2.4.1	Ambiguous Position between Science and Art.....	34
2.4.2	Social Work's Artistic Aspects	36
2.4.3	Specific Art Forms in Social Work.....	41
3	METHODOLOGIES.....	44
3.1	Qualitative Case Study	50
3.2	Purposive Sampling and Semi-structured In-depth Interview	51
3.3	Inductive Thematic Analysis	52
3.4	Strategies to Improve Research Validity and Reliability	53
4	THE ART FOR THE DISABLED SCHEME: ENHANCE LIMB-DISABLED STUDENTS' SOCIAL INCLUSION THROUGH ART AND PHILANTHROPY	54
4.1	Introduction	54
4.1.1	The Art for the Disabled Scheme: Conception, Initiation and Implementation	54
4.1.2	Arts Education for the Disabled in China	57
4.2	Summary of Previous Research	59

4.2.1	Social Exclusion and the Disabled.....	59
4.2.2	Enhancing Disabled People’s Social inclusion through Arts..	63
4.3	Research Purpose and Research Question.....	67
4.4	Data Collection and Analysis.....	67
4.5	Participation in Art for the Disabled Scheme	69
4.5.1	Initial Motivations and Engagement.....	69
4.5.2	Five Aspects of Multiple Benefits	71
4.5.2.1	Financial and Material Support	74
4.5.2.2	Improvement of Mental Well-being	76
4.5.2.3	Promotion for Personal Development.....	79
4.5.2.4	Positive Self and Group Identity Building.....	81
4.5.2.5	Social Development.....	87
4.6	Three Issues for Discussion.....	90
4.6.1	Sustainable and Efficient Implementation	90
4.6.2	Unique Roles Played by Artists	92
4.6.3	Extensive Cross-disciplinary Cooperation	94
4.6.4	Research Limitation	95
4.6.5	Conclusion.....	95
5	THE ART AND CULTURE COMPANIONS: ART MUSEUM VOLUNTEERING AS SERIOUS LEISURE IN FINLAND	97
5.1	Introduction of the Art and Culture Companions	97
5.2	Museum Volunteers as Serious Leisure Enthusiasts	102
5.2.1	Volunteering and Serious Leisure	102
5.2.2	Museum Volunteering as a Serious Leisure.....	105
5.2.3	Mixed Serious Leisure in the Arts and Culture.....	108
5.2.4	Museum Volunteering in Finland	109
5.3	Articulation of Research Question	111
5.4	Data Collection and Analysis	111
5.5	Art Museum Volunteers as Mixed Serious Leisure Enthusiasts	115
5.5.1	Volunteer/Hobbyist	116
5.5.2	Amateur/Volunteer.....	120
5.5.3	Balanced Participant	122
5.5.4	Summary	124
5.6	Assessment of the Art and Culture Companions	124
5.7	Conclusion	133
6	CRITICAL THINKING OF BENEFIT-ORIENTED SOCIALLY ENGAGED ART	136
6.1	Aesthetic Tension of Benefit-oriented Socially Engaged Art	136
6.2	Practical and Symbolic Social Action.....	140
6.3	The Artworld and the Non-artworld	144
6.4	Professionalism and Amateurism	148
7	CONCLUSION	153

REFERENCES	155
APPENDIXES	166
Appendix 1: Transcript of Interview with Leena Pukkala.....	166
Appendix 2: Transcript of Interview with Liisa Kirveskangas	171
Appendix 3: Transcript of Interview with Hanne Laitinen	177
Appendix 4: Transcript of Interview with Wei.....	188
Appendix 5: Transcript of Interview with Lin	194
Appendix 6: Transcript of Interview with Liu Danfang and Geng Bo	197
Appendix 7: Transcript of Interview with Zhou Chunya	205

1 INTRODUCTION

Global art history over the past half century has witnessed more direct engagement of art with society. In 1982, when German artist Joseph Beuys was invited to make a work for the coming Documenta 7 in Kassel, he planned to call for the planting of seven thousand trees throughout the greater part of the city. The *7000 Oaks* project is his most famous work, perhaps the grandest in scope as well. He talked about the *7000 Oaks* project:

I rejected the plan to make a kind of sculpture there in this old way, to make in a kind of special place this special modern sculpture. I told him that my idea would be this time to plant seven thousand oaks in Kassel, seven thousand trees. And to mark every tree with a little stone, so that everybody after three, two, five or six hundred years can still see that in 1982 there was an activity. After the radical destruction of the forest here in Germany for all this technological nonsense, there was an impulse that came in the same time, to plant seven thousand oaks. This is such a kind of activity during the Documenta, that has to do with the Documenta, but is a real other thing in the conventional understanding of art.¹

Beuys' initiative soon became a five-year effort under the sponsorship of Free International University. He and others planted 7,000 trees of various types throughout the city of Kassel, each paired with an approximately four-foot-tall basaltic stele. According to a variety of document records, the organization of this project resulted in a series of conversations among local community councils, associations, and citizens concerning a variety of issues, ranging from where the trees would be planted, their impact on city planning, to the meaning of the project for future generations. The event of planting trees also created a stage where people met and communicated with each other. This project was completed in 1987, one year after Beuys' death. It truly epitomizes Beuys' ideas about art and its ability to effect changes in society.

According to Beuys, the Kassel project was the first stage in an ongoing tree planting project as part of a global mission to effect environmental and

¹ Joseph Beuys, "Interview with Louwrien Wijers," in *Energy Plan for the Western Man: Joseph Beuys in America*, ed. Carin Kuoni (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1990), 185.

social changes; locally, the action was a gesture towards urban rejuvenation. Once the project was initiated by Beuys, it continuously grew according to its own logic. The artist signed away his control over the process, his individual creativity gradually giving way to and transforming into collective creativity. With the steady growth of the trees, collective creativity has continued to play a role.

Beuys' project represents an increasing and still ongoing social turn of art globally. Rather than affecting social changes through the completed artwork, as recorded in most chapters of our art history, art turns to affect social change through the process of art making, and social action becomes a medium of art making. These practices have expanded the field of art production beyond the conventional venues such as galleries and museums. They focus on dealing with social and political issues, occur in real social contexts, often across the boundary of social disciplines, depend on and value the collaborative participation of people in communities, and often look more like non-profit activities rather than art pieces.

These practices are often labeled as socially engaged art or social practice. The term socially engaged art (SEA) has become a prevalent term, seen in tenets of various arts and cultural funding programs, in introductions of different arts workshops, in goal setting of social service organizations, and in course descriptions of BA or MA programs in a number of arts colleges and universities. However, there is not a very articulate definition of this term. In its 2012 discussion paper, the Canada Council for the Arts recognized art engagement as a growing priority worldwide and defined it as: "actively engaging more people in the artistic life of society notably through attendance, curation, active participation, co-creation, learning, cultural mediation, and creative self-expression".² In the view of Abbott, a British artist, writer and musician, the two prominent characteristics of what we call "socially engaged art practice" are "people-focused" and "not dependent on the gallery as site".³

Pablo Helguera defined the most decisive characteristic of socially engaged art as its dependence on social intercourse as a factor of its existence:

Social interaction occupies a central and inextricable part of any socially engaged artwork. SEA is a hybrid, multi-disciplinary activity that exists somewhere between art and non-art, and its state may be permanently unresolved. SEA depends on actual – not imagined or hypothetical social action.⁴

He further explained how SEA functions between art and other social disciplines:

-
- ² Canada Council for the Arts, "Public Engagement in the Arts - Discussion Paper," 3, <http://canadacouncil.ca/~~/media/files/corporate-planning%20-%20en/finalversionofenglishpublicengagementpapertoeprintit.pdf>.
- ³ Andy Abbott, "Transgression, Cooperation and Criticality in Socially Engaged Art Practice," <http://www.andyabbott.co.uk>.
- ⁴ Pablo Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook* (New York: Jorge Pinto Books, 2011), 8.

Socially engaged art functions by attaching itself to subjects and problems that normally belong to other disciplines, moving them temporarily into a space of ambiguity. It is this temporary snatching away of subjects into the realm of art-making that brings new insights to a particular problem or condition and in turn makes it visible to other disciplines.⁵

Socially engaged art is often interchangeably called “social practice”. For Shannon Jackson, social practice is “an interdiscipline that integrates experimental aesthetic movements with the traditions of social science and social theory.”⁶ According to Helguera, even though the two terms are often interchangeable, the term “social practice” emphasizes the artist’s function as a free agent to encompass working with society as part of their vocation instead of the artist’s creativity and self-consciousness in its critique and consequently more deeply questions whether these practices still belong to art.⁷

SEA is rather a tendency, fluid and ever-changing in contemporary art instead of a fixed defined “genre”. These practices demonstrate multiform and contingent nature—under the umbrella term socially engaged art there are a variety of projects that vary from each other based on their goals and consequently working methods. This research, rather than making a comprehensive study of socially engaged art as a whole, is based on an in-depth study of two cases. The two cases discussed in this dissertation, the *Art and Culture Companions* and the *Art for the Disabled Scheme*, reveal a tendency that the artists commit social work experiments and employ art-based service to benefit individuals and communities in need. Although I was so reluctant to define these practices with a fixed terminology, for the purpose of easier description and discussion, I tentatively set forth a conception of “benefit-oriented socially engaged art (BOSEA)”. Firstly, this dissertation explores two benefit-oriented projects. The case studies included a set of issues such as the conceptions, mechanisms and effects of the two projects with a specific focus on the participants’ experiences and the artists’ roles. Secondly and more significantly, based on investigation on the two cases, this dissertation is dedicated to revealing the meaning of benefit-oriented socially engaged art practices and their position within contemporary art and culture as a whole. Many issues of the collaboration of aesthetic study and sociological and social work study still lack, as well as deserve, further exploration. This dissertation seeks to scrutinize a set of contradicting norms, values and perspectives which embody aesthetic tension: practical and symbolic social action, the artworld and the non-artworld, and professionalism and amateurism. The articulation of these norms, values and perspectives demonstrates that as social work experiments, benefit-oriented socially engaged art practices have aesthetic value, which draws them from other ameliorative social actions. The artists’ endeavour synthesizes different knowledge fields, integrates various

⁵ Ibid., 5.

⁶ Shannon Jackson, “What is the “social” in Social Practice: Comparing Experiments in Performance,” in *Cambridge Handbook of Performance Studies*, ed. Tracy Davis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 136.

⁷ Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, 3.

social sectors and institutions, and mobilizes expertises from different disciplines to reach creative solutions for problems confronting human societies.

This dissertation comprises 7 chapters. The first chapter comprises a brief introduction to the term socially engaged art (SEA), sets forth the concept of benefit-oriented socially engaged art (BOSEA), and presents the research purpose and question. The second chapter presents a number of studies in relation to the interaction between art and social action. It firstly includes a set of terminologies referring social engagement in contemporary art literature. Secondly, it provides a brief introduction to the evolution of social engagement in the art field since the 1950s and a number of central concerns such as community, conversation, collaboration, and participants. Thirdly, it presents a group of studies in social work research, revealing the closeness between social work and art, and implying the integration of art and social work. Chapter 3 discusses all methodological issues of this research. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 present two in-depth case studies. Chapter 6 is the discussion chapter. It reveals the aesthetic tension of benefit-oriented socially engaged art practices and defines their position in the contemporary art and culture as a whole. Finally, Chapter 6 is followed by Chapter 7, a brief conclusion of this study.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW ON ART AND SOCIAL ACTION

This chapter examines a constellation of contemporary art literature relating to social engagement. Art historians, curators and artists set forth a number of ideas to offer aesthetic explanations of social engagement in art which emerged and flourished since the 1960s, though these writers did not directly use the term “socially engaged art” or “social practice”. Among them are social sculpture, Happening, connective aesthetics, new genre public art, relational aesthetics, dialogue-based public art, dialogical art, site-specific art, art as activism, and littoral art, which is an inexhaustive list. Secondly, this chapter contains a brief review on the development course and central concerns of socially engaged art practices. Lastly, this chapter reviews how social work researchers perceive the artistic attributes of social work from their career perspective and apply various artistic methods and forms for enhancing their work.

2.1 Social Engagement in Contemporary Art

2.1.1 Social Sculpture

A comprehensive discussion on Beuys’ massive revolutionary contributions to contemporary art is beyond the scope of this dissertation and must be left for other researchers. His most noteworthy contribution, however, is that his concept of expanded art in a theoretical dimension, together with his zealous involvement in social and political activities, has deeply influenced socially engaged art practices. According to Beuys, traditional art cannot bring any social change or enhance people’s ability and joy for life. He suggested a new type of art that concerns people’s needs and societal problems.⁸ His idea of

⁸ Beuys, “Interview with Kate Horsefield,” *Joseph Beuys in America*, 75.

social sculpture contains two meanings. Firstly, as “the only evolutionary-revolutionary power”, art is to “build a social organism” as make a sculpture.⁹ Secondly, everyone is an artist or has the capability of creativity. Beuys’ extended concept of art is based on a broad understanding of creativity; all producing activities are possibly able to become art, and art cannot be restricted to professional artists.¹⁰ Therefore, Beuys’ art theory has surpassed the gap between professional and amateur and broken the line between art and the rest of life, between art and other socially relevant spheres.¹¹

Since the 1970s, Beuys became more and more involved in political activities and environmental movements. He founded the German Student Party (1967), the Organization for Direct Democracy through Referendum (1971), Free International University for Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research (1974) and co-founded the German Green Party (Die Grünen, 1980). His numerous talking about the implementation mechanism of his social art projects refers to the combination of art and social work:

Now people understand the implications, the integration of art and social work. They understand more and more about the interdependency of what I understand as art and the social sculpture, so an understanding of art being related to everybody and to every section, or every power field of our society.¹²

From the perspective of socially engagement of art, Beuys did not merely employ social action as a contemporary art medium; more importantly, he redirected art to social issues. As pointed out by Caroline Tisdall, Beuys’ idea of social sculpture includes definite social and political purposes. Social sculpture is a means of facilitating and affecting change beyond conventional art concepts. Beuys made a distinction between social sculpture and performance.¹³ He pinpointed the difference between his work and Happening; for him, to have people participating in a vague performance is a kind of superficial activism which could never lead to the emancipation of mankind.¹⁴

2.1.2 Happenings

Drawing on John Dewey’s argument of “art not separate from experience”,¹⁵ Allan Kaprow has developed his social-oriented art practices and arguments with a focus on shifting the site “from specialized zones of art toward the particular places and occasions of everyday life”.¹⁶ Kaprow believes that

⁹ Beuys, “I am Searching for Field Character,” *Joseph Beuys in America*, 21.

¹⁰ Caroline Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys in America*, 8.

¹¹ Beuys, “Manifesto on the Foundation of a ‘Free International School for Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research’,” *Joseph Beuys in America*, 149.

¹² Beuys, “Interview with Louwrien Wijers,” *Joseph Beuys in America*, 223.

¹³ Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys in America*, 9.

¹⁴ Beuys, “‘Death Keeps Me Awake’ interview with Achille Bonoto Oliva,” *Joseph Beuys in America*, 159.

¹⁵ According to Dewey, the separation of art from the everyday life experiences has cut off art from its roots in cultural and human nature.

¹⁶ Allan Kaprow, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life* (expanded edition), ed. Jeff Kelley (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2003), xi–xii.

modernist art practice is not only the production of artworks, but also involves the artist's disciplined endeavour to observe, engage in and interpret the processes of living. For him, the contents of everyday life are more than merely the subject of art; they are the meaning of life, or as described by Dewey as "the every events, doing, and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience".¹⁷ Though first known as the inventor and an early proponent of Happening, Kaprow has expanded his art practices and writings to a much broader range of experimental art practices which are centred on art as a participatory experience and the blurring of art and non-art experiences.¹⁸

Kaprow identified five communication models of experimental art, rooted in everyday life, non-art professions, and nature. Among them are situational models, operational models, structural models, self-referring or feedback models, and learning models. These five types of communication models embrace various everyday environments, occurrences, and mechanisms of natural and ecological cycles and other human affairs in art; meanwhile, they include the artist's demonstration of these everyday life phenomena in art.¹⁹

He further described five models of making non-art performance, in which all artists could locate themselves and their work: work within recognizable art modes and contexts, work in unrecognizable (non-art) modes but present in recognizable art contexts, work in recognizable art modes but present in non-art contexts, work in non-art modes but present as art in non-art contexts, and work in non-art modes and non-art contexts but ceasing to call the work art despite suspiciously regarding it as art.²⁰ Kaprow's five models of communication and his five models of making non-art performance expand art-making to other social disciplines and sectors. These models provide a scaffold in modern art via which artists can surpass the boundary of art forms and directly access sources outside their art profession. Even though Kaprow's art practices and writings did not suggest direct social and political purposes, they paved the ground for socially engaged practices on the conceptual and philosophical level.

2.1.3 Connective Aesthetics

Built upon a thorough critique of the dualistic separation between aesthetics and ethics, and the isolation of art from society, Suzi Gablik proposes the concept of connective aesthetics, defining her aesthetics as connective and participatory.²¹ According to Gablik, modern aesthetics is inherently isolationist, aiming at disengagement and purity.²² Art's autonomy and

¹⁷ Kaprow, *Essays on the Blurring*, xiii.

¹⁸ In the 1960s, Kaprow summarized seven key components of Happenings as performances, which erased the distinct line between performance and daily life and introduced the non-professionals and audiences to participate in performance and become an inextricable part of the event. See Kaprow, *Essays on the Blurring*, 62-64.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 130.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 175.

²¹ Suzi Gablik, *The Reenchantment of Art* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1992), 9.

²² *Ibid.*, 4.

self-sufficiency have been incorporated into a capitalistic marketing and consumption system. Creativity in the modern world, in Gablik's words, "has been strictly viewed as an individual phenomenon". The artist's image in the modern world is described as a solitary genius absolute from others and the world. Gablik cited the statement of painter George Baselitz:

The artist is not responsible to anyone. His social role is asocial; his only responsibility consists in an attitude to the work he does. There is no communication with any public whatsoever. The artist can ask no question, and he makes no statement; he offers no information, and his work cannot be used. It is the end product which counts, in my case, the picture.²³

Connective aesthetics changes our recognition of the worth of artwork, the artist's career, and the issue of creativity. Being ethic-oriented, connective aesthetics is essentially focused on social and purposeful art, and values the social and environmental responsibilities of art. It highlights social creativity rather than self-expression and contradicts the myth of the isolated genius in modernism. It appraises participatory and socially-oriented interactions rather than art objects. It requires empathy and listening instead of visual domination. It also represents multi- and cross-disciplinary cooperation. Connective aesthetics emphasizes the connection between human society and nature, between self and others, and values the caring and healing nature of art. Social context becomes the field for interaction to relate and weave them together.

Gablik suggests a partnership model that gives priority to relationship and mutual cooperation for the common good.²⁴ This model perceives all levels of experiences and the world in terms of relationship, more attuned to the inter-relational, ecological and process character of reality. Thus, it encourages the artists to develop a more alive, collaborative and empathetic work mode, entering other people's worlds, listening to them, developing empathetic understanding of their problems, and launching cooperative action.

2.1.4 Relational Aesthetics

Relational aesthetics is set forth by French art curator Nicolas Bourriaud to describe artistic practices emerged in the 1990s which take "the whole of human relations and their social context" as the fundamental theoretical and practical concern. Bourriaud defines the relational aesthetics as "aesthetic theory consisting in judging artworks on the basis of the inter-human relation which they represent, produce or prompt".²⁵

The notion of relational aesthetics, echoing the needs for a direct interpersonal encounter rather than the virtual relation in digital age and the shifting trend of global economy from goods to service, highlights the move from focusing on an object to the audience's experiences and the processes of

²³ Ibid., 61.

²⁴ Ibid., 67.

²⁵ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods (Dijon: Les Presses du Reel, 2002), 112-113.

making art. The term “social interstice” is used to present the use of social interaction as a form for constructively opposing global capitalism and consumerism, and a way to recover communal experience.²⁶ In Bourriaud’s view, artwork creates a social environment in which people come together to participate in a shared activity; thus “art is a state of encounter” and an exhibition is an “arena of exchange”.²⁷ Firstly, rather than creating a passive object that connects with viewers in a one-directional and top-down mode, the relationship is open-ended and the building of meaning is negotiated with the audience instead of predefined. Secondly, the building of meaning is elaborated collectively rather than in the space of individual consumption. The essence of relation is not a “one-to-one relationship between work and viewer”; instead, relational art builds up situations in which viewers are allowed and encouraged to create a community that is, however, often only temporary.

The concept of relational aesthetics is essential to the understanding of socially engaged art. As pointed by Bourriaud, as a kind of cultural production, the role of artworks nowadays involves everyday life, to be the ways of living and models of action. Instead of building imaginary Utopia, artists today seek to create micro-utopias, to effect social changes on a community level. Meanwhile, unlike traditional artworks that can be seen and experienced at any time, relational artworks can only be experienced within certain time frames.²⁸ Relational artists provide ways for humans to aesthetically interact and collaborate with each other through social exchanges.²⁹ Relational aesthetics has become one essential theoretical foundation for the criticism of socially engaged art projects, widely cited as well as questioned by other critics.³⁰

2.1.5 Art as Activism

Based on an in-depth observation of a number of hybrid projects that stand on the fuzzy territory between art and political activism, Nina Felshin set forth the notion of art as activism, also understood as hybrid cultural practice or activist art. What most distinguish activist art from other political art is “not its content, but its methodologies, formal strategies, and activist goals”.³¹ Art as activism is focused on innovative use of public spaces to address social and political issues, and to empower individuals and communities to facilitate social changes.

First of all, Felshin regards activist art as process rather than object or product oriented. Secondly, different from conventional art that is produced, distributed and consumed within the art venues, activist art practices occur at public sites. Thirdly, activist art often takes the form of temporal interventions, such as performance or performance based activities, media events, exhibitions

²⁶ Ibid., 14-17.

²⁷ Ibid., 18.

²⁸ Ibid., 29-31.

²⁹ Ibid., 43.

³⁰ For example, Claire Bishop questioned the essence of relation in relational art practices, for they veil the real divisions that split the world with created harmonic and convivial experiences of participation and togetherness.

³¹ Felshin, *But is it Art? The Spirit of Art as Activism*, (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995), 9.

and installations. Fourthly, to deliver messages, many activist art projects employ mainstream media techniques such as billboards, posters, subway and bus advertising, and newspaper inserts in various and innovative ways, which subvert the usual intentions of these commercial media. Fifthly, the most typical characteristic of activist art is its collaborative methods of execution, the collaboration among artists and with communities and audiences. Activist artists value team work and many of them reject individual authorship and expression. Meanwhile, they highlight public participation, regarding public participation as a critical catalyst for social changes because the self-expression and self-representation of the community is considered an empowering act.³²

The key point to understand activist art is that activist artists have created a cultural form that unites aesthetic critique with community activism; therefore their practices challenge, explore or blur the boundaries and hierarchies which have defined the culture.³³

2.1.6 New Genre Public Art

In Suzanne Lacy's 1995 symposium, she set forth the concept of new genre public art and collected the opinions of many like-minded critics. Lacy's point of departure is to establish a set of aesthetic arguments for the emerging art practices during the past decades which "resemble political and social activity", deal with social issues and "include public strategies of engagement as one part of its aesthetic language".³⁴ Defining these practices as new genre public art, Lacy explains them from the evolutionary perspective of public art. New genre public art is art for which being in the public interest is more important than being in public spaces: it is not defined by materials, spaces, or artistic media, but rather by concepts of audience, relationship, communication and political intention.³⁵

For the goal of developing a critical dialogue, Lacy suggests the following areas as a beginning constructs in relation to the criticism of new genre public art: the quality of the imagery in relation to beauty and the relevance of invention, the artist's intention and effects of the work, whether measurable or hypothesized, and the work's method of conveying meaning.

Firstly, since aesthetic judgment of these temporal works is difficult, many critics simply avoid this topic. The quality of imagery and use of material, including time and interaction, must be included in a critical analysis of new genre public art. Secondly, when encountering new genre public art, artists' intentions and effects, like their theoretical constructions, assumptions, intentions and understandings, together with the results should be included in evaluation. Lacy also noted that methods traditionally used to measure change, drawn from the political or social science, are never actually applied. The third

³² Ibid., 10-11.

³³ Ibid., 10.

³⁴ Suzanne Lacy, ed. *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1994), 19.

³⁵ Ibid., 28.

concern is about art and meaning. According to Lacy, processes are metaphors and symbolic acts containing social meaning. Because current art criticism has problem in assessing the value of process art, critics do not give as much consideration to the work's aesthetic qualities as they do to the aesthetic qualities of more conventional art productions.

Whether the art operates as a concrete agent of change or functions in the world of symbolism, in order to develop a set of critiques for new genre public art, Lacy calls for a more complex and multifaceted critical approach. She suggests the cooperation of curators, critics and artists to work for an integrative critical language through which values, ethics, and social responsibility can be discussed in terms of art. The central point of the evaluation is refining art not primarily as a product but as a process of value finding, a set of philosophies, an ethical action, and an aspect of a larger social-cultural agenda.³⁶

2.1.7 Dialogue-based Public Art

Tom Finkelpearl installs his discussion of public art in social and political context. Public art is not only about the patronage by public agencies, the existence outside traditional art venues and the expanded audiences outside the conventional art audience profile, but also the class issue inherent in the term of public art. For Finkelpearl, the word "public" is associated with the lower classes as opposed to the word "private" associated with privilege.³⁷ Different from art that is generally associated to upper class, public art is a potent tool for bringing people into communication in creative ways, and communication can cross all sorts of boundaries.

Dialogue-based public art projects, in Finkelpearl's terminology, focus on addressing social and political affairs often faced by disenfranchised groups and focus on healing social ills imposed by the fragmentation and social segregation of the contemporary public space. Dialogue-based public art projects are often created through a deliberate process of collaboration and dialogue, in which artists initiate and facilitate open dialogue among equals, promote critical consciousness and power sharing through the use of art. His discourse of dialogical public art is also connected to another widely adopted but slippery term: community. According to Finkelpearl, "community" is often used as a contrast to the elitist tradition and has a social and political focus. Dialogue-based public art refers to art that includes people from lower class in its creation and consumption, while not excluding other people from participating in these projects.³⁸

Generally, Finkelpearl's concept of dialogue-based public art represents the shift in public art from art in public spaces towards use-oriented work. Dialogue-based public art sets up a frame for grassroots, community-oriented

³⁶ Ibid., 46.

³⁷ Tom Finkelpearl, *Dialogues in Public Art*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001), x.

³⁸ Ibid., xi.

art projects initiated by or for people outside the traditional mainstream of power, which allow for an open exchange among equals and stay far from the elitist top-down notion that public art is a gift of the best to urban habitants.

2.1.8 Dialogical Art

Deriving from the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin's argument that art can be a conversation among different meanings, interpretations and points of view, Grant Kester set forth the notion of dialogical aesthetics as a new aesthetic and theoretical paradigm for evaluating art practice as a process.³⁹ In a group of dialogical art projects examined by Kester, the artists focus on facilitating dialogues among diverse communities and dialogues become an integral part of the work itself. These practices embody a paradigm shift from traditional object-based static and immediate aesthetic experience to project-based durational experience.⁴⁰

According to Kester, dialogical art practices challenge the anti-discursive consensus prevalent among advanced artists and critics of the 20th century's avant-garde art.⁴¹ The dialogical art practices, while they encourage their participants to question fixed identities and stereotypical images, do so through a cumulative process of exchange and dialogue, rather than a single and instantaneous shock of insight which is precipitated by an image or object.

Installing his theory at a locus of discursive exchange and negotiation, Kester drew a lot from Habermas. First, he adopted Habermas' concept of an identity that is formed through social and discursive interaction; dialogical aesthetic suggests the establishment of the artist' identity in terms of openness, of listening, and of dependence on and inter-subjectivity with the viewers or collaborators. Secondly, Kester analogized Habermas' concept of an ideal speech situation. The physical and psychological "frame" created in these projects sets participants apart from daily conversation and allows them to view dialogue as a process of self-transformation. According to Habermas' concept of discursive interaction, there are two key differences between a dialogical and a conventional model of aesthetic experience. The first difference concerns claims of universality; dialogical aesthetic promotes the generation of local, provisional consensus grounded precisely on the level of collective interaction, instead of providing or requiring a universal standard of judgment. The second difference between a dialogical and a conventional model of the aesthetic concerns the specific relationship between identity and discursive experience. Discourse is

³⁹ Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2004), 12.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 1-3.

⁴¹ This consensus believes that the role of art is to "shock" viewers, dragging them out of the perceptual complacency of the shared bourgeois discursive systems that formed people's perception of the world (linguistic, visual, etc.). This discursive system is specifically epitomized by the predominant visual culture, the omnipresent, homogeneous and superficial mass media images, print advertisements and TV commercials. Thus the significant function of avant-garde art is for "forcing" them into a new perspective to see the world rather than communicating with viewers.

not simply a tool to be used to communicate a predetermined content with others; instead, it is involved in the formation of subjectivity.⁴²

According to Kester, empathy is a necessary component of dialogical aesthetic. Empathy is rooted in the feminist “connected knowing”. Connected knowledge is grounded in our capacity to identify with other people: first, connected knowing recognizes rather than denies the social context within which others speak, judge and act; secondly, it involves the re-definition of discursive interaction in terms of empathetic recognition. Kester points out that an empathetic insight can be produced along three axes. The first occurs in the rapport between artists and their collaborators, especially when the artist is working across racial, ethnical, gender or class boundaries. The second axis of empathetic insight occurs among the collaborators themselves. The final axis is produced between the collaborators and other communities of viewers. Dialogical works can challenge the dominant stereotype of a given community and create a more complex understanding of and empathy for that community among a broader public.⁴³

Kester has been continuously focusing on the examination of the methodology of site-specific collaborative and participatory art projects and it can be regarded as the expansion of his argument about dialogical aesthetic and art. Collaborative and participatory art practises, characterized by extended interaction, shared labour, and the understanding of the process of participatory interaction as a form of creative practice, question contemporary art at three levels.⁴⁴ The first is at ontological level. A reconsideration of aesthetic autonomy via the mutual penetration of and interaction between art production and other forms of cultural production and activism questions the constituents and defining condition of art. The second is at epistemological level, questioning what forms of knowledge collaborative and participatory practices generate in relation to the recent debates over the differentiation of “aesthetic” and “ethical” criteria. The third is at hermeneutic level. Collaborative practices suggest a model of reception, and a set of research methodologies that are potentially quite different from research methods applied to object-based art practices. The temporary and participatory nature of these projects requires the historian or critic to employ social scientific techniques such as field research, participant-observation, interviews, etc.⁴⁵

2.1.9 Site-specific Art

Focusing on the concept of site in art, Miwon Kwon considers the site to be a social entity rather than a physical location and suggests that art in the public interest forms direct intersections with social issues.

⁴² Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, 111-112.

⁴³ Ibid. 115.

⁴⁴ Grant Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 9.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 9-10.

Kwon traces the development of site-based art from the 1960s and proposes three paradigms of site specificity: phenomenological or experiential, social-institutional, and discursive. The three paradigms, although in a somewhat chronological order, often overlap as competing definitions. The first paradigm defines the site as the actual physical attributes of a particular location. Then, along with the second paradigm, the site gradually shifts from physical location in a gallery to a system of socioeconomic relations surrounding art and its institutions, “a relay or network of interrelated spaces and economies”.⁴⁶ The relationship between an artwork and its site becomes changing and provisional instead of based on a fixed physical location. According to the third and final paradigm, site becomes issue specific, in Kwon’s words “art in the public interest”. In this paradigm, site is defined as a field of knowledge, intellectual exchange, or cultural debate in which art takes on a social function. According to Kwon, site-oriented practices today more eagerly and actively pursue intense engagement with the other parts of society, with non-traditional environment, and with everyday life, based on a cultural tendency that encompasses spaces, institutions, and issues which are conventionally non-art. As Kwon pointed out in her concern to integrate art more directly into the realm of the social, either in order to address urgent social problems or define art as one among many forms of cultural work, current site-specific art practices tend to focus on the social nature of art’s production and reception, while treating aesthetic and art historical concerns as secondary issues.⁴⁷ Thus art becomes a powerful source of social and political change in the form of community development—a domain where social work and art encounter, cooperate with each other and integrate.

In considering the shift from site to community, Kwon also addressed the issue of the role of the artist. The artist who acts as social change agent pursues social justice; he or she engages in such art as a cultural-artistic service provider rather than merely as a producer of artworks. The artist, involved in institutional decision-making, acts as the representative of minorities and disadvantaged groups, uses influence and the resources of museums and funding agencies, and deals with media and the public in order to affect government policies and to facilitate social change. The artist works as facilitator, educator, coordinator and bureaucrat, and engages in various approaches to negotiate, organize, promote, coordinate, compromise, research, and interview.⁴⁸

2.1.10 Littoral Art

Through a series of essays, interviews and statements, artist, teacher and curator Bruce Barber suggests a theoretically sophisticated version of public, community-based art. The term littoral, a word to “describes the intermediate

⁴⁶ Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Location Identity* (Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 2002), 3.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 51.

shifting zone between sea and land”, refers “metaphorically to cultural projects that are undertaken predominantly outside of the conventional context of the institutionalized art world”.⁴⁹ Littoral projects, as a cultural action, can enter the art field if they are associated with art theory and criticism.

Littoral art is politically and socially oriented. Rooted in Marxist philosophy, Barber points out that what philosophers (artists) did was simply interpret (represent) the world; the point is to change it.⁵⁰ He believes that artist rather than merely representing society should be a producer and engage in social transformation. Littoral artists work as critical agents in society, working both on culture and social relations. Differing from the studio and salon art, littoral artists recognize their engagement in public, community-based art projects and might “use any form and employ any materials, techniques or procedures to reach his/her objectives”.⁵¹ Barber highly values the co-operative achievements of understanding among participants instead of egocentric purpose for individual achievement. Littoral art values the process and temporal nature, the discursive relationship and the cooperative mechanism among participants and between participants and the artist. The concept of littoral art embraces those projects by focusing on facilitating real social changes. Its purpose and mechanism bear some similarity with social work.

Littoral art shares a close connection with Kester’s dialogical aesthetic. Littoral art is regarded as a precursor to the dialogical aesthetic. Both Barber and Kester emphasize Habermas’s discursive theory as a significant theoretical root of their arguments. According to Kester, the discursive nature of littoral art has inspired his interest “in a discursive aesthetic based on the possibility of a dialogical relationship that breaks down the conventional distinction between artist, artwork and audience”.⁵²

It is safe to say that the long list of aspects identified in relation to art’s social engagement shares an immanent connection with constructive postmodernism. David Ray Griffin is concerned with a group of themes that strongly relate to postmodern spirituality and social thinking. The first and foremost concern is interconnectedness. In contrast with the modern worldview that regards individualism as central to modern spirituality and society, postmodern thinkers regard relations as “internal, essential and constitutive”; thus no one and nothing is really separated from anything else. Charlene Spretnak adduced ten key values of postmodernism: ecological wisdom, grassroots democracy, personal and social responsibility, nonviolence, decentralization, community-based economies, postpatriarchal values, respect for diversity, global responsibility and future focus.⁵³ The *Ten Key Values* that

⁴⁹ Bruce Barber, “Sentences on Littoral Art,” 1998.

⁵⁰ Karl Marx, 11th Thesis on Feuerbach (1845), cited in Barber, “Sentences on Littoral Art.”

⁵¹ Barber, “Sentences on Littoral Art.”

⁵² Grant Kester, “Dialogical Aesthetics: A Critical Framework for Littoral Art,” Variant Issue 9 (Winter 1999-2000).

⁵³ Charlene Spretnak, “Postmodern Directions,” in *Spirituality and society: Postmodern Visions*, ed. David Ray Griffin (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 38-40.

address the concerns of postmodern society imply vast spaces for the marriage of art and society and highlight the caring and healing functions of art.

Griffin suggests a constructive or reconstructive art that is “deeply ecumenical”, representing a “reenchanting, reconnecting and recreating postmodern version”.⁵⁴ Based on a postmodernist worldview, the respect for and emphasis on connectedness, diversity, dialogue and process naturally become the main concern of art and differ from dualism or the dual-opposite conception. The conventional neutral, individualist, visually dominant, object-oriented and instantaneous aesthetic attitude has to shift to a socially engaged, collaborative, listening-based and process-oriented experience.

Various ideas about social engagement have identified significant aspects of art’s social turn over recent decades. Firstly, they highlight ethical value. Aesthetic appreciation is not any more limited to disinterestedness and art is not any more independent from society and other humane claims; instead, engaging and healing have become part of artistic vocabulary. Consequently, art has transcended the conventional label of “being useless” and subverted the concept that art is created with concern for aesthetic values instead of for utility. Secondly, and correspondingly, these aesthetic arguments have brought social interaction, process and relation within the scope of aesthetic considerations. So, aesthetic considerations no longer focus solely on a static object. Social action, with some highlighted interpersonal interaction, process and relation, can now also be endowed with aesthetic value. Thirdly, the social engagement of art underscores an extensive collaboration which has changed the image of the art audience from passive viewers to active participants. It has also challenged the absolute dominance of a series of individuals, values and institutions in our mainstream art history, including among them professional artists, curators, museums and galleries. The concept of authorship is itself being redefined. The last but not least significant aspect of art’s social turn relates to methodology. Artists work cross social disciplines and often encompass mechanisms and ideas from other social fields, so the introduction of a set of new criteria for the evaluation of these practices is now called for.

The above mentioned studies represent the efforts of several decades to define whether a social action is aesthetically valuable, to distinguish it from other social actions and finally to establish legitimacy for it within discussions about contemporary art. Today, socially engaged art has been recognized by the world of contemporary art. However, considering the complexity of social action, the complexity and the variety of forms of art’s social engagement has not been examined adequately. The abovementioned multiple terminologies reflect the crossover characteristics and multiple dimensions of these practices, so that many art critics and researchers could retrospect and comb these projects from their views. Meanwhile, numerous terminologies also suggest ambiguity and confusion in current studies of the social engagement of art, based on the fact that different artists and their works chosen by the critics

⁵⁴ David Ray Griffin, ed. *Sacred Interconnections: Postmodern Spirituality, Political Economy and Art* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 9.

represent but only certain perspectives and methodologies. Artists are always introducing new ideas and methods in their practices, so new analytical approaches are needed for the study of art and the social.

2.2 Development Course

The evolution of art's social engagement encompasses many aspects, among them the most prominent influences coming from the social and political movements that emerged in the 1960s and the inspiration from the conceptual art of that period. Lacy noted that the social movements in the 1960s and 1970s greatly influenced the development of social art. The civil right movements, Vietnam War protests and the feminist movement in the 1960s encouraged feminist, ethnic and Marxist political artists to begin to focus on issues such as identity, community, and the relationship between artists and their audience. From different points of view, ethnic, feminist and Marxist political artists developed new artistic methods and new criteria. These artists included the combination of their own cultures and Western artistic aesthetic, the application of art as a way to speak to people, the sophisticated strategies for addressing specific audiences, and the critical thinking about art and its marketing system as well as the dominance of galleries and museums into their methods and criteria. Their endeavour formed the basis for new genre public art. Felshin also mentioned the connection between activist art and a number of political and countercultural movements in the 1960s and early 1970s. Although these groups had no connection to the artworld and did not necessarily self-identify as artists, their creative use of publicly sited images and their way to adopt performance to generate media attention inspired activist artists.

Scholars discussed the root of art's social engagement in conceptual art. A series of movements prominent in the 20th century art history like Dada, Futurism, Surrealism and Fluxus were much interested in breaking down the traditional boundaries between art and life. They sought to disrupt the complacency of modern bourgeois life through shocking reinterpretation of artistic and social spheres. Felshin states that conceptual artists' critique of the art object and formal aesthetic strategies, and their desire to mingle art and audience, and art and life, inspired socially engaged artists. However, as pointed by Felshin, activist art draws a line from conceptual art, because conceptual art did not really embrace social and political issues, nor did it liberate itself from the definition of art project or undermine the art marketing system.⁵⁵ Still, activist art differs from postmodernist art, because participation through interpretation is a key strategy of activist art, while the ambiguity and obscurity of postmodernism hamper the comprehension and the access to art of a general audience. According to Kester, the gradual shift from object-based practices to process, the increasing interest on interaction with the viewer and

⁵⁵ Felshin, *But is it Art*, 27-28.

the changing concept of aesthetic experience toward “a durational rather than instantaneous experience” represent the three key shifts in conceptual and minimal art associated with dialogical art. However, he also recognized the locus of dialogical art more in contexts associated with activism and policy formation.⁵⁶

In Kwon’s genealogy, first in the 1960s, site-specific artworks emphasized “a phenomenological or experiential understanding of the site,” as informed by artistic movements such as Minimalism, Happenings, Installation and Land Art. Then, almost at the same time, many of the artists working in this field started to recognize the contextualization of art beyond its physical relationships, extending their interest in the site of artwork to cultural, social, political and economic significance and often embodying a critical gesture towards the institutional framework of art. Then, in the 1980s and 90s, the field of art was increasingly influenced and informed by interdisciplinary forms of knowledge, including the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, philosophy, literary criticism, and so on. She noted:

The distinguishing characteristics of today’s site-oriented art is the way in which the art work’s relationship to the actuality of a location (as site) and the social conditions of the institutional frame (as site) are both subordinate to a discursively determined site that is delineated as a field of knowledge, intellectual exchange, or cultural debate.⁵⁷

2.3 Central Issues of Socially Engaged Art

2.3.1 Community

As mentioned earlier, socially engaged art is generally undertaken in a specific social and cultural setting that we call community. The key to a successful socially engaged art project lies in understanding the social context in which the project will take place and will be negotiated with the participants and larger audiences. The significance of the microscopic social and cultural setting of social action was emphasized by Beuys, in relation to focusing on specific issues or groups and concentrating on “the only level from where one can change things”.⁵⁸ He noted:

But like all connections, or junctions, to a broader understanding of art, also the being open to a kind of social change, depends...on the will of the people who are living there. I cannot just come with my ideas and say: let’s make, I want to make, I will make... So, I hear what the wants of the people there are, and if they want to do it, then I come. Every country has its own problems, its own needs, its own spiritual condition, and so one has more to hear than to act.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, 13-14.

⁵⁷ Kwon, *One Place after Another*, 26.

⁵⁸ Beuys, “Interview with Louwrien Wijers,” *Joseph Beuys in America*, 236.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 228.

Community bears various meanings, varying according to different researchers. Crooke points out that the study of community has experienced a shifting process. In the 1950s and 1960s community was mainly understood in functional or structural terms, identified as how groups of people are organized and interact in a given district. Recently, such structural analysis of community has given way “to greater consideration of the cultural, social and political dimensions of community”.⁶⁰ According to Crooke, the essential characteristic of community is that the experience within the community is intangible and highly subjective; a sense of community develops through sharing experiences with each other within the group. A community should not be narrowed down to be understood as a group of people in a fixed geographic location or people living in the area. The sense of togetherness experienced by the community members is the essence of community.

According to Hugh Butcher, there are three main forms of communities: descriptive communities, communities as value and active communities. The concept of a descriptive community relates to the idea of a network of people who have something in common, either through a sense of belonging built upon a common interest or identification. Community as value relates to certain fostered and nurtured values, such as solidarity, communal aid and connectivity. The active community relates to social initiatives that aim to develop community strengths and capacities. In each of these cases, community functions as both an active tool and an essential process that brings mutual benefits to its members.⁶¹

Kwon made a thorough analysis of community in relation to site-specific projects. She suggests four different communities that commonly emerge out of community-based collaborations: community of mythic unity, sited communities, temporary invented communities, and ongoing invented communities.⁶² A community of mythic unity is conceptually based upon activities of service which aim to support, nurture and correct injustice, and to promote equality. Therefore a community of mythic unity addresses diversity and difference only for the purpose of overcoming and surpassing them through a common goal. In a sited community, artists, with the defined project and goals on one hand, and with the assistance of curators and sponsoring institutions to provide knowledge and access to specific community on the other hand, approach the community group that is best suited to fulfil the particular goals of the project. Within this model, the conceptual framework is made prior to conversations with potential collaborators; the contribution of community partners is limited to the realization of projects. In an invented community (temporary), art works as the effort to forge an operational community group around a set of collective activities and/or events as defined by the artist. Because invented community groups are conceptually and financially dependent on the art project, they often have limited life spans

⁶⁰ Elizabeth Crooke, *Museums and Community: Ideas, Issues and Challenges* (London, New York: Routledge, 2007), 30.

⁶¹ Butcher, 1993, 3. Cited in Crooke, *Museums and Community*, 31-32.

⁶² Kwon, *One Place after Another*, 118-130.

according to the duration of the art project. In an invented community (ongoing), there is more sustainability. In this model, the art project serves only as the means to organize a sustainable community organization. In other words, after the art project is over, these established ongoing community organizations still function over the long-term, often based on the created internal identities of volunteer activities.

2.3.2 Conversation and Collaboration

Conversation and collaboration are two main media used in socially engaged art practices. It is through conversation and collaboration that socially engaged art projects form productive interactions and create the possibilities for social changes.

Conversation encompasses verbal and body communication, the primary concern being based on language. Beuys' social art practice was largely involved with the application of language. He stated that "the thought is a sculptural process, and the expression of the thinking forms in language is also art".⁶³ The employment of linguistic narration such as speeches, interviews, public dialogues and seminars was the key substance and primary mode of his art. Language and conversation understandably had more efficacy than any visual modes when Beuys' art was more engaged in political activities and environmental protection, and the public sphere and mass media became primarily important parts of his work.

Conversation is a medium central to socially engaged artists, and it creates multiple exchanges among participants, either forming mutual understanding and consensus, or evolving the different viewpoints of the participants and highlighting debate and disagreement, or simply sharing experience. Conversation process is of primary significance in socially engaged art practices, important for evaluating what socially engaged art projects claim against what is actually achieved. However, as Helguera points out, the content and structure of conversation are underexplored in contemporary art discussion and most conversation based projects are simply generalized into an unclear category of dialogic practices.⁶⁴

Still, Helguera points out the different levels of formality of conversation. More formal modes mean less sociable, their main goal being conversation rather than exchange. Different from many contemporary artists who employ the formal modes as a parody or as critique of the forms themselves, socially engaged artists who seek to create a more convivial experience are likely to apply less formal conversational structures to encourage participants to realize interesting exchanges.⁶⁵

Effective conversation requires empathic listening, what the philosopher David Michel Levin calls "enlightening listening". Enlightening listening has its

⁶³ Beuys, "Interview with Kate Horsefield," *Joseph Beuys in America*, 74.

⁶⁴ Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, 41.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 43.

roots in the feminist principle of empathy and relatedness to others; considering the “practices of the self” essentially intertwining self and other, self and society.⁶⁶ According to Gablik, an enlightening listening means giving each person a voice, shifting from a vision-oriented to a listener-centred paradigm, building community and making art socially responsive. She believes that a listener-centred paradigm will erase the old specializations of artist and audience, creative and uncreative, and professional and nonprofessional.⁶⁷ Empathetic listening makes us attend to other people’s plight, enter into their emotions, and perceive from their conditions, so that we cannot remain neutral or detached observers; instead, we feel the responsibility and that will lead to action.⁶⁸

Conversation is conveniently placed between pedagogy and art. Historically, it has been seen not only as a key educational tool but also as a form of individual enrichment that requires as much expertise as any delicate craft.⁶⁹ In many social engaged art practices, conversation closely relates to pedagogical function. Beuys strongly emphasized the pedagogical function of his social project. In his interview with Willoughby Sharp, he recognized that to be a teacher was his greatest work of art.⁷⁰ He said: “the real educational process consists in people meeting each other and trying to understand their respective differences, learning tolerance towards others who are moved by entirely different forces”.⁷¹ Lippard points out that Beuys’ work as a teacher and the use he made of language distinguish his work from the work of conceptual artists in which language is a medium and not just a means of communication.⁷²

Collaboration does not merely mean people “working together”; rather, it conveys the sense of reciprocal activation. The collaboration process generates a group sense and empowerment among the participants that they may not otherwise experience and act upon. Under this definition, collaboration is oriented towards action and facilitates social changes. Collaboration occurs on different levels: among participants, between artists and participants, and between artists and other organizations and agencies etc. Through collaboration, socially engaged art generates interest among individuals and organizations, and develops new thoughts and strategies for managing this type of art.

Many projects, as noted by Kwon, function as forums of debate, around and through which competing and conflicting elements are juxtaposed. Various spheres, disciplines, intentions, forms of expression, voices and views by different individuals and groups meet, communicate, compete, fuse, and regenerate. The juxtaposition of contradictions often creates new

⁶⁶ Gablik, *The Reenchantment of Art*, 65.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁶⁹ Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, 42.

⁷⁰ Beuys, “Interview with Willoughby Sharp,” *Joseph Beuys in America*, 85.

⁷¹ Beuys, “‘Death Keeps me Awake’ Interview with Achille Bonito Oliva,” *Joseph Beuys in America*, 162.

⁷² Claudia Mesch, and Viola Michely, eds. *Joseph Beuys: The Reader* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2007), 16.

understandings and creates new issues to be questioned, even though it does not necessarily solve problems.

Drawing on Paul Freire's revolutionary pedagogy, Finkelppearl proposes an analogous method of socially engaged art which integrates conversation, collaboration and pedagogy. Freire focused on the power relations between teacher and students and contended that the unequal power relation labels education as an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. His concept can broadly be seen as an analogy to the oppressor and the oppressed. Finkelppearl connects this to the artworld where museums and artists take on the role of moral/intellectual/aesthetic teachers through their work, while the audience takes on the role of passive students.

Against this conventional education model, Freire suggested a problem-posing model of education, based upon mutual communication rather than a one-way transmission of information. According to Finkelppearl, problem-posing dialogue is the essential technique of Freire's pedagogy and it can be applied to the artist-audience relationship focusing on conversation and collaboration. Freire's method involves a flexible and intense series of collaborative interactions over a prolonged period. The first stage of his procedure includes pre-research, meeting with local residents, calling for volunteers, visiting sites and recording what was seen. The next stage includes a series of evaluation meetings and a decision about the "nuclei of contradiction" within the community. It involves team work to select some contradictions and codify them in sketches and photographs, to analyze the codifications for reaching an understanding of the process, to facilitate thematic analysis with a psychologist and sociologist for listening, posing questions and challenges, conducting systematic interdisciplinary study of their findings, and finally to prepare materials to be used for the local educational project.⁷³ Even if this working procedure may not be carried out entirely by socially engaged artists, it shows clearly that community and social artists and social workers share similar values, methodology and challenges in their work.

2.3.3 Participants

Socially engaged art is characterized by the active participation of community members in the fabrication of the work rather than merely as passive receptors. Socially engaged art does not only often include participants from outside the usual art circles, but also expand the depth of social relationship, often promoting ideas such as empowerment, criticality and sustainability among the participants.

For a better understanding of how new genre public art interacts with people who engage in the project at different levels, Lacy developed a model that is formed by "a series of concentric circles with permeable membranes that allow continual movement back and forth". This audience-centred model,

⁷³ Finkelppearl, *Dialogues in Public Art*, 278-280.

taking the fabrication of the work as the central point, includes the individuals and groups of people with different engagement level with the work. The concentric circles, from inner to exterior, contain six layers. The innermost circle concerns origination and responsibility; it includes those core members who initiate and facilitate the project. The next circle out from the centre, called collaborators and codevelopers, includes both artists and community members who play a significant part in the project and whose endeavour ensures its development. The next level of participation is the volunteers and performers, “those about, for, and with whom the work is created”. The fourth circle, called the immediate audience, is those who have a direct experience of the artwork, for instance people who attend a performance or visit an installation. The fifth circle, called the media audience, is those who experience the work indirectly through media (newspapers, television) or subsequent documentary exhibitions. The outermost circle is called the audience of myth and memory, comprising those who carry the artwork over time as myth or communal memory.⁷⁴

Lacy’s participant circle echoes Helguera’s three registers. The first is the immediate circle of participants and supporters; the second is the critical artworld, toward which the project usually looks for validations; the third is society at large, on which the ideas or other aspects of the project can have impact. The third register consists of governmental institutions, the media, and other organizations or systems.⁷⁵

Accordingly, Helguera proposes a multi-layered participatory structure including four types of participation. The first is nominal participation, a passive form of participation in which the visitor or viewer contemplates the work in a reflective manner. The second is directed participation, in which the participant completes a simple task to contribute to the creation of the work. The third is creative participation in which the participant works within a structure decided by the artist and contributes content as a part of the work. The fourth is collaborative participation in which the participant shares responsibility for developing the structure and content of the work in partnership and direct discourse with the artist. Some of the most sophisticated socially engaged art projects offer rich layers of participation. Nominal and directed participation typically take place in a single encounter, while creative and collaborative participation, mostly seen in socially engaged art practices, means a longer-playing engagement.⁷⁶

Although many participatory projects are declared open to the broad public, in fact they serve very specific audiences. The understanding of the complex participation structure and the different engagement of participants is significant for an evaluation of a project’s intention and its actualization. Even though most curators and artists are suspicious of the notion of a preconceived audience, Helguera believes that, when planning a socially engaged collaborative project, it is important to bring its hypothetical audience into

⁷⁴ Lacy, *Mapping the Terrain*, 178-180.

⁷⁵ Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, 22-23.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

consideration, even if only intuitively. No matter if the project is designed to reach large or selective audiences, to achieve the desired results, the artist should be able to address articulately to the people with whom he wishes to work.⁷⁷

2.4 Art in Social Work Research

Social work on all levels, from practice to research and teaching, has been drawn into dialogue with art. The following paragraphs consider the common ground between the nature of social work practice and that of art, and from three aspects. The first aspect is the ambiguous position of social work between science and art; the second is studies of the artistic aspects of social work, the shared connection between social work and contemporary artistic aesthetic; the third is the use of specific art forms and media in social work. From the perspective of constructive postmodernism, social work practice has much to share with contemporary art and aesthetics. Social work, based on its problem-solving, helping and caring essence, highlights a reciprocal relationship that is characterized by cooperation, creativity, intuition, empathy and improvisation. Social work practice is seen to have common ground with socially engaged art. The studies of art in social work demonstrate that the boundaries between science and art are not so clear-cut.

2.4.1 Ambiguous Position between Science and Art

Martinez-Brawley and Zorita point out that social work has been at the edges of the mainstream of scientific discourse, due to the nature of social work that social workers' actions often rely on intuitive reflection rather than formal theory.⁷⁸ In addition to the apparent anti-intellectual stance of social workers, they mentioned the insufficiency of merely discussing the "universal truths about the human condition" in social work. Often, universal truths do not help solve individual problems; instead, they have become contrary to the essence of social work.

According to Martinez-Brawley and Zorita, the existing overlooking of the artistic aspects of the social work profession is due to the technical rationality of the academic world. The predominant scientific and positivistic paradigm in the profession can be dated back to the beginning of the twentieth century, when social work practitioners struggled for legitimacy and status in academia dominated by technological rationality. This tendency was later strengthened as a result of the obsession with objectivity and the overuse and misuse of statistical procedures that is often considered accurate and scientific.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 25.

⁷⁸ Emilia E. Martinez-Brawley and Paz M. B. Zorita, "At the Edge of the Frame: Beyond Science and Art in Social Work," *British Journal of Social Work* 28, no. 2 (1998), 197.

[T]he most formidable research strategy modern sociology had developed—statistical analysis—is of no use in exploring the dynamics of social phenomena and evaluating the probabilities of their future development. Significance and numbers have parted ways. Statistically insignificant phenomena may prove to be decisive, and their decisive role cannot be grasped in advance.⁷⁹

Throughout recent decades, a number of social work scholars have been attempting to question the predominant scientific paradigm which is epitomized by dominant empirical and evaluative models in this profession. To correct the technological rationality, researchers have proposed the recognition of uncertainty, contingency and incompleteness as research outcomes, with the respect for the unpredictability rooted in the behaviours of human being and the understanding of instability, complexity and flux in research.

Siporin declares that social work shouldn't be placed purely within the realm of science because it "does not use scientific methods to seek objective truth".⁸⁰ On the one hand, it contains the scientific aspect that it develops validated research evidence for specific theory, method and process; on the other hand, uses artistry to apply scientific knowledge and achieve beneficial purposes.

According to Goldstein, determined by the ambiguous, diverse, individualized and contingent nature of the human condition, understanding in social work is not an objective phenomenon.⁸¹ The limits of understanding first lie in the exclusive nature of existing approaches for understanding and assessment, which just pick on certain fragmentary aspects of the client's situation while disregarding others. The second and more important reason is that the circumstances social workers are facing are themselves ever-changing, and characterized by mysteries and enigmas. Thus, universal theories and laws are not enough to provide theoretical support for understanding the human mind and the human condition.

According to Graybeal, throughout the history of the profession social workers have striven to develop helping relationships that are based on and derived from a strong empirical foundation. However, the strong empirical paradigm that focuses on choosing and evaluating one model or technique versus another is not enough in this profession. There is a need for a new and inclusive paradigm that takes into account the unique characteristics of the client, the practitioner, and also the unique characteristics of their collaboration.⁸²

Martinez-Brawley and Zorita emphasize that, social work has always been a practice at the edge of the frame of social scientific research and can be seen as representing an art/science duality. They suggest a new paradigm that values

⁷⁹ Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 192, cited by Martinez-Brawley and Zorita, "At the Edge of the Frame", 200.

⁸⁰ Siporin, *Artistry in Social Work Practice* (New York: iUniversity, 2009), 4.

⁸¹ Howard Goldstein, "The Limits and Art of Understanding in Social Work Practice," *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services* 80, no. 4 (1999), 386.

⁸² Clay T. Graybeal, "Evidence for the Art of Social Work," *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services* 88, no. 4 (2007), 521.

the richness and diversity of the human condition. Owing to its capacity to accommodate ambiguity, art is underscored in this new paradigm for the human condition that cannot be easily expressed in science.⁸³ Their new paradigm is based on the perspectives of constructive postmodernism. The postmodern art perspective recognizes a wide range of social actions, like everyday life and political activities, as creative and artistic expression. Meanwhile a set of tenets cherished by constructive postmodernist aesthetics are very relevant to grasping the nature of social work: the emphasis on process, the challenges to authorship, the innovative ability to meet human needs, the emotional engagement with an audience, the melange of fact and fiction, history and story, and art and science, and the awareness of the relativity of reality.

2.4.2 Social Work's Artistic Aspects

Creative and artistic aspects of the social work profession have been overlooked and under-estimated for a long time. Some researchers are inclined to consider social work as, at least in part, art and have analyzed many aesthetic aspects. England points out that, Lydia Rapoport's study bears specific significance among earlier studies in this field. She discussed the general similarities between the social worker and the artist, by focusing on creativity in all good social work.

[Both social work and art are] engaged in problem solving, be it the problem of expression, communication, transformation, or change. Both deal with human materials or human themes and both require an intimate knowing and contact. Both call for creative and imaginative use of self. Both require a special kind of distance and objectivity.⁸⁴

Rapoport noted four elements that are nowadays widely discussed in social work literature: the creative impulse that is necessary to create order from a chaotic situation, imagination that is central to empathy and innovation, intuition that enables workers to make judgments without knowing how to achieve them, and style that refers to the structure of the work. Rapoport's study not only inspired social workers to borrow some instrumental use from art, but also provided them with a general guidance for their work.

England focuses on how the social worker intuitively uses his self in his work. The social worker's central role is to improve the client's coping capacity. The essence of social work is a helping relationship that is based on understanding. The practitioner gives meanings to the client's problem when the practitioner interprets the problem through his own experience. The task of the social worker is always to understand the meaning of experience and to

⁸³ Martinez-Brawley and Zorita, "At the Edge of the Frame", 205.

⁸⁴ Lydia Rapoport, "Creativity in Social Work," *Smith College Studies in Social Work* 38 (1968), 139-161, cited by England, *Social Work as Art*, 98.

communicate the understanding.⁸⁵ An interactive model between social worker and client is developed on the basis of a strong notion of inter-subjectivity.

It is in the nature of the social workers' task that he will encounter diversity greater than that for which he can be specifically prepared, not least because each situation will be specifically distinct. Social workers, can be prepared in general terms for situations which they will probably encounter, but they must be clear—and not apologetic—that such knowledge only serves to sketch in the likely dominant characteristics of experience.⁸⁶

The understanding of social workers and the helping work with their clients are in relation to the diversity of people, problems and settings. Thus it is always subtle, complex, individualized and circumstantial. England described the understanding of the social worker as an elusive, but not mysterious, creation.⁸⁷ He suggests an emphasis upon the worker's own intuitive ability to make meaning, upon the use of self at the centre of social work analysis rather than denying and avoiding intuition.⁸⁸

England's argument is consistent with a number of later studies. Martinez-Brawley and Zorita's study also offers a way to revisit the artistic and reflective aspects of social work. They emphasize that, the intimate relationship between the social worker and the client is the medium through which the artistic is expressed in practice. The interaction between the client and social worker is a series of complex and context-based creations. They suggest that "the social worker is not an artist who creates an artwork through a process of domination or subjugation of raw material or symbols, but a co-creator of harmony".⁸⁹

Walter installs social work in a performance framework. He suggests "a third space of the borderlands" to explore the improvisational ground of the social work profession that can be understood as an improvisatory performance between art and science.⁹⁰ Social work as improvised performance means that the profession must recognize and accept both the scientific and the artistic side, instead of being restricted within either category. The idea of the third space invites the reconsideration of the scientific art of social work in terms of performance, which helps avoid the rigidities of a purely technical-rational understanding of professionalism.

Graybeal believes that social work is dependent on relationship building for achieving its goals. He focuses on the improvisatory conception of social work practice. Social work is on a stage "set for an improvised scene". The social worker enters the stage with his theory and technique and the client comes with his individual experience and they interact and co-establish a

⁸⁵ Hugh England, *Social Work as Art: Making Sense for Good Practice* (London: Allen & Unwin Publishers, 1986), 21.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁸⁹ Martinez-Brawley and Paz M. B. Zorita, "At the Edge of the Frame", 207.

⁹⁰ Uta M. Walter, "Toward a Third Space: Improvisation and Professionalism in Social Work," *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services* 84, No. 3 (2003), 317-318.

meaningful and productive relationship. This collaboration emerges from a synthesis of science and art. The building of human relationship in social work is a “remarkably diverse and complex understanding, subject to ever-changing details that inevitably arise in the challenges of unique and individual lives”.⁹¹ The art of social work practice is rooted in a balance between the structured knowledge and intuitive and improvisatory understanding when encountering the problems of another human being. The profession’s emphasis on the relationship between social worker and client supports a comprehensive, artistic, improvisatory, and relational conception of practice. Science and art in social work are two dimensions of a coherent and integrated whole, so that social workers should sufficiently recognize the artistic dimension of practice as an opportunity to enrich and expand the scope of inquiry.

According to Dewey, aesthetic experience is understood as a way of interaction and relationship between an individual and his or her world. Drawing on Dewey, Siporin contends that social work practice is an art—it has the essential attributes of artwork and social work practitioners are artists who use artistry to create works of art. Understood as the creative, skilled production of a work of art, artistry in social work is presented from the perspective of both social workers and clients. Social workers, with artistry, create aesthetically beautiful forms of transformative, helping actions and results through experiences and events. From the client’s side, aesthetic values, dynamics and effects can be identified in the helping process through which people in need develop transformative changes, realize their capacities, reach new beliefs, meanings, directions, understandings, insights and self-identity, and develop better relations with the world and others.

As in other creative endeavours, the social worker tries to interpret life, to console, to sustain, to liberate inner feelings, to enlarge consciousness and self-awareness. He [She] provides a way of encounter, exploration, and growth in the realms of human spirit and relationship on their deepest levels of meaning and experience.⁹²

Siporin specifically makes an analogy between social work and the performing and dramatic arts since the social work practitioners create the performance with “creative improvisations in collaborative, dialogical relationships with clients and others”.⁹³ He identified and discussed a series of notions in contemporary art and aesthetic discourses such as form or structure, creativity, style, communication, empathy, improvisation and reciprocal relationships among others. He points out that beauty lies in a harmonious and holistic unity of different parts, which is a cognitive, emotional and sensory pleasure, and the creation of significant harmonic form is presented as a defining attribute of social work art. A central element of artistry is in the practitioner’s use of self, along with one’s imagination, creativity, intelligence and intuition.⁹⁴ The expression of artistry develops through the helping relationship between

⁹¹ Graybeal, “Evidence for the Art of Social Work,” 521.

⁹² Max Siporin, *Introduction to Social Work Practice* (New York: Macmillan, 1975), 52-53.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 81-82.

practitioners and clients. The aesthetic attributes are epitomized by rhetorical, metaphorical, narrative and humorous elements in effective communication in order to help create authentic dialogue, and also to create mutual objectives and subjective and inter-subjective understanding. They are also presented through an engaging style that is often individual, unique and charismatic. The aesthetic attributes are embodied from the process of knowing and understanding development on mostly subjective and tacit levels of thinking and feeling, which include reasoning/reflection, imagination, creativity, intuition, intelligence, empathy, dialogue and inter-subjectivity with clients. The aesthetic qualities are also present through the use of practice wisdom, from which practitioners learn, accept and internalize the knowledge and skills which succeed in helping relationships—the process which is regarded as one of making beauty in social work. These aesthetic qualities and experiences stimulate important personal and social functions.

In social work, as mentioned by Goldstein, the ambiguity and uncertainty that reflect the complexity of human nature legitimize artistry as a foundation of the narrative approach through which the social worker can individualize and make sense of human experience. The social worker's endeavour to grasp, or make sense of, the metaphoric human experience from the fragmental narratives of the client (or other people) depends on a certain artistry and creativity. Such artistry does not go against the necessary rigours of scientific thinking; instead, art is often an associated attribute of science in many ways. In a profession like social work that is concerned with personal meanings and ethical dilemmas, artistry and theory are not polarities but resonating aspects of the same continuum.⁹⁵

Sinding and others focus in particular on the metaphors at play in arts-informed social work projects.⁹⁶ Through reviewing a cluster of literature, they identified three key metaphors for how art works on people and communities for their benefit. The first metaphor describes how art offers a means, which is an alternative to conventional language or speaking, to reach out to people, and then allows or enables the clients' inner troubles as well as strengths and insights "to get out". Otherwise, these feelings and emotions would remain contained inside, unnoticed or unarticulated. Art works well when dealing with difficult or undesirable content, certain prohibitions against speaking, defensive attitude caused by familiar communication, and experiences and phenomena too elusive for verbal expression. The second metaphor is imaging art as a means of "inhabiting" the world of others, to deeply appreciate and empathize with others and their situations. The metaphor of inhabiting activates emotion and enables a complex, nuanced and empathic understanding and solidarity. Thirdly, art also offers a way to "break habits", to break stereotypical patterns of seeing and knowing; thus it can bring

⁹⁵ Goldstein, "The Limits and Art of Understanding," 386.

⁹⁶ Sinding, Christina, Cathy Paton and Rachel Warren, "Social Work and the Arts: Images at the Intersection," *Qualitative Social Work* 13, no. 2 (2012), 190.

us awareness about these habits, and create the possibility for a new understanding.

There has been a consensus that the personal characteristic of the social work practitioner, such as empathy for the patient, warmth and concern, acceptance and a nonjudgmental approach, plays a significant role in facilitating the process of change. There is a cluster of studies on the use of self by social workers, and they present different views on this issue. According to Reupert, clinicians reject the relational model of the dialogic self and tend to see their concept of self as individualistic, central and unique, and also autonomous, only partially defined by others and the context in which they worked. They prefer to consider the self that they bring to their work as primarily defined by themselves. Rupert's understanding is based on the increasing individualization of the idea of self in Western cultures, owing to respect for promotion for personal uniqueness and self-fulfilment.⁹⁷ Thus, people are unaware of the deep influence of the society in which they live on their values, beliefs and identities; rather, they consider their values and beliefs to be the result only of self-determination. Consequently, social work participants may not be aware of the influence of others in their descriptions of the self that they bring to their work.

However, Ganzer, also focusing mainly on the work of clinicians, defines the self of the therapist as "dialogic, contextualized, decentred, and multiple". According to Ganzer, the self is defined as "relational" and "multiple".⁹⁸ In a relational approach, self-awareness develops through interaction; it develops with the patient in and through the environment, in contrast to the highly individualistic and autonomous sense of self of clinicians defined in Reupert's study. Secondly, there is not one solid, identifiable, or unitary self; rather, the self is decentred, shifting, and discontinuous. The clinician's shift from the patient's intrapsychic world to the inter-subjective world between the clinician and patient creates various and shifting selves.⁹⁹ It allows for multiple realities to emerge and incompatible perceptions to be discarded so that the various self states can be linked into a cohesive reality and integrated into the patient's lived experience and thereby form the basis for a new self-narrative.

Ganzer suggests a contemporary view of self in social work practice, particularly in clinical practice, training and supervision. The contemporary view of self places the therapist and/or supervisor within a relational matrix where the subjective experiences of all the parties provide a venue for better understanding those experiences. The use of self requires that when participating in the enactments, therapist should accept the often unconscious and dissociated nature of enactments and have tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty in the treatment. The reflection on and interpretation of the unconscious relational patterns lead to the constitution of new patterns of

⁹⁷ Andrea Reupert, "Social Worker's Use of Self," *Clinical Social Work Journal* 35, no. 2 (2007), 113.

⁹⁸ Carol Ganzer, "The Use of Self from a Relational Perspective," *Clinical Social Work Journal* 35, no. 2 (2007), 117.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 118.

therapeutic action. In addition, the relational use of self requires shifting the role of supervisor through dialogue and negotiation from an expert in an objective position towards a less hierarchical supervision and a more mutual mode.

Previous researchers hardly related social work to art criticism. England's study on this issue is a significant beginning. In addition to the primary concern of "the intuitive use of self", he suggests a critical approach to social work from "the tradition of art and criticism". He attempts to locate social work in the critical tradition of art, so that the evaluation of good and bad art can be adopted as a critical approach for intuitive understanding of social work.¹⁰⁰ Criticism in social work, as in art, forms part of its practice. The social worker is a critic in two aspects; first as the critic of the client, and secondly as the critic of his own behaviour and his communication as art. England suggests that criticism is a creative process. It must be a manner of artistic expression and must be evaluated by the canons of criticism. The process of criticism includes three steps: experience that means engaging in the work as either practitioner or critic; picture that mentally shapes which is accessible to detection and description; analysis that means in which we have something to say. In addition, criticism also calls for dialogue. The development of criticism will help establish a "community of consciousness" within the social work profession and help enhance the professional culture.

2.4.3 Specific Art Forms in Social Work

A number of studies refer to the application of special art media and forms such as literature and visual arts in social work. As interesting and supportive examples, these studies not only confirm the instrumental use of art, but also lead to critical thinking about the nature of the profession, and the development of integrated approaches in social work practice and research. In earlier studies of social work practice, the articulation of art was limited mainly to literature. In recent years, however, researchers have increasingly expanded the application of art to many fields of the arts, especially to the visual arts and including performance and theatre.

With regard to literature and social work, Damianakis suggests four aspects where creative writing and social work intersect. Creative writing and social work both aim to interact with clients emotionally, physically and spiritually; both require the construction of language, expression, and communication that reflect empathy and careful listening; some social workers employ creative writing for personal and professional self-reflection, for example, to work against professional stresses and frustrations; creative writing clarifies the intersections of mind, body and spirit, and exposes and transcends the dichotomies of social work knowledge. Damianakis' findings illuminate the potential influence of the arts toward an integrated epistemological perspective,

¹⁰⁰ England, *Social Work as Art*, 118.

and call for a pluralistic and integrated approach to transcend the dichotomies in creative ways.¹⁰¹

Seligson set forth, from the perspective of performance art, three parallels existing between the art of performance and the art of social work.¹⁰² Firstly, both a career in performance and one in clinical social work require the integration of professional knowledge and skills and the awareness of when to use them. In practice, a clinical social worker, like a performer, intuitively uses knowledge and skills rather than consciously calling them to mind. Secondly, alike a performance artist's deliberate use of his/herself to create a depth to his performance, a social worker also needs self-knowledge and the ability to use the self in the service of his clients. Thirdly, similar to what an artist faces in performance, a social worker also faces the obstacles of physical and cognitive distractions such as attention deviation from any current situation; hence, the ability to act spontaneously in the moment is required.

Seligson points out that both performers and social workers often have to work unprepared and in difficult situations in which they have to confront the recognition of "their own weakness and limit" and the consequent struggle to "use it for their work".¹⁰³ Art provides a joyful experience for performance or clinical social work to better deal with this rather challenging side of their profession. The parallels with creative performance reveal the significance and potential of the proficient artistry the social workers bring to their own profession. Meanwhile, the parallels also suggest the expansion of social work knowledge into the realm beyond technique, and the use of social workers' creativity and intuition to benefit their clients and themselves. Therefore, regarding social work as an artistic endeavour can be of considerable benefit in the development of this profession.

Westerling and Karvinen-Niinikoski's study focuses on the possibilities of using theatre for facilitating the integration of immigrants into society, a topic that lacks research in Finland. They investigated a drama project that resulted in a performance based on the Finnish national epic *Kalevala*. Their study first highlights the concept of integration as an act of solidarity. Loneliness and lack of social contacts can be obstacles to integration and these problems cannot be solved merely through being integrated into the labour market. Being involved in drama activities promoted integration in relation to improving the immigrants' visibility and showing their wish to participate in Finnish culture, making them feel useful and being able to express themselves positively, bringing them deep joy and pleasure, and creating a democratic approach and mutual trust among participants. Most significantly, the participants' experiences reveal that the safe and supportive atmosphere of a theatre group

¹⁰¹ Thecla Damianakis, "Social Work's Dialogue with the Arts: Epistemological and Practice Intersections." *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services* 88, no. 4 (2007), 532-533.

¹⁰² Lucy Vance Seligson, "Beyond Technique: Performance and the Art of Social Work Practice," *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services* 85, no. 4 (2004), 531.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* 537.

can encourage personal uniqueness in a positive and contextual way by taking their own culture as positive instead of negative. This study suggests it is necessary to integrate art in social work as a potent means of interaction and the importance of inclusion and participation. This requires a more open kind of professional thinking that recognizes diversity and complexity.¹⁰⁴

Very few social work studies have explored the works made by artists. Through reviewing the works made by two installation artists, Stan Douglas and Jamelie Hassan, Chambon suggests what the similarities are between the artist's work and social work practice.¹⁰⁵ Similar to social workers, artists work within various cultural and institutional constraints. When they start their work, they are concerned with issues like theories, public display space, and power relations; then artists establish their understanding based on possible narratives, select some elements of narratives to question, and proceed to question them by drawing upon history and memory. Their work activates the audience and invites viewers to respond to this open-ended presentation. Similarly, social workers and researchers also need to deliberately inquire and collect information, and share or negotiate their understanding with other professionals and a broader audience. In such ways the artist's work seems to share similarities with social work. In addition, according to Chambon, artists actively engage with the more hidden, overlooked, unremembered, or even denied sets of relationships, and in their displays these relationships are brought to the forefront of our awareness. This is inspiring for social worker regarding their ideas and ways of intervening.

To summarize, social work practice, due to its caring, ameliorating and empowering goals and its cooperative, creative, intuitive, empathic and improvisational nature, has much in common with the approach of socially engaged art under the roof of constructive postmodernism. The studies of art in social work research demonstrate that, in regard to those fields at least, science and art need no longer be regarded as entirely separate disciplines. Although the artistic and aesthetic aspects in the social work profession may not be the main point of this dissertation, to know how the professional social work researchers think of art from their perspective can stimulate more attention in the art field. Socially engaged artists could and should seek more cooperation with social worker in goal setting, working methods, and evaluation.

¹⁰⁴ Marika Westerling, and Synnöve Karvinen-Niinikoski, "Theatre Enriching Social Work with Immigrants—The Case of a Finnish Multicultural Theatre Group," *European Journal of Social Work* 13, no. 2 (2010), 267-268.

¹⁰⁵ Adrienne Chambon, "What can Art Do for Social Work?" *Canadian Social Work Review* 26, no. 2 (2009), 220.

3 METHODOLOGIES

To date, most studies on socially engaged art are focused either on its artistic and aesthetic significance or on its impact, and especially the social impact. Those two research paradigms, or tendencies, underscore two different understandings of the value of socially engaged art.

Socially engaged art challenges conventional art evaluation as well as the definitions of the artist, the curator, the critic, and the institutions of art.¹⁰⁶ That is because it is different in the following ways: it is connected to social issues, in some cases providing a practical solution to a specific social issue; it has a temporary or transitory nature; it takes place away from the usual art venues such as galleries and museums; it is inclusive and actively involves others, not simply as viewers but as active participants and co-authors. What interest art historians and critics, some of them also artists, is to find justifications for the unconventional characteristics of these projects and install them in art history and in the post-modernist context. Kaprow stated:

Once the artist is no longer the primary agent responsible for the artwork but must engage with others, the artwork becomes less a “work” than a process of meaning-making interactions. Once art departs from traditional models and begins to merge into the everyday manifestations of society itself, artists not only cannot assume the authority of their “talent”, they cannot claim that what takes place is valuable just because it is art. Instead, in most cases they dare not say it is art at all.¹⁰⁷

Their studies underscore a significant issue in the critiques of these projects, the conflict between the work’s social claims and its aesthetic qualities. Art historians and critics have noticed that artists participate in a conflation of art and sociology and they have revealed the confusing position between the conventional art research method and the sociological method. For example, Lacy points out that different from sociologists’ measurement, artists and critics often assume the goals and outcomes and their assumption is often on the basis of unexamined political notions. She implies, but does not confirm, the possible

¹⁰⁶ Mary Jane Jacob, “An Unfashionable Audience,” in Lacy, *Mapping the Terrain*, 56.

¹⁰⁷ Allan Kaprow, “Success and Failures when Art Changes,” in Lacy, *Mapping the Terrain*, 157-158.

adoption of sociological methods such as taking a survey or assessing artwork's influence on people's feelings and behaviour and the actions motivated by a work of art. The revealed gap implies a need for and possibility to look to other research paradigms, to bridge the artists' view and participants' perspective and to combine the aesthetic study and the study of impact.

Looking from the other paradigm, based on the consensus that participation in the arts has positive impacts on individual and social development, researchers working in the fields of culture and arts policy making and art education, have undertaken many studies of the impact of participation in the arts. As an artist or a group of artists creates a project to fulfil the mission of social work, benefit-oriented art practices produce a range of benefits, from bettering individual emotion and life quality, to empowering disadvantaged social groups, to enhancing social bonds and community solidarity.

Most previous research works focus on 'measuring' the 'impact' of collaborative and participatory practices, due to one basic fact, namely that most socially engaged art projects are funded by either private or public agencies. It is natural and necessary for these agencies to expect positive and measurable impacts from these projects and to have a formal impact assessment as a condition of their investments.¹⁰⁸ Secondly, the interest for measurable impact derives from the study of the impact of the arts on health and well-being which is rooted in the therapeutic function of the arts, and specifically the measurable effects from the perspective of psychology and medical science.

The previous impact studies of the arts were mainly focus on economic impact, social impact, educational impact and health impact. In practice, the studies on the four types of impact often overlap with each other.¹⁰⁹ Reeves mentioned that the social impact of the arts is those effects which are sustained beyond actual art experiences, and have an impact on the individuals' life courses.¹¹⁰ Social impact is understood and applied by researchers as a broad

¹⁰⁸ Tony Newman, Katherine Curtis and Jo Stephens. "Do Community-based Arts Projects Result in Social Gains? A review of Literature." *Community Development Journal* 38, no. 4 (2003), 310.

¹⁰⁹ Reeves, "Measuring the Economic and Social Impact of the Arts: A Review," Arts Council England (April 1, 2002), 29.

¹¹⁰ Landry et al., 1993. Cited in Reeves, "Measuring the Economic and Social Impact," 21. MaCarthy et al. also distinguished the benefits of the arts in two ways: instrumental and intrinsic. The term "instrumental" means that the arts are seen as an instrument to promote broad social and economic goals that have nothing to do with art per se. Intrinsic benefits, based on aesthetic experience, refer to effects inherent in the arts experience which add value to people's lives. Because intrinsic benefits are difficult, sometimes impossible, to measure according to traditional quantitative tools of the social sciences, although they are of primary importance, the researchers are reluctant to introduce them into the policy discussion. In addition, intrinsic benefits are not considered convincing to legislators and policy makers due to the long-term bias that "the arts community is expected to focus on tangible results that have broad political backing, such as improved educational performance and economic development". To see MaCarthy et al., "Gifts of the Muse: Reframing the Debate about the Benefits of the Arts," Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2004, <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG218>.

concept, so the study of education, health and well-being and even the economic impact are often included in the measurement of social impact.

The studies of the social impact of the arts go along with a significant shift since they represent the recognition of the role of the arts and culture in social and economic development at large. With recognition of the valuable contributions art can make in the community, such as revitalizing neighbourhoods and eliminating social exclusion, researchers have developed various criteria to evaluate the impact of collaborative and participatory art projects. They have established a practical methodological framework for social impact assessment and have furthermore provided useful evaluation instruments for public policy planning and development.¹¹¹

In practice, the impact paradigm is often questioned and criticized in relation to evaluation and measurement. Even an empirical approach has been widely applied in education and art; in studies of the impact of the arts, a lot of difficulties have been met on account of a lack of robust data or evidence especially referring to long-term impact, the resistant or suspicious attitude from the arts realm, the big number of stakeholders, the multiplicity of possible outcomes, and the intangible nature of some benefits associated with art practices. The social impact studies are often questioned for their methodological validity as well.¹¹² Besides being concerned with the practical problems embodied in the study of the instrumental benefits of art, some researchers worry that the justification of emphasizing the arts as a means to other ends will devalue art for its own sake. "Absolute quality is paramount in attempting a valuation of the arts; all other factors are interesting, useful but secondary."¹¹³

The disconnection between the sociological tendency and the aesthetic perspective, the gap between art researchers and sociological researchers reveals common dilemmas. For instance, as implied by Lacy, if the artist who adopts pedagogical methods in a project refuses to cooperate with the members from pedagogical fields or refuses to evaluate it as a pedagogical project, this project is often doubted for its effectiveness and a conflict of interests arise. This demonstrates the necessity of cooperation between artists and social work professionals. In reality, a set of practical problems, such as how to combine the

¹¹¹ Social impact assessment: see Williams (1995), Matarasso's (1997), Guetzkow (2002); also see Landry et al. (1993), Jermyn (2001), Reeves (2002), Merli (2002) and McCarthy et al (2004).

¹¹² Merli and Clement questioned the validity of the approach of Matarasso. According to Merli, Matarasso's method firstly lacks internal validity, for the data collected cannot support conclusions about the hypotheses of the research project; secondly, his research lacks external validity because the results cannot legitimately be generalized due to that the sample was not representative of the wider population and of all participatory arts activities. Paola Merli, "Evaluating the Social Impact of Participation in Arts Activities: A Critical Review of François Matarasso's Use or Ornament?" *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 8, no. 1 (2002), 107-118. Paul Clements, "The Evaluation of Community Arts Projects and the Problems with Social Impact Methodology," *International Journal of Art and Design Education* 26, no. 3 (2007), 325- 335.

¹¹³ Reeves, "Measuring the Economic and Social Impact," 36.

artistic assumption of the result and the evaluation through the procedures and assessment methods of social science, or how to understand and evaluate the differences between the initial purpose and the actual result, require cooperation between the two paradigms.

Art historians, critics and artists mainly focus on the art professionals' view, and the researchers who focus on the aesthetic merits hardly take the experience and benefits of participants into consideration. However, as socially engaged projects focus on the process of collective operations, rather than on the object as result, the artist' creativity has been transformed and mingled into the collective creativity. The artistic merits of socially engaged projects are realized through the empowering experience of the participants; without deep understanding of the experience of participants and its benefits, it is impossible to properly understand the aesthetic and artistic merits of benefit-oriented art practices.

On the other side, the researchers who focus on evaluating the instrumental impact of these projects often neglect their artistic merits and the artists' roles in the mechanism. Without the background of art history and aesthetics, the studies on the impact of benefit-oriented collaborative projects easily veer off to equate art with all kinds of other social and communal activities. In fact, many impact studies often could not distinguish between the impact from participating in art projects and the impact from some other communal activities such as tourism and sports, so the research result was not sufficiently valid and persuasive. According to Badham, the artistic merit in this field should not be overlooked or the researchers will miss the social impact. Socially engaged art practice requires a "more rigorous inquiry of relevant art based conceptual frameworks" to acquire legitimate grounds in the art field. He also noted that the interdisciplinary nature of socially engaged art often creates a lack of connection to its historical context. In reality, since the challenge of articulating and qualifying the artistic and aesthetic merits becomes too complex, researchers easily resort to the more easily expressed description of social policy outcomes.¹¹⁴

Meanwhile, if the artists are excluded from the inquiry, the researchers cannot really evaluate the impact of these projects. Firstly, the impact generated is highly dependent on the artist. Some challenges such as "the potential professional itinerancy" that can hamper the efficacy of a dialogical project" are closely related to the artist's working methods.¹¹⁵ Hence the artist's self-awareness of his limits, self-reflection of the situation within the community, in-depth understanding of the participants, and capacity to build long-term relationship with the community members all highly influence the efficacy of the project. In socially engaged art projects, the great demands of time and effort on an artist often conflict with the limited time permitted. In many projects that employ a pedagogical approach, educational goals cannot be

¹¹⁴ Marnie Badham, "The Case for 'Socially Engaged Arts' Navigating Art History, Cultural Development and Arts Funding Narratives." *Local-Global: Identity, Security, Community* 7 (2010), 85.

¹¹⁵ Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, 171-173.

achieved without prolonged involvement; therefore, the artist's realistic goal setting needs to be realistic and the need for continuous and effective execution of the work is decisive. Secondly, differently from social work on its own, the benefit-oriented practices often show flexibility. The division between the initial goal and the ultimate outcome is not appraised as successful social work; however it nonetheless demonstrates the creativity of art practices. Without putting artists and their intentions in consideration, it is difficult to evaluate the impact.

The contradiction between the artistic/aesthetic paradigm and impact paradigm reflects a dichotomy between art and the social science. The two competing paradigms underscore an inherent contradiction regarding the understanding of the value of art, and highlight the confusion between on the one hand art's autonomy, that is to say its position independent from instrumental justification, and on the other hand heteronomy, which refers to the blurring of art and life. This dichotomy is harmful for understanding the value of experimental social work undertaken by artists. The prosperity of benefit-oriented practices calls for a bridge between the aesthetics and social sciences.

Nowadays, more and more critics are inclining to develop a more holistic perspective on socially engaged art. Nato Thompson holds a pragmatic and inclusive attitude to these practices. Thompson described socially engaged art as "a growing array of complex cultural production" or "non-discipline-specific cultural projects" which disturbs the foundations of art discourse with its accepted methods and intentions.¹¹⁶ When talking about the methodologies of these practices, he didn't mince matters when considering the impact of these new practices. According to him, focusing on methodologies means the conversation shifting away from the art's typical lens of analysis—aesthetics—and emphasizing the designated forms produced for impact. He suggested a more inclusive perspective that would add many non-profit projects, whether they are artist-initiated or non-artist-initiated, into the discussion of cultural production.

The study of socially engaged art projects shows clearly that a one-fold perspective is not enough to reveal the multiple values of these projects. The study of these projects highlights the necessity of combining knowledge from different disciplines, and it calls for integrative research methods. Integrative research methods require that researchers import methods from other fields such as sociology, social work, psychology, anthropology, cultural studies and so on. Artists working with socially engaged art projects establish their theoretical backgrounds and methods in different combinations depending on their interests and needs; on account of the uniqueness of each project, there is no particular universal *modus operandi* for these partnerships.

Methodologically, this dissertation is an attempt to reach these goals. The main body of this dissertation is composed of two case studies. One case is the

¹¹⁶ Nato Thompson, ed. *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011* (Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 2012), 19.

Art for the Disabled Scheme, a Chinese project aiming to help disabled students through the integration of art instruction and philanthropy. The other case is the *Art and Culture Companions* (named in Finnish Kulttuuriluotsitoiminta), a Finnish art museum volunteer activity which seeks to encourage people, specifically marginalized social groups, to partake in the arts and culture. The study of the *Art for the Disabled Scheme* presented how a small group of limb-disabled students enhanced their social inclusion through participation in this long-term extracurricular art education project. The study provided a thorough understanding of how the integration of philanthropy and art enhance disabled young people's full participation in society. The study of the *Art and Culture Companions* explored a group of museum volunteers' involvement with this activity. The study was dedicated to improve knowledge in relation to the integration of museum volunteering and public participation in the arts.

Considering that the two case studies share many similarities in methodological design, here I prefer to discuss all common methodological issues together in one chapter.

The research method I adopted in this study can be called a quasi-sociological method. It is characterized by qualitative, in-depth case study, interviews and inductive thematic data analysis. These methods, imported from the sociological domain, are nowadays applied widely by cultural researchers. The whole methodological design was dedicated to develop a deep understanding of each project as a unique social and cultural phenomenon, based on the belief that through long engagement understanding may be reached. The qualitative in-depth case study was helpful for focusing on the process rather than only evaluating from the output; moreover, it avoided over generalization and stereotyping.

This study was designed to encompass both an aesthetic study and an impact study of social engaged art. The two cases explored the participants' experience, the unique mechanisms and the roles played by the artists, providing new insights into understanding how art can integrate into social work to benefit a socially disadvantaged group. Firstly, at the centre were the participants. I focused on exploring their participation experience instead of only listing their benefits as the outcome. Secondly, I explored the artists' roles, how they considered their projects and combined their own aims and interests with the participants' needs. Thirdly, I discussed the working mechanisms of each project. For data collection and analysis I mainly focused on their subjective accounts, an approach which is different from the typical social work research method that uses before and after tests to measure the change after intervention. This was mainly determined by the research purpose for exploring people's subjective understanding. It was also restricted by the limitation of the research procedure; because I engaged in both projects over a certain limited period of time, it was impossible to compare the before and after situation.

3.1 Qualitative Case Study

Both case studies followed a qualitative paradigm. According to Holloway, qualitative research “focuses on the way people make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live”; a qualitative approach is applied to explore people’s behaviours, feelings and experiences and give them meaning. Qualitative research is identifiable through seven main features: the theoretical framework primarily derived from data rather than being predetermined; contextualization that requires the researcher to be context sensitive; the researcher’s full engagement in the natural setting of the people whom the researcher wishes to study; focus on the “emic” perspective and the views of the participants involved in the research; a thick description developed from the data and context to describe, analyze and interpret the participants; a trustworthy and equal relationship between the researcher and the participants; critical reflection on the research work, which means the researcher must be aware of his/her role in the involvement for self-monitoring the research process and outcomes.¹¹⁷ Qualitative research is considered “interpretive” for it seeks to understand the complex, multi-layered and textured social world; secondly, the data generation methods of qualitative research are quite flexible and context-based; thirdly, analysis and explanation methods concern complexity, detail and context, and aim at holistic form.¹¹⁸

The focus of the study of the *Art for the Disabled Scheme* was to explore the disabled students’ involvement with this project. The main concern of the study of the *Art and Culture Companions* was to acquire a deep understanding of the characteristics and significance of museum volunteers’ involvement with this activity. The research participants in this study included a small group of museum volunteers and a couple of museum staff. In both projects, I interacted with participants over a long period and had considerable interpersonal communication with them. Data was obtained through direct observation and in-depth interviews with participants; data analysis was mainly through analyzing their subjective accounts. The research data and the presentation of results primarily involved the verbal, textual, experiential and visual, rather than numerical figures. The social phenomenon to investigate, the research purpose, the research question setting, the relationship with participants and the data collection fulfilled the criteria of qualitative research design.

Secondly, both investigations were conducted using a case study approach. A case study is “an exploration of a ‘bounded system’ or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context”.¹¹⁹ According to Yin, case study research is generally chosen under three conditions: when the research questions need to

¹¹⁷ Immy Holloway, and Stephanie Wheeler, *Qualitative Research in Nursing and Healthcare* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 3-4.

¹¹⁸ Jennifer Mason, *Qualitative Researching* (London: SAGE, 1996), 3-4.

¹¹⁹ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Traditions* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1998), 61.

be traced over time rather than frequencies and incidence, when the relevant behaviours cannot be controlled, and when the study is focusing on contemporary events which involve direct observation and interviews as the most significant techniques.¹²⁰ The advantage of case study research is that it allows the researcher to obtain a holistic understanding of a social phenomenon in its context whilst focusing on certain specific aspects of the phenomenon based on research question setting.

Both projects focused on typical “how” questions that required a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of this project, whilst calling for a focus on the people’s participation experience. Both projects are ongoing activities. As an observer and interpreter, I had no control over the phenomenon studied; neither on the development of this project, nor the interaction between staff and participants. In both projects, the participants’ experiences were highly context-based. Through the case study I engaged in these projects over time through detailed and in-depth data collection involving multiple data sources; thus, I could examine the structure and implementation of the projects, trace the sequence of their evolution, record and reflect on the narratives and performances of individuals, and finally develop a holistic and comprehensive understanding of the meaning from the data.

3.2 Purposive Sampling and Semi-structured In-depth Interview

Owing to constraints on time, it was not possible to conduct interviews with all the participants, and random sampling was not feasible on account of the purpose of this study. Therefore, based on the research goal, the purposive sampling that is a typical characteristic of qualitative research was adopted to get access to information-rich respondents in order to obtain depth and richness of information.¹²¹ In addition, a semi-structured interview approach was adopted so as to foster a well-organized and focused conversation, whilst allowing for flexibility and comprehensiveness. A list was made regarding the important questions and topics that needed to be covered during the conversation and it served as a rough interview guide. In each interview, the sequence of posing questions varied with respect to the respondent’s interest and the atmosphere in conversation. The interviewees were encouraged to freely describe their experiences and express their opinions, with no indication given regarding their possible answers or restriction as to what was said. The interviewer gave only the direction necessary to ensure that the interview progressed.

¹²⁰ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Method*, 3rd edition (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2003), 9.

¹²¹ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 118.

3.3 Inductive Thematic Analysis

In both case studies, thematic analysis was chosen as the salient data analysis method. In methodological discussions, thematic analysis is often described as being quite similar to qualitative content analysis, as they share many principles and procedures with one another; the terms “code” and “theme” are used interchangeably.¹²² According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), qualitative content analysis is “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns”.¹²³ Analyzing data is the most crucial, as well as the most problematic, task of theory building from a case study. Qualitative content analysis offers a range of strict procedures for a systematic analysis of data material; Kohlbacher therefore recommended a combination of qualitative content analysis and case study research to add rigor, validity and reliability in case study research.¹²⁴

There are two key coding categories based on either constituting a theme from existing theoretical ideas (deductive coding) or establishing categories from the raw data (inductive coding). Inductive coding is appropriate when preconceived categories are not applicable. The basic idea of inductive content analysis is to allow the categories and names for categories to flow from the data,¹²⁵ though there is no entirely inductive or data driven theme, as the researcher’s knowledge and preconceptions will inevitably influence the identification of themes.¹²⁶ I used inductive coding in both case studies for the purpose of data analysis: to understand the phenomenon and to find the pattern from the participants’ self-reflection about their experiences rather than to verify existing theories. I coded from raw data and initially used descriptive codes. Codes were then categorized into sub-themes before all the emergent sub-themes were grouped into broad themes based on the research purpose, research questions, and interview design.

After the interviews were transcribed, each transcription was returned to the interviewees and each interviewee was asked if the transcription completely covered what he or she described and if there was still something more he or she wished to supply. The qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti was chosen as the tool for data analysis. Firstly, I read through the transcriptions, as well as the data from other sources; this provided an initial idea of the participants’ experience as a whole. Meaningful data segments were marked and labelled, using specific and descriptive codes. Subsequently, codes were grouped into more conceptual categories (sub-themes). I coded and analyzed data

¹²² David F. Marks, and Lucy Yardley, “Content and Thematic Analysis,” In *Research Methods for Clinical and Health Psychology* (London: SAGE, 2004), 57.

¹²³ Hsiu-Fang Hsieh, and Sarah E. Shannon, “Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis,” *Qualitative Health Research* 15, no. 9 (2005), 1278.

¹²⁴ Florian Kohlbacher, “The Use of Qualitative Content Analysis in Case Study Research,” *Forum: Qualitative Social Research (SOZIALFORSCHUNG)* 7, no. 1 (2005).

¹²⁵ Hsieh and Shannon, “Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis,” 1279.

¹²⁶ Marks and Yardley, “Content and Thematic Analysis,” 58.

simultaneously. During this process of abstraction and synthesis, I repeatedly went through the text passages, constantly comparing the similarity and difference of initial data segments, codes and categories. The process finally led to the emergence of several overarching themes.

3.4 Strategies to Improve Research Validity and Reliability

Validity concerns the valid measurement method. Maxwell pointed out that qualitative researchers must identify the validity threat and handle it throughout the research process.¹²⁷ In this research, I applied intensive and long-term involvement, “rich” data, respondent validation and triangulation to test the validity of conclusions and rule out the potential threats. Firstly, long time on-site observation and in-depth interviews were applied during one year’s data collection. Secondly, detailed and varied data was collected to demonstrate a comprehensive and revealing picture of the ongoing project. Thirdly, respondent validation was applied after the interview transcriptions were made as well as at the end of data analysis. Finally, triangulation was achieved through two ways: data was collected from a diverse range of individuals and in a variety of forms including direct observation, interview, image analysis, document study, and my field notes and memos; the information gathered from the media and applied in research work was only from professional and reliable sources.

Reliability is a factor which relates to the effectiveness and explicit observation procedures, as explained by Yin, so that the same findings and conclusions should be reached if future researchers follow the same procedure and repeat the same case study.¹²⁸ In relation to data collection, I recorded all interviews and made the transcription precisely. I also had regular communication and discussions with staff members and participants throughout all phases to make sure that the study was supported by standard practice and was conducted ethically. With regards to data analysis, the process of data analysis was described in a detailed way with clearly given description of context, selection of participants, data collection and analysis procedure. Supportive citations were presented as well. In this study, multiple coding was not applied, for this was an individual research effort rather than team work. Consultation from peers and respondents about coding and category was applied to compensate for this factor.

¹²⁷ Joseph A. Maxwell, *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*, 2nd ed., (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2005), 107.

¹²⁸ Yin, *Case Study Research*, 37.

4 THE ART FOR THE DISABLED SCHEME: ENHANCE LIMB-DISABLED STUDENTS' SOCIAL INCLUSION THROUGH ART AND PHILANTHROPY

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The Art for the Disabled Scheme: Conception, Initiation and Implementation

The *Art for the Disabled Scheme* is organized by the 5Colours Foundation based in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province, China. The 5Colours Foundation is a non-profit organization started and sponsored by Chinese artist Zhou Chunya. The 5Colours Foundation aims at integrating art and philanthropy, and mobilizing various resources to help disabled children and young people. Offering long-term extracurricular art instruction as its core, the Foundation has launched the *Art for the Disabled Scheme* in 2009. This project currently provides assistance to over 100 limb-disabled students.¹²⁹

The devastating earthquake that occurred in Sichuan on the 12th of May 2008 caused a huge number of casualties, with 68,712 dead, 17,921 missing and at least 374,643 injured. The earthquake made more than 7,000 people disabled; among them were many adolescents.¹³⁰ Zhou noted later:

I remember that after the Sichuan earthquake, two artists (Zhao Huan, Su Yang) and I often went to the ICU and rehabilitation centre of the West China Medical Centre of Sichuan University to see the people disabled by the earthquake. We saw those children and teenagers who were still lying in beds, sitting in wheelchairs or walking

¹²⁹ The study of the *Art for the Disabled Scheme* was presented by the author at the 9th International Conference on the Arts in Society (Sapienza University of Rome, Rome, Italy, 25-27th June, 2014). Although the *Art for the Disabled Scheme* has been the subject of massive Chinese media coverage since its initiation in 2009, there has not been any previous attention from academia.

¹³⁰ Hu Wu, "Rehabilitation Study on Handicapped population from Wenchuan Earthquake," *Social Science Research* 6 (2009), 96-97.

with crutches; their youthful, cute but sad faces shocked us a lot. Most of their classmates left them forever after the disaster, which also rewrote their destiny. Several months later, volunteers were fewer and fewer and all healthy survivors plunged themselves into the huge and heavy reconstruction work for the ruined area.¹³¹

After the earthquake, Zhou Chunya, together with art critic Lv Peng, called for a charity art auction and received enthusiastic response from a range of Chinese artists. The charity auction was held just three days after the earthquake. Zhou recollected:

The auction was held at Beijing Poly Auction House. We collected RMB 48,000,000. It was a big success, almost the biggest charity auction in China. All collected money was donated to the Red Cross Society of China (RCSC). Later we heard that a big part of the money collected was used in reconstruction work for the ruined area. Of course, the RCSC has the right and responsibility to manage the use of money from charitable donation and we can't step into the role as advisors. However, I just began to think, to think about the faces of those disabled children and teenagers—they are the ones who need help most. As artists, what can we do to help them more directly and efficiently? If we had our own philanthropic foundation, we could clearly see what money was used and for whom and we could offer help to those groups most in need.¹³²

When questioned by the media why he wanted to establish the 5Colours Foundation, Zhou answered that he had two concerns when deciding to establish the Foundation. The first concern was employing art to soothe the disabled students' injured hearts; the second longer term concern was to pass on artistic skills to the disabled students who would have difficulties finding jobs. As the old proverb says, to teach a person fishing is better than to give him a fish. Zhou's statement demonstrated the philanthropic nature of this project. In the world of non-profit, philanthropy and charity are often used interchangeably; the key difference between them is that charity is more focused on helping someone or something right now, while philanthropy aims to improve the situation of others through long term charitable aid or donations.¹³³ Afterwards, the tenets of the 5Colours Foundation were described as to soothe the soul, to inspire creativity, to master the skills and to pursue the value of life via art. These statements clearly demonstrated that since the initiation of this project the concern for the comprehensive well-being of the disabled students in relation to supporting themselves and achieving better lives in the world was already in the mind of the initiator and other staff members.

The basic implementation mode of the *Art for the Disabled Scheme* is door-to-door teaching and individual instruction, named "*The Mobile Art*

¹³¹ Zhou Chunya, "Forward of Exhibition Heart—Whisper", 2010

¹³² Zhou Chunya, Interview with the author, July 14, 2012. All interviews used in this report were initially undertaken in Chinese and translated into English by the Author.

¹³³ Lisa M. Dietlin, "Chapter 1: Philanthropy versus Charity", in *Transformational Philanthropy: Entrepreneurs and Nonprofits* (Sudbury, MA: Jones & Bartlett Learning Publishers, 2009), 5. Also see Robert H. Bremner, "Modern Philanthropy and Organized Charity", in *Giving: Charity and Philanthropy in History* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1996), 159.

Classroom". Professional art instructors, teaching facilities and art books were sent to schools or residences of the disabled students by vehicle to offer on-site art teaching. In a research interview with Zhou, he explained the idea of *The Mobile Art Classroom*. At first, he and some other artists thought of establishing an art school to gather all the students together, for it would make teaching easier as well as facilitate students by learning in a big group; however, several practical difficulties forced them to find another solution. These disabled students are dispersed geographically; it is difficult, therefore, to gather them together, especially those severely disabled. The cost of establishing an art school for the disabled would be too high. Furthermore, those students are within the age scope of "nine-year compulsory education" or senior middle school education. Zhou explained:

We can teach them art, but we can't take care of their other school subjects such as mathematics and language. They need compulsory full-time education and that must be undertaken in public schools; we had therefore the idea of *The Mobile Art Classroom*. It sounds like door-to-door delivery!¹³⁴

The 5Colours Foundation was established in March, 2009 with RMB 1,000,000 donated by Zhou. Since then, as the main sponsor, Zhou has been continuously donating money on a yearly basis to support the Foundation. As a quasi-governmental organization, the 5Colours Foundation is under the legal jurisdiction of the Chengdu Disabled People's Federation which is responsible for directing and regulating the work of the Foundation. Currently, the 5Colours Foundation is directed by a board of trustees which consists of four members. Zhou is one of them. The daily management is the responsibility of a small but committed team that manages instruction, exhibition planning and implementation, philanthropic events, and so on. Nowadays the Foundation has five paid full-time art instructors, along with around 50 volunteers periodically coming to offer help. Every week the staff members have a routine meeting at the head office, where they exchange ideas and experiences, review the last week's work, and plan the work for the coming weeks.

TABLE 1 Instruction Units, Locations and Student Number

Instruction unit	province	Student number
Sichuan Huaxin Modern Vocational College	Sichuan province	11
Art College of Sichuan University	Sichuan province	1
Bayi Rehabilitation Centre in Deyang	Sichuan province	1
Dongqi Middle School in Deyang	Sichuan province	2
Children' Welfare Home in Dayi	Sichuan province	16
Youai School in Dujiangyan	Sichuan province	35
Hanwang	Sichuan province	1
Yushu Thangka Paingting Class	Qinghai province	43
Kunming	Yunnan province	5
Guiyang	Guizhou province	1
Nantong	Jiangsu province	1
Total student number		105

¹³⁴ Zhou Chunya, Interview with the author, July 14, 2012.

There are so far 11 instruction units. Seven are in Sichuan province. This research work was carried out at four units: Sichuan Huaxin Modern Vocational College, Sichuan University, Youai School in Dujiangyan, and the special unit in the Rehabilitation Centre in Deyang. In addition, there are four instruction units outside Sichuan province. The one in Yushu, Qinghai province is the largest unit with 43 Tibetan students. TABLE 1 has the information of all instruction units.

The age of the disabled students ranges from six to 22 years old. Although the Foundation was initially established to help the students disabled by the earthquake in Sichuan in 2008, the scope of aid-receiving students has expanded to include other disabled young people impaired by both seismic and non-seismic causes. The foundation divided all aid-receiving students into several groups according to their age range: primary school stage, junior middle school stage, senior middle school stage, and higher education stage.

4.1.2 Arts Education for the Disabled in China

In contemporary China, there are three main avenues for the education of disabled students: special education school, a class for students with special needs in regular school, and students with disability in regular classes. The legislation related to disabled people's education contains three laws. The first milestone of disabled people's education was the launch of the Compulsory Education Law, which was passed in 1986. A few years later, the passing of the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities (National People's Congress, 1990) and the Regulations on Education for People with Disabilities (State Council, 1994) further ensured the right of disabled people to receive nine-year compulsory education.¹³⁵

In China currently, however, the right for students with disabilities to receive systematic schooling is protected by law only until the end of nine-year compulsory education. After that, disabled students need to go to senior middle school education or choose vocational education. By 2011, there were 179 senior middle schools (classes) for disabled students and 7,207 disabled students were studying. By 2011, there were 131 vocational schools (classes) for disabled students with 11,572 current students.¹³⁶ It is evident, however, that vocational education for disabled people lags behind. Pang and Richey noted the challenges faced by special education in China, referring to there not being enough qualified special education teachers, difficulties in identification and

¹³⁵ Jeffrey B. Kritzer, "Special education in China," *Eastern Education Journal* 40, no. 1 (2011), 58-59. Also see Pang Yanhui, "A Review of China's Special Education Law and its Impact on the Living Status of Individuals with Disabilities in China," The 18th Annual Conference of the Global Awareness Society International (May 2009).

¹³⁶ In 2011, 6449 disabled students graduated from medium-level vocational education (among them, 4781 obtained professional certification). In 2011, 7,150 disabled students entered mainstream higher education institutions and 877 disabled students entered special higher education institutions. See Statistical Communiqué on Development of the Work for Persons with Disabilities in 2011, China Disabled Person's Federation (CDPF).

diagnostic procedures, challenges in vocational education, scarcity of educational opportunities for disabled students, and insufficient family and professional collaboration. There are particular problems concerning vocational education, such as the limited scope of vocational education for disabled students, inappropriate skills for disabled students who live in rural areas, and insufficient post-school services. These deficiencies in special vocational education have severely hampered disabled students from obtaining further education, and especially from pursuing higher education and hence ultimately limiting their chances of finding decent jobs in the future. Art education such as painting, embroidery, handicraft making, and music are widely adopted in vocational education for disabled students, though their provision lags far behind the demand for them.¹³⁷

Disabled students study in many Chinese higher education institutions, i.e. colleges and universities; nevertheless, the higher educational opportunities for disabled students do not fulfil their requirements. Disabled people's higher education is conducted through four channels. The first channel is "establishing a college, department or faculty of special education at university for the disabled student". The second channel is "enrolling limb-disabled students and moderate visual and auditory disabled to study together with non-disabled youth at college and university". The third solution is "developing cooperation between the middle special education vocational school and an adult university to enrol disabled students". The fourth way is "encouraging distance education through TV and the Internet, and a higher education self-study examination".¹³⁸ In China, the first channel is by far the main way to provide higher education for disabled people. Until 2007 there were 14 special education colleges and nine of them provided degree education in the arts for disabled students. Amongst them, the Special Education College of Beijing Union University provides degree education in visual communication design and musical performance for disabled students. Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts provides degree education in art and design for disabled students. In addition to providing a variety of education in the arts to disabled students, some colleges such as Nanjing Technical College of Special Education also enrol non-disabled students who study special education in fine art and music. The small group of limb-disabled students in this study belongs to the second channel. To this day, most universities and colleges in China are not fully prepared for providing barrier-free campus environments and facilities. This channel is still under development.

In recent years, more art courses and arts hobby groups have opened for disabled people in urban communities. Disabled people can enjoy participating in the arts and improve their talents in painting, calligraphy, singing, dancing and instrumental performance. Although these community-based courses and arts groups are often reported by the media and are considered beneficial

¹³⁷ Pang Yanhui, and Dean Richey, "The Development of Special Education in China," *International Journal of Special Education* 21, no.1 (2006), 84-85.

¹³⁸ Qu Xueli and Lv Shuhui, "The Current Situation and Developmental Trend of Higher Special Education in China," *Chinese Journal of Special Education* 6 (2004), 72.

auxiliary channels via which disabled people may participate in the arts, owing to an absence of data, there is no further information about their number, size, implementation and the situation regarding their level of development. In short, how to employ art or art education for improving the well-being of disabled students has not been part of the academic view in China. Such a gap in academic research stands in marked contrast to disabled people's increasing participation in the arts and culture generally in China.

4.2 Summary of Previous Research

The second section begins with a brief review of social exclusion studies, which leads naturally to the discussion of the social exclusion of disabled people and the disability study. Then I discuss a group of studies in relation to enhancing social inclusion through the arts at large and a volume of studies associated with enhancing disabled people's inclusion in society.

4.2.1 Social Exclusion and the Disabled

Disabled people are often considered one of the most excluded groups in contemporary society. Their socially excluded straits are often demonstrated by inaccessibility caused by barriers in architecture and public transportation in the urban environment, difficulties in the job market, problems in housing, failure in building a romantic relationship and family, exclusion from educational institutions, and segregation from leisure activities.

In the context of sociology and policy making, social exclusion is imbued with fluid meanings at different times and in different societies. The term "social exclusion" originated in France and initially referred to a rupture of the "social bond" or "solidarity". In 1970s, "the excluded" was adopted to refer to the groups excluded from the social insurance system. Over time, the idea has been applied to various social problems and disadvantaged groups.¹³⁹ In the UK, the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) established by the New Labour government outlined social exclusion as a short form for what happens once individuals or areas suffer a mix of joint issues like joblessness, insufficient skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family disruption.¹⁴⁰ When social exclusion was accepted in EU social policy discourse, the struggle against social exclusion gradually highlighted the integration of social inclusion and social protection.¹⁴¹ There is, however, a consensus of understanding of this term as drawing attention to people's

¹³⁹ Hilary Silver, "Understanding Social Inclusion and Its Meaning for Australia", *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 45, no. 2 (2010), 185-186.

¹⁴⁰ Helen Jermyn, "Arts and Social Exclusion: A Review Prepared for the Arts Council of England," Arts Council England: November 1, 2001, 2.

¹⁴¹ Silver, "Understanding Social Inclusion," 190-192.

experiences of being prevented from being full members of society.¹⁴² Although this concept closely relates to poverty, the notion of social exclusion is complex and multi-dimensional, as “social exclusion is more than a material condition”.

Burchardt and others define social exclusion in this way: “an individual is socially excluded if (a) he or she is geographically resident in a society but (b) for reasons beyond his or her control he or she cannot participate in the normal activities of citizens in that society”. Hence, social exclusion is defined as low income below the considered norm that is standard in society, lack of savings, pension and owned property, lack of employment, formal education and job training, and other social services, lack of engagement in collective effort, and lack of engagement in social interactions with and support from family, friends, social group and community.¹⁴³

Silver specifies social exclusion firstly as “relational” regarding the breaking of social relations or the failure of initially building relations. Secondly, social exclusion is “relative” because the definition of being integrated is often context based. Thirdly, it is “a multi-dimensional” term regarding “complex inequality” rather than only the economic dimension. Lastly, it refers to “a dynamic process in which different indicators might influence with each other over time”.¹⁴⁴

People with disabilities face multiple forms of exclusion. According to Silver, the disabled population in Europe has much lower involvement in higher education, higher unemployment and greater poverty, poorer access to public goods and services, markedly decreased social relations, and less participation in cultural and leisure life compared with nondisabled people. In China, 6.134% of the total population, say over 83,000,000 are disabled. Comprehensive data on disabled people’s participation in cultural and social life is not available. However it can be stated that the employment of disabled population is crucial for the individuals concerned and for society as a whole, as has been demonstrated in previous studies. In 2009, the unemployment rate of urban disabled people hit 13.6%, 3.2 times of the average unemployment of urban population of 4.2%. In addition, in 2008, among labouring aged disable people, only 4.14% received sufficient vocational training. The unemployment of disabled people above the age of 15 was 69.198% and employment was only around 31.102% whilst the employment of non-disabled people was around 72.167%.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Community Development Foundation (CDF), 2001, cited by Helen Jermyn, “Arts and Social Exclusion,” 2.

¹⁴³ Tania Burchardt, Julian Le Grand, and David Piachaud, “Social Exclusion in Britain 1991-1995,” *Social Policy & Administration* 33, no. 3 (1999), 231.

¹⁴⁴ Silver, “Understanding Social Inclusion,” 190-192.

¹⁴⁵ Lai De-sheng, Liao Juan, and Liu Wei, “Employment of the Disabled and Its Determinants in China,” *Journal of Renmin University of China* no. 1 (2008), 11-12; Xu Lin, “The Difficulty of the Disabled Employment and the Perfection of the Employment Promotion Policy,” *Journal of Northwest University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)* 40, no. 1 (2010), 117-118.

A number of disability theorists have explored the exclusion of disabled people in different aspects of life, though it must be said that the voices from disability studies have not so often been heard in the discourse of social exclusion at large. The social model of disability defines the nature of disability as a form of social oppression and claims that it is society that disables people with impairments rather than considering disability an individual problem caused by impairment (as in individual model of disability). Disability is the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by our social system which neglects or ignores the needs of people who have physical impairments, and therefore excludes them from every realm of social life. According to Barnes and others, being oppressed is a synonym for being rejected from participation in social life.¹⁴⁶ Given the crucial economic concerns rooted in the poverty common among physically impaired people in the 1970s, early studies on the social exclusion of disabled people focused on barriers in the labour market. Since then, the social model has encompassed a range of socio-structural barriers and demonstrated disabled people's social exclusion in every realm of social life: environmental and transportation barriers hampering mobility and access, organizational and attitudinal barriers in education, barriers in leisure and cultural activities, and barriers inhibiting full involvement in civic and political activities.¹⁴⁷ The Disabled People's International (DPI) identified education, employment, economic security, services, independence, culture and recreation, and influence or political participation as seven human rights to enable disabled people to participate fully in society.¹⁴⁸

Thomas introduced the extended social relational model of disability, considering disability as "a form of social oppression involving the social imposition of restrictions of activity on people with impairments and the socially engendered undermining of their psycho-emotional well-being".¹⁴⁹ According to Thomas, psycho-emotional dimensions of disability are additional and intangible dimensions on people with impairments, which can cause behavioural and other practical consequences. Psycho-emotional dimensions of disability hamper disabled people's personhood and self-esteem. Therefore, the extended social relational model provides a sophisticated and complete analysis of both structural and psycho-emotional dimensions of disability that operate on both public and personal levels and affect what disabled people "can do" and "who they can be".

Reeve set forth a more complex and complementary definition of psycho-emotional dimensions of disability with emphasis on internalized oppression. According to Micheline Mason, internalized oppression exists with the real external oppression that "forms the social climate in which we live". Internalized oppression happens once disabled people internalize the prejudices and stereotypes maintained by a non-disabled mainstream society,

¹⁴⁶ Barnes, Mercer and Shakespeare, *Exploring Disability: A Sociological Introduction*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), 80.

¹⁴⁷ Thomas, *Female Forms: Experiencing and Understanding Disability*, 17.

¹⁴⁸ Barnes, Mercer and Shakespeare, *Exploring Disability*, 97.

¹⁴⁹ Thomas, *Female Forms*, 60.

which means that oppressed group members subject themselves to the oppressor's beliefs and values. Internalized oppression is the most important psycho-emotional oppression because it impairs disabled people's self-identity and influences their psycho-emotional well-being.

We harbour inside ourselves the pain and the memories, the fears and the confusions, the negative self-images and the low expectations, turning them into weapons with which to re-injure ourselves, every day of our lives.¹⁵⁰

Shakespeare analyzed how the stereotypical perception about disability and disabled people was generated and maintained through cultural representation, in contemporary society, through the media and other art forms. Disabled people are mostly portrayed as not-powerful, not-attractive, criminal and pathetic, and impairment as a metaphor for evil, for the tragic, the pitiable and the dependent, a view which stems from the innermost fears of disabled people because they "remind the non-disabled people of their own vulnerability".¹⁵¹

Stigma is the co-occurrence of its components—labelling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination. Stigmatized individuals or groups experience status loss and discrimination along with the necessary implication of social, economic and political power which allows the occurrence of stigmatization. Green and others systematically described how disabled people and their families are excluded from social life and the negative consequences of being rejected and isolated.¹⁵²

There is very little data about the social exclusion of young disabled people, even if a few studies have disclosed that the meaning of social exclusion to disabled young people somehow differs from its general definitions. The study by Morris is significant for understanding the social exclusion of disabled young people. Morris defined three dimensions of social exclusion in relation to disabled young people: the experience of not being listened to, having no friends or finding it difficult to make friends, and a sense of being a burden rather than a contributor.¹⁵³

"Not being listened to" means the failure to address their limited opportunities and needs. According to Morris, this can have significant influence on other aspects of their lives. Friendship is a dimension of social inclusion; social interaction with their disabled and non-disabled peers at school or college is a central part of inclusion. The obvious limitation on disabled children's interaction with their peers is caused by practical barriers,

¹⁵⁰ Micheline Maison, "Internalized Oppression," in *Disability Equality in the Classroom: A Human Right Issue*, 2nd edition, eds. R. Reiser, and Mason, M, (London: Disability Equality in Education, 1992), 27, cited by Donna Reeve, "Negotiating Psycho-emotional Dimensions of Disability and their Influence on Identity Constructions," *Disability & Society* 17, no. 5 (2002), 495.

¹⁵¹ Tom Shakespeare, "Cultural Representation of Disabled People: Dustbins for Disavowal?" *Disability & Society* 9, no. 3 (1994), 297.

¹⁵² Green et al., "Living Stigma: The Impact of Labelling, Stereotyping, Separation, Status Loss, and Discrimination in the Lives of Individuals with Disabilities and their Families," *Sociological Inquiry* 75, no. 2 (2005), 197.

¹⁵³ Jenny Morris, "Social Exclusion and Young Disabled People with High Levels of Support Needs," *Critical Social Policy* 21, no. 2 (2001), 164.

by negative attitudes held by non-disabled children and young people who consider disabled peer to be pitied and the objects of charity, and by disabled young people's dependence on adult care-givers. The sense of being a burden rather than an active contributor is a key part of feeling "shut out from society". Morris' analysis of two related aspects—education and employment—points out that the inappropriate evaluation standards marginalize and undervalue disabled young people's educational needs and achievements; meanwhile, focusing on the characteristics of individuals rather than the barriers in workplaces also hampers their employment possibility.

Disability studies have then thoroughly portrayed the ubiquity of the social exclusion of disabled people. The co-functioning of external and internal barriers, from the socio-structural, cultural as well as psycho-emotional levels, severely inhibits disabled people's participation in society and relegates them to a marginalized and excluded status.

4.2.2 Enhancing Disabled People's Social inclusion through Arts

In EU member countries, "social inclusion" has become a widely used and well-established term in social and cultural policies designed to improve the lives of disadvantaged groups. Social inclusion is identified as a process through which those at risk of poverty and social exclusion obtain necessary opportunities and resources, so that they can fully—economically, socially and culturally—participate in the society in which they live and enjoy a normal standard of living and wellbeing.¹⁵⁴

A report by Long and others identified seven indicators of social inclusion outcomes through culture, the media and sport in the UK. They embody improved educational performance and participation, raised employment rates, reduced levels of crime, better (and additionally equal) standards of health, increased personal development, strengthened social cohesion and reduced social seclusion, and active citizenship.¹⁵⁵

The employment of the arts to enhance social inclusion is part and parcel of a broad inclusive cultural and arts policy, resting on a consensus that participating in the arts has positive impact on individual and social development. Enhancing social inclusion is demonstrably the central concern of a large body of empirical studies on the social impact of the arts.

Francois Matarasso summarized six categories of the social impact from participation in the arts, including personal development, social solidarity, community empowerment and self-determination, community image and identity, imagination and view, and health and well-being. Many of his findings refer to the enhancement of social inclusion. Williams' survey on community based, collaborative art projects identified large qualitative outcomes in five categories: human capital development, social capital

¹⁵⁴ Silver, "Understanding Social Inclusion and Its Meaning for Australia," 187.

¹⁵⁵ Long et al., "Count Me In: The Dimensions of Social Inclusion through Culture, Media & Sport," Department for Culture, Media & Sport, Leeds Metropolitan University, 2002, 4.

development, community building and development, social change facilitation, and economic enhancement. HDA's study divided the impacts into three categories: the first is improved mental health, referring to happiness and releasing stress; the second is improved well-being/self-esteem, indicated by enhanced motivation, connectedness, a positive outlook on life, and reduced fear, isolation and anxiety; the third is educational enhancement through developing language, creative and social skills, enhancing transferable skills, and increasing employability resulting from learning specific arts-related skills. A literature study by Guetzkow identified three types of claims about the impact of participating in the arts, ranging from the individual to the community level: building social capital, improving the economy, and benefiting individual life. These studies, while only a small portion of the considerable number of studies on the impacts of the arts, also supported the call for social inclusion through the arts, even though they do not specifically refer to disabled people.¹⁵⁶

Although there is no large-scale survey on how participating in the arts can enhance disabled young people's social inclusion, many prior studies have proved, directly or indirectly, that the arts generate massive benefits for disabled people's social inclusion. Previous studies on enhancing disabled people's social inclusion through the arts can be summarized into five aspects. Firstly, the arts provide disabled people with a way of rejecting the negative perceptions of disability and disabled people. Secondly, participating in the arts indisputably improves psychological well-being, whether one is disabled or not. Thirdly, participating in the arts, and especially collective art projects, creates a venue in which disabled people can interact with others and this interaction helps to improve their social relations, a factor which is significant for facilitating disabled people's participation in society. Fourthly, the positive impacts of the arts on intellectual development, such as cognitive growth relate to academic achievement and full development of personal ability. The fourth aspect is linked to the third in that the arts can improve disabled people's employability and career development. The artistic skills acquired also help disabled people in employment and in self-employment. The following paragraphs will consider some research work related to these significant aspects.

For disabled people, art inherently enhances their inclusion because artistic expression provides a medium for self-expression and enabling their voices to be heard by society. Through the medium of art the discrimination and prejudice that disabled people face can be exposed, the stereotypical representations of disability can be countered, and a new group consciousness and solidarity can be generated. As Barnes and Mercer pointed, in addition to enhancing disabled people's access to mainstream arts and to exploring the experience of living with impairment, the most crucial dimension of disability arts is that "disability arts offer a critical response to the experience of social

¹⁵⁶ See Matarasso, 1997; Williams, 1997; HDA, 2000; Guetzkow, 2002.

exclusion and marginalization".¹⁵⁷ Disabled artists and activists have attempted to reject and reverse the negative perception of the dominant non-disabled social group and to reassign the meanings of disability on their own terms, as represented via disability performance art.¹⁵⁸

Psycho-emotional oppression is not inevitable and unchanging. Disabled people can resist stereotypical attitudes as well as transform themselves by generating different selves.¹⁵⁹ With the blooming Disabled People's Movement and the Disability Art Movement, "critical interrogation of the cultural construction of disability", how to expose and reject the negative perception of disability and disabled people whilst building up a more positive identity has become the focus of art education on disability. Art education provides disabled people with visual literacy, practical and aesthetic skills and competencies with which to create powerful alternative images.

There are very few empirical studies on art education for disabled young people. Hermon and Prentice investigated a school-based art and design project, which focused upon overturning a negative image of difference while promoting a positive attitude towards difference, in the context of contemporary art and fashion design. Through engaging in fashion design by the way of "deconstruction fashion", students addressed issues of difference in relation to their own experience of disability, challenging the passive and negative image of difference.¹⁶⁰ Taylor's study on a group of disabled students demonstrated that through identifying and addressing living experiences of impairment and disability via artwork, disabled students could move towards a positive, inclusive and multi-identity perspective in relation to the recognition of human diversity.¹⁶¹ Both studies mentioned the significant provisions in art education for disabled young people, such as having adequate access to a curriculum and materials, addressing the disability through different art media, and cooperating and interacting with peers, educators, staff and community.

The many known benefits that art can bring to people, such as enhancement of social relations, mental well-being, intellectual development, skills learning and career development also apply to disabled people. Lynch and Allan organized an extensive investigation on art projects in which participants include disabled people, delinquent school age youngsters and violated women. Evidence from Lynch and Allan reveals that participating in the arts develops social capital among participants – both among people who

¹⁵⁷ Colin Barnes, and Geoff Mercer, "Disability Culture: Assimilation or inclusion?" In *Handbook of Disability Studies*, eds. Gary L. Albrecht, Katherine Seelman, and Michael Bury (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001), 529.

¹⁵⁸ Rosemarie Garland Thomson, "Staring back: Self-representations of Disabled Performance Artists," *American Quarterly* 52, no. 2 (2000): 334-338; Jennifer Eisenhauer, "Just Looking and Staring Back: Challenging Ableism through Disability Performance Art," *Studies in Art Education* 49, no. 1 (2007): 7-22.

¹⁵⁹ Donna Reeve, "Negotiating Psycho-emotional Dimensions of Disability and their Influence on Identity Constructions," *Disability & Society* 17, no. 5 (2002), 494.

¹⁶⁰ Alison Hermon, and Roy Prentice, "Positively Different: Art and Design in Special Education," *International Journal of Art & Design Education* 22, no. 3 (2003): 270-271.

¹⁶¹ Margaret Taylor, "Self-identity and the Arts Education of Disabled Young People," *Disability & Society* 20, no. 7 (2005): 763.

have similar social and culture attributes, and among groups with different backgrounds and interests.¹⁶²

Previous studies found that participating in visual art-making can support the subjective well-being of people living with severe and disabling diseases. Reynolds and Prior's investigation on a group of women living with disabling chronic illness discovered that textile art making contributed to their health and well-being in diverse ways: filling occupational emptiness, drawing attention away from illness, facilitating the experience of flow and spontaneity, enabling the expression of sadness, maintaining a positive identity, and expanding social networks. Another, Reynolds' earlier study on female needlework practitioners experiencing chronic or fluctuating depression also identified that creative art functions as a vehicle for managing depression and enhancing psychological well-being. Needlecraft helps them create an "abled" identity: it brings mental and physical relaxation; it improves self-esteem through a sense of mastery/competence and achievements from visible productions; it is a form of self-expression and attracts acknowledgement and praise from others; it makes a contribution to valued roles and sources of status; it enhances control and confidence; it increases activity levels and energizes thoughts; it brings social support as well.¹⁶³

Dalke's study of the integration of visual arts with special education curriculum proved that art can reinforce perceptual, motor, and academic skills as well as self-consciousness in children with learning disability; that success in one subject can promote changes in attitude and have an effect in other areas.¹⁶⁴ Art experience encourages disabled students to make decisions and initiate ideas, to be active in creating something, and to have control over the process without strictly controlled standards of right and wrong, which are empowering attributes for disabled children.

Employability and career development are significant for disabled people's inclusion in society, although disabled young people's career development in the field of arts is under-explored. A study on young disabled artists mentioned the potential chances of employment as a consequence of involvement in arts, mainly owing to the factor that arts careers offer flexible employment options, provide opportunity for self-expression and affirmation, and access to art communities.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Heather Lynch, and Julie Allan, "Social Inclusion and the Arts." Final Report to the Scottish Arts Council (Stirling: University of Stirling, 2006).

¹⁶³ Frances Reynolds, and Sarah Prior, "'A Lifestyle Coat-hanger': A Phenomenological Study of the Meanings of Artwork for Women Coping with Chronic Illness and Disability," *Disability and Rehabilitation* 25, no. 14 (2003): 788. Also see Reynolds, "Managing Depression through Needlecraft Creative Activities: A Qualitative Study," *The Arts in Psychotherapy* 27, no. 2 (2000): 110-112.

¹⁶⁴ Connie Dalke, "There Are No Cows Here: Art and Special Education Together at Last," *Art Education* 37, no. 6 (1984): 6-9.

¹⁶⁵ Heike Boeltzig, Jennifer Sullivan Sulewski, and Rooshey Hasnain, "Career Development among Young Disabled Artists," *Disability & Society* 24, no. 6 (2009): 753-769.

4.3 Research Purpose and Research Question

The focus of this case study was to reveal a small group of disabled students' long-term involvement with the *Art for the Disabled Scheme* that integrates art instruction and philanthropy on an important and practical level. It was worthwhile noting that previous studies on how art enhances disabled people's social inclusion had the following shortcomings: a lack of detailed exploration of disabled people's participation experience, of the mechanisms of those often long-term and multifaceted projects, and of the roles played by the artists. Concerning the existing research gap and the attributes of the *Art for the Disabled Scheme*, the research questions were defined as follows: What benefits did they reap from participation? How did the process occur and how did all benefits combine to enhance the social inclusion? Since this project was initiated as a philanthropic action that combined charitable aid and art, how were philanthropy and art integrated in order to reach the goal and how did art function in the process? What roles did the artists play in the implementation process?

4.4 Data Collection and Analysis

In this qualitative in-depth case study, data was collected from direct observation, semi-structured in-depth interview, image analysis, and document study, among which semi-structured in-depth interview was the most significant method. Inductive thematic analysis was used for data analysis. In addition, this case study was involved with the analysis of artwork produced by the disabled students. Therefore compositional interpretation was applied as a method of supplementary visual data analysis to describe the visual impact of images through looking carefully at the content and form of an image. As one approach that offers "a detailed vocabulary for expressing the appearance of an image", compositional interpretation mostly focuses on the composition of an image which includes the analysis of a series of elements.¹⁶⁶ They include the content, colour, spatial formation and light of a still image. However, as mentioned by Rose, the compositional interpretation method has difficulty reaching the broader cultural meaning and resonance of an image due to the shortcomings in the production of an image and the use or interpretation by different viewers. Compositional interpretation, she suggested, needs to be combined with other methodologies. In this study, the compositional interpretation method was combined with content analysis.

¹⁶⁶ Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials*, 2nd edition (London: SAGE, 2007), 35.

First, in June 2011 I contacted the Foundation and soon obtained a permission to investigate this project. Later in 2011 I started by going with instructors to different instruction units at Sichuan Huaxin Modern Vocational College and the Youai School in Dujiangyan, Sichuan. Meanwhile, I examined the press reports about the 5Colours Foundation and the *Art for the Disabled Scheme* including one on-line video documentary made by CCTV. The initial study provided me with a basic understanding of the mechanism of this project and students' participation experience, whilst demonstrating the necessity of doing further in-depth interviews. It helped me to build up a rapport with the staff members and students, which in turn paved the ground for further in-depth interview.

The *Art for the Disabled Scheme* has instruction units in different provinces. Given the restraints on time and finance, this study was undertaken in Chengdu, where the head office of the Foundation is situated, and in the surrounding area, where most instruction units are located.

The research participants included eleven aid-receiving students (four males and seven females) and three staff members including artist Zhou. The student interviewees were college age students from 20 to 22 years old. Among them, one was studying in Sichuan University; eight were studying in Sichuan Huaxin Modern Vocational College; one had already graduated from Huaxin College; one was still in rehabilitation. These students were the first group enrolled in the *Art for the Disabled Scheme* and all of them had at least three years art practising experience within this project. They witnessed the start of the 5Colours Foundation and the development of this project; they understood the research background and the purpose of this project, and were able to provide detailed and clear interview narratives. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured to all student interviewees throughout the whole research journey. In addition, I had interviewed artist Zhou Chunya and two staff members working for the 5Colours Foundation: professional art instructor Geng Bo, and Liu Danfang who was in charge of media communication and project promotion. They helped me build a holistic view on this project and provided rich information.

Before the interview, the potential student interviewees were asked if they would like to participate in this research. Barring one, 11 students accepted the interview request and written consent was duly obtained. From June to August 2012 I interviewed 11 disabled students. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured way with focus on five sections of questions. The interviewees were encouraged to describe their personal experience, feelings and thoughts as thoroughly as possible. The length of the interviews ranged from one to two hours. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed. In addition to a face-to face interview, e-mail and instant messaging were used to get in touch with some of them for supplementary information and further clarification. The interview focused on several issues: When, where and via whom did the interviewee have first experience with this project? What was his/her personal situation (physical and emotional) at that moment? What motivated the

interviewee's participation, or what were the factors that drove the interviewee to make the decision to take part in the project? How did interviewee participate in this project, such as the content of art practice in different periods, the length and intensity of practice, their interaction with peers and instructors, and their involvement in all the activities such as taking part in exhibitions, interacting with the media and the public as well as the participants' plans for future participation? How and why does interviewee think that his/her participation changed his/her life? The interviewees were encouraged to feel free to describe any kind of change happened to them in reference to their participation in the project, such as mental well-being, knowledge and skill improvement, social improvement and any other change. There was no preset frame. I also asked if there was any barrier and challenge to his/her participation, if they attempted to overcome them, and if so, how.

After the interviews were transcribed and checked by the participants, I imported the entire transcriptions as well as media reports and documents provided by the Foundation to qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti 7.0 for PC. Finally, five over-arching themes emerged from the constant comparison of the similarities and differences between initial data segments, codes and categories.

Several pieces of artwork were selected and used in this study. The selection included individual work and collective work. The purpose of artwork analysis was firstly to support the statements from the descriptions. Secondly, artwork as their self-expression was a symbolic representation of their experience and feelings; certain meanings that were not clearly depicted in their description were expressed through their works. I wrote notes on all the selected artwork and combined them into content analysis afterwards. Image and interview transcriptions were juxtaposed and compared repeatedly to enhance understanding of the disabled students' psychological journey.

4.5 Participation in Art for the Disabled Scheme

This section presents the findings and it comprises the key part of this study. I identified five benefits in relation to the disabled students' involvement in the scheme: obtaining financial and material support, improving mental well-being, promoting personal development, building positive self and group identity, and enhancing social development. Those five themes revealed what benefits they obtained from the participation experience, more importantly, how all defined impacts occurred and how all positive impacts interplayed with each other.

4.5.1 Initial Motivations and Engagement

The students' narratives illustrated multiple motivations for participating in this project. Most students mentioned that they were somehow interested in art

before they took part, though they had not had the chance to study art, a situation typically described as “since my childhood, I’ve liked painting, but I didn’t have the chance to study art” or “I used to draw for fun, copying the figures in books for fun”.

Five students mentioned opportunities in higher education. In China, all senior middle school graduates need to pass the rigid national college entrance examination in order to be able to study at college or university. Their injuries and medical treatment adversely affected these disabled students’ schooling and severely hampered their chances of passing the examination. Studying art provided an alternative option for them, because the competition for art college entrances is not so stiff even if it does require a level of artistic competence. They hoped that participation in this project could help them to pass the examination and to obtain a place in higher education:

The injury and medical treatment for it and also the rehabilitation dragged me behind in my school study; so it became more difficult for me to be enrolled in university. I should say that my choice is also partly out of the consideration of future education opportunity.

I was worried about my future education. My parents have always wanted me to have higher education. Then I thought I might be able to study at an art college through practising art with them.

Other students did not mention such clear instrumental motivation; they just wished that learning some skill could not be bad and since “there is nothing to lose”, “why not have a try”. One girl noted that:

Zhou and his friends came to visit us and asked us if we’d like to study art. I thought it would be good to have a try. I thought it might be helpful for us even if I didn’t know exactly what kind of help it could bring. I didn’t have much understanding of this project at that time; I just felt that learning more things is not bad.

One student told a different story. He had been in training as a disabled athlete but he wanted a more creative and colourful life:

I was in training in the national weight-lifting team. For me that kind of life was tedious. We had two hours training per day and four training days per week. During the rest time, we had nothing interesting to do. We even didn’t have to do laundry by ourselves; service staff did it for us. The training centre is in suburban area, segregated from the outside world. I felt that kind of life was not what I wanted, without any creativity. I decided to come back to Sichuan. I returned to senior middle school and at the same time, I joined the *Art for the Disabled Scheme*.

Students’ motivations were often mixed. For instance the boy who mentioned the wish for a creative and colourful life also mentioned the considering higher education. One girl, in addition to declaring she had been motivated by the chance for a higher education opportunity, also mentioned that economic reasoning influenced her decision-making:

The Foundation also distributed a maintenance grant every month, so the family financial burden was more or less relieved.

The interviews revealed the significance of personal connections in their early engagement. All students came to know about this project by word-of-mouth and all students confirmed that personal interaction had had an influence on their decisions. Some first heard of this project from Zhou and other artists during their visit to the hospitals, rehabilitation centres or schools; some from their art teacher in middle school and one from the leader of Chengdu Disabled People's Federation.

The students' activities included practising art and learning artistic knowledge and skills, exhibiting their artwork, visiting museums and exhibitions, participating in various social events organized by the 5Colours Foundation and interacting with the media. There was no significant personal difference among participants because all students shared similarities in age and education background, had experienced similar misfortune during the earthquake, and faced the similar dilemma after the earthquake. Generally, they studied together and socialized together in this project and their participation experience demonstrated a considerable degree of homogeneity.

The students also mentioned challenges they faced in their participation experience. The primary challenge was feeling that they had not enough artistic knowledge and skill, as one boy mentioned: "I feel the gap between what I conceive and the details I depict; the gap between what I wanted to express and what I've actually painted". Apart from that, two students mentioned that a small portion of the media's professional quality was not enough good, for instance the way they posed questions might be somehow upsetting. Students generally held very positive attitude for interacting with the media and they understood that the media made a significant contribution to this project and brought them considerable social resources. The unpleasant feeling caused by certain people in the media, though it only occurred occasionally, was one negative effect mentioned by students. One boy noted that:

A somewhat disturbing thing was that some media people always asked me the same questions, just something related to the earthquake. For some experiences, it's unpleasant to recall them and talk about them over and over again. I felt somehow upset.

4.5.2 Five Aspects of Multiple Benefits

The most important concern of this study was to develop a deep understanding of "benefits". Data analysis identified five overarching themes in relation to the multiple benefits: obtaining financial and material support, improving mental well-being, promoting personal development, building positive self and group identity, and enhancing social development. The articulation of the five overarching themes with sub-themes below each provided a comprehensive description of their participation experience and revealed how the combination of philanthropy and art enhanced the disabled young people's full participation in society.

The study found that some impacts directly resulted from participation in art while others arose indirectly. For example, obtaining artistic skills was a

direct result of participating. While with the artistic skills acquired students passed the entrance exam of art colleges and managed to obtain an opportunity to study in higher education institutions, the educational opportunity may be said to be as an indirect consequence. These five aspects often occurred simultaneously, and interlinked and interacted with each other. A master table (TABLE 2) is used to illustrate all identified themes, sub-themes and representative quotes.

TABLE 2 Five Aspects of Multiple Benefits

Themes	Sub-themes		Representative quotes
1. Financial and material support	1.1 Long-term free art instruction		<i>Instructors meet them every week; almost every day our instructors go to teach the disabled students in different units.</i>
	1.2 Financial assistance		<i>Without the Foundation, I can't afford to study in any art and design higher education institution.</i>
	1.3 Accessible environment enabling		<i>We prefer that they study in the same college, so we can offer financial aid for barrier-free facilities on campus to make their study and daily life easier.</i>
2. Improvement of Mental Well-being	2.1 Negative emotion relief		<i>Painting provided relief and brought me peace.</i>
	2.2 Focus on positive experience		<i>After the earthquake, we had negative emotions. ... I wanted to paint another self, a happy and joyful self.</i>
	2.3 Enjoyment and satisfaction		<i>Art is an outlet for your feelings ... even if you can't paint very well, you still feel so happy.</i>
	2.4 Sense of achievement		<i>These years, when I see myself make greater progress, I feel a sense of achievement. I've felt fulfilled these years ... I make oil paintings now; when I see what I've painted on canvas, I feel proud of myself.</i>
	2.5 Cultivation of Volitional Quality	2.5.1 Patience	<i>At the beginning, I just grabbed the brush and began to doodle, then gradually, I became more patient and learnt to express details.</i>
		2.5.2 Perseverance	<i>Painting is not easy work, you can't see progress in one or two days; it requires a large amount of persistent work.</i>
		2.5.3 Self-discipline	<i>I used to be restless. Now, I feel I'm no longer restless. Now it's much better and I can control myself.</i>
2.6 Self-esteem and self confidence		<i>I feel that although we are physically disabled, we can still do a lot; so I feel the value and purpose – the value and purpose of our existence – and that can be realized through art. I gradually became more confident. Now it's much better. I'm not afraid anymore, not afraid of making mistakes.</i>	

3. Promotion for personal development	3.1 Artistic knowledge and skills		<i>I learned oil painting and had my works in exhibitions. I've had a full time during these years.</i>
	3.2 Access to higher education		<i>I've obtained the chance to study graphic design in higher education. At least I can see a way forward in the future now.</i>
	3.3 Cognitive growth	3.3.1 Enhanced attention	<i>Practising art really builds up a person's mind. It makes me more mentally focused.</i>
		3.3.2 Improvement in activity planning and problem solving	<i>I've become more thoughtful than I was before, and than many others, because making painting requires the ability to think thoroughly. You need to think through the situation before you start and then you need to insist on painting on canvas and try to solve the problem.</i>
		3.3.3 Observation improvement	<i>I can grasp details better than before when I do other things.</i>
		3.3.4 Looking with new and different eyes	<i>You know, the person who has studied art has different views on things in life. This is a reward in my life.</i>
3.4 Horizon expansion		<i>We also took part in different events. We have travelled and held exhibitions, so our horizons have been broadened.</i>	
4. Positive self and group identity building	4.1 Accepting disability as part of identity		<i>The human figure, in fact is the figure of myself. That means two selves; one is the real self, standing on the bank while the figure reflected in the water is another self, the imagined self.</i>
	4.2 Rejecting negative perception		<i>There are many skilful people, but when we paint and draw, we present not only artistic skills, but also a spirit, the spirit of self-improvement. The spirit is what is most valuable.</i>
	4.3 Transforming into a positive identity		<i>I think the scar is a symbol for us which means that although we had such a tragic experience our life is still wonderful.</i>
5. Social development	5.1 Sense of belonging to a group	5.1.1 Feeling safe and equal	<i>We study art within this project, in this group, and all students are in a similar situation and the teachers treat us as their own family members.</i>
		5.1.2 Fraternity	<i>We are in a group; we study together, play together. We are like brothers and sisters. We have experienced many things together and we have deep affection for each other.</i>

	5.1.3 Mutual aid and encouragement	<i>If we stay in a group, we can help each other and life and work will be better.</i>
	5.2 Interpersonal skills	<i>We used to be very shy at the beginning, but gradually we became more extroverted.</i>
	5.3 Social network expansion	<i>I made many friends, came to know many people in art and design. All of these are things that I couldn't imagine before.</i>
	5.4 Public attention through media exposure	<i>Every time we have an exhibition, the media report can make more people know about the exhibition and the work of foundation. This is good.</i>
	5.5 Respect from others	<i>People see our strong side ... [that we are] worth respecting and are an encouraging example ... rather than being pitied for our disability.</i>
	5.6 Opportunity for employability	<i>The Foundation introduced us to designers and many other people in the field of art and design; we have had the chance for an internship in their design office or studio. This is helpful for job-hunting.</i>

4.5.2.1 Financial and Material Support

Disabled people are often excluded from society because of a lack of access to various resources and services. The same situation can be seen in the art field as well. Boeltzig, Sulewski and Hasnain reviewed a series of barriers in relation to the career development of young disabled artists.¹⁶⁷ They include a lack of access to the art community, practical barriers like architectural and transport problems, a lack of money, limited access to art education, people's attitudes to disabled people and disabled artists, poor job seeking and marketing skills, and lack of awareness about opportunities. Economic insufficiency often hampers opportunities in many ways. The *Art for the Disabled Scheme* provided various financial and material supports including free art instruction, financial assistance (free painting material, a maintenance grant, a grant for higher education tuition fees, travel and exhibition cost coverage), and improved physical accessibility for the disabled.

The long-term free art instruction was the most significant support provided by this project. The art instructors were in key positions to play significant roles. The instruction time was generally two hours per week, but from time to time, for instance before the art exhibition, the instructors provided extra instruction for the students. Instructors passed on artistic knowledge and skills, offered suggestions and provided necessary technical support together with other staff members in the Foundation. Students were encouraged to try different methods and materials.

¹⁶⁷ Boeltzig, Sulewski, and Hasnain, "Career Development among Young Disabled Artists, 754.

One student described the rapport between instructors and students in this way: “the teachers treat us as their own family members”. However, instructors and other staff members did not consider themselves charity givers or social workers in a position of superiority; there was mutual trust, equality, and interpersonal warmth and closeness between the students and staff members. Instructors often had personal interaction with students, for example talking about art and sharing art experience with students, showing concern for their daily lives and spare time activities and encouraging students to give voice to their opinions. Instructor Geng recollected his working experience:

In my work, I treat them as totally normal students, I never treat them as disabled so that I myself feel more relaxed in my work and I believe it's better for them as well. I can't treat them as disabled, as different people, and give them special care. That is not good for them. I just treat them naturally and equally, and if they make some mistakes, I simply point them out just as I would to any students.¹⁶⁸

For socially disadvantaged groups, financial problems often hamper their opportunities in many ways. Economic assistance can work as a sort of lubricating oil therefore to make the machine run more smoothly. The financial assistance included free painting materials, a maintenance grant of around RMB 500 per month before they entered college and the payment of their higher education tuition fee of around RMB 12,000 to 14,000 per year. The foundation also covered all exhibition costs such as flights and hotels, site rentals, and brochures printing. One boy's story revealed how important the financial assistance was for them:

Without the help of the Foundation, studying art would be impossible for me. First, if you attend art class, the cost is high. In addition, the painting materials and tools are not cheap. Therefore, even if you are enrolled in an art college, the tuition fee on top is hard to find. Without the Foundation, I couldn't afford to study in any art and design higher education institution.

Disabled people are often excluded from society by environments unfriendly to mobility. Both students and staff members considered an accessible environment to be a significant support. As the sponsor and executor of the *Art for the Disabled Scheme*, the 5Colours Foundation financed a set of campus environmental reconstruction projects to ensure a barrier-free campus life for the disabled students; all exhibitions and other events organized by the Foundation were held in barrier-free environments.

For the most excluded groups, external support is a significant part of their chance to participate equally in society. The financial and material support offered by the 5Colours Foundation highlighted the core value of philanthropy – using charitable aid to “stimulate the best and most aspiring of the poor...to further efforts for their own improvement”.¹⁶⁹ The findings in this case suggested that without the support from the project, the disabled students could hardly have got involved in art of their own accord, let alone obtain

¹⁶⁸ Geng Bo, interview with the author, July 2, 2012.

¹⁶⁹ Bremner, *Giving: Charity and Philanthropy in History*, 159.

further benefits from art participation. The support provided by the Foundation not only catalyzed their initial participation, but also maintained their involvement throughout these years.

4.5.2.2 Improvement of Mental Well-being

It is widely argued that whether talking about disabled or non-disabled people, making art can promote mental well-being. In this study, the conclusion of improvement to mental well-being was justified as the relief from negative emotions, the focus on positive experience, enjoyment and satisfaction, a sense of achievement, the cultivation of volitional quality, and self-esteem and self-confidence. The students' narration illustrated a long-term process through "soothing" to "rebuilding", which revealed a psychological journey of empowerment.

All students had traumatic experiences of the earthquake, such as being buried under the ruins for several days, seeing others die around them, losing friends, enduring painful medical treatment and amputation, together with negative prospects in education and job opportunities as a consequence of their disabilities. One student explained the difficulty he faced after the earthquake:

The most painful time was those days after I was rescued, but before limb-amputation. The medical treatment made me awfully uncomfortable. I often had a fever in those days. My sleeping was also bad. Once I closed my eyes, those scenes of the earthquake began to swirl in my brain. I didn't feel fear when I was buried under the ruins; I started to fear after I was rescued.

Two other girls noted their poor frame of mind when they first realized the reality of being disabled:

I lost my right arm and I felt my life was over. I was so sad and felt hopeless.

I was buried under the ruins for three days. [...] I was severely injured. At that time, I was in a very bad mood. I didn't talk at all, and I often cried and yearned at my parents. I couldn't accept the reality.

Most students described their worry concerning future study. They were second year senior middle school students before the earthquake, but the medical treatment and rehabilitation therapy made them lag behind in their schooling. Thus passing the national college entrance exam became an inaccessible target, and future job prospects became limited as well. This added to their anxiety and sense of hopelessness for their future lives. The following quotes typify their anxiety:

At that time, I was downhearted. Due to the physical situation, I was lagging behind in my studies because I stayed such a long time in hospital. Anyway, I had negative feelings.

Because of the earthquake, I felt lost and hopeless. I don't know what I should and I could do for the future job plan. [...] The disability severely limited my future job choices [...]

Many of them degenerated into a very “low” psychological state, experiencing emotions of anxiety, fear, hopelessness, anger, depression and apathy. One student described it as if “plunging into an abyss ... there is no hope. You have nothing to do ... in fact, nothing you can do, and nothing you want to do”.

For these young people, when they suddenly became impaired, their world that had been so much broader and more colourful suddenly became restricted. For instance, they were deprived of many vigorous exercises usually favoured by teenagers. A sense of emptiness pervaded these newly disabled young people. Participating in art—doing repeated manual work and seeing immediately the output of their creativity—became a way to fill their empty time as well as a means of escape to set their minds free, at least temporarily, from the torture of daily life. Most interviewees described their experiences in the first months and recognized that making art was relaxing and enjoyable experience that relieved negative emotion:

Painting relieved my burden and brought me peace. At that time, I was restless, but when I began to draw and paint, I felt peaceful because I didn't have to think about anything else. Making art became a spiritual sustenance, mainly by getting me away from all kinds of repugnant fantasies. Besides, I lost my best friends in the earthquake and I felt so lonely, so painting became my companion, a way to pass the time.

Students were encouraged to create artwork and to freely express their true feelings. Many works reproduced their traumatic experiences such as being buried under the ruins, the broken body and limbs, and the collapsed buildings. The cathartic mode of expression was helpful in pushing negative feeling away. However art meant more than a cathartic mode of expression for them. Drawing and painting also provided the disabled students the opportunity to focus on the positive side of their lives. Many works depicted sunshine, flowers, blue sea and green trees. Likewise, their self-portraits also expressed many cheerful images, which were consistent with their more upbeat change in their personal narratives. One girl recalled her work:

My work was based on my photo. However, I didn't copy the photo so faithfully and I made many changes, such as in facial expression and colouring. I painted with vivid and bright colours [...] slightly cold tones, but really bright. I was smiling happily. After the earthquake, we had had negative emotions. I was over-sentimental at that time and I wanted to paint another self, a happy and joyful self.

Some interviewees spoke with emphasis of their experience of being completely focused on drawing and painting and the intense sense of enjoyment afterwards. One explained, “When I was painting, I forgot eating. I couldn't stop [painting] until I completed the work” and another noted, “I felt that time passes so quickly. I thought I was sitting there for only 30 minutes, but three hours had passed”. The deep mental engagement in activities at hand is explored in Csikszentmihalyi's study on “flow” experience. Csikszentmihalyi identified three conditions of flow experience: a clear set of goals and progress,

clear and immediate feedback, and a good balance between the perceived challenges and perceived skills.¹⁷⁰

Csikszentmihalyi discussed a large number of flow experiences in work and leisure. Stebbins also discovered flow experience in the pursuits of serious leisure enthusiasts.¹⁷¹ It is not the purpose of this study to go into detail about the flow experience in the disabled students' involvement with this project. The flow experience identified in this group of disabled students in this study, although according to them it appeared only occasionally, revealed the optimal experience in non-professional art participation and implied a distinct link to disabled people's well-being. The full mental and emotional engagement and the enjoyable and rewarding experiences were motivational factors for their further participation. Generally, the mental and emotional engagement brought them deep enjoyment, and in turn the enjoyable experience was rewarding, so that participants sought to duplicate this experience. Thus flow experience was a motivational factor for their further participation. Only when participants have experienced enough enjoyment from making art, which means when enjoyment has become the main reason for pursuing an activity, can practising art become a strong internal demand and an ongoing process, so that participants change into "frequent participants".¹⁷²

Most interviewees mentioned the cultivation of such aspects of volition as patience, perseverance and self-discipline. One student's experience illustrated that painting enhanced his patience and perseverance:

Before, I was restless and messy [...] studying art, for example oil painting, requires a quiet and tidy environment as well as a long time. When you encounter difficulties, you can't just easily give up. You can't just rip the paper down and begin a new one. You need to think through the situation before you start and then you need to insist on painting on the canvas and try to solve the problem [...] This process builds up my patience and persistence.

He added:

I think the impact is very great. I was careless and I often couldn't finish what I started—as somebody said, tiger's head and snake's tail. Now I'm much better. I can be more mentally focused, I'm more able to control myself and I'm more persistent.

One severely disabled student had a moving description on how practising art helped her keep her spirits high through adversity:

You see these years, I've been restricted to a sickbed in hospital and I haven't gone back to school. Hospital is not a good place for studying. In addition, you know most people can't move much. My poor physical situation also hampered me in my studies—I mean general studying, not only art. Under this kind of situation, a person can easily sink under the weight. However, in such hard circumstances, practising art kept me up. I've become more active. The benefit to the spirit is obvious.

¹⁷⁰ Jeanne Nakamura, and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "The Concept of Flow." In *The Handbook of Positive Psychology*, eds. C. R. Snyder, Shane J. Lopez (Oxford University Press, 2005): 89-105.

¹⁷¹ Stebbins, *Serious Leisure*, 15.

¹⁷² MaCarthy et al., "Gifts of the Muse," 62-63.

The students' narration emphasized the sense of achievement obtained. Two girls explained their feelings:

When I finally complete my painting, perhaps others see its poor quality, perhaps the professional artists can point out many faults from my work; however, I feel a sense of achievement.

I've had a fulfilling time these years. When I was practising art before coming to college, I made sketches every day and I worked hard. Now if I look back, I can say it was a happy time. Nowadays, I'm making oil paintings. When I see what I've painted on canvas, I feel proud of myself.

The improvement of mental well-being was a long-term process. All students in this study had an average of over three years' art practice. Data analysis revealed that long-term involvement with this project largely improved the disabled students' self-esteem and self-confidence. Self-esteem and self-confidence go towards making up a positive experience of self, which supports findings from prior studies. One student explained how her sense of self-esteem was enhanced:

Throughout these years, from Zhou and other students, I've learned and seen a lot. I feel that although we are physically disabled, we can still do a lot; so I feel the value and purpose – the value and purpose of our existence – that can be realized through art [...]

Most students recognized that participating in this project made them more confident owing to the awareness of their capacity to make art as a result of the programme and the appreciation and acknowledgement from others. One girl voiced the opinion that when she was too timid and nervous to paint, the instructor encouraged her and afterwards, she gradually became more confident in painting as well as in career planning, implying that the self-confidence that had grown in her exerted a positive influence on her attitude to other aspects of her life:

Geng told me that, "painting can't only be in your mind, you need to paint by hand. Even it's poor work, you can modify and improve and I will help you. However, if you don't dare to paint, you can never paint well". I thought: yes, maybe art needs some talent, but am I less talented than anybody else is? [...] I realized that it was my own problem, a problem in my own mind. Afterwards, I gradually became more confident. Now it's already much better. I can say that I don't hesitate to paint what I want to express and I'm not afraid anymore, not afraid of making mistake.

I like designing and I hope that I can go forward. Now I plan to apply for a master's degree [...] I've realized that we should not just think about the possibility of failure before doing something. We need to try it even if we might not always be successful. During the process of doing it we can learn a lot and accumulate many valuable experiences.

4.5.2.3 Promotion for Personal Development

Identified areas of personal development encompassed artistic knowledge and skills, access to higher education, cognitive growth, and the expansion of their

horizons. Personal development is significant because it is linked to confidence and capacity. The centre of personal development is obtaining knowledge and building skills generally through school education, and for disabled children and young people it is often through special education. As an extracurricular project, the *Art for the Disabled Scheme* did not replace the significance of school education; however, in its unique way, it enhanced the personal development in various aspects.

Artistic knowledge and skills were the most valuable competence they obtained through participation. Throughout these years students greatly improved their artistic skills and they have grown from green hands into skilful painters. In addition, all students mentioned that they learnt about art history, aesthetics, artists and art exhibitions. Artistic knowledge and skills equipped them with the necessary capability for creating artwork through which they could express their thoughts and feelings. One student noted that in her life imprisoned in a sickbed, how she enjoyed making artwork through which she conveyed her message and shared her experience with others; her description implied the significance of acquiring artistic knowledge and skills:

Sometimes you want to convey a certain message—a kind of secret that you don't want others to see so easily—and you can do it through art.

The outlet [of feeling and emotion] through art is more symbolic and indirect, not so concrete and direct ... others can speculate on what you think, but can't speak out so easily and clearly. This is pretty interesting.

Obtained artistic skills also directly led to another outcome—higher education opportunities in art colleges and institutes. Here are the reflections of two students:

It helps us to realize our higher education dream and learn knowledge and skill. If a person is physically disabled, and he doesn't have skill, how can he survive in society in the future? The foundation helped us a lot in this aspect.

I've obtained a chance at higher education in graphic design, at least I can see a way for the future; otherwise I don't know what I would do in the future.

Almost all students demonstrated cognitive improvement e.g. enhanced attention, activity planning, problem solving, observation, and a new way of looking at things. Five interviewees mentioned that participating in this project enhanced their attention. One of them explained:

To do painting, you need to focus on it. You need to immerse yourself in painting, then the world surrounding you doesn't exist. Practising art really builds up a person's mind and make me more mentally focused.

Two students affirmed the improvement of their observation ability, especially observations of detail. As one said, "I can better grasp the details often neglected by other people". Two mentioned the improvement in activity planning, while two mentioned improvement in imagination and

creativity – the capacity to look at things from a new and different angle. One noted the improvement of planning ability:

Since studying art, I've become more thoughtful than I was before, and than many others, because making painting requires the ability to think thoroughly. Before you start painting, you need to consider the whole and many details like composition and colours, and then you begin little by little.

Their narration also suggested that enhanced cognitive abilities transferred to other aspects of their life where it had a positive influence:

When I do other things, I can grasp details better than before. The person who practises art is sensitive to details; he can catch many details that are usually neglected by other people.

You know, the person who studied art has a different view on things in life. This is a reward in my life.

Six students recognized that the participation process broadened their horizon mainly as a result of the various activities organized by the 5Colours Foundation such as visiting art exhibitions, travelling, encountering the media, and interacting with artists and different people. One noted:

The experience of studying art has broadened my view. Before, I was like a little frog in the well, and my world was narrow. The foundation often organized visits to art exhibitions for us and arranged for us to communicate with artists. I've learned a lot.

4.5.2.4 Positive Self and Group Identity Building

As mentioned before, through identifying and addressing the experience of impairment and disability via artwork, disabled people are more able to resist negative perceptions of disability and impairment and therefore move towards a positive and inclusive identity.

In this study, building a positive self and group identity was one overarching theme which included three sub-themes: accepting disability as part of identity, rejecting negative perception, and transforming to a positive identity. Accepting disability as part of identity was the first step towards a continuous process of building positive identity. The students' work and narration demonstrated that free art making gave them an alternative way to reflect and express their experience of disability and it helped them accept the reality. For example, in the early days of this project, the students were once required to make a self-portrait. One girl painted a full-length self-portrait, in which she depicted a gloomy human figure standing by the water with its vivid and bright reflection in the water. According to her description, it represents two versions of "self" – the real self and the imagined self. The one standing on the bank is the real self, while the figure reflected in water is another self, the imagined self. There is no direct depiction of the impairment and disability, while the juxtaposition of the two illustrated her inner struggle for accepting

the reality of being impaired, and demonstrated that expressing the conflicting emotions through painting helped her accept disability as part of her identity.



FIGURE 1 I Wanna Stand Up!

One student's work demonstrated clearly the shifting identity through the three years of participation. This student had both legs amputated after the earthquake. The first work discussed here is an installation *I Wanna Stand Up* (FIGURE 1). Made of used newspaper, a human shape with both legs amputated is standing on crutches. This work was made several months after he attended this project and was displayed in different exhibitions. Here, the title *I Wanna Stand Up* carries a symbolic meaning. The robust upper body shows his strong will and the crutches symbolize the obtained support. This work depicts his physical and mental situation at that crucial moment when he had accepted the reality of his disability and was preparing to go back into society with the obtained support.

Later, having entered college, this student produced a series of oil paintings under the title of *Effortless*. The following two oil pieces are from this series. *Effortless 1* (FIGURE 2) is the first in this series and the painting time was about the end of 2010. *Effortless 5* (FIGURE 3) is the last one, made about one and a half years afterwards. He adopted a narrative method and depicted his wheelchair pulled by dogs—the hindered mobility and dependence on “others” —even dogs. Hindered mobility excludes disabled people from many places because many places are not friendly to wheelchair users, a fact which

shows that the exclusion of disabled people is caused by society rather than by impairment itself.

The comparison between the two pieces is revealing. In the first piece, the huge and robust dog, the sombre colour schemes, the downward motion of the dog, and the tiny and faceless human figure in the wheelchair stretching his arm to hold the taut reins together convey anxiety, tension, and sense of lack of control. In the second piece, there are three dogs and their size is relatively smaller, while the human figure in the wheelchair is bigger than in the first painting. The background colour is bright and fresh. The three dogs and the human figure are depicted in a much more detailed way. The dogs are under control and the image projects an atmosphere of relaxation, harmony and control. *Effortless 1* demonstrates his dilemma upon returning to society: the dog carries an ambiguous meaning, symbolizing both the support he obtained as well as the difficulties he had to deal with. In *Effortless 5*, three dogs symbolize more sociability, with dogs not so fierce looking, signifying that he has now obtained more control over his life. The comparison of the two paintings suggests a process of gradually overcoming the challenges and moving his self-identity towards a more confident and relaxed perspective.

The humorous, even playful title *Effortless* expresses his rejection of the negative perception of disabled people. As noticed in life, mainstream society often holds a negative perception of the disabled: disabled people are timid, more sensitive, dull, and lack a sense of humour. This stereotypical perception makes them (especially disabled young people) even more segregated from regular social circles. The segregation is often camouflaged under a false politeness. The humour depicted by both image content and title expresses his rejection of the negative perception of disabled people, demonstrating his attitude of not being so sensitive because he is mentally stronger. He does not care about other people's negative attitudes any more, and he can accept his disability but now look at it in a positive way. His works clearly illustrate the process of shifting self-identity with the experience of impairment and disability through the long-term practice of art.



FIGURE 2 Effortless 1



FIGURE 3 Effortless 5

One girl painted a series of oil works under the subject of a scar, in which she depicted scars in an abstract style with light and pastel tones (FIGURE 4). The following account demonstrated her understanding of impairment and disability:

Well, before the earthquake, I was also so afraid of scars. After the earthquake, my body was covered with scars, and I found all my classmates had scars on their body. I suddenly realized that scars were like a witness, a witness of survival and rebirth. [...] The scars on my friend's body are exceedingly strange. When I saw them, I just couldn't help painting them. I think that scars are as a symbol for us which means that although we had such a tragic experience our life is still wonderful.

The transformation of traumatic experience into creativity in culture and art is a way by which disabled people can become empowered. She depicted scars—a symbol of physical injury, agony and fear in such an elegant way. When a traumatic and painful symbol is transformed into creative expression in artwork, it implies that her self-identification with the experience of impairment and disability is transformed towards a more relaxed and confident direction. She realized in particular that scarring was not only her experience, but also a common experience among all peers. Addressing a symbol of collective suffering implied the transformation of identity at the collective level—the transformation of group identity towards a sense of freedom, relaxation and confidence.



FIGURE 4 Tang's Scars



FIGURE 5 Crutches



FIGURE 6 Imagery



FIGURE 7 Colourful Home

Another example is an installation work fashioned from crutches (FIGURE 5), the crutches are put together to form a geometric tower-shaped object. This is a fabulous and moving team effort. According to the members' explanation, several crutches putting together is a symbol of solidarity and strength. They said, "even though we are physically disabled, solidarity and strength can make us climb up to reach the summit". This teamwork demonstrates the students' creativity through looking at and expressing a common thing in their life from a new angle. Looking through such a symbol of disability with a relaxed heart and transforming it into a symbol of solidarity and power led to a confident and powerful group identity.

Through artwork, people can bring a previously denied aspect to consciousness; this healing process forms the basis of the transformative power of image, both at the individual and the collective level. Their addressing of impairment and disability as well as the potential to conquer their predicament revealed a positive self and group identity. Through exhibitions and the media, these positive images reached the community and society and awakened public consciousness of the disability issue. Zhou pointed out that this project was an inspiring example to society and generated huge social impact; it had educational significance for changing people's misconceptions about disabled people, and in turn helped the disabled students regard themselves as positive contributors to society rather than only as passive recipients of assistance.

4.5.2.5 Social Development

Participating in the arts can enhance disabled peoples' social development. Identified as one of the overarching themes, social development includes a sense of belonging to a group, interpersonal skills, social network expansion, public attention through media exposure, respect from others, and the improved opportunity for employment.

The improvement of social development was highly emphasized in the day-to-day work of art instructors and staff members. Staff members clearly understood that they could not just "create an asylum and put them in it forever". In the words of one staff member, "this project was dedicated to push them into society". Instructor Geng Bo's explanation illustrated his understanding of this issue:

This project makes them feel that they are useful, they have value, they are able to create many things as well as help and inspire other people. Of course the therapy has had positive effects. But the most important thing is to guide them to real life in society. This is the only way to make them strong; otherwise when they really step into society, perhaps just some small practical difficulty, a glance of prejudice, a refusal, or maybe just a joke, can cause problems for them again¹⁷³

All respondents emphasized the sense of belonging to the group, which was identified with the association of feeling safe and equal, with fraternity, and mutual aid and encouragement in the group. This project effectively built and maintained a strong community. In the words of one boy, they "experienced many things together and we have deep affection for each other". Within their community, the disabled students could share their experiences of impairment and disability, develop a deep friendship, and help with each other in daily life and study. Being in the community solved the sense of isolation and helplessness.

Interviewees frequently mentioned feeling safe and equal, and feeling fraternal love. One girl explained, "We study art within this project, in this group, all students are in a similar situation and the teachers treat us as their own family members". Two students said, "We are like brothers and sisters and we study

¹⁷³ Geng Bo, Interview with the author, July 2, 2012.

together and play together". Mutual help was remarkable in this group; students who were less disabled helped those who were dependent on wheelchairs. This project provided the students with a means of unification and of mutual stimulation; they often had discussions together and gave suggestions to each other, usually in a relaxed and constructive way. They motivated each other, so that "if somebody is in a bad mood, the others give him a prod".

Meanwhile, four students mentioned friendly competitiveness among members and all of them recognized the friendly competitiveness as positive and encouraging, as it motivated members and strengthened the group. One boy described it as "invisible competition". He explained: "We are always practising together. The more people, the more motivated you feel. At least you should not be at a much lower level of achievement than others are, so this helps you improve your own level".

Rather than letting students only paint and draw in the studio, the Foundation organized various social activities for them, such as bringing them to visit art exhibitions, helping them hold their own exhibitions in galleries and museums, presenting them to the mass media and art and design circles, and holding charity art auctions and dinner parties. For instance this project created a platform for presenting students' achievements through exhibitions. Up until spring 2013, the 5Colours Foundation has held five big exhibitions and more small exhibitions of works produced by the students. Besides, the Foundation also helped students with their solo exhibition. The first important exhibition was *Tomorrow – 5.12 Anniversary Special Exhibition* held in May 2009. The second big exhibition was *Heart & Whisper* in the Today Art Museum in Beijing in June 2011. Then the *Heart & Wish* exhibition was held at the Shangri-la Hotel in Chengdu at the end of 2011. Another important exhibition, *Heart & Path* was held in Shenzhen in November 2011 and was sponsored by the Bond Education Agency. In June 2013, there was the *Love-Measuring* exhibition of students' oil paintings, installations, and design works in Chengdu. The exhibition was a result of collaboration between the Blue Roof Art Base and the Sichuan Huaxin Modern Vocational College. Local newspaper and TV reported on their exhibitions, which tremendously stimulated public awareness of the well-being of disabled people.

The students benefited from the positive interaction. Almost all students recognized that interpersonal interaction within their group and with the public greatly enhanced their interpersonal skills. As one girl said, "We used to be very shy at the beginning, and gradually we became more extroverted". The students obtained public attention through media exposure when they have an exhibition; people came to visit their works, congratulated them on their success, and gave them warm encouraging comments. The students also recognized the expansion of their social network: as one girl put it, "I met many people; they helped us for our future life and development with their hearts. All of these are things that I couldn't imagine before". Most students recognized the expansion of their social network. The wider social links with the art and design communities as well as with individuals from all walks of life worked as

a springboard to facilitate their engagement in more activities and access to more social resources.

Disabled young people often have difficulty finding jobs on account of their limited social network, which in turn hampers their life-quality and throws them into poverty where they end up with a marginalized status. Of course, employability is associated with many factors such as education and mastery of skills; however, in this study all students pointed out that the social network expansion, especially the interaction with the art and design circles, led to internships and job opportunities. One student graduated in 2012 and he successfully found a designing job in a company soon afterwards. Among the other 10 students who graduated in 2013, most students found internships before graduation. Information feedback three months after their graduation revealed that apart from one who was in a master's degree course and two others who chose self-employment as their career paths, all of them found jobs in the art and design field. This statistic compares favourably with that of many non-disabled graduates, especially taking into account the unfavourable economic and job situation in China at this moment.

It was obvious that in social interaction being considered an able member of society and "being respected by others" rather than being considered a person to be pitied was significant to them. One boy recollected:

I generally don't let other people know my disability, only with the time passing and we get very familiar with each other and become friends, I can tell them. The reason for not telling others is that if I tell them, the others will pity me.

Another description from a girl also demonstrated the significance of obtaining respect from others:

When we go for exhibitions, people respect us and treat us so kindly and warmly, which makes me feel very good. People see our strong side ... [that we are] worth respecting and are an encouraging examples ... rather than to be pitied for our disability.



FIGURE 8 Disabled Students Displaying the Postcards Featuring their Artwork

4.6 Three Issues for Discussion

This section discusses three concerns arising from the study in relation to the mechanism of this project: sustainable and efficient implementation, unique roles by artists, and extensive cross-disciplinary cooperation.

4.6.1 Sustainable and Efficient Implementation

There were many projects for helping earthquake victims after the earthquake; however, only the *Art for the Disabled Scheme* is still ongoing and continues to have a large impact. The success of this project depended on sustainability and efficient implementation. According to Liu Danfang, sustainability did not only mean “sending teachers every week and every day to teach the disabled students”, but also highlighted “a long-term and holistic perspective to provide benefits to the disabled students, not just offering help at one time”.¹⁷⁴

The course was designed so that the effects of the teaching would be long term and sustainable, so it was systematically graduated. The teaching plans were therefore designed to meet the students’ different psychological statuses, artistic levels, and ages. It was mentioned previously that the aid-receiving students’ ages range from eight years old to over 18. In order to create a more effective operation, the Foundation divided students into four stages according to age: primary school stage, junior middle school stage, senior middle school stage, and college stage. For primary school students, the main task is to cultivate their interest in art. For junior middle school students, the purpose of art instruction is to pass on to them basic artistic knowledge and painting and drawing skills. For senior school students, the purpose of art instruction is to improve their drawing and painting skills, especially via intense instruction that is aimed towards helping them pass the art college entrance examination. For college students, the main task is to guide them to make art in a professional manner. Different teaching plans were designed to meet the needs of students of different age groups, so that students of all ages enjoyed taking part and therefore wanted to stay in this project.

Long-term and sustainable art instruction also concerns the students’ artistic levels. Liu recollected their work with the small group of students:

When these students were suffering from trauma, we had to first open their hearts. They had to accept the reality; since the disaster had already happened, it’s pointless to always be anxious, depressed and complaining. After stepping out of the shadow, they could begin to study something. Then through studying art, gradually they obtained special skills. For instance, they could hold exhibitions, so they gradually obtained self-confidence. Therefore, you see, this process is a continuous one with necessary stages within it. Maybe people only see us passing on artistic skills to those disabled students. But this process has dragged them out of a tragic situation and led them into a positive and optimistic life.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Liu Danfang, Interview with the author, July 2, 2012.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

This long-term and sustainable project enabled the students to obtain the assets offered by art practice. Though art is a sublime way to express emotion and feeling, only through long-term practice, can participants master enough practical and aesthetic skills; otherwise letting off emotion is just dashing and daubing on paper. In the art field, there is little study assessing the difference between long-term and short-term participation. This finding is somehow in accordance with a previous study on long-term participation, in which MaCarthy claimed that although the arts generate remarkable benefits, most intrinsic and instrumental benefits are available only through frequent participation in the process and the frequent participants are those who benefit most mentally, emotionally and socially.¹⁷⁶ The emphasis on the sustainability issue brings to mind the “continuity” dilemma of many art projects that aim at empowering disadvantaged groups. As mentioned by the artist Judith Baca, “it has to be sustained. You cannot have a flash in the pan and expect that’s going to change things”.¹⁷⁷

As an extra-curricular project, art instruction was carried out at weekends, during the summer and winter holidays, and after school in the afternoon. The regular instruction lasted for two hours each time and took place once a week. The principle was that instruction time should suit the students’ time schedule and art practice should neither disturb their regular schooling nor cause too heavy a burden on the students’ school education. However, being an extra-curricular project did not hamper its quality.

The foundation set a systematic and definite teaching plan; the implementation was rigorous and efficient. One student explained as well, “After all, the Foundation helps us not just by letting us paint for fun; they expect that we should make some progress, have some achievements.” The art instructors stayed in the key positions and carried out the primary work, while experienced staff members were in charge of the teaching planning and monitoring. Staff members often engaged in self and group reflection on their work and tailored their work to suit the students’ changing needs: in words of one staff member, “our project grows with the students”.

This project demonstrated the “always going forward” principle, as explained by instructor Geng: “We have begun studying painting and drawing since childhood. During the first years we do them mainly for fun; however when we grow up, we can’t always draw and paint as kids do, so the study must advance”. Most disabled students had very little or no experience with drawing and painting before attending this project. During the early days the instruction was done in a relaxing way, and the tasks assigned were not so demanding. For instance, students were required to draw some simple objects in their daily lives, and the instructors gave them positive comments. With the passage of time, tasks of increasing difficulty were presented to the students; for instance, after students entered college, instructors started to teach them oil painting. As recognized by most students, the primary challenge in their

¹⁷⁶ MaCarthy et al., “Gifts of the Muse,” 63.

¹⁷⁷ Judith Baca, cited in Lacy, *Mapping the Terrain*, 34.

involvement was their insufficient artistic knowledge and skills; this situation sometimes caused a sense of pressure. However, they also noted that though the challenges increased, they were surmountable with the help of the instructors. The disabled students' participation experience illustrated a constant and progressive process through which they learnt new skills and techniques, overcame the emerging challenges, and tasted the growing experience of success.

In short, sustainability and efficiency ensured that the students' experience was empowering. This fact emphasized effectiveness of professional control in long-term extracurricular art instruction.

4.6.2 Unique Roles Played by Artists

This study delineated the unique role played by artist Zhou and other artists. In China, the concern for the well-being of the people has been a consistent and integral concern of many Chinese contemporary artists. For instance, contemporary artists often play the role of leader of public opinion. A small group of contemporary artists prefer a more radical way, as is represented by the well-known artist and dissident Ai Weiwei. He has successfully integrated his works with open political protest against oppression and social injustice under the current system. However, not all contemporary artists stand in opposition to the system. Some artists prefer presenting their social consciousness in a milder way through their works, as in the case of famous performance artist Cai Guoqiang. In his 2010 exhibition in Shanghai entitled *Peasant Da Vinci*, he scoured the country searching for amateur inventors and finally found 12 peasant inventors. According to him, this exhibition was designed to show that masses have boundless creativity and enthusiasm and his exhibition was to awaken the public awareness of the creativity in grass-roots groups.¹⁷⁸

With the prospering civic society, nongovernmental and non-profit organizations have sprouted up over the last decade. However, Chinese artists seem to have had little to do with these organizations. This project changed the separation between art and those organizations and demonstrated that besides the confrontational and symbolic gesture, Chinese artists could fulfil community responsibility through a constructive and cooperative channel – integrating art and philanthropy in order to enhance the well-being of disadvantaged social groups. Zhou explained his idea about the combination of artist and philanthropist:

Art should play a more important role. As an artist, I believe that the combination of art and philanthropy is very meaningful. In a sense, an artist is a philanthropist;

¹⁷⁸ ARTFORUM, "Cai Guo-Qiang," last modified March, 5, 2010, <http://artforum.com/words/id=25519>; CNN Travel, "Cai Guo Qiang: Inventions by Chinese peasant inventors," last modified May 28, 2010, <http://travel.cnn.com/shanghai/play/cai-guo-qiang-inventions-chinese-peasant-inventors-584584>.

through his work, he's helping society, helping people by soothing their soul. That is why I say the combination of philanthropic work and art is significant.¹⁷⁹

In addition to donating money, donating artwork for charity auction and propagating this project, Zhou was involved in the investment and production of two documentary films *Tomorrow* (2009) and *Time* (2011) about the disabled students.

Zhou mentioned the significance of developing public awareness too in order to improve the well-being of disabled people:

In China, there is still a wrong perception of disabled people. One important purpose of our work is to raise public awareness of the disabled and other disadvantaged populations. This is not only the mission of artists, but the mission also of all people.¹⁸⁰

On another occasion he spoke of the future:

In the future, we plan to help more disabled artists to have their exhibitions, not only our own current students. We can bring encouragement for life to society through exhibitions. That will be good for all disabled students. That will have multiple effects.¹⁸¹

He distanced himself, however, from the rubric of socially engaged artists. Zhou Chunya's reluctance laid in two concerns. One concern was based on his understanding of the teamwork nature of this project that referred to issues like authorship. The other concern referred to the possibility to overshadow the beneficial and altruistic mission of this project if it was declared as an artistic piece, especially since this project obtained financial support from other artists, media and enterprises. He did not want to be regarded as exploiting this project for the purpose of his own personal achievement and fame in the art field. He recognized the significance of his own engagement in the project as a known artist donating time and money in charity work and employing his influence to fulfil his social responsibility: for him, an artist participating philanthropically implies a new mode of combining art and society. He made some further observations in this regard:

Some artists' works are directly engaged in social activity. They do their work through social action and have an immediate social impact. Maybe my work is less demonstrative and works more slowly. This project has immediate and direct effects. I can't say that the work of this project is my artwork. For instance, this is a group project, not my personal work. Nevertheless, the ideas are interlinked and the way of working is also connected; for example, I obtain money and resources from my artwork and through that, I can support this project.¹⁸²

Zhou's endeavour inspired more artists to volunteer in this project. Around 50 volunteers irregularly participated in this project; most of them are young

¹⁷⁹ Zhou Chunya, Interview with the author, July 14, 2012.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

artists from the Blue Roof Art Base, an art zone sponsored by local municipalities. Over these years, many artists including Zhou have settled down and made their art studios there. Although the volunteer part was not the central concern of this study, it is noteworthy that their work also played an important role in the 5Colours Foundation. Volunteering artists offered free labour by giving instruction to students and helping organize exhibitions. They also actively donated their artwork to charity auctions, which ensured adequate funding for the long-term development of the Foundation.

4.6.3 Extensive Cross-disciplinary Cooperation

The *Art for the Disabled Scheme* essentially combined philanthropy and art. Besides offering handicapped students long-term free art instruction to acquire artistic skills and offering them economic and material assistance, the 5Colours Foundation regularly organized art exhibitions for the aid-receiving students, presented the students to the media and to art and design circles, and held art charity events to raise money as well as to raise public awareness about helping the disabled. Students' participation encompassed practising art and acquiring artistic knowledge and skills, exhibiting their artworks, visiting museums and exhibitions, interacting with the media, and communicating with art and design circles. The multifaceted nature distinguished it from other philanthropic work centred on providing money or other material aid as well as drew a line from conventional art/art education projects.

The staff members called their work a "Compassion Relay" that might more effectively raise public awareness and mobilize social resources to help the disabled:

For helping handicapped people to integrate into society, art on its own is not enough. There is not enough care for people with disabilities in our country. [...] Our government and society need to do more for disabled people. [...] But one positive thing is that now public consciousness of the welfare of the disabled is increasing quickly – more and more people have realized that helping the disabled is not only the duty of state and government, but also everybody's responsibility.¹⁸³

This project highlighted the wide co-operation with enterprises, the mass media, and individuals both from within and from without the art circle. For instance, over 44 enterprises and media have established sponsorship with the Foundation. Additionally, individual sponsors support the Foundation; among them are artists, connoisseurs, and celebrities in the fashion and cultural circles.

The media played a significant role. Since the birth of this project, the project and these disabled students received media attention. Media reports enlarged the influence of this project and effectively raised public awareness of disabled people's welfare. In addition to massive coverage on the development of the Foundation, the media also offered economic support; for example, TV, newspapers, magazines, and Internet sites offered free ad publishing. Staff members of the 5Colours Foundation emphasized the contribution of the media

¹⁸³ Liu Danfang, Interview with the author, July 2, 2012.

as was commented by Liu: “We are like a window, but the media opened this window to public”. However, it is also noteworthy that as mentioned by one boy, the behaviour of certain media people did upset some students.

This project created a unique mechanism for integrating art into non-profit philanthropy. Different individuals such as artists, entrepreneurs, connoisseurs, designers and institutions like galleries, museums, companies, the mass media, and printing houses collaborated with each other. The integrated nature reached through extensive cross-disciplinary cooperation further mobilized social and human resources and thereby maximized the benefits for the students. Such extensive coordination is not achievable in most other philanthropic work, art education, art therapy, or social work projects. One girl recollected how she benefited from the multiple activities organized by the 5Colours Foundation:

We had a lot valuable experience. We used to be rather shy at the beginning, and gradually we became more confident. I got to learn a lot of things and I've been able to visit different places, like Shenzhen. I visited many art exhibitions, including the last Picasso exhibition. What is more, I often saw my works in art exhibitions. I also took part in one competition organized by the city of Phoenix in the USA and I won the second prize. Without the help of the Foundation, I could never have taken part and won the prize. The mayor of Phoenix specifically flew to Chengdu to award me the prize. I also harvested friendship. I made many friends. I couldn't expect these before.

4.6.4 Research Limitation

The limitation of this case study is evident. In this study, obviously the data is limited to a small number of interviewees and the absence of focus on other disabled students shows that the findings of this study cannot be confidently generalized. Although qualitative study does not need to rely on a large sample size, studies of other disabled students' involvement with art should support the findings from this case study and open up other problematic issues; thus the research in spite of its limitations also points towards future areas for research. In future studies perhaps more concern should be put on other aid-receiving disabled student groups within this project; researchers could then form a more comprehensive profile of students' involvement with the *Art for the Disabled Scheme*. Secondly, relevant studies concerning other similar projects that combine social help and art could be compared with this case study and that would enhance researchers' understanding of the combination of social work and art for disadvantaged people's well-being. In addition, considering that this project is an ongoing project, it would be interesting to launch further longitudinal studies in order to understand the longer term impacts of this project on these disabled students.

4.6.5 Conclusion

The *Art for the Disabled Scheme* integrated long-term extracurricular art instruction with philanthropy, and mobilized and combined various social and

human resources for enhancing limb-disabled students' inclusion in society. Their broad range of activities covered making art, appreciating art as an audience, holding exhibitions, sharing the art experience with each other, and interacting with the media and art and design circles, and so forth. This study identified five themes: obtaining financial and material support, improving mental well-being, promoting personal development, building positive self and group identity, and enhancing social development. The articulation of the five themes provided a comprehensive understanding of a small group of disabled students' participation experience, centring on the occurrence of positive changes in relation to the generation of considerable economic capital, human capital and social capital. Subsequently, three issues relating to the mechanism of this project were discussed: sustainability and efficient implementation, the multifaceted nature with respect to the integration of various resources, and the unique roles played by artists. The findings demonstrated that the cooperation of philanthropy and art in the mechanism of this project formed a very empowering whole and effectively facilitated the disabled students' overall social participation.

Although taking into consideration the fact that the existence of this project owed much to the personal popularity of artist Zhou Chunya, so arguably it might be said that the achievement of this project is not exactly replicable, this project still provides new viewpoints for social work practitioners and artists who attempt to combine art and social service. It also provides new viewpoints for policy makers, art educators, artists, social workers and participants in different art and social activities. In recent decades, the boundary between art and society has become increasingly blurred and the integration of social work and art/art education has developed in new ways that are not readily understood, at least by using the conventional terms of art criticism. There have been more and more "art as social work" projects in which a socio-political purpose is deliberately built into them through art participation rather than as a haphazard by-product from art. In these projects, art, as a catalyst for better facilitating change and reaching socio-political purposes, often integrates into or collaborates with social services. The *Art for the Disabled Scheme* provides an example of a very supportive integration of art and social work in contemporary society in order to improve the well-being of socially disadvantaged people. This study reveals the feasibility and significance of having a holistic perspective on emerging "art as a social service" projects that combine social service and art to enhance disabled people's well-being. Further, it reveals the importance of undertaking ideographic analysis of participants' involvement within the context of different project mechanisms.

5 THE ART AND CULTURE COMPANIONS: ART MUSEUM VOLUNTEERING AS SERIOUS LEISURE IN FINLAND

5.1 Introduction of the Art and Culture Companions

Jyväskylä is a small city in central Finland. In 2006, the Jyväskylä Art Museum launched a project called the *Art and Culture Companions* whose Finnish name is *Kulttuuriluotsitoiminta*.¹⁸⁴ The basic concept of this project is training museum volunteers to provide low-threshold access to cultural activities for social groups in need—such as the elderly, the disabled, chronic or mental patients, and individuals who are not familiar with the cultural services.

Afterwards, the goals of the *Art and Culture Companions* were developed and categorized into four sectors: promoting active participation and involvement of the senior population and individuals with special needs within the arts and cultural field, creating recreational experiences for everyone involved, generating a sense of empowerment and well-being, and enhancing community inclusion.

A museum educator of the Jyväskylä Art Museum, Sirpa Turpeinen, was the initiator of this activity. Although this activity was initiated in 2006, formulation of the idea was earlier. In 2003/2004, Turpeinen participated in a museum project designed to improve exhibitions and make them more accessible. Turpeinen and other museum staff started the *Open Museum (Avoin museo)* project on the internet. They made a portal to introduce the information of different museums through using sign language and they made online exhibitions for blind people. However, she soon felt that the online connection was not enough. As she said in an interview:

¹⁸⁴ The study of the *Art and Culture Companions* was presented by the author at the 7th International Conference on the Inclusive Museum (The Autry National Centre of the American West, Los Angeles (CA), USA, 4 - 6th August, 2014).

People want face-to-face communication with each other. I think that live contact is the best way to promote accessibility. As for myself, I was taking part in the peer sport project; we were educating peer sport guiders who guide people toward sports ... In my opinion, this idea of peer sports guiding was really excellent, and then I thought that I might be able to apply this idea to the cultural field. How can I use this method of volunteer work in my own work? The idea of the *Art and Culture Companions* was invented.¹⁸⁵

According to Turpeinen, the idea of the *Art and Cultural Companions* had a conceptual connection with local culture and history.

Luotsi literally means a pilot, a mariner who guides ships through dangerous or congested waters, such as harbours or river mouths. In Jyväskylä, for various reasons, lakes, shipping and sailing are seen as very important. We don't have sea, but we have lakes and sailing ... there are many cultural projects that are named after sailing or water. We have had the *Art Lighthouse* project (*Taidemajakka*) and the *Cultural Splash* project (*Kulttuuriroiskeet*) for teachers. You see, many "watery" things! So I think the name "luotsi" is in the same family and it's quite OK.¹⁸⁶

The volunteers are called "companions" in English or "luotsit" in Finnish. According to the coordinator Hanne Laitinen, a companion is a "peer guide" who operates within the frame of voluntary work and represents an equal status with visitors instead of the superior status of a professional guide.¹⁸⁷ The staff and participants prefer using the Finnish term "luotsata" to describe the volunteers' work, which has an original connection with the word "luotsi". As Laitinen described, "luotsata" combines meeting, escorting, guiding, assisting, and exchanging ideas with people.¹⁸⁸ The typical role played by the volunteers is that of a tour guide (a tour generally lasting for around 2 hours) to a museum or any other cultural venue according to the requirements of the service users. The service itself is free of charge, and volunteers and their service users are entitled to free entry at museums or to special discounts at other cultural venues in the Jyväskylä region.

Initially, potential service users, or their service agents, contact the coordinator to book a time for the voluntary service. The volunteers can get a schedule concerning the forthcoming individual or group visitors from the coordinator and select the suitable service users according to their particular expertise and timetable. In many cases the coordinator pairs the most suitable volunteer(s) with the service users. The volunteers can also access and provide guiding services to service users without permission from the coordinator.

The volunteers are firstly informed about cultural services offered in the region. Prior to assigning guiding work to new volunteers, this project provides them with basic training that includes peer-guided visits to 5 museums. Each visit lasts for around 2 hours and the training process continues for a couple of weeks. During the training, the volunteers learn about the museum collections and how to present them to visitors. They also learn about the special services

¹⁸⁵ Sirpa Turpeinen, Interview with the author, March 22, 2011.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Hanne Laitinen, Interview with the author, April 21, 2013.

¹⁸⁸ Jyväskylä Art Museum, Art and culture companions, http://www.jyvaskyla.fi/taidemuseo/english/art_and_culture_companions.

and facilities which are offered by these sites and could be used by visitors who have special needs. In addition, they need to study how to use the online informing system—a capability which is of course important, as well as possibly challenging, for senior volunteers. At the end of the training there is a seminar during which the volunteers can exchange their ideas and share their experiences. The volunteer training not only aims to teach the participants necessary knowledge and skills to work as a “companion”, but also provides them with enjoyable experiences.

The most prominent quality of this project is the vast possibilities it offers the volunteers to get involved in the arts, which encompass a range of art forms including visual arts, theatre, dance, music, craft, literature, and film.¹⁸⁹ After completing their basic training, the volunteers can participate in various seminars, meetings, excursions, arts workshops and interest groups. The volunteers can make art within different workshops as well as establish their own arts groups based on their interests. Each volunteer can join different interest groups in accordance with his/her own time schedule, interest in the arts, participation preference and physical situation. The current interest groups include the dance companions’ group (*Tanssiluotsi*), the movie companions’ group (*Elokuvaluotsi*), the literature group (*Lukupiiri*) and the painting group (*Leidit*).

The *Art and Culture Companions* service is operated as part of a cooperative network. The following organizations have all collaborated closely with this project: the Jyväskylä Art Museum (Jyväskylän taidemuseo, under the City of Jyväskylä), the Alvar Aalto Museum (Alvar Aalto museo, under the Alvar Aalto Foundation), the Craft Museum of Finland (Suomen käsityön museo, under the Design Forum Finland), the Museum of Central Finland (Keski-Suomen museo, under the City of Jyväskylä), the Jyväskylä University Museum, the Natural History Museum of Central Finland (Keski-Suomen luontomuseo, under the University of Jyväskylä), the Galleria Becker (Galleria Becker, under the Jyväskylä Artists Association), the Kallio Planetarium (Kallioplanetaario, run by Nyrölään Tähtikeskus Ltd.), the Kuokkala Manor Gallery (Kuokkalan kartano, owned by the Kauko Sorjonen Foundation), and the Aviation Museum of Central Finland (Keski-Suomen ilmailumuseo, under the Finnish Air Force).

¹⁸⁹ Note the use of “art” and “arts” in this case study as well as in the other parts of the dissertation. Generally, the term “arts” is applied in a very broad sense used to include activities ranging through music, dance, theatre, performing, painting, sculpture, pottery, literature, photography, video, gardening, flower arranging, and textile art. The term “art” is limited to “visual arts” or “plastic arts”, mainly referring to painting, ceramics, sculpture, printmaking, design, crafts, photography, video, filmmaking and architecture. Generally, the list of principal arts includes nine disciplines: architecture, dance, sculpture, music, painting, poetry (as a form of literature with aesthetic purpose or function, which also includes the distinct genres of the theatre and narrative), film, photography and comics. In practice, all these disciplines are included in the study of art and art history, considering the hybrid nature of many artists’ practices. In this case study, because the participant’s diverse activities include dance and literature instead of mere visual arts, I preferred the term arts when generally describing their participation. However, when considering the project as a whole, I preferred the term art.

Access to museums is free for volunteers working in this project and for those people whom the volunteers serve. Furthermore, the Jyväskylä City Theatre (Jyväskylän kaupunginteatteri) and the Sinfonia Finlandia Jyväskylä (Jyväskylä Sinfonia) offer special discounts on ticket prices for the volunteers and their service users. The Jyväskylä City Library (Jyväskylän kaupunginkirjasto) has recently been included in the cooperative network. In 2010, the specialized volunteers—dance companions and movie companions—started to accompany people to attend dance performances, films and festivals. As part of the *Art and Culture Companions*, the training for dance companions and movie companions was offered by the Central Finland Dance Centre (Keski-Suomen tanssikeskus) and the Central Finland Movie Centre (Keski-Suomen elokuvakeskus).

The *Art and Culture Companions* has multiple channels for information exchanging. Information regarding the activities and members' enrolment is often communicated via word-of-mouth amongst the volunteers and work staff members in cultural, social and health branches—such as nurses who work at retirement homes and day centres for the elderly. Information is available on the internet as well. The activity is visible on the Jyväskylä Art Museum webpage and on the online volunteer newsletter *Vapari* that is linked to the Finnish Voluntary Association (Kansalaisareena). The information for the volunteers is mainly communicated via e-mail and the online forum *Ning*. *Ning* has been used since the early days of this project to encourage the use of social media tools among senior volunteers, providing further information for the “companions” and allowing them to keep in contact with each other. The detailed information for potential service users relies on the *Art Pharmacy (Taideapteekki)*, a printed brochure deliberately designed in a visualized and easy-to-understand way for informing people of art and cultural events. The evaluation of this activity primarily relies on the volunteers' feedback from both regular peer meetings and brainstorming sessions.

In recent years, more museum volunteer activities have emerged in Finland. These activities combined volunteer guide services with community services for social groups such as senior inhabitants, disabled people, chronic patients or people with mental disorders, in order to encourage them to participate in arts and cultural events. For example, there was a similar project in Pori, where the service organization at Puskalatalo took on volunteer assistants to help senior people and those with movement disorders to go to museums and cultural heritage centres within the Pori region.

This activity has fuelled the development of similar projects in different cities in Finland. Kuopio first started its own activity in 2010; then Turku started the *Cultural Friend* project (*Kulttuuriystävä*) in 2011. In 2012, more cities initiated their own projects owing to the influence of the activities taking place in Jyväskylä. These cities include Oulu (*Kulttuurikaveri*), Hanko, Vantaa, Lahti (*Kulttuurikummi*), Kemiö (*Kulttuuriystävä*) and Rovaniemi (*Kulttuuriväärti*). In 2013, this activity spread to Helsinki (*Kulttuurikaveri*), Mikkeli (*Kulttuurikaveri*) and Järvenpää. Subsequently, some other cities such as Tampere, Leppävirta, Eurajoki, Espoo, Lappeenranta, Kouvola, Kangasala and Kemi are planning

their own activities as well. This has demonstrated the developmental prospective of this project. The *Art and Culture Companions* has been included in the cultural and social service agenda which aims to improve people's well-being in the City of Jyväskylä. Meanwhile, this project itself is still on-going; since the beginning of this project, more initiatives have come under its umbrella in the form of collaboration with other projects, institutions and organizations.

Milka Manerus, a former staff member working with Hanne Laitinen, oversaw the project initially. Manerus' paper focused on the museum volunteers' profile and activities.¹⁹⁰ She stated that there had been a positive impact on the museum volunteers' life, by increasing the volunteers' self-confidence and generally enriching their lives. Manerus emphasized the importance of increasing the specialist training given to volunteers in accordance with the potential service users' needs and the volunteers' own backgrounds. She emphasized too the importance of maintaining the leadership of the project coordinator. The expansion of the volunteers' activities, such as the territorial expansion of the operation, the special volunteer training and the specialization of cultural and art forms, could benefit therefore from further research.

Another researcher Yussif discussed the conception and mechanism of the *Art and Culture Companions* from the perspective of museum audience promotion.¹⁹¹ Yussif assumed that this volunteer initiative could promote self-organisation, improve social bonds and networks, and generate a sense of community and belonging. Secondly, it could develop artistic knowledge and foster informed and active participation. Thirdly, different people's participation could facilitate new discursive platforms within the framework of museum projects and attract more audiences who otherwise wouldn't visit museums. Yussif also called for the creation of strategies and policies, within the arts and culture, to secure the long-term operation of this volunteer initiative and the position of professional coordinator.

Both Manerus and Yussif's studies on this project underscore the significance of further study on the volunteers' participation experience. Innovative and effective museum volunteering can improve participation in the arts and culture generally; it can enhance people's well-being as well as community inclusion. Better understanding of museum volunteering paves way for a firmer foundation for these purposes.

¹⁹⁰ Milka Manerus, "Art and Culture Companions—Accessible Cultural Activity in Jyväskylä," Humak University of Applied Sciences, Jyväskylä, 2009, <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:amk-200911235852>.

¹⁹¹ Giovanna Esposito Yussif, "Report on Peer-led Voluntary Initiatives in Finnish Museums," KEHYS, 2012, http://www.kulttuuriakaikille.info/doc/research_and_reports/Report_on_peer-led_voluntary_initiatives_in_Finnish_museums_.pdf.

5.2 Museum Volunteers as Serious Leisure Enthusiasts

This section reviews previous studies within which this study is situated. This section begins by examining volunteering from the perspective of serious leisure; secondly, a number of studies are identified concerning museum volunteering in the frame of serious leisure; lastly, a brief overview is provided regarding the volunteer landscape in the field of the arts and culture within Finland.

5.2.1 Volunteering and Serious Leisure

Volunteering is a heterogeneous and complex phenomenon, rather than a simply defined altruistic behaviour to give time to serve others.¹⁹² Sociologists already noticed that volunteering can be a form of leisure activity.¹⁹³ Volunteering as a leisure activity has changed the altruistic imagination of volunteering from being a purely philanthropic giving of one's time to help others. The volunteer motivation is more intrinsic rather than extrinsic, which means that volunteers participate in voluntary activities during their free time to obtain intrinsic rewards that they cannot get from a mundane career. The motivation stems from an interest in a specific activity and from the desire to obtain knowledge and learn new skills. Leisure volunteering is typically seen in art, culture, sport and recreation. Most activities occur in large associations as well as in community-based small groups. The activities include coaching, teaching or tutoring, and directing.

Among the articulations of volunteering as a leisure activity, Stebbins' serious leisure perspective has specific significance to the studies of volunteering in the field of the arts and culture. Stebbins defined serious leisure as the following:

Serious leisure is the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist or volunteer core activity that participants find so substantial, interesting and fulfilling that, in the

¹⁹² Rochester et al. questioned the four dimensions of volunteering activities which are identified as free choice, absence of remuneration, structure and intended beneficiaries, whilst proposing three perspectives of volunteering. The first perspective is the non-profit paradigm which considers volunteering to be an altruistic action through which volunteers donate their time as a "gift" to people who need help. These activities are generally offered by formal organizations, mostly charity and the third sector organizations; volunteers offer unpaid labour and are considered a human resource. The second perspective is called the civil society paradigm; the motivation of a volunteer is rooted in self-help and mutual aid. The third perspective is recognizing volunteering as a leisure activity. See Rochester et al., *Volunteering and Society in the 21st Century* (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 10-15.

¹⁹³ Robert. A. Stebbins, "Volunteering: A serious Leisure Perspective." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (1996), 211.

typical case, they launch themselves on a leisure career centred on acquiring and expressing its special skills, knowledge and experience.¹⁹⁴

Stebbins identified three forms of serious leisure: amateur, hobbyist and volunteer. Amateurs can be found in art, sport, science and recreation, where they are inevitably linked one way or other, with professional counterparts who coalesce, along with the public whom the two groups share. Hobbyists lack the professional alter ego of amateurs. There are five categories of hobbyists: collectors, makers and tinkerers, activity participants, players of sports/games, and enthusiasts of liberal art hobbies. Stebbins positioned volunteering in the field of leisure study, considering leisure volunteering “basically a satisfying or enjoyable experience”. The difference between volunteers and the other two types is that volunteers have a more altruistic dedication and offer services, while amateurs and hobbyists do not.

Stebbins identified six qualities which distinguish serious leisure enthusiasts from others who engage in more casual leisure activities.¹⁹⁵ They include the occasional need for perseverance; careers in their voluntary endeavour; the need for acquired knowledge, training, experience or skill; various durable benefits from the activity; a unique ethos composing special attitudes, norms, beliefs, values, events, and goals; strong identity with their pursuits.¹⁹⁶

Stebbins presented a number of concepts in relation to the understanding of serious leisure. Among them, the notion of career has significance in this case study. A leisure career is the typical course, or passage, of a type of amateur, hobbyist or volunteer that carries the people into, and through, a leisure role and possibly into, and through, a work role. The essence to understanding a leisure career is the “temporal continuity”.¹⁹⁷ Serious leisure enthusiasts gain a profound sense of continuity, and hence career, from his or her more or less steady development as a skilled and experienced participant in a particular form of serious leisure as well as from the deepening fulfilment that accompanies this kind of personal growth. Stebbins also suggested two terms to further classify the career participants within serious leisure: devotees and participants. The devotees are highly dedicated to their pursuits; participants who are interested only relatively modestly in their hobby generally greatly outnumber devotees. The amount of time they commit to their hobby distinguishes devotees and participants.

¹⁹⁴ Robert, A. Stebbins, *Amateurs, Professionals, and Serious Leisure* (Montreal, QC and Kingston, ON: University Press McGill-Queen's, 1992), 3.

¹⁹⁵ According to Stebbins, there is casual leisure, project-based leisure and serious leisure. Consequently, not all volunteering is serious leisure. Stebbins recognized two other forms of leisure volunteering - casual volunteering and project-based volunteering, depending on “whether volunteers feel they are engaging in an enjoyable (casual leisure), fulfilling (serious leisure) or enjoyable or fulfilling (project-based leisure)”. See Stebbins, *Serious Leisure: A Perspective for Our Time* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2007), 9.

¹⁹⁶ Robert, A. Stebbins, *Amateurs, Professionals, and Serious Leisure*, 6-7.

¹⁹⁷ Stebbins, *Serious Leisure*, 19-21.

According to Stebbins, what drives people into serious leisure is to “experience the rewards of a given leisure activity”.¹⁹⁸ The concept of rewards is the meaning of the activity for the participants and their motivation for engaging in it. Based on his previous research, Stebbins summarized 10 rewards in serious leisure pursuits, classified into two groups: personal rewards and social rewards. Personal rewards include personal enrichment (cherished experiences), self-actualization (developing skills, abilities and knowledge), self-expression (demonstrating skills, abilities and developed knowledge), self-image (known to others as a particular kind of serious leisure participant), self-gratification (combination of superficial enjoyment and deep satisfaction), recreation (regeneration) of oneself through serious leisure after a day's work, and potential financial return (from a serious leisure activity). Social rewards include social attraction (associating with other serious leisure participants, with clients as a volunteer, participating in the social world of the activity); group accomplishment (group effort in accomplishing a serious leisure project, a sense of helping, of being needed and being altruistic); contribution to the maintenance and development of the group (including a sense of helping, being needed and being altruistic in making the contribution).

One closely relevant term to rewards is benefits. According to Stebbins, “a benefit is an agreeable outcome, anticipated or not, of a person's participation in a leisure activity”. It can be “physical, social, psychological or anything appealing to the participant”.¹⁹⁹ As Stebbins pointed out, rewards and benefits are on opposite sides of the same coin. The eight durable benefits of serious leisure include self-actualization, self-enrichment, self-expression, regeneration or renewal of self, feelings of accomplishment, enhancement of self-image, social interaction and a sense of belonging, and the lasting physical product of the activity.²⁰⁰ In addition, Stebbins identified self-gratification as a further benefit that combines superficial enjoyment and deep personal fulfilment.

Stebbins expanded the discussion of serious leisure to quality of life and well-being, based on four components of a want-based quality of life.²⁰¹ The first component is a sense of achievement that was identified in discussion about the rewards, career, benefits and insistence of serious leisure. The second component is the appreciation of beauty in nature and the arts that is found in serious leisure forms such as outdoor activities and artistic pursuits. The third component is a feeling of identification with one's community, and it is seen through the social worlds of serious leisure participants and their direct relation to the larger community, for instance through artistic performances by amateurs and interesting displays by hobbyists. And the last component is a sense of fulfilment of one's potential often identified from the reward of self-actualization, by finding a career in the activity and having occasionally to persevere at following it.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 13.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 11-12.

²⁰⁰ Stebbins, *Amateurs, Professionals, and Serious Leisure*, 7.

²⁰¹ Stebbins, *Serious Leisure*, 82.

Serious leisure also contributes to the community in the sense of generating social capital that is recognized as interpersonal connections, trustworthiness, reciprocal actions and influences in a community or a larger society.²⁰² Stebbins suggested that the contribution of serious leisure to the community (and sometimes even the larger society) should be understood within the context of “community involvement” or “civil labour”. The former relates to members of a local community that participate together in non-profit making groups or other community activities. The latter almost has the same meaning as community involvement except that it emphasizes unpaid renewal and the expansion of social capital.

As with amateurs and hobbyists, volunteers too enjoy personal rewards (personal enrichment, self-actualization, self-expression, self-image, self-gratification, recreation, financial return) and social rewards (social interaction, group accomplishment).²⁰³ Rochester and others discussed four stakeholder groups, on whom volunteering is likely to have an impact: volunteers, organizations, service users and communities.²⁰⁴ The impact on people who undertake volunteering includes satisfaction, a sense of achievement, meeting people, making friends, gaining skills, personal development, and improved health. The service users are provided with a free service, increased social contact and enhanced mental and physical well-being. The organization involved is provided with a bigger and more diverse workforce. For the communities, volunteering has an impact on things such as service provision, social cohesion, enhanced social capital, reduction in crime and the enhancement of well-being.

5.2.2 Museum Volunteering as a Serious Leisure

Stebbins’ study on serious leisure activities in arts administration demonstrates that serious leisure enthusiasts in the arts covered all three forms of serious leisure and volunteers played an important role in the arts field.²⁰⁵ Previous studies on serious leisure study in the arts revealed this field that though relatively new is worth-exploring. For example, Brown’s exploration of the social world of Carolina shag dancers defined two types of dancers: casual and serious dancers; furthermore, Brown categorized shaggers into five subtypes based on their dance identity, skill improvement, and interpersonal relationship with other dancers. Brown’s study revealed the complex dimensions of the leisure world of amateur dancing supported by Stebbins’ assumption that amateurs as serious leisure enthusiasts can be ranked by their degree of involvement in a particular activity, rather than simply by whether they are serious or casual.²⁰⁶ Quilting is considered a serious artistic hobby. Stalp’s

²⁰² Ibid., 63.

²⁰³ Stebbins, “Volunteering: A serious Leisure Perspective,” 216-217.

²⁰⁴ Rochester et al., *Volunteering and Society*, 167.

²⁰⁵ Stebbins, *Serious Leisure*, 97.

²⁰⁶ Carroll A. Brown, “The Carolina Shaggers: Dance as Serious Leisure,” *Journal of Leisure Research* 39, no. 4 (2007), 629-630.

study of American female quilters revealed that female quilters faced time and space constraints.²⁰⁷ Women resisted such constraints and pursued serious leisure quilting by through achieving a balance where they compromised both their traditional gender roles in a family as mother/spouse and also their serious leisure pursuits.²⁰⁸

A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development. It conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity. It is open to the public and its environment is used for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.²⁰⁹ Today, the museum has become a creative forum for the enhancement of people's participation in the arts and culture and for the development of community as a whole. When one examines museums over the last three decades, with the focus of education shifting from the written word to learners' active participation through interaction with objects, the informal learning provided by museums has acquired more value. The museum audience has diversified. It is not any more limited to a middle class audience, to school children and to small groups of the cultural elite and of researchers. The image of passive spectator has been replaced by a diversified and active visitor. The public expectation of a museum changed as well. A museum is considered to be an interpreter of culture, an active preserver of culture and for working for the endogenous development of social communities within which they are situated. Community museums have been more attentive to social and cultural change and consequently have helped present identity and diversity in an ever-changing world.²¹⁰ This demonstrates the importance and expansion of a museum's educational mission towards enhancing community development as a whole.

The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council in the UK (MLA) issued a bulletin of how museums could contribute to sustainable communities: by fostering and creating pride in communities; by celebrating local identity and a sense of place; by providing safe and trusted public spaces for certain groups such as refugees; by using creativity workshops in museums and libraries to promote local cultures; by empowering and involving people from different backgrounds through, for example, life-long learning projects; by creating cohesive communities through making museums into community centres; by providing access to, and integrating with, other public services.²¹¹

²⁰⁷ Marybeth C. Stalp, "Negotiating Time and Space for Serious Leisure: Quilting in the Modern U.S. Home", *Journal of Leisure Research* 38, no. 1 (2006), 127-129.

²⁰⁸ For other studies of serious leisure study in the arts, see quilting by King 2001, community theatre by Burden 2000, and museum volunteering by Orr 2006.

²⁰⁹ The World Museum Community, Definition of Terms, <http://icom.museum/the-organisation/icom-statutes/3-definition-of-terms/#somm airecontent>.

²¹⁰ UNESCO-CULTURE, Museum, http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=35032&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

²¹¹ Elizabeth Crooke, *Museums and Community: Ideas, Issues and Challenges* (London, New York: Routledge, 2007), 42.

Museum volunteering is one of the most familiar forms of volunteering in the fields of the arts and culture. Today, museum volunteers play a more important role than before. Although the work of museum volunteers varies from different museums and programs worldwide, the tasks they most likely undertake are displaying/interpreting exhibitions and guiding visitors. In recent years, museum volunteering has often been within the frame of leisure study, based on sociologists' articulation of volunteering as a leisure activity. Hood identified six characteristics of an enjoyable leisure experience and found that museum visiting satisfied these attributes well.²¹² A study of Australian museum volunteers revealed that museum volunteers partake in volunteering first and foremost for satisfying their own personal interests, commitments, and needs.²¹³

The concept of serious leisure offers us a different way to draw a profile of museum volunteers. Noreen Orr noted that museum volunteers are those people who seek more than a consumption experience and pursue their interest in heritage, not only by visiting museums but by volunteering to help. Orr argued that museum volunteers participate in "self-generated leisure consumption"; for them, museum volunteering is for leisure, self-identity creation and life-long learning.²¹⁴

Holmes suggests that museum volunteering is a committed form of visiting, at the extreme end of a visitor-volunteer continuum that includes non-visitor, occasional visitor, frequent visitor and volunteer. According to Holmes, museum volunteers, as a unique segment of the museum's audience, are those who tend to be more active in terms of participation than ordinary audience members and act as a bridge between paid staff and visitors. Museum volunteers' motivation is driven by both altruistic and egoist factors but the primary motivation is driven by self-interest in pursuing leisure. Museum volunteers receive various benefits, such as training seminars and courses, good service, a chance to socialize with people, being surrounded by interesting museum collections and culture, experiences that may benefit their career in the future, and a sense of satisfaction from serving the community.

Museum directors value the time which volunteers donate to the museum, for their contribution ensures that the museums are able to fulfil their public educational mission such as managing large group tours of schoolchildren or tourists. However, although their work is often valued by the museums, tension often exists between the professional museum staff and the volunteers. As to the possible negative effect of museum volunteers, Orr stressed the power issue and the conflict that exists between the two groups. The professionals, owing to

²¹² Kirsten Holmes, "Volunteers in the Heritage Sector: A Neglected Audience?" *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 9, no. 4 (2003), 346.

²¹³ Deborah Edwards, "It's Mostly about Me : Reasons why Volunteers Contribute their Time to Museums and Art Museums," *Tourism Review International* 9, no. 1 (2005), 1-11. Cited in Kirsten Holmes and Deborah Edwards, "Volunteers as Hosts and Guests in Museums," Paper for CAUTHE 2007 Conference, Tourism: Past Achievements, Future Challenges.

²¹⁴ Noreen Orr, "Museum Volunteering: Heritage as 'Serious Leisure'." *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 12, no. 2 (2006), 201-202.

their knowledge and expertise, have an elite status compared to that of the volunteers. Nonetheless, there is tension between volunteers and professional staff based on the fact that some professionals are afraid that they will lose their jobs to volunteers, since volunteers offer cheap labour, albeit unprofessional. Orr also pointed out that the cost of using volunteers could be a financial burden to museums since there are costs involved in screening and recruitment, with more substantial supervision costs for a paid volunteer coordinator, and the costs associated with training volunteers.

5.2.3 Mixed Serious Leisure in the Arts and Culture

Often serious leisure enthusiasts do not pursue only one single form of serious leisure, as they tend to be “involved in two or more types or subtypes of serious leisure that, together, constitute for the participant an integrated pursuit of a more encompassing free-time activity than either of the two pursued alone”. This is called mixed serious leisure.²¹⁵ Thus, in a single leisure pursuit, a mixed serious leisure participant can combine the commitments as an amateur, a hobbyist or a career volunteer.

Examples of mixed serious leisure can be found in the studies of leisure enthusiasts in sport, culture and art. A study on Australian motorsport volunteers revealed the mixed nature of their involvement in motorsport. They engaged in motorsport as marginal volunteers and motorsport fans on one hand and as amateur motorsport racers on the other hand, representing a hybrid “career volunteer/amateur” profile. Hunt’s study on a group of American leisure enthusiasts in “living history” re-enactment revealed that the participants joined the activity because they were seeking a worthwhile hobby, social life, comradeship and an educational element along with the related theme of historical scholarship.²¹⁶ Their multiple activities and motivations underscore the complexity of participants’ experiences in a single serious leisure project.

Another study on amateur artist groups in a regional Australian city explored the career integration of mixed serious leisure in the creative arts field.²¹⁷ When a small number of group members integrated a career volunteer leader role with their roles as amateur artists, they managed to balance the rewards and costs of artistic efforts with the extra rewards and costs required from the leadership roles. A mixed serious leisure participant could be all of these: an amateur involved in irregular volunteer effort, a mixed serious leisure moderate devotee who could be an amateur with regular committee duties, or a mixed serious leisure core devotee who could be an amateur with group leadership duties. Bendle and Patterson’s finding combines temporal continuity with the intensity of involvement identified by Stebbins in a mixed serious

²¹⁵ Stebbins, *Serious Leisure*, 34.

²¹⁶ Stephen J. Hunt, “Acting the Part: ‘Living History’ as a Serious Leisure Pursuit,” *Leisure Studies* 23, no. 4 (2004), 396-397.

²¹⁷ Lawrence J. Bendle, and Ian Patterson, “Mixed Serious Leisure and Grassroots Organizational Capacity: A Study of Amateur Artist Groups in a Regional Australian City,” *Leisure Sciences: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 31, no. 3 (2009), 282-284.

leisure study. Their findings explain the benefits and costs attributed to the mixed serious leisure enthusiasts, and prove the value of mixed serious leisure to the organizational capacity of amateur artist groups.

In practice, most volunteers in the arts and culture fields pursue mixed serious leisure activities, which offer this research a unique angle from which to view the museum volunteer phenomenon. Museum volunteering as a serious leisure pursuit may lead to the integration of the pursuit of art with a volunteer mission in the form of mixed serious leisure, and to benefits from both participating in the arts and volunteering. The specific benefits greatly depend on the design and implementation of different projects and the needs of individual participants. Although the mixed serious leisure activities are common in arts and culture, to date the involvement of museum volunteers as mixed serious leisure is underexplored.

5.2.4 Museum Volunteering in Finland

According to *Study on Volunteering in the European Union: Country Report Finland*, organized volunteering and civic activities began in the mid and late 1800s in Finland and have been closely connected with the historical development of the Finnish nation and the development of civic society. There has been a significant change in attitude since the economic recession in the early/mid 1990s.²¹⁸ After the recession, public services were re-organized; the rising of neo-liberalist policies, with the budget cuts, led to a significant increase in voluntary organizations in the social and health service fields. The voluntary sector has found an important place in society.

It is pointed out in *Country Report Finland*, based on Yeung's (2002) research, that the two main volunteer motivations are "the desire to help" (41%) and "to regularly spend time on something useful" (16%). Other motives include "being involved at the request of others" (9%), "taking part in an interesting activity" (8%), "meeting new and like-minded people" (8%) and "obtaining new life experiences and learning new things" (8%).

According to *Country Report Finland*, the factors that motivate people to volunteer vary according to their gender, social status and age group. Women's motives emphasize their willingness to help, their enthusiasm to learn new things and to meet new people. Men are more motivated by the influence of friends and acquaintances, spending free-time meaningfully, and a sense of civic responsibility. In rural areas, voluntary activities are more motivated by a strong sense of civic duty, while in large cities they are more focused on providing a channel for citizens willing to help, as well being a meaningful leisure activity that can be a hobby amongst many others.

It is also pointed out that different age groups tend to be motivated by different factors. Young people are obviously more motivated by learning new

²¹⁸ Study on Volunteering in the European Union: Country Report Finland, GHK, http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/europe-for-citizens-programme/studies/index_en.htm.

skills and more influenced by friends. People aged over 50 years, or retired volunteers, are more motivated by meeting new people and are much less influenced by friends, and more influenced by the desire to help others and maintain regular participation in an activity that benefits society and others.

For potential direct beneficiaries, volunteers are often more self-motivated in providing assistance as they “really want to help rather than being employed to do so”, so they bring a new atmosphere and a more subjective and personal attitude than paid employees. As for the benefits for the volunteers themselves, they feel that their benefits from volunteering include “being able to learn new skills, gain new experiences and strengthen one’s self-identity”, “feeling good about themselves as they can help others” and “helping them with their career”, “improve self-confidence”, “enhancing interpersonal skills” as well as “creating a platform for meeting new people”.

Experience with art and culture can make people’s lives meaningful, which is important as those are two key prerequisites for mental, physical and social well-being. According to *Art and Culture for Well-being – Proposal for an Action Program 2010–2014* issued by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, volunteering is said to provide new possibilities for well-being and health promotion and social inclusion through arts and cultural activities. The *Proposal for an Action Program* calls for strengthening the cooperation between the public, private and third sectors. It points out that non-profit associations and voluntary activities should receive more support and recommends that local authorities should build, and maintain, closer partnerships with these organizations. Furthermore, the program suggests that the cultural needs of service users within social and healthcare services (e.g. visits to cultural and art events) should be part of serious consideration in the regular daily work of institutions. Cultural professionals should be available in care units and should organize arts and cultural activities in cooperation with service users, relatives and volunteers.

Volunteering in the field of the arts and culture is very common in Finland. According to data from Statistics in Finland, among the 1000 museums in Finland, only about one third of them are professionally-run museums (156 museum administration units for 325 museum sites). The rest of them are small, local or specialized, and are managed by volunteers and owned by associations and foundations. Volunteers play multiple roles in volunteer-run, as well as in professionally-run, national and provincial museums, such as working as guides or educators, offering stewarding assistance, and using their expertise to help preserve cultural heritage.

Given the increasing awareness of the significance of volunteering in improving active participation in the arts and culture and the profound tradition and prominent employment of volunteer work in many Finnish museums, research is increasingly focusing on this topic of volunteering in the fields of the arts and culture. However, the study of art and cultural volunteering, especially from serious leisure perspective, is lacking.

5.3 Articulation of Research Question

In previous studies of mixed serious leisure, how museum volunteers integrated their volunteer service with their enthusiasm for the arts was rarely explored. The established literature revealed in particular a gap between museum volunteering as serious leisure and participation in the arts. *The Art and Culture Companions* provided volunteer participants with a wide range of possibilities for taking part in the arts in various forms and modes. This project provided a unique opportunity to understand how a group of serious leisure museum volunteers integrated their volunteer mission with their interest in the arts, and subsequently how the integration benefited themselves, the museum and their service users as well as the community. Meanwhile, this case study also focused on the roles played by the coordinator/professional artist, and the mechanisms of this project.

5.4 Data Collection and Analysis

This study was a qualitative case study which combined multiple data resources. The data was obtained through on-site observation, document study, and in-depth interviews with volunteers, coordinators and other staff members.

This case report was based on research work initiated in late 2011. Interviews were first conducted with the initiator of the *Art and Culture Companions*, Sirpa Turpeinen, and the current coordinator Hanne Laitinen. I searched online information and previous studies in order to obtain background information about the project. Furthermore, I participated in a series of meetings and discussions, visited different workshops and exhibitions and held conversations with museum volunteers.

A questionnaire survey conducted in 2012 provided a profile of this volunteer group. The questionnaire was distributed to 150 participants according to the available addresses provided by the coordinator, in order to obtain the basic information about the volunteer group. Amongst the 72 returned questionnaires, 70 samples were valid (valid rate = 97.2%). The volunteers' age ranged from 24 years to 82 years old ($M=58.33$); among them 26 were 60–70 years old, which comprised the biggest age group. All respondents were Finnish. Most of them had a college or university education. 59 volunteers had previous voluntary experience and most of the volunteers enthusiastically participated in arts activities. This survey showed an obvious gender imbalance; 65 of the volunteers were female and just 5 were male. The main volunteer group was the retiree population: there were 45 retirees, 11 workers and five students. Of the participants, 40 guided 1–5 groups, and 15 guided 6–10 groups, 3 had guided 11–15 groups, 2 guided 16–20 groups and only 3 guided more than 20 groups during the last year (* 7 no answer). Most guided groups had

fewer than 10 members. Partly estimated by Laitinen, volunteers provided guiding services 750 times in 2012 and visitor numbers reached about 3500.

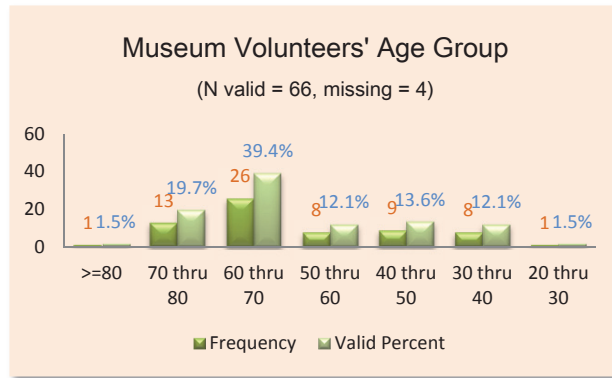


FIGURE 9 Age group of the Art and Culture Companions Volunteers

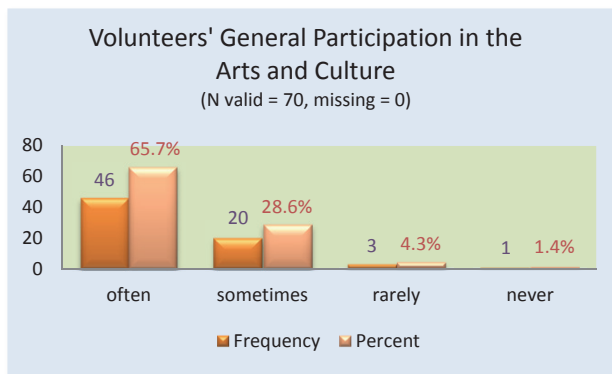


FIGURE 10 Volunteers' General Participation in the Arts and Culture

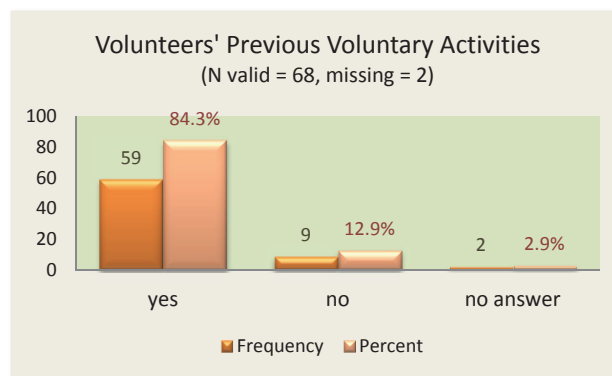


FIGURE 11 Volunteers' Previous Voluntary Activities

Through observation, I gleaned that rather than just being museum volunteer guide most participants were involved in multiple activities: excursions, making art, attending peer meetings, attending art seminars and visiting exhibitions. This information correlated with the survey conducted by Manerus on the *Art and Culture Companions* participants. In her survey, when asked what the favourite activities were, among 41 respondents, 32 selected "excursions to art and cultural sites", 24 selected "volunteer training courses", 23 chose "offering guide service". In addition, 20 considered "art lectures and seminars about", 20 considered "peer meeting" and 15 considered "arts workshop" their favoured activities (A multiple answer was allowed). Initial studies revealed that the participants became involved in multiple activities; however, their participation activities were not always visible for a researcher because a big portion of their activities were often outside the museums, thus it was difficult to investigate their all-round experiences. In this case, the limited options offered by multiple-choice questions in a quantitative questionnaire could not provide a comprehensive understanding of participation experiences. Furthermore, they could lead to missing important information because the participants' expected answers might not be in the options as a result of inaccurate questionnaire design.

Previous studies on the volunteers demonstrated that many of them, though not all, were not pursuing their interest for a single purpose as either a hobbyist or a volunteer; on the contrary, their participation combined the different type of serious leisure within this project. The initial findings revealed that their involvement was as of the nature of mixed serious leisure. In a single leisure pursuit, a mixed serious leisure participant can combine commitments as an amateur, a hobbyist or a career volunteer. The findings were consistent with prior studies on volunteering in the field of culture and the arts, as very few museum volunteers stick to one single activity. However, the limited quantitative data from previous studies had very little to tell about the participants' experiences; how they combined the different leisure activities as an amateur, hobbyist and volunteer and how volunteering benefited themselves as well as others.

The initial findings implied the necessity to conduct further research in the form of an in-depth interview. Afterwards, several meetings were conducted with coordinator Laitinen. The findings from the initial study were explained to her as were the need for a more in-depth interview. It proved to be that in this case study, the coordinator played a crucial role in providing information and provided enormous help in introducing and contacting interviewees.

According to the introduction by the project coordinator Hanne Laitinen, there were approximately 30 quite active participants, which was in accordance with my initial observation. Due to time limitations, I used purposive-sampling. Together, Laitinen and I looked for available participants and subsequently decided on the potential interviewees. The selection was based upon finding individuals who were long-term participants, who involved

actively, who represented different participation experiences and perspectives, and crucially, who were willing to be interviewed.

The interviewees included eight volunteers and three staff members who worked within this project. From autumn 2012 I conducted in-depth interviews with eight museum volunteers. Among them, one was male and seven were female, a relative proportion which was consistent with the gender demography of the participant group. All interviewees were retired. The following list provides some basic information about them.

TABLE 3 Interviewed *Art and Culture Companions* Volunteers

Name	Gender	Accession Time	Current Job situation
Maija Laitaharju	Female	2010	Semi-retired
Marita Riikonen	Female	2009	Retired
Sanni Kankainen	Female	2007	Retired
Tapani Hynynen	Male	2007	Retired
Heli Hietaharju-Mölsä	Female	2007	Retired
Liisa Kirveskangas	Female	2011	Retired
Pirkko Rissanen	Female	2010	Retired
Leena Pukkala	Female	2010	Retired

The interview questions were open-ended and covered the individuals' motivations, activities and benefits, and their recognition of their primary roles in the project. Participants could cover all issues in the order they wished to. Interview time ranged from one and a half hours to two hours. Interviews were recorded and then transcribed. The interview transcripts were reviewed by both Laitinen and the interviewees in order to verify that the data was accurate before being used for data analysis.

Three staff members were also interviewed. In addition to the current coordinator Laitinen, interviews were conducted with the museum educator, Turpeinen, who was the initiator of this project. The third interviewee was Manerus, a staff member who was in charge of the *Art Pharmacy* and designed and managed the arts and cultural services for senior people. Manerus worked as Laitinen's assistant for a long period of time. They together provided rich information of this project, such as the concept, initiation, operation, as well as the overview of the museum volunteer group. The duration of the interviews with staff members ranged from two to four hours.

After the interviews were transcribed and checked by the interviewees, I imported data to the qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti and started to code according to an inductive method. The rich qualitative data obtained from the in-depth interviews generated a clear and deep understanding of the museum volunteers' participation experiences. Thematic analysis was used as the salient data analysis method. Based on the participants' recognized principal involvement, along with their identified motivations, activities and benefits, this study identified three different types of mixed serious leisure enthusiasts: volunteer/hobbyist, balanced participant and amateur/volunteer.

5.5 Art Museum Volunteers as Mixed Serious Leisure Enthusiasts

This section is the main part of this research report which presents the findings. It draws out a comprehensive profile of the volunteers' involvement with the *Art and Culture Companions* as "mixed serious leisure enthusiasts" through identifying three types of mixed serious leisure enthusiasts.

Data analysis revealed that participants had different self-recognitions of their primary involvement, as listed in TABLE 4. The first type primarily undertook volunteer work, while as a secondary activity they pursued their own hobbies in the arts; the second type participated in this project mainly as amateur artists but occasionally doing volunteer work; the third type balanced arts hobbies and voluntary work and had no obvious participation inclination. In accordance to their primary involvement, I defined three types of mixed serious leisure enthusiasts: volunteer/hobbyist, amateur/volunteer and balanced participant. The relation of the three types is illustrated in the diagram (FIGURE 12). The left arrow points towards the complete volunteers who do not consider their own interest in the arts. The right arrow points towards those who merely partake in the arts but do not undertake any volunteer work. Situated between these two is the balanced type. In reality, no participant undertook voluntary work without considering his or her own artistic pursuit, nor did he/she engage in the arts solely, without undertaking any voluntary work.

Consistent with their recognized primary involvement, each type of participant demonstrated difference in motivations, activities and benefits. Though not every interviewee pinpointed all the identified motivations, all of them mentioned mixed motivations that combined self-interested and altruistic factors. All the interviewees participated in multiple activities and all identified multiple benefits.

The categorization of the three types was based upon individual participants' involvement with this project—how they understood and dealt with the relationship between participation in art and in volunteer work, how they found the most suitable way to combine the two, maintain their motivation, optimize their participation experience, and cater to the design of this project. In this case, mixed serious leisure offered a unique viewpoint from which to observe how these volunteers integrated their interest in the arts with volunteer work, and in the process generated a positive impact for themselves, for the service users, the host organization and the community.

TABLE 4 The *Art and Culture Companions* Participants' Principal Involvement

Primary involvement	Primarily undertaking volunteer work	<i>In this project, there are various activities one can participate in; but for me, the most important reason is doing voluntary work.</i>
	Primarily pursuing their own artistic hobbies	<i>Being a volunteer guide is not the first thought. Our first interest is our painting group and the second interest is guiding.</i>
	Equally pursuing their own arts hobbies and undertaking volunteer work	<i>I have a lot of different activities in this project. I can't say which is more significant. It is difficult to choose; they are equal and they all have their place.</i>

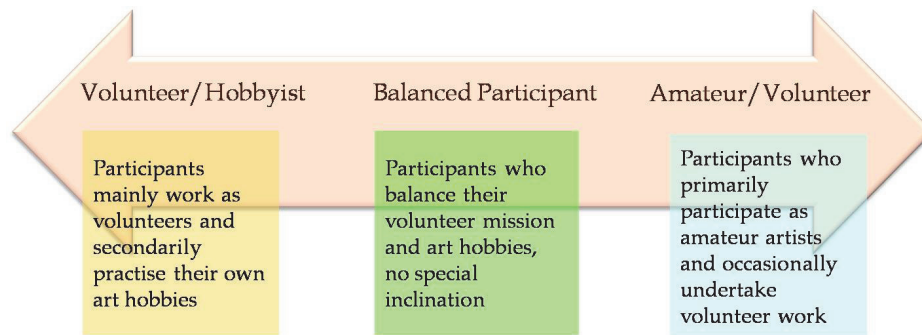


FIGURE 12 Three types of Mixed Serious Leisure Enthusiasts

5.5.1 Volunteer/Hobbyist

Although mainly undertaking voluntary work, a volunteer/hobbyist represented both self-interested and altruistic motivations. For example, one dedicated volunteer/hobbyist Leena Pukkala attributed her participation reasons to “always loving the arts”, “seeking empowering and new experiences when retired”, “meeting people”, and “introducing people to local museums and heritage”. Another volunteer/hobbyist Heli Hietaharju-Mölsä emphasized her “intention to learn more about the arts”, “helping the museum”, “sharing experiences with people”, “bringing the joy of the arts and culture to people”, and “using skill and experience to help disabled people participate in the arts and culture”.

Pukkala’s story was typical when comparing with a volunteer/hobbyist’s participation model. Pukkala attended this project in 2010. In 2011 she worked with Laitinen and formed a Korpilahti volunteer guide group under this activity. Pukkala enthusiastically and regularly undertook guide work and worked as the contact person of the small Korpilahti group. According to incomplete statistics by Laitinen, Pukkala offered guide services to hundreds of visitors each year. Her primary participation activity was to demonstrate to people the rich heritage in Korpilahti. As she expressed it:

Korpilahti is very rich in cultural and historical heritage. My favourite is our museum, the Korpilahti Museum of Local History and Culture (Korpilahden kotiseutumuseo), run by the regional history society. It is very interesting and I love to show it to people.

In addition to presenting art and cultural heritage in Korpilahti and guiding people from Korpilahti to museums and art exhibitions in Jyväskylä, Pukkala and her group members also showed artwork to senior people at day centres and retirement homes. Sometimes they presented their own work, she noted:

One day, we were asked to make a small show for old people. Three of us made an old portfolio with old tools, traditional men and women's clothes, old schoolbooks, photos from the 1930s, and some old handicrafts items like lace to make this work. We then displayed this at the Older People's Day Centre. It was an art and handicraft show, a small show specifically planned for the elderly. This was an example of how we can tailor this activity to certain aspects of the community.

Sometimes, she presented artists' work to senior people:

I'm often present in retirement homes to show them artwork, not my work, but artwork made by artists and collected in museums. I like old people and I'm old as well. [...] I showed them Alvar Cawen's work over the internet. Alvar is an artist from Korpilahti. Korpilahti has been the favourite place for many famous Finnish artists. Many artists like Gallen Kallela and Pekka Halonen went there and made paintings. I also presented these artists' work to old people.

Pukkala was involved with other activities as well: acrylic painting, taking part in printing workshops, attending peer meetings and seminars, and frequently visiting museums and going to concerts. However, she recognized that her major role was as a volunteer, as she emphasized it: "I offer guide services and show art to old people; they are equally important for me. As an *Art and Culture Companions* member, I primarily undertook volunteer work." Pukkala's desire to participate in the arts as a hobbyist appeared not to be such a significant factor when she was examining her participation choices.

Another active volunteer, Maija Laitaharju, noted the connection between volunteering and her previous work experience for the Sovatek organization:

I offer guide service to old people. My previous job was organizing events for people with special needs and leading people to different places. I had worked for a long time with mental rehabilitants. It is very natural and easy for me to do this now.

In spring 2012, Laitaharju was given access to six 65–85 year old women living alone in their own homes. She organized a close group for them and worked intensely with this small group. She guided them to eight art and cultural sites in Jyväskylä and then organized 11 different art and culture oriented group meetings over a period of ten weeks. She stated: "some members were so afraid and reluctant to attend activities; I helped them a lot to overcome the obstacles. I encouraged them. Afterwards, they trusted me and shared a lot of their life experience with me." Afterwards, based on her work, she completed her bachelor thesis in the field of social service. Her work identified what is the significance is of art and culture oriented group meetings in elderly people's

everyday lives and produced useful information for the Senior Fishnet Association (Seniorinuotta) which serves to improve elderly people's psychological well-being in Jyväskylä.

Although Laitaharju also pursued her own interest in the arts, often visiting exhibitions and concerts. She indicated that the important way for her to participate in the arts included watching and listening, discussing art and sharing experiences with people; making artwork herself was not so important for her".

In addition to offering guide services and demonstrating artwork to old people, the volunteers/hobbyists undertook a variety of other activities such as making art with marginalized groups and providing volunteer training and steward assistance for the museum. One dedicated volunteer, Heli Hietaharju-Mölsä, described how she made art with old people:

I've also visited the service home for senior people in Väinönkatu. [...] I've been there many times and we painted together with older people and five or six year old children from a nearby day care centre. Then we put the works on the wall and simply admired them.

One active volunteer, Pirkko Rissanen, valued her experience of planning and building the *Kulttuuriluotsien löytöjä* exhibition as her most valued experience. For Rissanen, exhibition building was very interesting, inspiring and a unique way of actively participating in museum work as well as in the arts.

First, I heard about this in our meeting that there could be a possibility for the *Art and Culture Companions* participants to plan and build an exhibition. I thought it would be very interesting, to plan, to select artwork, and to do all these things to make an exhibition. We saw all the artwork owned by the city; there were hundreds of pieces of work. We were told that we could choose those pieces of artwork to be shown from their 2000 to 2010 collection. It was very interesting to see all kinds of work and get to know the artists and the whole thing. Then we had a very nice process when we were choosing the work. We were talking and making suggestions. I made many suggestions about what kind of work I would like to exhibit and why, for instance. [...] We went to the art museum and saw the space we were about to use for the exhibition and then we discussed what to do. We selected around 40 pieces of work. I was involved throughout the whole process. Afterwards, a couple of volunteers including me made a report about the exhibition experience.

All volunteers/hobbyists mentioned the stewarding assistance they offered to the museums; they stated that "staff members need more hands so that they can manage". Laitaharju noted that she used to serve coffee and do dishes when events were being held to "give a hand to Laitinen and the museum, although many participants don't often do this". Hietaharju-Mölsä indicated how she presented the function of assistive equipment in a *Lukupiiri* members' meeting for helping visitors with sight problems, which was closely connected to her previous career experience, as she worked for decades as a special teacher for the blind.²¹⁹

²¹⁹ *Lukupiiri* is a literature group. Heli is the leader of the literature group *Lukupiiri*. Group members usually gather every three weeks to read one book, often an art book and then they exchange opinions about the book.

The volunteers/hobbyists explained how their volunteer mission and hobby pursuits interacted and affected each other. For example the most senior volunteer, Sanni Kankainen, mentioned that her participation in the arts was partly born out of her own interest, but more importantly out of the purpose to “understand better the collection in museums in order to better introduce collections and sites to service users”. She spent a considerable amount of her free time “updating her knowledge about the arts and culture for her guiding work”. On the other hand, her hobby in the arts deeply influenced her preference for volunteering. She had a long, deep interest in architecture; so in recent years she has been focusing on offering guide services at the Finnish architect Wivi Lönn’s sites.²²⁰ Throughout every week of the previous summer, she guided people around houses designed by Wivi Lönn and told them about the historical background relating to the architect and her architecture work. Kankainen did not consider her experience as totally altruistic behaviour; she regarded her participation as a kind of reciprocal experience as “on the one hand, you gave and on the other hand, you obtained a lot”. She noted: “I like all beautiful things and I enjoyed it a lot. I acquired a lot of knowledge and information and I also want to give back, to share that with people.”

The volunteers/hobbyists highly valued the sense of belonging to a group, the opportunity to have social connections and to share art experiences with people, the rewarding feeling of enhancing people’s well-being through the arts as “when I saw that those guided people were so much into visiting art exhibition or watching performance at theatre, I really enjoyed it a lot”, external rewards from “warm feedback and the grateful feeling from service users”, a good feeling of enhancing people’s communication and understanding, a chance to use their expertise “so people could benefit from their expertise”, the opportunity to immerse themselves in art, and the possibility to “have a more meaningful and creative life”. The volunteers/hobbyists also highly valued the feeling of being able to help the museum(s) and propagate this project; one indicated that their participation “made people know who they are and what they do in this activity, and then people can request our services”.

To summarize, although committing to different activities, the volunteers/hobbyists recognized that undertaking volunteer work was their primary involvement with regard to this project, as one volunteer noted, “In this project, there are different things, but for me, the important thing is doing voluntary work”. For the volunteers/hobbyists, the significance of museum volunteering obviously weighed more heavily than their own arts hobbies. Volunteering was often, although not exclusively, closely connected to their previous career; thus being a volunteer offered them the opportunity to use their skills to help others. The volunteers/hobbyists demonstrated the distinguishing qualities of a career volunteer as a serious leisure enthusiast, such as perseverance despite age, health problems, and the challenges and

²²⁰ In Sanni’s area in Jyväskylä, there are 12 houses designed by Wivi Lönn, including the house she designed for herself and her mother where her bronze statue stands in the yard.

difficulties they faced in their participation; skills, experience and knowledge; devotion of time and energy; acceptance of certain costs; involvement in a familiar volunteers' social world; the strong self-identification as a "museum volunteer".

5.5.2 Amateur/Volunteer

Different from the volunteers/hobbyists who primarily focus on volunteer work, some Art and Culture Companions participants focused on pursuing an interest in art rather than undertaking volunteer guide work.

Under the *Art and Culture Companions* there is one painting group called *Leidit* that consists of six female members; they usually gather once a week at the Jyväskylä Art Museum and make artwork together. One member Liisa Kirveskangas reviewed their story. This group started to collaborate with Laitinen in 2008. In 2011 they became a part of this project. According to Kirveskangas, the motivation for group members to join this activity was mainly to find out more about art rather than become a volunteer guide, although they still tried to combine their own pursuit of art and help other people access the arts and culture:

We are not in the first list when Hanne needs guiders. [...] Normally, we don't guide people so often; instead, we participate a lot in painting activities. [...] Our first interest is our painting group and the second interest is 'guiding'.

Their activities included making art in the studio in the Jyväskylä Art Museum, visiting exhibitions and taking excursions with group members to art and cultural sites, exhibiting their work in different places, attending arts seminars and lectures, participating in peer meetings and discussions, and making art with older people. *Leidit* members spent a remarkable amount of time and energy in making art together and exhibiting their work in different public spaces. Kirveskangas recollected their time of practising art together:

We practise different art, different techniques, using different materials and colours. We don't have another place where we can practise art ... here we have a big place and different materials we can try. Hanne always gives us information about art; we learned a lot about artists, exhibitions and artistic techniques.

On another occasion, she described their exhibition at the Jyväskylä Central Hospital:

The theme of our exhibition at the Jyväskylä Central Hospital was *Ilo*. Every autumn, there is so-called *Elämän Ilon Viikot* (*the Joyful Weeks of Life*) at the Jyväskylä Central Hospital and there are different programs there. The hospital planned and organized the art exhibition in the lobby near the main entrance. We made very colourful work for the exhibition. Some pieces were quite large. We thought that when patients are lying on their back, being transported on beds to labs and examination rooms, they can see the colourful work on the walls and ceilings. But it was not easy to put work on the ceiling because there were lights, lamps and we couldn't put all the pieces there. But we put some work on the wall. Afterwards, at least one painting was sold.

One interesting and noteworthy factor is that although their motivation was the least altruistic, and they seldom offered guide services, their participation generated considerable benefits for their clients, organization and community. For instance they had exhibitions in retirement homes, the local hospital, the church and the museum, which widely publicized this activity and the Jyväskylä Art Museum. Their exhibitions attracted people to gather together to communicate, share experiences with each other, and generate social changes. For instance, in the *Art Bazaar* happening (*Taidebasaari*) in 2011, they held a charity auction where they sold their own work in order to raise money for orphans in Tanzania. In addition, they presented their work to marginalized social groups; their participation activity also inspired and encouraged people, especially those marginalized social groups, as Kirveskangas emphasized:

It was around 2010 when we went to the nursing home in Keljo for the first time. We presented our work, and then the old people were so interested that we started to make work together with them. We went there many times [...] between six and ten times. Afterwards, those elderly people had their own exhibition; we put their work in their dining room and we had a celebration there.

The amateurs/volunteers valued the benefits of immersing themselves in art, the sense of belonging in a group, the sharing of art experiences with group members, the opportunity to learn more about art and to practise art, and the sense of empowerment that art provided. They recognized that their participation generated feelings of joy, inspiration and encouragement for others, that they publicized this activity, and promoted community inclusion. They regarded these factors as an impact generated from their amateur artist activities, however, rather than as an impact generated directly from volunteering, because volunteering was not the main part of their involvement. Their stories indicated that amateur artists' active participation in the community in a sense expanded the work of the professional community/socially engaged artists.

In general terms, this type of participation was performed by a small number of participants, exposing the diverse and complex nature of museum volunteers' involvement. They emphasized that their involvement in this project was mainly for the pursuit of their own artistic hobbies, as Kirveskangas noted: "Our first interest is our painting group and the second interest is guiding" and "The deep interest in art is the primary reason for us to attend this project". As serious art hobbyists, their experience revealed perseverance through times of hardship; a long standing and regular involvement in making art; quality demonstrated in their work; efforts in learning knowledge and artistic skills; an active attitude in connection with the art field, such as communicating with artists, paying attention to current issues in the art field, hosting exhibitions and even selling their own work; possessing a strong self-identify as an amateur artist.

5.5.3 Balanced Participant

The third type of volunteer identified in this study represented a balanced inclination. The dance companions' group (*Tanssiluotsi*) is one interest group which falls under the *Art and Culture Companions*. Formulated in 2009, the group has several members including Tapani Hynynen and Marita Riikonen.

Hynynen's motivation came from "a life-long passion for folk dance, festival dance and classical dance", "seeking friends and having social connections with people", and "helping shy people, older people and immigrants enjoy culture and the arts". Riikonen summarized the multiple factors drove her to the participation as "a passion for the arts", "seeking a new and empowering experience when retired", "meeting people and sharing experiences with them", and "inspiring people to have new experiences from the arts". Hynynen described his participation as a dance enthusiast:

In 2010 the dance companions' group was established. After one winter course, we heard that the Central Finland Dance Centre organized a workshop in which dance companions could have their own dancing program. A professional choreographer was sent to this group and she had an idea about the theme of our dancing program, that it should be based on our life story. I took part in this small group called *Kuplivat*; it implied for us that dance is like bubbles going up into the ocean of life.

On another occasion, he described their performance:

Kuplivat dancers performed at retirement homes, schools, day centres for senior people and at hospitals. Sometimes, we gathered all the sick people in the common room and danced there for them. For those who were too weak and sick, we performed in their room and at their bed. Performance time varied each time, but normally, it lasted for 10-15 minutes. We had the possibility to use social dance methods in our performances; we had more interaction with the audience. It is different from dance performance in theatre or on the stage. When we perform for people, we often invited the audience to dance together with us.

Riikonen also noted:

The Central Finland Dance Centre organized this; they sent us a professional choreographer for the project and paid the professional dancer's salary to work with us. Together we choreographed based on our own life stories. We danced for 15 minutes; the dance was based on the four members' dancing background. Each time we practised a couple of hours and we had in total eight weeks of practice. Then we performed six times in different places.

In addition to the activities related to dancing, both of them undertook other voluntary work. Hynynen was an enthusiastic museum guide and he often offered guide services for students, immigrants and foreign visitors. According to Hynynen, his service generated financial benefits for students because there is free entry to museums with a "companion" and he said he made immigrants and foreign visitors feel more at home in museums and at cultural sites. Riikonen also recalled her multiple activities in this project such as doing peer guide work for theatres and museums, participating in the *Friday Art Talk* session, and organizing events and gatherings for various groups.

The balanced participants also demonstrated multiple benefits. For Hynynen, the sense of belonging to a group and being involved in the arts as a dance enthusiast are significant benefits; he also experienced a good feeling to enhance people's well-being through the arts as "bringing a piece of joy to people"; in addition, he expressed the social opportunity as "possibilities to be with new people and old acquaintances, and spread my social net". He mentioned that working as a guide provided him with possibilities to visit different museums and cultural sites and he regarded it as a "benefit that he can't get from other projects" because he could always know more about culture and the arts. For Riikonen, the most important benefits were "social interaction with people", "a sense of belonging to a group", "using expertise to do meaningful things after retiring from one's career", and the possibility to "influence public and community issues".

On both their pursuit of arts hobbies and also voluntary work, they demonstrated the qualities of serious leisure pursuits such as perseverance, career characteristics like rich experiences, long-time involvement, effort in obtaining knowledge and skill and training, various durable benefits, familiarity with dancers' and the volunteers' social worlds, and a strong identification as both art enthusiasts and volunteers. As dance enthusiasts, both Hynynen and Riikonen had substantial practice experience in different types of dances. For example, Riikonen had life-long involvement with dance and dance education and she considered herself "something between an amateur and a professional dancer" and "having a lot of experience in dancing and a connection with professional dancers":

When I was a little girl, I practised ballet dance for many years, and jazz ballet. I taught dancing at school and I still dance jazz ballet. I also organized dance courses for teachers at my school as well as at other schools.

As a volunteer, Hynynen worked as an experienced museum guide and a city guide for many years. Riikonen had decades of work experience as an educator and an education administrator. Similar to a volunteer/hobbyist, volunteering was a way for them to continuously apply their passion and skill to do something meaningful after retiring.

Their description illustrated that dance was both their cherished art hobby and the platform via which they could serve others; they practised dancing, watched dance performance, met people and shared experiences with other dance enthusiasts, and performed for the elderly. Their performance brought joy and satisfaction to themselves as well as to other people. Balanced serious leisure enthusiasts balanced their own art hobby and their volunteer mission. Hynynen mentioned that "pursuing my own hobby is as important as bringing a good feeling to people through volunteer work". Riikonen explained her balanced point of view: "I have a lot of different activities in this project. I can't say which is more significant. It is difficult to choose; they are equal and they all have their place". The most distinguishing thing for this group was that they identified their own arts hobby as equally significant and valuable as the

volunteer mission they undertook, as they balanced being an art enthusiast and a volunteer.

5.5.4 Summary

It is significant to note that the difference among the three types of mixed serious leisure enthusiasts should not be overemphasized. The three types represent three different inclinations flowing and oscillating within a certain range, among which there is no fixed boundary. The volunteers/hobbyists represent the mainstream type amongst all the participants, whilst the other two types are identified as much less prominent. All three types of mixed serious leisure enthusiasts had multiple motivations, were committed to various activities and identified extensive benefits.

The three types revealed the complexity of the museum volunteers' involvement as mixed serious leisure enthusiasts. Their multiple motivations echoed Orr's finding that museum volunteers acquire knowledge and skills from their amateur and hobby activities and at the same time volunteer to "extend their interests and share their knowledge".²²¹ Generally, the motivations recognized by a volunteer/hobbyist and those by a balanced participant were quite similar, as both combined their own passion for the arts, and the intention to socialize with people and help others. The motivations recognized by an amateur/volunteer, however, emphasized an obvious difference from the other two types because an amateur/volunteer underscored learning with more regard for art, and especially making artwork.

The absence of career and morally coercive factors from their identified motivations conforms to the leisure seeking nature of the participant group.²²² Their multiple motivations and benefits are also consistent with the findings from Stebbins' studies on the personal and social rewards and durable benefits of serious leisure. Meanwhile, their participation experiences meet the description of the four key stakeholders (volunteers, service users, organizations and the community) upon which volunteering has impact.²²³

5.6 Assessment of the Art and Culture Companions

The project coordinator Hanne Laitinen has been solely responsible for ensuring the success of the whole project since 2008. Having a sound

²²¹ Orr, "Museum Volunteering: Heritage as 'Serious Leisure'," 195.

²²² In the field of volunteerism study, Clary et al. defined motivation as the "internal psychological forces that move people to overcome obstacles and become involved in volunteer activities". Clary et al. classified volunteer motivation into six categories including; values, understanding, social, career, protective and enhancement. See Clary et al., "Understanding and Assessing the Motivations of Volunteers: A Functional Approach," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 74, no. 6 (June 1998), 1520.

²²³ Rochester et al., *Volunteering and Society*, 167.

background in art education and community art, the coordinator position provided her with a valuable opportunity to fulfil her belief in art's ameliorative and healing purpose—art should benefit more people, especially those with special needs.²²⁴ Her basic idea was the marriage of museum volunteering and community art to enhance people's participation in arts and culture and thus generate benefits for people and the community. She once stated that:

Socially engaged art or community art is more about finding out problems or imperfections in societies, and maybe not only shortcomings but doing something worthwhile together to get added value for people involved and in that way increase the well-being of the whole community.²²⁵

Laitinen explained her understanding of the essence of the *Art and Culture Companions*:

This activity contains certain parts of a socially engaged art or community art, though it's not total social art. I feel the volunteers and I are doing work in the way social artists do. It is a kind of social service, but based on art and culture. [...] [It] offers art and cultural services as a way to improve people's well-being. Social service is not only financial help, medical care and housing etc; it also contains art and cultural services and affects people's spirits.²²⁶

As project coordinator, one big part of Laitinen's work was promoting the collaboration between different networks, museums, organizations and institutions, informing volunteers about upcoming activities, planning gatherings and events, organizing volunteer training, and arranging meetings for members. The following quotes provide a glimpse into her daily work as a coordinator:

I deal with the volunteer network in *Vapari* (Jyväskylä City Voluntary Services) and the volunteer coordinators' network *Valikkoverkosto* for example. I started dealing with *Valikkoverkosto* in 2008 and it has been very important for me. [...] Nowadays, many organizations organize volunteer work for helping old people and we try to make the collaboration better.

Recently, a big project was *Cultural Orienteering Day* (*Kulttuurisuunnistus*). It was an event representing the combination of the arts and sport. People could walk, run or roller-skate through cultural sites and the entry to every site was free. This was my idea in the beginning, to combine this with our project, so people could go on a Sunday afternoon around the city to pop in to cultural and art events. [...] This is one big part of the so-called one day happening, only four hours. But it's still a big network and we have to find the resources and organizations behind them. I've been working on this over summer.²²⁷

Her work surpassed her administrative duty. As a dedicated volunteer, she spent a remarkable amount of time and energy on volunteer work, guiding

²²⁴ Laitinen previously studied art education at the University of Lapland, and afterwards she went on to further education in social and community art in the Karelia University of Applied Sciences in 2005.

²²⁵ Hanne Laitinen, Interview with the author, April 21, 2013.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid.

people at art and cultural sites and bringing artwork to those most marginalized social groups. Laitinen considered being a serious volunteer a significant part of her identity, as she pointed out: “I feel that being a volunteer is my identity. I started as a volunteer. So it’s very natural for me (to do volunteer work)”. She described one of her volunteer guide experiences:

A couple of months ago, two volunteers and I had such an experience describing Jude Griebel’s artwork to five blind people. Jude Griebel just had an exhibition called *Life after Death* in this museum. [...] It is challenging to describe contemporary art to people who can’t see. [...] We had a minimal house made by the artist based on one piece of his work, so the blind visitors could touch that piece, feel the artwork and listen to our description.²²⁸

Undertaking career volunteer work is not only serious leisure for Laitinen, but it was also one useful part of her work as a coordinator. Sometimes, when she received calls and she couldn’t find a suitable volunteer to guide visitors, she did the work herself. Secondly, in addition to obtaining the rewards of gratitude from people she guided, Laitinen believes that her volunteer experience helped her understand the volunteers’ needs and the difficulties they faced, so it in turn improved her own work as a coordinator. She said:

Some coordinators don’t do this, so they miss the experience of how it feels to be a volunteer: if there is problem with staff or if there is problem with volunteers ... I have a lot of experiences. Undertaking volunteer work is a good self-reflection.

Laitinen also gave free art instruction to participants. Working as an educator was one significant part of her work; through this she enhanced the volunteers’ passion in art, as she recollected:

I try to be aware of all the events in the cultural field all over Finland. Even though some of our members are old, they are still ready to learn. I’m always learning and they learn with and from me. When I’m active, it can have a positive effect on them. This is one way I can help them.²²⁹

As a trained artist, Laitinen still maintained making and exhibiting artwork with volunteers, painting with people suffering from amnesia and bringing art to retirement homes. In addition, she worked as a curator who organized or co-organized art exhibitions to present the participants’ work to public.

As the project coordinator, Laitinen took up multiple roles including those of administrative worker, art instructor, artist, curator, and volunteer. The world of art, social work, museum and leisure enhanced each other. Her involvement reminds us the multiple roles and identities of socially engaged artists/community artists, illuminating expertise across different social fields and implying the artists’ capability to integrate all these different disciplines and institutions.

The idea of combining museum volunteering and community arts participation was presented in the mechanism of this project. Running this

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

project within the frame of a museum provided an effective and sustainable working mechanism; it offered material support, facilitated cooperation among different organizations and personnel, and motivated participants in the name of an altruistic purpose. This project made the most of the resources in the Jyväskylä Art Museum, such as exhibitions halls, studio rooms and other facilities necessary for offering participants arts education. This project networked with 14 cultural institutions. The volunteers and their service users were entitled to free entry or special discounts on ticket price at these venues, a factor which basically ensured the operation of the project. The wide cooperation with these institutions in human power employment also facilitated volunteer training and decreased the training cost. For instance, this project often organized arts workshops where professional artists passed on artistic skills and techniques to participants, and organized seminars where artists were invited to participate in meetings and discussions with participants. Apart from a small portion of paid work, in most cases the artists undertook their work without being remunerated, which greatly decreased the cost of art education and the volunteer training. All these factors maintained the development of this project.

As a museum volunteer project, there is supposed to be a strict evaluation of the volunteers' work. As Rochester and others pointed out, nowadays monitoring, evaluation and impact measurement have become very familiar to people working in the third, public and private sectors because organizations need to prove the worth and effectiveness of their work. For example, matching a particular volunteer to the right position is crucial; this process can be undertaken effectively by utilizing the "position descriptions" as part of the professionalization of the volunteer role in a museum.²³⁰ However, as a project that focused on encouraging low-threshold access to arts and culture, it was not so applicable to have rigid or even exclusive criteria in volunteer recruitment and evaluation. This revealed the conflict between art initiatives and voluntary management. Laitinen regarded how to balance this activity's basic idea and the needs and initiatives of the members as the crucial concern in the implementation and future development of this project.

She insisted on the importance of having an inclusive and flexible mechanism that could respect and encourage the participants' initiatives. She believes that "there is not only one way to be a volunteer of the *Art and Culture Companions*" and a great advantage is that the participants should be able to develop their own participation interests within the project and choose what they wanted. She noted in an interview:

The most meaningful thing is perhaps getting the new things, both for the service users and for our volunteers. There are new events, new chances, new ideas, new possibilities, and new perspectives to develop themselves for finding new ways of "who I am."²³¹

²³⁰ Rochester et al., *Volunteering and Society*, 167.

²³¹ Hanne Laitinen, Interview with the author, April 21, 2013.

On one hand, she taught the volunteering companions art techniques, designed programmes and workshops for them, and provided them with necessary material supports and facilities. On the other hand, she collaborated and negotiated with a wide variety of community groups to see their needs and likes, introduced the volunteers to these community groups, and encouraged the volunteers to employ artistic activities to serve community members.

Rather than only escorting people in museums and interpreting collections to them, the companions actively engaged with different community groups. They presented artwork that were made by artists and themselves to those marginalized groups, facilitated discussion and conversation among community members, made art with these people, and inspired them to participate in the arts. All interviewees recognized that this project is targeted at the arts field as “not for solving people’s many other problems, just making them happy through the arts”. The richness of artistic activities identified by the companions far exceeded the conventional understanding of art museum volunteers’ work and made this project different from other museum volunteer projects. Many of these factors were not recognized in previous studies. These activities differentiated this project from most other museum volunteer projects or art projects. Taking this project as a whole, it was not merely a museum volunteering activity, but also a long-term, even never-ending community art project.

The following paragraphs describe how the integration of museum volunteering and community arts participation brought benefits to different people involved and to the community, in three dimensions. First of all, individual visitors reaped joy and satisfaction when they were accompanied to exhibitions or performances. For the companions, arts experiences made them feel empowered and inspired, broadened their knowledge and view about culture, and helped them find a creative and meaningful life. One companion’s comment summarizes the essential sense of meaning to a serious leisure enthusiast involved with the arts. She noted:

People who are not (professional) artists can participate in the arts in many ways in order to live a happy, more creative, and meaningful life. [...] Nowadays, people have more financial possibilities and leisure time to participate in the arts. If we want, every one of us can do this and this project offered us such an opportunity.

On the second level, the arts worked as a catalyst to facilitate the interpersonal communication and they fostered a new social space in which people from different backgrounds could encounter each other and exchange their ideas. It was mentioned by a companion that “in front of artwork, the barrier between people is easily broken down and it becomes much easier for people to communicate and share experiences with each other” and sometimes “the experience shared is not limited to artwork and artists, it embraces the other aspects of their lives”. That first occurred among the volunteers. Laitaharju mentioned how art became a medium for interpersonal communication among participants; she explained the sense of empowerment through sharing art experiences amongst peers:

Although we don't know each other very well, we have something in common—all of us belong to arts and culture. Some of us maybe have severe diseases, such as cancer, or other problems in our lives, but it doesn't matter because we're dealing with the arts and can share feelings and experiences and encourage each other. This is a very empowering experience.

The arts worked as a catalyst to facilitate the social interaction between volunteers and clients. The non-professional attitude emphasized by this project distinguished itself from the professionalism in the museum guide; the volunteers regarded themselves more as a "companion" but not a professional guide or museum docent. The companions tried to meet visitors' special interest and personal needs, rather than regarding all visitors as a "standard type". The arts created equality and a sense of sharing between service users and volunteers, so that the guiding experience in fact became more like sharing arts experiences with each other. One enthusiastic participant Rissanen described her activity at the *Friday Art Talk*:

I'm very often in the *Friday Art Talk* and I find it's very important for me, almost every time. It is from 2 pm to 4 pm. I talk with visitors, serve coffee and guide them, if they like, and I introduce them to the work and the artists. Many people like to talk, discuss their experience of the artwork and artist. It is interesting for me to know how other people think about artwork and an artist.

Many participants recognized that the guiding process was an enjoyable experience because it brought them more than just the external rewards of gratitude as "interactive relations were the best for enriching, as well as broadening, the understanding of myself—I am an artist in my heart!"

One enthusiastic participant who often offered guide services and attended the *Friday Art Talk* explained her feeling of wanting to share:

When the topic or subject of artwork is related to your own experience, it really has meaning for you. You want to share your experiences with other people.

On another occasion, she had a further similar explanation:

When you talk about art, you talk about your life, yourself. When facing one another and talking about artwork, people become much easier to talk to. The artwork is between us, so it helps us to share our problems, our experience. [...] People can talk about difficult and sensitive issues. Without art, they might never talk about those issues. Art makes people share experiences and their ideas more deeply.

The third level was at community level. When volunteers went to different communities, presenting artwork or making art with community members, it further enhanced the community members' involvement in the arts and culture and promoted community cohesion in a broader sense. Hietaharju-Mölsä once said: "this project offered me a new chance that I can't get from other projects. It brought people different enjoyment that they can't obtain from other voluntary help. I don't think I can paint with old people and kids in other voluntary projects." In addition to promoting people's active participation in the arts, many of their activities such as performing dance at retirement homes or

schools, holding exhibitions of their own work at the city library, and performing at local arts and cultural events helped create a vivid arts and cultural atmosphere, promoted the community members' participation in the arts, and enhanced the common sense in the community.

There was reciprocal influence between the volunteers' interest in the arts and voluntary work. Firstly, being surrounded by artwork, discussing art with people, meeting artists and making arts brought them joy, made them feel empowered and inspired, and broadened their knowledge and view about the arts and culture. The enjoyable experiences associated with the arts helped them improve their ability to interpret artwork, made them more likely to share their understanding of artwork and artists with peers and service users, and encouraged them to expand their service into different communities which in turn expanded the scope and influence of museum voluntary work. Secondly, the volunteers' interest in the arts influenced their preference in volunteering; they preferred to undertake guide work at sites that could meet their own interests in the arts. On the other hand, voluntary work had a large impact also on the companions' pursuits in the arts. The requirement of voluntary work motivated the volunteers to engage more actively in the arts, to know more about the arts, culture and museums, and encouraged them to be more creative in the sense of including experiences, skills and knowledge from different disciplines into the arts.



FIGURE 13 Learning how to Describe Contemporary Artwork to Blind People



FIGURE 14 Participants are Preparing their own Exhibition at the Jyväskylä City Library



FIGURE 15 Participants are Preparing their own Exhibition at the Jyväskylä City Library



FIGURE 16 Participants in Art Exhibition and Discussion



FIGURE 17 *Kuplivat* Members in Performance at the Theatre



FIGURE 18 *Leidit* Group's Exhibition at the Jyväskylä Central Hospital



FIGURE 19 Participants Visiting Art Exhibition

Generally speaking, the amateurs/volunteers involved themselves in the arts most likely as a natural consequence of their own personal focus on making art and exhibiting their work. They were the most eager group to learn artistic techniques and skills. The volunteers/hobbyists mainly focused on volunteer service; they involved themselves with the arts more as audience members instead of as art makers, so their involvement was broad but relatively less profound. Their involvement in the arts was most closely linked with appreciating art as audience, sharing art experiences with peer members and service users, and occasionally making artwork. The extensity and profoundness of the balanced participants' involvement in the arts lay between the other two types because they balanced being an art enthusiast and being a volunteer. There was no bias in their involvement with art between making/performing art, appreciating art as audience, and sharing art experiences with others.

All the participants recognized the durable benefits of mixed serious leisure. The volunteers/hobbyists' experiences exposed the durable benefits to both career volunteers and art hobbyists; however the benefits related to volunteering obviously surpassed the benefits related to their own arts hobbies. The balanced participants recognized multiple benefits as well; they equally valued the benefits of volunteering and their own artistic hobby, a point which was consistent with how they identified themselves as being equally art enthusiasts and volunteers. The amateurs/volunteers' participation also generated durable benefits from participating in the arts and volunteering, though they mainly valued the benefits of being amateur artists. All in all, it is fair to say that the volunteers' participation in the arts integrated well with their voluntary work. The integration of the arts and volunteering generated extensive benefits for the participants, service users, host organization and community.

5.7 Conclusion

This case study explored the involvement of a small group of enthusiastic art museum volunteers with the *Art and Culture Companions*. The defined three key types of mixed serious leisure enthusiasts—volunteer/hobbyist, amateur/volunteer, and balanced participant—demonstrated how the participants combined their pursuit of the arts and museum volunteer work in different ways in order to cater for their own needs and optimize their benefits. The participants demonstrated great initiative and enthusiasm through their work as museum volunteers. Rather than only escorting people in museums and interpreting collections with people, as museum guides tend to do, the museum volunteers facilitated discussion and conversation with, and among, guided groups, presented their own artwork or work created by artists to socially marginalized groups, made art with people in the community and even inspired them to host their own exhibitions. Their involvement has not only

reaped multiple benefits for themselves, but also supported museums, promoted community cohesion, and helped more people to access culture and arts activities.

Limited by the small scope of this study, the findings cannot be generalized to apply to studies of volunteering at other museums. It is noteworthy that the profile of the museum volunteers as mixed serious leisure enthusiasts might not represent the whole image of the *Art and Culture Companions* participants, because the study has not taken into account those less active participants. It is possible that in a further study, with more data resources and a larger pool of volunteers, the world of the participants could be found to be more multi-dimensional and complex. Another limitation is the lack of information regarding the service users, as a result of practical difficulties such as that the service users dispersed across different regions, some of them are physically or mentally disabled, and they are, in most cases, one-time visitors. Apart from data from Hartikka and Tuomainen's study regarding the three organizers of visitor groups and Laitaharju's study regarding six senior female service users, not much information is known from the service users' perspective.²³² Therefore it is still difficult to construct a comprehensive understanding of the benefits from this activity. These limitations also tend to suggest the direction in which possible future studies should aim.

To summarize, this project highlights the issue of social exclusion with a special focus on people's exclusion from arts and culture and offers a creative solution through the integration of museum volunteerism and community arts participation as a special social service. Within the mechanism of museum volunteerism, the arts played a significant and irreplaceable role in creating a sense of joy, achievement, empowerment and belonging for the museum volunteers; in promoting service users' well-being; and in improving community inclusion. Volunteering and participating in the arts are highly interdependent and mutually reinforcing. In a sense, this project can be recognized as a community art project that was operated within the framework of museum volunteering. It also can be regarded as a museum volunteering project that has expanded the meaning of museum volunteering in the sense of moving toward the people beyond the walls of the museum and using artistic activities as a way to engage in social service. The integration takes full advantage of human and social resources. It ensures that different mixed serious leisure enthusiasts maximize their interests and benefits; it helps more people access arts and culture; it fosters meaningful interaction amongst different people; it fuels the influence of this project far beyond museums; finally, it promotes community cohesion. This study implies a more holistic perspective on the collaboration between museum, leisure, community art and

²³² See Matti Hartikka, and Pilvi Tuomainen, "Kulttuuriluotsatun kokemus. Selvitys Kulttuuriluotsattujen kokemuksista," Jyväskylän yliopisto, Museologia, 2011; Maija Laitaharju, "Than jäi hyvä mieli pitkäksi aikaa' kulttuurisesta ryhmätoiminnasta hyvinvointia ikääntyville".

social service. It suggests the great potential of and need for developing more inclusive, collaborative and creative working modes, and brings new viewpoints to museum educators, artists and researchers as well as to community policy makers.

6 CRITICAL THINKING OF BENEFIT-ORIENTED SOCIALLY ENGAGED ART

6.1 Aesthetic Tension of Benefit-oriented Socially Engaged Art

The two projects share a set of common features. Both projects were designed to employ the transformative power of art for the benefit of individuals and communities who are disadvantaged, though not only for them. Both projects generated remarkable positive impacts that were widely recognized by participants. The artists undertook laborious work over time as patrons, paid instructors, organizers, supervisors, administrators, and volunteers. Rather than using social action as a way to do art, the artists employ art and aesthetics, even often in conventional forms, to reach social goals. They are engaging in social work experiments and committing themselves to the duties of social workers. Instead of creating a single masterpiece, the participants partake in these projects in order to reap multiple benefits. Therefore, the essence of the relationship between artists and participants in these practices is between service provision and service reception. Meanwhile, though these projects share the common aims of identifying social imperfection and employing art as service provision, nonetheless each project is unique with its own overall operation mechanism of context, logic, and breakthrough point. The service provision is based on a social context in which art is produced and received—it is depended on the artist's identification of specific social problems, his/her expertise, the nature of the participants, and the particular ways in which the artist chooses to intervene.

Such concepts as benefit generation and service provision make these actions so close to social work; they may be understood as social work experiments undertaken by artists/ art educators.

Corbett Barklie, a columnist, already noted that those artists who work in schools, hospitals and prisons are not really doing art, but art service:

In my opinion, those are arts *service* organizations—a rarely made but critical distinction. Arts service organizations exist to create and provide ancillary programs that help fulfil the missions of social service nonprofits such as schools, community centres, hospitals, etc. [...] The point is not art, the point is *service*.²³³

Giving attention to the essential significance of collaboration in many arts organizations' working methods, Barklie connects them with the collaboration between social service organizations. Deliberate and comprehensive collaboration often in the form of partnerships and coalitions is vital for the success of social service organizations. Looking back to the 1960s, when artists working in arts groups were struggling for grants, many of them adopted the organizational structure of social service organizations and included the culture of collaboration into their own tenets and mechanisms.

An artist Markuz Wernli Saitô defines "art that is in service" as pragmatic, task-based work-in-process, which is independent of any specific material production that cannot be transacted as or along with a product."²³⁴ In these practices, the practitioners share a service ethic and provide a practical and useful service to people in need, based on the artist's convictions and interests. These practices can generate multiple functions for people with different concerns and levels of engagement.

Saitô regards service as "one interstice of art and life" and understands it as an idealist human relationship, ideologically rooted in Rachel Naomi Remen, a Clinical Professor of Family and Community Medicine.²³⁵ According to Remen, the essence of service is "in its primary humanistic sense as a relationship between equals" and "service eliminates the distance":

When I help somebody I am aware of my own advantage. But when I serve I am not in a position of strength because we serve with the whole of ourselves. To be in service means that we employ all our experiences and creativity. This wholeness in us serves the wholeness in others. [...] We cannot serve at a distance. We can only serve that to which we are profoundly connected, that which we are willing to touch.²³⁶

These arguments echo Gablik's multidisciplinary working methods. In *Beyond the Disciplines: Art without Borders*, Gablik noted the "idea of art as service" to describe a group of artists who have expanded their activities into social and environmental domains for finding creative resolutions.²³⁷ Art as service refers to the enlarging extension of art concerning its purpose and function. A new

²³³ Corbett Barklie, "Why Are Nonprofit Arts Groups Looking More and More Like Social Service Organizations?" <http://www.kcet.org/arts/artbound/counties/los-angeles/why-are-nonprofit-arts-groups-looking-more-and-more-like-social-service-organizations.html>.

²³⁴ Markuz Wernli Saitô, "Being in Service: Art Practice towards Empathy," <http://www.momentarium.org/research/service.pdf>.

²³⁵ Baurriaud initially articulated the shift from goods to service in the global economy. His service articulation is opposed to goods provision, and connected to interpersonal relationships.

²³⁶ Rachel Naomi Remen, "Helping, Fixing or Serving?" <http://www.lionsroar.com/helping-fixing-or-serving>.

²³⁷ Suzi Gablik, "Beyond the Disciplines: Art without Borders," 2004.

understanding of the ubiquitous relevance and connection of all fields to each other requires erasing the strict demarcations between discrete professional fields, reflecting Griffin's call for an empathetic, healing and holistic view of art in the line of a constructive postmodern spirit.

Identifying these long-term and on-going non-profit actions as benefit-oriented socially engaged art (BOSEA) helps to install these experimental social work practices undertaken by the artists in line with already existing critical discourses concerning the social engagement of art.

Although the integration of art and social work has generated many ideas and practices over recent decades, practices centred on benefit and service are generally overlooked by critics and artists as something other than artwork. Their aesthetic qualities are downplayed.

For example Claire Bishop points out that the critique of socially engaged art is framed by two judgments: social judgment and artistic judgment—which need “different criteria”. According to social judgment, socially engaged art offers an ameliorative solution—“if social agencies have failed, then art is obliged to step in”; while according to artistic judgment, socially engaged art is based on questioning established systems of value—“devising new language with which to represent and question social contradiction”.²³⁸

To interpret the incompatibility of the two judgments and to accommodate both critiques in socially engaged art, Bishop looks to French philosopher Rancière's argument about the politics of aesthetics. According to Rancière, aesthetics means “the infinite openness of the field of art”, which ultimately leads to the elimination of the boundaries “between art and non-art, between artistic creation and anonymous life”.²³⁹ Rancière also pointed out that aesthetics itself has two politics. One is the politics of “art becoming life”, in which the aesthetic experience resembles other forms of experiences and leads to art's self-elimination. The other is the politics of the “resistant form”, in which the aesthetic experience derives from the separation of art from other forms of activity and resists any transformation into a form of life. These two politics of aesthetics, although opposite, exist in tension with one another.²⁴⁰ Rancière's argument is significant for the critique of socially engaged art. In Bishop's words, it defines aesthetics as the capacity to think about the productive contradiction of art's relationship to social change, making aesthetics and social change compatible because aesthetics “always already contains this ameliorative promise”.²⁴¹

Bishop suggested a set of binaries for evaluating socially engaged art's place among a number of polarizations: conviviality versus antagonism,

²³⁸ Bishop, “Participation and Spectacle: Where Are We Now” in *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011*, ed. Nato Thompson, 38.

²³⁹ Jacques Rancière, “Transformations of Critical Art Contemporary Art and the Politics of Aesthetics,” in *Communities of Sense: Rethinking Aesthetics and Politics*, B. Hinderliter and others, eds., (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009), 36-37.

²⁴⁰ Jacques Rancière, “Problems and Transformations of Critical Art,” In *Aesthetics and its Discontents*, S. Corcoran, trans., (London: Polity Press, 2009), 46.

²⁴¹ Claire Bishop, “The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents,” In *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso Books, 2012), 29.

legibility versus illegibility, radical functionality versus radical unfunctionality, and artistic heteronomy versus artistic autonomy. According to her, criticality and resistance to intelligibility are necessarily for the existence of aesthetics. She proposed the concept of antagonism as the core criterion of socially engaged art. She made the critical comment that the comfortable relation set up by relational art work produces only a community with consensus and commonality instead of facilitating a real dialogue: without antagonism there is only the imposed consensus of authoritarian order—a total suppression of debate and discussion, which is inimical to democracy.”²⁴² Socially engaged art practices that are focused on creating a harmonious intersubjective relationship lack the capacity of critical reflection; further, art practices that follow “socially ameliorative tradition” risk becoming overly instrumentalized “in compensation for some perceived social lack”.²⁴³ Socially engaged art unavoidably becomes “a harmless branch of the welfare state”.²⁴⁴

Although I am all for Bishop’s analysis of the two judgements of socially engaged art, I do not approve of her argument that art practices aiming at “feeling good” and “doing good” end up being in the bad category as a result of a lack of antagonism. How can we declare that Tiravanija’s convivial and hospitable party-like relations are lower than Sierra’s antagonist gesture just because it lacks antagonism? Convivial relations can still contain rich and delicate emotions and facilitate new human emotional experiences among participants as well.

The investigation of the two projects in this dissertation suggests that benefit-oriented socially engaged art projects still contain an aesthetic tension between “art as art” and “art opening up onto life”. The Aesthetic tension differentiates them from other social actions and prevents the artists’ practical labour from being totally absorbed in other social disciplines and sectors according to the social division of labor. The rest of this dissertation is dedicated to a discussion of the aesthetic tension in benefit-oriented practices. Drawing on Bishop, the discussion is also framed within a set of binaries; each contains a pair of opposite notions, values or perspectives to articulate the essence of benefit-oriented socially engaged art in the line of previous critiques. There are at least three pairs of competing themes: practical and symbolic social action, the artworld and the non-artworld, and professionalism and amateurism. The use of binaries implies an “in-between” territory of these practices; it helps us to understand the meaning of these practices to our society, their position in the whole of art and culture and their relationship with today’s artworld. The two case reports investigated in the previous chapters, along with some other selected examples as the supportive resources, are employed as a way of facilitating the discussion.

²⁴² Claire Bishop, “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics,” 2004, 66-67.

²⁴³ Shannon Jackson, “What is the “social” in Social Practice: Comparing Experiments in Performance,” in *Cambridge Handbook of Performance Studies*, ed. Tracy Davis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 138-139.

²⁴⁴ Bishop, “Participation and Spectacle,” 38.

6.2 Practical and Symbolic Social Action

The significant distinction between symbolic and actual in socially engaged art practices lies in whether the project “controls a social situation in an instrumental and strategic way in order to achieve a specific end”.²⁴⁵ In practice, the difference between symbolic and actual practice is not so distinct; the two types often overlap with each other. However, the contradiction between symbolic and practical social action situates at the centre of the critique of socially engaged art. Although the ideas of “social action can be art” as well as “art can be social action” are widely recognized by contemporary artists, critics and researchers, if a social action aims to provide a concrete solution for a social problem, most critics are reluctant to call it art. Most critics and artists still incline towards believing that raising questions symbolically or metaphorically instead of providing concrete answers is the most significant discourse in the aesthetics of the arts.

Socially engaged art is often accepted by the art realm based on its being “useless”. Gablik describes the strength of the attitude that resists the idea of “useful” art—real-life actions or situations can sometimes be art, but only as long as they are not useful and serve no purpose. A meaningful action based on the perception of a real need is more likely to be viewed as a “real” work than as art, because in the language of modern aesthetics, art has to maintain being “useless” work.²⁴⁶

The issue of symbolic and functional directly refers to working methods of socially engaged art projects. Abbott states that the working methods of socially engaged art differ from total “transgression” that seeks to alter the social fabric through agitation, resistance and conflict against collaboration with the state or the art field.²⁴⁷ Transgression is understood as aesthetically valuable instead of only as valuable for ethical criteria in socially engaged art projects.

As pointed by Helguera, in socially engaged art, confrontational method implies a critical gesture on a given issue without necessarily proposing an alternative; in addition, confrontation is often associated with the vocabulary of contemporary art such as taking an ironic, humorous, provocative, or openly antagonistic stance. Thus the confrontational project is recognized as carrying significant conceptual meaning and more easily receives legitimacy in contemporary art.²⁴⁸ According to Adorno, the cause, perhaps the sole one, of art’s existence lies in its power to resist society instead of its direct communicability and intelligibility, nor its practical function.

Art will live on only as long as it has the power to resist society. If it refuses to objectify itself, it becomes a commodity. What it contributes to society is not some directly communicable content but something more mediate such as resistance. [...] What is social about art is not its political stance, but its immanent dynamic in

²⁴⁵ Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, 7.

²⁴⁶ Gablik, *the Reenchantment of Art*, 134-135.

²⁴⁷ Abbott, “Transgression, Cooperation and Criticality,” 1.

²⁴⁸ Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, 59.

opposition to society. [...] If any social function can be ascribed to art at all, it is the function to have no function.²⁴⁹

Based on previous studies by Helguera and others, the following graph (FIGURE 20) illustrates the position of socially engaged art. The two pairs of variables (symbolic versus practical, confrontational versus non-confrontational) define four intervals of social actions in accordance with their goals and working methods. Socially engaged art is on the fuzzy territory among the four intervals and easily shifts to any of them.

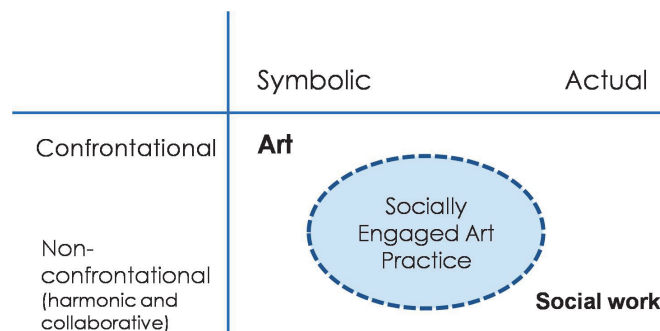


FIGURE 20 The Territory of Socially Engaged Art

The art field currently largely accepts and recognizes the social actions that present symbolic purposes and employ confrontational approaches. If a social action has symbolic purpose and non-confrontational approaches, it is also recognized as art in a broad sense, as is often seen in many arts festivals which are less valued by contemporary art media and institutions. A social action that is practical and confrontational is considered as a non-art protesting action. A social action that is both practical and non-confrontational is typical social work, focusing on helping people in need. In reality, the shifting and blurring boundaries among the four variables make art as social action and other non-art social actions often tangle with each other and create the multi-formality of socially engaged art. Recently, different versions of occupation movements throughout the globe have stimulated wide discussions in art circles.²⁵⁰ In Doug Ashford's words, "civil disobedience is an art history, too."²⁵¹ These

²⁴⁹ Theodor Adorno, "the Autonomy of Art," in Brian O'Connor, ed., *The Adorno Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2000), 242-243.

²⁵⁰ The Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement, see Elyse Mallouk, "Aesthetic Events in Occupation," last modified October 31, 2011, http://www.artpractical.com/feature/aesthetic_events_in_occupation.
The Sunflower Student Movement in Taiwan, see ARTALKS, 陈泰松, "以活动掩护行动, 一种可以是的美学实践," last modified April 2, 2014, <http://talks.taishinart.org.tw/juries/cts/2014040203>; also see ARTALKS, 张小虹, "这不是太阳花, 这是打倒艺术的艺术行动," last modified April 11, 2014, <http://talks.taishinart.org.tw/juries/chh/2014041101>.

²⁵¹ Cited by Brian Holmes in "Eventwork: The Fourfold Matrix of Contemporary Social Movements," *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011*, ed. Nato Thompson (Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 2012), 85.

grassroots movements successfully mingled the realization of concrete political goals and the building of symbolic meaning. Though this dissertation is not focused on the artistic attributes of protest movements, they remind us of the further blending of different social actions. Different from previous activist art, these newly emerged protest movements are not using political action as a medium to make art; instead, they are introducing artistic and aesthetic strategies into political action. According to Brian Holmes, the normative and legal limits fenced by a profession are broken due to people's attempts to seek a broader meaning for their skills and practices.²⁵² These actions step across social disciplines and institutions and always throw socially engaged art critique into question. Similarly, current art analysis pays very little attention to those practices which focus on caring and empowering the disadvantaged social groups through collaborative, concerted approaches and strategies that favour congenial experience, dialogue and collaboration rather than confrontation and transgression, because they are often considered as sliding into the field of social work.

Artists who work with benefit-oriented practices recognize as their initial purpose the improvement in the wellbeing of individuals and communities in need, rather than any symbolic meaning and aesthetic quality. The artists first install themselves in a microscopic social and cultural setting to identify specific problems. These benefit-oriented collaborative projects generally have a very targeted focus, as Lowe pointed out: "As a tactical thing, I found that it was more effective to work with a focus, as opposed to trying to speak for the world".²⁵³ Secondly, instead of merely presenting social issues, they more focus on providing practical solutions to meet the real need of the community. In Lowe's description in *The Project of Row Houses*, the purpose is to find some kind of creative solution to issues instead of just telling people what they already knew.

The artists who work with benefit-oriented projects generally adopt concerted methods, often referring to pedagogical methods such as seminar, group meeting and art making, rather than making strong conceptual gestures. In practice, most benefit-oriented projects bear a pedagogical dimension, mainly as informal or extracurricular art education, which is different from art education projects launched in the school system. In many benefit-oriented projects, pedagogy is not regarded as merely an emancipatory power on a symbolic level; instead, it has more practical significance. Often the participants lack skill and knowledge, so pedagogy can enhance their interest and improve their capacity so that they can enjoy participating and obtain various benefits. Both projects in this study adopted an informal pedagogical dimension to offer the opportunity for participants to take part in the arts and consequently obtain various direct and indirect benefits. These working methods created a convivial

²⁵² Holmes developed a four-dimensional matrix to explore these new tendencies of mingle of socially engaged art with political movements: critical research, participatory art, networked communication and mass-media, and collaborative coordination.

²⁵³ Finkelpearl, *Dialogues in Public Art*, 239.

and agreeable atmosphere among participants, which was well illustrated from the participation process of the limb-disabled students and museum volunteers and was characterized by equality, harmony, friendship, a sense of belonging, collaboration and empowerment.

In addition, benefit-oriented practices always have very targeted participants rather than more loosely aimed at anyone or for everyone. The *Art for the Disabled Scheme* has rather strict membership control: for disabled, school children, teenagers or young adults who have the desire to study art. Targeted participants hinder their legitimacy in the art realm, because again they are easily considered to be lacking in openness and inclusiveness and too close to education (students) and social work practice (clients).

Therefore, the more successes they achieve, the more are they drawn away from the art field, because art is not supposed to accommodate so many “practical” things. Therefore benefit-oriented practices are easily categorized into a general category of community art or art-based community development, which focus merely on their social impacts instead of referring seriously to their significance as art and aesthetics. But even if benefit-oriented practices can be easily excluded from art discourse, does it necessarily mean that it does not have symbolic significance?

Even though the functional purpose of the benefit-oriented socially engaged art evidently overpasses their symbolic purpose, these practices still somehow embody their characteristics as “symbolic”. They expand people’s understanding of specific social issues and expand their understanding of what creative art can bring to them. What distinguishes benefit-oriented practices from other social services is that the service provision is not predetermined or fixed; instead, it is produced by the artists. An artist, coming to a specific social context, through her/his own experience with the individuals, perceives their need and makes the invisible needs apparent. Art creates a new social space that didn’t exist before; in this space people from different backgrounds can meet and have free and equal interactions with each other. The new relationship is the basis for the successful realization of service.

Both cases in this research created deep interpersonal interactions, which surpassed people’s routine life experiences. Without the *Art for the Disabled Scheme*, we could never believe that artist Zhou Chunya’s life trajectory could intersect with a group of poor rural teenagers. The *Art for the Disabled Scheme* not only offered help, but also raised awareness of disability and of disabled people in China. It first dragged the social invisibility of the disabled people into public view, and at the same time, demonstrated their struggle and dreams, exuding positive energy to public. The idea of *The Mobile Art Classroom* expands the conventional understanding of “art class room”. In emphasizing the expansion of art and art education towards the most marginalized social groups and highlights the creativity of these people, it is even a gesture of protest in China, where elitism and market-orientation are still dominant in contemporary art.

The *Art and Culture Companions* attracts rich metaphorical imagery. The volunteers who were initially called pilots bear a conceptual connection to local history and culture; their functions in the community are analogous to seeds that disperse, to catalysts that facilitate change from within the community, and to bridges to connect people and art and cultural institutions. Meanwhile, this action also raised public awareness of social problems in Finnish society, specifically the issue of ageing. But, continuing with the use of metaphor, it does not address ageing simply as an incurable headache; instead, it demonstrates the creativity and vividness of older people. Of course, we cannot count on this project to solve the issue of ageing and people's exclusion from the arts and cultural participation in Finland. This project is nonetheless a creative and empathetic gesture, an encouraging example, to highlight these issues and show the possibility of some solutions.

Benefit-oriented collaborative projects are often neglected or denied legitimacy among art critics and researchers owing to the fact that their overwhelming functionality overshadows the symbolic value. It is fair to say, however, that the tension between symbolic and functional social action draws benefit-oriented practices from other art projects, as well as draws them from other social actions. In Tim Rollins' project *Kids of Survival (K.O.S.)*, he achieved practical results: his project established long-term interaction with the community, and changed the course of local youngsters' lives. His practice was also a strong gesture against the stereotypical impression of a mainstream modern artist as a solitary genius hiding in his studio and creating a masterpiece. I may round out the discussion of practical and symbolic social action with his statement: "We drive people crazy because they can't figure out what it is. Is it social work? Is it a school? Is it an art project? Is it a fraud? Is it socialism? Is it rehabilitation for juvenile delinquents? ...I think many people find the work we do threatening".²⁵⁴

6.3 The Artworld and the Non-artworld

Socially engaged art represents an inextricable connection between art and other social disciplines. Because of its closeness to social work, benefit-oriented socially engaged art sits on the fringe of the art realm and questions the concept of art and the artworld – it questions what art is and what it is not.

According to Dickie, the notion of the artworld is a totality of roles of artist, presenter and public centred on presentation. What brings the artist and the public together is presenter. An artworld system is a framework for the presentation of a work of art by an artist to an artworld public and the artworld is the totality of all artworld systems.²⁵⁵ Martin Irvine further defines the

²⁵⁴ Gablik, *The Reenchantment of Art*, 109.

²⁵⁵ George Dickie, *The Art Circle: A Theory of Art* (New York: Haven Publications, 1984), 80-82.

artworld as “an interdependent network of social-economic actors who cooperate to enact and perpetuate the artworld”.²⁵⁶ The concept artworld is a complex and broad institutional network that carries economic, social and political significance. This network encompasses a broad list of participants (personnel, organizations and institutions) that cover all aspects of the constitution of the artworld and dominate the discourse power in the artworld. Many parts of the artworld network are now highly professionalized. Cooperating in “a mutually understood careerist and competitive context”, this interdependent network decides on the art making, art exhibition, art marketing and consuming, as well as art education. An artist and his work need to be recognized by this institutional network; otherwise his work is not recognized as art.

Based on a sociological perspective, Becker defines “art worlds” (in a plural form) as an established network of cooperative links among participants who collaborate in the production of works which that world defines as art. Firstly, artworks are produced collaboratively by members of an artworld according to an artworld’s typical conventions rather than made merely by artists; artists are just one sub-group of art worlds’ participants.²⁵⁷ In addition, art worlds also treat aesthetic judgments of produced artworks collectively through a shared sense of the value and status of the work.²⁵⁸ Lastly, there is no distinct line between art worlds and other parts of a society; art worlds typically have close relations with other parts of the society in resource sharing, personnel recruitment, idea adoption, and competition for audiences and financial support.

Benefit-oriented projects do not operate merely in the artworld network. In benefit-oriented collaborative projects, as mentioned by Abbott (2007), because of the practical goal setting and working mechanism, the activities and actions of artists are often indistinguishable from professions such as social workers, educators, bureaucrats, politicians, product-designers and marketers. Meanwhile, artists maintain a good relationship with institutions and the state, making acquiescent and cooperative gestures instead of confrontational and protesting ones when interacting with these spheres. Secondly, most benefit-oriented collaborative projects face a funding problem. The outcomes from these practices and the processes involved are often indistinguishable from responsibilities held by other sectors in society; meanwhile, these projects often lack high quality artistic, especially visual, outcome. Therefore, they are often excluded from art institutions’ funding or sometimes they face funding withdrawals. Many art service projects, owing to insufficient financial support from art institutions, often seek funding from other institutions such as governmental departments in education or health, and all kinds of

²⁵⁶ Martin Irvine, “The Institutional Theory of Art and the Artworld,” <http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/irvinem/visualarts/Institutional-theory-art-world.html>.

²⁵⁷ Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), 34-35.

²⁵⁸ Becker, *Art Worlds*, 38.

non-governmental and non-profit organizations and so on. Consequently they acquire a reputation in disciplines other than the art circle.

Furthermore, the paradoxical attitude of the artists or art educators also increases ambiguity about the relationship between benefit-oriented projects and the artworld network. The artists and participants often do not care or are not so conscious of whether they are making art. Artists who work with benefit-oriented projects generally keep a low profile. Although some artists who work with benefit-oriented projects speak of their work as art and struggle for its recognition by the artworld, more often than not the artists deliberately underplay the connection with the art field, sometimes even denying the status of their projects as artwork, in order to avoid a kind of self-expression that is somehow against the altruistic purpose of their involvement. By and large, the artists consider themselves artists working in the context of community development—something related to their career, but not art-making.

The *Art for the Disabled* project was operated by a non-profit organization, through the mechanism of philanthropy and pedagogy. Zhou Chunya did not recognize this project as one piece of his artwork, whilst he reluctantly recognized that this action was somehow relevant to his vocation as an artist. The operation methods of the *Art and Culture Companions* combined museum pedagogy and volunteer social service to community members in need. The initiator Sirpa Turpeinen declared it was primarily museum education, and partly art education. Hanne Laitinen described it as cultural service that contains community and social art aspects. When talking about this project as a whole, neither of them recognized the activity as an art project.²⁵⁹

The nature of going out of the artworld is also seen in *Hua Dan*, a China-based project that uses participatory theatre and other creative arts as tools for empowering female migrant workers in China.²⁶⁰ In the early days, *Hua Dan* workshop was totally dependent on funding and donation; afterwards, social enterprise gradually became a cogent and established work mechanism. A social enterprise is an organization that applies the method of business and the power of the marketplace to advance their social, environmental and human justice agendas. Social enterprises can be structured as either profit-making or non-profit, and may take the form of a co-operative, a mutual organization, a disregarded entity, a social business, or a charity organization. The innovative employment of social enterprise, the mixing with commercial strategies, distinguishes the working method of this project from other socially engaged

²⁵⁹ *The Art for the disabled Scheme* won a Special Contribution Award in the selection of the 8th Award of Art China in 2013, which signals that its value is gradually being recognized in Chinese art circle.

²⁶⁰ *Hua Dan* is a China-based project that uses the unique power of participatory theatre and other creative arts as a tool for empowering disadvantaged social groups. Founded by Hong Kong-born British theatre educator, Caroline Watson in 2004, *Hua Dan* has been focusing on China's internal migrant population, especially female migrant workers and children of migrant workers. This project organized a series of workshops to educate and inspire participants on a range of issues essential to their well-being, and also provided a forum for participants to come together and contribute to solutions for a better future. <http://www.hua-dan.org/>

art projects and expands it into the business world. It is significant for the sustainable development of this project, but it pushes it further from the conventions of the artworld.

From another perspective, socially engaged art is shaped by and always under the influence of the artworld. As pointed by Felshin, activist artists have an ongoing relationship with the artworld, such as museums, art agencies and foundations, art schools and critics. The mobilization of the expertise of professional artists, the collaboration with art institutions and the use made of art venues are well illustrated in both projects.

In the *Art for the Disabled Scheme*, a staff member of the 5Colours Foundation Liu Danfang noted that the success of this project was mainly on account of Zhou's personal influence. She emphasized that the "forum" they offered to students, including high-level exhibitions, the resource of the expertise of artists and art educators working as either professional staff or volunteers, and the cooperation with galleries, collectors and the media. All of these are dependent on being rooted in the artworld network. The *Art and Culture Companions* was initiated by a typical art institution. The initiator Turpeinen had a background in art and art education, and long working experience in an art museum. The current coordinator Laitinen was also educated in the field of community art and worked as an artist. This project mobilized professional artists to pass on artistic skills and techniques to participants and to exchange art experiences with participants. A similar situation is seen in other benefit-oriented collaborative projects. For example, Lowe initially obtained an art grant for starting *The Row House Project*, and his project contained a very artistic part: the houses were refurbished as accommodation for artists-in-residence. *Hua Dan*, though it has gained a wide reputation from other social disciplines than the art field, Watson and other volunteering artists' artistic expertise still played a pivotal role.

It is noteworthy that although socially engaged art projects often take place outside the traditional art venues such as museums and galleries, benefit-oriented practices often cooperate with art venues rather than exclude them. The two projects are also implemented within a museum environment. As art historian Zhu Qingsheng noted, the cooperation between many benefit-oriented practices and conventional art venues underscores the fourth function of museum; besides collecting, research and education, a museum functions as a laboratory for social work experiment. The laboratory already contains an environment that is distinct from the normal social environment. A museum is still a place that defines and sets boundaries for what is and is not art. Thus, as long as a social work is conducted in the context of the white cube of museum, it becomes experimental.²⁶¹

The bond with the artworld makes these practices more visible to the community or public, so the artists can effectively mobilize social and financial resources from different parts of society and generate more influence. Without the resources from the artworld, can these projects achieve what they have

²⁶¹ Zhu Qingsheng, correspondence with the author, October 22, 2014.

accomplished? In practice, the artists who undertake social work experiments do not intentionally blur the boundaries between social work and art work—they may not even be particularly concerned whether their work is art or non-art—their work still shows relationship to art and always leads to discussion within the artworld. Even though socially engaged art projects share many similarities with social work, in the sense of helping individuals and communities solve problems of living, and enhancing their capacities for managing their problems, according to Helguera they differ widely in their goals. Socially engaged art has a double function: besides offering a service to a community, in Helguera’s words, artists who work with socially engaged art projects always “pursue a dialogue with the artworld”, which evaluates the project not just on what it has accomplished, but also as a symbolic action in practice.²⁶²

Becker points out that “art worlds” provoke some of their members to create innovations even though these innovations will not be immediately accepted. In time, these innovations either form their own small worlds, or are finally accepted by “a larger art world years or generations later”.²⁶³ The concept of artworld is thus flexible, open and expandable, instead of being a static system. When these benefit-oriented projects that are conducted as social work experiments introduce different non-art mechanisms into their work, they produce new insights for the members of the artworld. Although not all the working methods they employed, not all the outcomes they generated are immediately recognized and accepted by the artworld, they could continuously stir up debate in and about the artworld, provide potential candidates for the artworld, challenge the understanding of artworks and art, and make artworld an open and fluid concept. In this meaning, according to Helguera, their work is operating to a degree within the realm of art, for it highlights and challenges the dichotomy between the artworld and non-artworld.²⁶⁴

6.4 Professionalism and Amateurism

The art field since the 1950s has witnessed a remarkable change in the profile of art makers from professional artists to amateur participants. Mass participatory projects form the new landscape of contemporary art, echoing Beuys’ statement that “every human being is an artist”. Yet a line between the professional and the amateur still exists and the contemporary art continues to be dominated by a professional institutional network.

The contradiction between professionalism and amateurism is embodied in several measures in socially engaged art. The first dimension exists between the privileged status of professional artists and their initiative to relinquish their

²⁶² Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, 36.

²⁶³ Becker, *Art Worlds*, 36.

²⁶⁴ Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, 37.

control to amateur participants. In socially engaged art projects, rather than solely as maker of artwork, artists expand their work models, shift among different disciplines and conduct multiple duties. Many critics and art historians have pointed out that professional artists are still the soul in socially engaged projects, their professionalism—expertise and status—guarantee the success of socially engaged art projects.

Lacy regards the function of artists as working at different points, shifting between the private and the public.²⁶⁵ Haynes considers the artist's vocation as that of public intellectual, struggling in a specific setting within a specific community and for specific goals and working as activist, persuader and organizer.²⁶⁶ An artist as a public intellectual should practise ethical aesthetics and reconnect the ethical and aesthetic dimensions in his work, which requires conscious self-examination and self-revision, adaptability, the capacity for empathy and compassion, and a mind open to uncertainty.²⁶⁷ Kwon describes the role of the artist as “a cultural artistic service provider rather than a producer of aesthetic objects”.²⁶⁸ She proposes diverse approaches for artists to work with the communities: consultation with representatives from the community, pairing with an existing organization, building a new group or organization through the coordination of the artwork itself, and pursuing the sustainability of the community organization beyond the art project and institutional support. The artists are involved in conversation, listening, teaching, community organizing and work as teacher, team leader, volunteer, co-coordinator, consultant, spokesperson and philanthropist.

Especially In many cases socially engaged artists or art educators collaborate with people and communities that have little previous experience of art, so the dominant and decisive roles of the artist are crucial for the success of the project.²⁶⁹ The artists' expertise and status play central roles in the sense of being free agents conducting multiple tasks.

The participants in benefit-oriented projects generally speaking engage actively and willingly in an activity. The amateur participants in benefit-oriented projects have dual identities: as art insiders who partake in art projects, yet at the same time as the chief beneficiaries, or clients, of art-based services. Most benefit-oriented projects last over years, and can even be never-ending, and they create an intersection where amateurs and professional

²⁶⁵ The function of the artist is first regarded as an “experiencer” who observes and then internalizes the observation of people and places, so that the artist becomes “a conduit for expression of a whole social group” and the work a metaphor of relationship. Secondly, the artist is regarded as “reporter” who gathers information and makes it available to others, not merely informing but also persuading an audience. Thirdly, the artist functions as an “analyst” who associates with and contributes to intellectual constructs, and finally the artist becomes a “citizen-activist” to catalyze change through his collaboration with people, depending on his awareness of social systems and institutions. See Lacy, *Mapping the Terrain*, 174-177.

²⁶⁶ Deborah J. Haynes, *The Vocation of the Artist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 247-249.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 252-253.

²⁶⁸ Kwon, *One Place after Another*, 4.

²⁶⁹ Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, 53.

artists become involved together. To encourage the members' participation, artists often have to sign away personal control to group work and collective creativity. This demonstrates a shift in socially engaged art away from a top-down welfare-giving approach for helping individuals and communities to a more collective way that encourages people's creativity in producing and presenting their own collective culture, which is considered empowering.

Thus, these projects highlight competing values: the artists' decisive and central roles as the predominant controllers and supervisors of the projects and as collaborators who sign off control of the creative process in order to work with other institutions and with the public. For instance in the *Art for the Disabled Scheme* artists worked as educators, organizers, philanthropists and supervisors of the project, certainly demonstrating strong control of project operation. Since the disabled students are at a disadvantage in that they have had less art experience, they are of course more dependent on the artists' expertise. However, during their daily interaction with the students, artists did not consider themselves as charity givers or social workers in a position of superiority. They let the students develop their own personal creativity so that it may be said that in this particular situation the artists' own creativity was being realized through the creativity of the disabled students. In the case of the *Art and Culture Companions*, Laitinen's daily work was characterized by listening, negotiating and compromising with participants and other agencies; yet, in a way, her personal creativity and control still had a decisive impact upon this project.

The artists' privileged status and their collaboration with the amateur participants echo a tension in the critique of socially engaged art projects. Kester views the control over an art project by an artist as egotistical rather than collaborative. According to Bishop, collaboration alone does not necessarily make a more successful piece. The ethic-first view, from her point of view, causes the reductive tendency that critics and artists might incline to evaluate a project simply based on its collaboration with the participants whilst arbitrarily reject a particular artist' authorship.²⁷⁰ Acting as an invisible catalyst of experience or playing central and decisive roles is always debatable in many benefit-oriented projects.

The contradiction between professionalism and amateurism also exists in another aspect. In socially engaged art projects, because the activities often expand to other social fields, artists have to enter these fields and work as amateurs. For instance a constellation of young artists conducted on-site observation, photo and video documentary, questionnaire survey and interview investigation with more than 50 families in Miao ethnic villages in Hunan province. Given the focus on the so-called three rural issues—agriculture, countryside and farmers—which are the key issues of Chinese society—their investigation covered a series of problems relating to local economic and social development. Afterwards, they held a series of exhibitions and seminars and

²⁷⁰ Bishop, "The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents," 19-26.

published their work.²⁷¹ The survey data was exhibited as part of their work. At the same time they held a symposium and invited a group of well-known experts and scholars in sociological, economic and cultural fields to have extensive discussions under the topic of the current problems in the new socialist countryside. In this case, making art became a social study or social research became a way of making art. Although this project cannot be defined as a benefit-oriented practice, it highlights the artists' social engagement as amateurs or quasi-sociologists.

In benefit-oriented practices, artists are involved in social work as amateurs and as volunteers. As defined by *The Encyclopedia of Canadian Social Work*, the social work profession stands as a well-recognized and respected senior profession within human services. The artists who engage in these art-based services are quasi-social workers. They often initiate their work based on an intuitive assumption; they do not follow the strict work procedure of social work, nor do they assess their work according to the criteria of social work. However, instead of being understood as just doing social service as laymen, the artists who undertake social work experiments can always demonstrate that artists can be involved in social action through unconventional ways. In the aforementioned *Social Investigation on Miao Ethnic Villages in Western Hunan*, artists adopted a method called the artistic social survey, which combined sociological research methods with the use of image. Compared to the social surveys undertaken by professional sociologists, the artists took the opportunity presented by art to convert information into images and to present it in the form of images. Although their procedure and validity can be questioned by professional sociological researchers, the power of "image" attracted the audience's attention and stimulated reflection on a serious social problem.

As pointed by Helguera, the expertise of socially engaged artist lies in acting as non-experts, as providers of frameworks on which experiences can form and sometimes be directed and channelled in order to generate new insights around a particular issue.²⁷² Art provides freedom of thinking and expression; it has limitless creative potential to overcome the separated disciplines formed by modern age.²⁷³ When the artists move freely among different disciplines and integrate themselves into different social groups, they reverse the conventional understanding of "what art is", and encompass something that was not previously considered to be art into their work. At the same time, they can bring initiative and new perspective to those conventionally non-art fields as well. Their work questions the conventional notion of professional and amateur, not only in the art field, but also in social

²⁷¹ This Chinese project was entitled *Social Investigation on Miao Ethnic Villages in Western Hunan*. Their first exhibition, under the title of *20,000 Meters Westward from Fenghuang: Art Documenta of Field work in Western Hunan* was held at the Xi Wang Art Museum in Beijing in November, 2011.

²⁷² Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, 54.

²⁷³ William Cleveland, and Patricia Allen Shifferd, *Between Grace and Fear: The Role of the Arts in a Time of Change* (Champaign, IL: Common Ground Publishing, 2010), 4, 9.

fields, and it facilitates new thinking concerning the relation between art and social work and the position and value of artists in society.

7 CONCLUSION

Today, the expansion of art into other disciplines and social spheres has become omnipresent in our society. As part of a broad culture production, many socially engaged art projects are undertaken outside the conventional artworld and they grow within various communities. This fact has been changing our society and redefining the contemporary art.

Socially engaged art is multi-disciplinary and encompasses many forms. The study of the *Art and Culture Companions* and the *Art for the Disabled Scheme* reveals a special type of socially engaged art practice. Defined as benefit-oriented socially engaged art (BOSEA), these non-profit practices aim to propose practical solutions for a specific social problem, by focusing on bringing benefits to the participants through providing them with art-based services. Their mechanisms are epitomized by targeted service users, long-term and sustainable operation, multi-disciplinary cooperation, and concerted and collaborative approaches. Sharing many similarities to social work practice, these practices are seen as social work experiments undertaken by artists or art educators.

Due to the point that the claim of benefit-oriented practices for efficacy is more prominent and convincing than their claim for aesthetic values, these projects are included in art discourses at a very debatable position. They are often regarded as non-profit work, as volunteering activities, as community service, as education, or as anything but art. The research reveals that benefit-oriented practices still embody aesthetic tension rather than simply working together as a way to make repairs to social problems and offering help to people in need. The tension between art and problem solving, between social efficacy and aesthetic significance and between art's autonomy and its heteronomy illuminates the spirit of art to some extent and distinguishes them from other social actions. These practices may not work in typical traditional art institutions, but they keep up with the continuously changing artworld, and enlarge the understanding of art and aesthetics through stirring debates within the artworld.

The definition of art is always under challenge by artists with their ceaseless thinking and practices. From one perspective, benefit-oriented socially engaged art further eliminates the border between art and non-art, and between art and society. When art is expanding into society, everyday life and other disciplines, aesthetic tension is continuously polemical, challenging the understanding of what art is and what good art is, thereby revealing the openness and flexibility of the “artworld” concept. While from another perspective the existing tension has revealed that the full fusion of art and non-art is impossible. Though having an expanding boundary, art still draws itself from the other aspects of life.

The artists undertaking social work experiments trigger new thinking about the artist’s multiple roles and identities. Their endeavours demonstrate how the creative processes could be used to solve the problem confronting human societies. In this changing world, the notion that creativity is just “an exotic by-product of the human condition” is to be discarded; instead, creativity is considered to be far more crucial to our survival and wellbeing. Because of its unbounded imagination and expression, artistic creativity is able to transcend the boundaries between different domains. Artists, as a result of their capability of synthesizing new ideas and communicating between different disciplines, can often provide a holistic approach from which to perceive and solve problems, thereby transcending the boundaries of specializations.²⁷⁴ Their efforts look into such a future in which the most creative people are to play more important roles in our society. The artists, through integrating their skills and knowledge into the leadership over these projects, are actively changing the world at the grassroots level.

²⁷⁴ Cleveland and Shifferd, *Between Grace and Fear*, 2.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix 1: Transcript of Interview with Leena Pukkala

Interviewer: Yang Jing (art researcher)

Interviewee: Leena Pukkala (the *Art and Culture Companions* participant, contact person of the Korpilahti group)

Yang: When did you start to participate in the Art and Culture Companions?

Pukkala: I started to take part in this project in 2010. I was born in Jyväskylä and I knew this city very well; it was natural and easy for me to take part in this activity in Jyväskylä from the beginning. Afterwards, in 2011 we started a small group in Korpilahti. Hanne Laitinen and I planned all these things together and I became the person to contact.

Yang: How did you first get to know about this activity?

Pukkala: From my colleague ... actually we worked for a long time together in this house ... she was working at the further education centre.

Yang: What can you tell me about the Korpilahti group?

Pukkala: I think the Korpilahti group is similar to other groups under the *Art and Culture Companions*, but mainly based in Korpilahti. We have ten members including me. Korpilahti is very rich in cultural and historical heritage. After Hanne's first visit to our cultural and historical sites, she formed the idea and founded this group. So you see, the Korpilahti group is part of the *Art and Culture Companions* and Laitinen has always tried to integrate this group into the operation mechanism of the whole project. The members had their volunteer training mainly in Korpilahti, but the final meeting at the end of their basic training was held in Jyväskylä. We were always invited to participate in different activities held in Jyväskylä. Korpilahti is not so far from Jyväskylä city centre, only 25 minute by driving.

We have also accompanied people from Korpilahti to visit museums in Jyväskylä. Several weeks ago, one member of our group was with a very big group, they visited some museums in Jyväskylä and planned to go to the city theatre there. I'm not so sure if they went there afterwards. All of our group members are women; by far, no man has shown interest to join our group, but maybe we will get some.

Yang: Can you tell me something about your service users?

Pukkala: Actually, we have two main target groups: one is elderly people who need something to refresh them and need others to be with them; the other, children. We want to show them our museums, the old mill, the blacksmith's

workshop and the gallery at our place. Now we are planning new activities for the coming August. For instance the elderly can show children how to find materials and make tools from natural materials as people did in the old days. This plan is just being formulated.

Yang: Why did you decide to participate in the Art and Culture Companions?

Pukkala: I've always loved culture and the arts, in every aspect. I like museums, music and art. I have some interest in theatre and opera too. For years, I've been going to symphony orchestra concerts. I have a yearly ticket. I started to go to piano concerts when I was a little girl. This spring, I was quite sick, so recently I haven't been to any concert. I left my job when I was 63 years old, so I've been retired for ten years. After retiring, when you live in the countryside with your old husband and your dog, you don't meet your friends very often, so you need something that empowers you and gives you wonderful experiences. That's very important for me. All our group members are retired, by the way.

Yang: Can you describe your main participation activity?

Pukkala: My favourite is our museum, the Korpilahti Museum of Local History and Culture (Korpilahden kotiseudumeseo), run by the regional history society. It's very interesting and I love to show it to people. In addition, we're proud of our blacksmith's workshop at the small harbour in Korpilahti, nearby is a sawmill that closed a long time ago, but the building is always there. The blacksmith who is a young man works in the workshop and makes very beautiful items for everyday use, for instance wonderful iron gates. Other interesting sites in Korpilahti include a summer theatre which has a cafeteria and a gallery. What we do is to offer guiding services to these sites. I mainly conduct this work. I also try to assign guiding task to other group members.

Yang: How often do you participate in the activities of this Korpilahti group?

Pukkala: We don't have many clients during wintertime, but in summer there are more visitors. Some of us have guided groups every week. Sometimes I guide people quite often, almost every week, but sometimes less. We can't always expect many people to come. Our group members try to meet together every second week or at least once per month. Tomorrow I'll hold a meeting, the second meeting of this year. Sometimes we meet more often, sometimes less often. It's not very regular. We meet when it's needed, as everyone in our group can ask for a meeting in case of need. Then we have contact with each other via other ways. I don't remember exactly how many groups I've guided because sometimes I forgot to count. In most cases, people who need guiding service will directly contact one member of our group and then that member can conduct the work; we have already some kind of network there. A lot of calls come to me and some come to others of course. Several members in the Korpilahti group are very active, but some not so active. I hope that they might become more active when they receive more information.

Yang: In addition to the activity in this group, do you take part in other activities organized by the Art and Culture Companions? There are several interest groups within this project, are you member of any of them?

Pukkala: No, not really. I like to be free to choose what I think is interesting for people who need volunteer service.

Yang: What else have you done in addition to guiding people?

Pukkala: Well ... I participated in some other activities. For example, last year I participated in the exhibitions at the City Library. I wrote poems. Some of our group members brought their artwork to the exhibition. A local media, *Korpilahti Magazine* which is issued once a week, was interested in our group and interviewed us. That was very nice. It shows that the Korpilahti group is very active. Our information has gone everywhere through the media report; now people want to know what we are and what we do, so they can book guiding services in Jyväskylä and Korpilahti. We have taken calls through Laitinen, but not so often; members often try to find potential service users themselves.

One day, we were asked to make a small show for old people. Three of us made an old portfolio with old tools, traditional men and women's clothes, old schoolbooks, photos from the 1930s, and some old handicrafts items like lace to make this work. We then displayed this at the Older People's Day Centre. It was an art and handicraft show, a small show specifically planned for the elderly. This was an example of how we can tailor this activity to certain aspects of the community.

I'm also interested in painting—acrylic painting for instance. I took part in Jonna's printing workshop course. I hope that she will continue to offer this kind of course this summer or autumn. I can't say that I'm a good painter, but I've been painting and drawing since I was a little girl. I was born in 1939; the war started at the end of that year. During the war time we didn't have many toys, but we always had a pencil and some paper. I often visit museums in Jyväskylä. I was there with my daughter and my grandchild last Friday; we visited the Craft Museum of Finland. I've been several times in the Central Finland Museum and I've always been fond of the Jyväskylä Art Museum as well.

Yang: Many interviewees mentioned that in the Art and Culture Companions, there are many arts activities which make this project different from other voluntary projects, how do you feel about this?

Pukkala: I think art is something very important in this project. It makes everybody feel good. People who have never been to art exhibitions can have much experience with arts; afterwards they are very happy and grateful. Sometimes, we have to push people to participate in the arts. I have some experience of pushing people towards art; they were grateful afterwards and got something that they never had before. From my point of view, art is one of the most important things in my life, something which I can't live without.

As I said, I'm so grateful to my parents for taking me to arts activities. I was not so brave, but when there were concerts or exhibitions, I was always ready to go even without my parents when I was very young. I was enthusiastic about playing the piano for many years. Not so many years ago I was still going to a piano course in Vantaa because my previous teacher moved there. Sometimes, I still play at home but not so often, because I have nowadays problem with my fingers. I play only for myself and I never enjoyed playing for other people.

Yang: Are there any challenges or difficulties which constrain/restrict your participation?

Pukkala: Always. Not with the service users. I'm the kind who wants to do their best, to be very good. Sometimes I'm not very happy afterwards, because I felt that I wasn't as wise and good as I wanted to be. Actually, we just need to be with these people and look through work and chat with them. It's not so difficult, but I make it difficult. Due to my personality, I always want to be prepared as well as possible; it's not always possible because people have different interests. I had the same experience in my previous career: sometimes the less I prepared for the presentation, the better results I obtained. Things emerged spontaneously from my mind were what I exactly wanted to speak about and what I was really interested in. The guiding experience made me to have more self-exploration. It teaches us something all the time. Nowadays, I try to take it easy and not be burnt out.

Yang: In your opinion, what activity is the main activity according to your participation experience?

Pukkala: Well, I think it's the guiding services. In addition, I'm often present in retirement homes to show them artwork, not my work, but artwork made by artists and collected in museums. I like old people and I'm old as well. As an *Art and Culture Companions* member, I undertake mainly volunteer work. I often did this even before joining this activity. Twice per week, we have cafeteria time with the elderly. They often ask me to go there to make a small presentation. I've displayed old pictures and handicraft items. I showed them Alvar Cawen's work over the internet. Alvar is an artist from Korpilahti. Korpilahti has been the favourite place for many famous Finnish artists. Many artists like Gallen Kallela and Pekka Halonen went there and made paintings. I also presented these artists' work to old people. I think one important thing in this project is what you get for yourself; it's a very valuable experience. I offer guide services and show art to old people; they are equally important for me. As an *Art and Culture Companions* member, I primarily undertake volunteer work.

These days, I'm thinking that in the future I should focus on only certain subjects and leave others aside. Like this, I can put more energy into and learn more about these subjects. For instance, I should focus on a couple of sites, such as our museum, the Central Finland Museum and the Craft Museum. I can't handle each and everything here in Jyväskylä; I need to leave other tasks to other members in our group.

Yang: What rewarding things do you think you have obtained from participating in the Art and Culture Companions?

Pukkala: It's simple. Often at the beginning of the tour, you can already see whether or not the visitors are interested. Afterwards, when they come to thank you or give you warm and beautiful comments in the guestbook that they have been so happy, that gives me a very good feeling. This good feedback and grateful feeling makes me happy. I guided a group of German school children. During the tour, all of them were listening politely and quietly, but I could see that there were two boys who were really interested in the collections. They followed me all the time and asked me many questions. When they saw some familiar things, they told me stories about those items. This was a nice experience. It always opens something in front of me and I learn new knowledge. When you get old, you know more about yourself. It's nice and it's important to learn something new every day.

Appendix 2: Transcript of Interview with Liisa Kirveskangas

Interviewer: Yang Jing (art researcher)

Interviewee: Liisa Kirveskangas (the *Art and Culture Companions* participant, member of *Leidit* painting group)

Yang: Why did you choose to participate in this project?

Kirveskangas: At first, *Leidit* group members had no idea of whether or not to take part in the *Art and Culture Companions*. Our group had worked together for a long time even before the initiation of the *Art and Culture Companions*. We know quite a lot about art and arts and cultural sites in Jyväskylä, so Hanne asked us if we would like to join this project. Some members said that they were not so interested, but I thought that it could be a good opportunity to get a broader view about the museums and also help people to develop an interest which could benefit their daily lives. So far, I've only guided a couple of groups, no more than that.

Yang: So, does it mean that you participate in this project mainly for your own interest, is that more important than your interest in helping others?

Kirveskangas: The deep interest in art, of course. This is the primary reason.

Yang: How do you and your group get involved with this project?

Kirveskangas: We participated in basic training and attended meetings. We didn't have the same volunteer training as other volunteer participants had. We only took excursions to three museums in Jyväskylä and visited some sites outside Jyväskylä, we didn't get through all the courses. As Hanne said, *Leidit* group is kind of attached group.

Yang: Yes, attached group. Does it mean that your group is in this project whilst maintaining some kind of independence?

Kirveskangas: Yes, independence ... it's a good word. We have such a close team and we've been working together for many years. At times, some other people asked if they could come and work with us for a short time. We had a discussion with Hanne. We thought that in our group the relationship among members was very close, so it wouldn't be easy for somebody coming from outside to work with us shortly.

Yang: Then, how many members are there in this group?

Kirveskangas: There are currently six members. One member just moved to Tampere one year ago.

Yang: Did you and your group members start this painting group before the formulation of the Art and Culture Companions?

Kirveskangas: Yes, in fact, we started this painting group a long time ago. It started five or six years ago. I don't remember the exact date, but it was about 2006. Our group was already working before this project started.

Yang: How often do you meet?

Kirveskangas: Once a week these days. Sometimes twice a month, but nowadays we meet normally once a week and each time for three to four hours. Our place is here, the art studio on the second floor. You saw last week when we were using scratchers for making paintings.

Yang: There are 6 members in your group. Do you think that the motivation for other members to join this project is similar to yours – mainly for practising art and knowing more about museums and galleries rather than being a guide?

Kirveskangas: Yes, I think so. Two of our group members said that they are not so eager to participate in guiding; however sometimes they do. I think that since we are so-called "liitteenäinen", we are not in the first list when Hanne needs guiders. If she has some special group, for instance people who are blind or mentally ill, she asks if we can guide them. But we are not the first group ready to act as guides. Normally, we don't guide people so often; instead, we participate a lot in painting activities.

Yang: So, being a guide is not the first thought of your group...

Kirveskangas: Exactly, being a volunteer guide was not our first thought. Our first interest is our painting group and the second interest is 'guiding'.

Yang: Just now, you said you have guided two groups...

Kirveskangas: Yes. For example last time, another member and I guided a group at the Natural History Museum of Central Finland. The group had six mental patients. Hanne asked us if we would like to guide them. I thought that it would be easier for us because as nurses, we had worked with patients and we had expertise in guiding these people. It was an interesting tour. There was a video section which was rarely visited by visitors. This group visited that section and they were very happy, as they said afterwards. There were video clips about Finnish nature and they sat there and watched the video after visiting the museum. When people are mentally ill, some of them get easily tired due to the effects of medication. So watching video was nice for them. One man in this group was so interested in all the things and he had many questions to ask. I thought he might like to come again afterwards. Unfortunately, we had only one and a half hours and that was not enough to visit the Natural History Museum in a thorough way, but it was really a good experience for them, I felt.

Yang: Do you think that other group members have the same background as you have? For instance, were they all nurses?

Kirveskangas: No. Three of us were nurses, but the other members ... one was teaching at university, another one was doing office work. Hanne was also in our group. She's the coordinator, of course, but she's also one member of our group. All the members are retired, except Hanne. This is why we can easily have free time and work together in the daytime. In summer, we don't have any meetings. We could have a summer excursion to an art exhibition in Mänttä for example. We go on a trip to Mänttä or Helsinki every summer, as well to some other places.

Yang: You mentioned that Leidit group started in 2006. At that time, did you have already six members?

Kirveskangas: Well, no. At the beginning we had a different group and our leader was a different person. We initially focused on the so-called therapeutic art and the name of our former group was K65. I joined K65 because the leader then was my friend and she asked me to join them, though I even had no idea what kind of group it was at the beginning. We worked together for two or three years. It was quite a different group. When we painted together, we first had a meeting and set a theme. For example, it could be the memory from our childhood. We painted and after that we sat around and talked about our work.

Yang: What kind of work did you make then, can you give some examples?

Kirveskangas: For example, once we made a book by using photos from our childhood and our present life, some kind of important events in our personal life. Everybody made a book and then our leader took photos of our hands and feet and we made a so-called sun photograph. We had a curtain and she put a kind of light-sensitive liquid on the curtain. In a sunny day, we put the curtain in the sunshine, laid down on it and let the sunshine photographed our body image. Like this, you lay down and the part under your body doesn't get light while the other part does, like in the exposure process.

Yang: Ah, interesting, it's like conventional photography.

Kirveskangas: Yes, we then had an exhibition in the theatre and that was what we did in the first year under our former leader. That was before 2006, before the beginning of *Leidit* group. Then, our leader died in 2008. After she died, we had no other leader. Then Hanne came and told us that she could have time to work with our group and we could make a new group. Afterwards, we formed *Leidit* group. The content of our art gradually changed, still self-expression but not so much therapeutic art as it was before.

Yang: So, Hanne made contact with you even before you started Leidit group?

Kirveskangas: Yes, our activities started even before *Leidit* group, we had something earlier. It was a long time before, when we were in the former group of eight persons. Then we had only some persons from that group ... three persons from that group are now still here.

Yang: How many exhibitions have you had since Leidit group started?

Kirveskangas: We first had one exhibition here in this museum; it was a long time ago, in 2007 or 2008. Then it was around 2010 when we went to the nursing home in Keljo for the first time. We presented our work, and then the old people were so interested that we started to make work together with them. We went there many times ... between six and ten times. Afterwards, those older people had their own exhibition; we put their work in their dining room and we had a celebration there. We also had two exhibitions at the Jyväskylä Central Hospital. One was two years ago, in 2010; the other was one year ago, in 2011. Last spring, we also participated in the exhibition at the Jyväskylä City Library.

Yang: Could you tell me something about the subjects and the content of the exhibitions? For example you had two exhibitions at the Jyväskylä Central Hospital, how about their subject and content?

Kirveskangas: The theme of our exhibition at the Jyväskylä Central Hospital was *Ilo*. Every autumn, there is so-called *Elämän Ilon Viikot (the Joyful Weeks of Life)* at the Jyväskylä Central Hospital and there are different programs there. The hospital planned and organized the art exhibition in the lobby near the main entrance. We made very colourful work for the exhibition. Some pieces were quite large. We thought that when patients are lying on their back, being transported on beds to labs and examination rooms, they can see the colourful work on the walls and ceilings. But it was not easy to put work on the ceiling because there were lights, lamps and we couldn't put all the pieces there. But we put some work on the wall. Afterwards, at least one painting was sold.

One patient wanted to buy one piece of work made by our group member Ilse. Last spring, the *Art and Culture Companions* participants had an exhibition of their own work at the city library. There were different kinds of work: painting, woodwork, textile work, printing, and book design ... different pieces. There was one big piece titled *Dragon* in the children's section, it was our work.

Yang: Yes, I visited that exhibition and took some photos. The exhibition at the city library was amazing. I remember that work. It was hanging down from the ceiling, in the children's section and it was long and huge. How about your exhibition in the retirement home? How about the subject and content?

Kirveskangas: We didn't have a special theme for that, we just exhibited work that we had made earlier. Our pieces are quite different. Some had tree figures, but most of them were quite abstract, not recognizable.

Yang: You had an exhibition in the Jyväskylä Art Museum, how about that?

Kirveskangas: Not really an exhibition. We just selected our previously made works and then we showed the work.

Yang: Now, let's go back the Joyful Weeks of Life exhibitions ... about those colourful pieces, were they figurative or abstract works?

Kirveskangas: Generally, not so figurative ... they are more abstract. Some figures were a little concrete, but most of the work was abstract.

Yang: I heard that there will be an exhibition in Vantaa, in one church. The theme sounds like Colour and Poem.

Kirveskangas: Yes, we are planning a new exhibition at Korso church (Korson kirkko) in Vantaa this summer. I haven't discussed with our members if they have any new ideas. Before, Ilse had nice poems and she combined painting and poem. Last year, she made a beautiful book, every page is a small watercolour painting piece and she wrote short poems for each painting; it was such a nice book. She also showed us a book she made before for her sister as a Christmas gift. She had small figures, paintings and poems in a very nice small book. Her son is working in that church as priest—that's why we're planning on having that exhibition in that church. She's a talent, she has a good viewpoint. We thought that she could write some poems or add some poems to our paintings—our paintings are supposed to be very colourful. Each of us can paint and then we can combine our work together as a team work.

Yang: Then you plan to present this kind of work for the coming exhibition in the church?

Kirveskangas: Yes, if they haven't moved on to a new idea. We haven't decided. I was away two times and our ideas are always changing.

Yang: Here I have another question: what have you gained from participating in this activity, what kind of positive impact has it had on you and your group?

Kirveskangas: We obtained two kinds of benefits. The first one is friendship. Our group is so close. It is important for us that we work together. We always expected the next meeting time. It's very nice. It's very important to be together to form and exchange ideas with each other. The circle is important. The other kind of benefit is that we can practise different art, different techniques, using different materials and colours. We don't have another place where we can practise art ... here we have a big place and different materials we can try. Hanne always tells us information about art. We learned a lot about artists, exhibitions and artistic techniques; for example, two weeks ago she went to a seminar in Sweden and then she told us about the seminar.

Yang: This project contains a lot of art and you participate in this project mainly for your own interest in art, so can you say something more about art in relation to this project?

Kirveskangas: I think that we can practise painting together, learn more about it and have a lot of fun. It is quite important. In other voluntary projects, we can't do this. That makes a big difference. Since becoming part of this group, I look at artwork through different eyes. Art is important. I feel a sense of power; I mean when I make artwork myself, I feel empowered.

Yang: How important is art to you as well as to other team members?

Kirveskangas: Practising art is not my job, but it's an important hobby in my life. And I think it's also very important for our team members. And I think all

members are like this, having the same idea. We often discuss why we are in this group. Art is very important for us; that is why we chose to participate in the *Art and Culture Companions* and establish this group. Everybody is happy when we can be together and paint together.

Yang: There are different ways of participating in art. In your opinion, appreciating artwork or practising art by yourself, which is more important to you?

Kirveskangas: I think practising ... making art is definitely more important.

Appendix 3: Transcript of Interview with Hanne Laitinen

Interviewer: Yang Jing (art researcher)

Interviewee: Hanne Laitinen (artist, the *Art and Culture Companions* coordinator)

Yang: Under what kind of situation did you start the work as project coordinator of the Art and Culture Companions?

Laitinen: I moved to Jyväskylä in November, 2006. Before I started this work, I was working in the Crafts Centre in Jyväskylä. In fact, before I came to Jyväskylä, I had gone through further education in social art in Joensuu in 2005. Then after I moved here, I just met Sirpa when she was presenting the project at the Senior's Fair (Vanhustyö messut) at the Jyväskylä City Library. She initially came up with the idea of the *Art and Culture Companions* and she was the initial coordinator. I realized that this could be quite a nice way to get to know this city. This city is full of culture and the Jyväskylä Art Museum is quite good; I knew that even before I moved here. The Jyväskylä Art Museum looked very open, and according to my view, this museum had already done many socially connected projects that I was very interested in.

Of course at that time, I didn't know many people, my social circle was the Crafts Centre and Sirpa. It took me about a year to get to know people after I moved to this city. I moved here just when the first course of the *Art and Culture Companions* started and by chance I met Sirpa at the library. I started working in the Crafts Centre from 2007. Later, I started working as the coordinator from January 2008.

Yang: Can you say something about the early stage work situation since you became the coordinator?

Laitinen: I met the *Art and Culture Companions* members when I was working in the Crafts Centre. I first had contact with them in a workshop in 2007. Sirpa was then training the volunteers there. When the first course finished, we had the final meeting and a small seminar, I made the card and we gave her a bunch of flowers. Nowadays, about five to ten participants who were in the first course are still with us and are quite active. I think that when people are really so much into it, they can see the importance of this work and they will be participating in this work in the future, even though they might not always be so visible. I asked some people what was going on with them, they told me that they didn't do anything, but then I got to know that they had expressed their idea through the internet and they had guided private visitors. They did a lot but they were so modest.

Initially, I thought that this was a very good chance to engage with people in a nice and easy way. I'm an art lover and I like to go to art and cultural places ... anyway, it's very natural for me to take somebody there with me. The

difficulty in the early stage was that in the first year, it took me time to get to know people and all these networks. Besides, I had never worked for the city before, so, to understand the construction of this community was somehow difficult for me. However, because I had gone through the social art education in Joensuu, it changed my thinking from an ordinary art educator to being more process-focused. I conducted my final social art project in the retirement home there, so I had already experience in relation to this work.

When I started in 2008, I was dealing with the head of one the Long-term Care Centre (*pitkääikaishoito*). The nurses working there were required to attend one volunteer training course organized by this project. We made training courses to fit them and organized four workshops for them. I started my work in January and the course started in March and ended in April. It took a long time for the nurses to understand more about the use of art. I also realized that many participants in the course disappeared afterwards, because they were somehow ordered, or you might say forced to join, by their boss.

Yang: Can you describe your work as a coordinator, and in addition to being the project coordinator, do you have some other duties or other work in this project?

Laitinen: Many. First, I deal with the volunteer network in *Vapari* (Jyväskylä City Voluntary Services) and the volunteer coordinators' network *Valikkoverkosto* for example. I started dealing with *Valikkoverkosto* in 2008 and it has been very important for me.

Part of my work is related to one volunteer group. This group is called *Vanhusvapaaehtois yhteistyöryhmä* in Finnish. It offers voluntary help to senior people; old people might need volunteers to accompany them when they go somewhere. Nowadays, many organizations organize volunteer work for helping old people and we try to make the collaboration better.

I've been improving the co-operation between museums, which is part of my work. This week, I also arranged an agreement with one museum that they will start a small open craft club on Wednesdays next autumn, so some *Art and Culture Companions* members can do handicraft together in this open workshop, in a more serious way.

In addition, I've worked with *Leidit* painting group here in the Jyväskylä Art Museum. If I could have more time, I would have painted more with them. They are making an exhibition this summer and they are busy these days.

What else? I'm planning some events here ... like this ... on the last pages, you see we have the content about the *Art and Culture Companions*. For instance, the Senior's Week is at the beginning of October. It's a big fair every year at the theatre so that people can present all the services offered to the seniors. They also invite the most famous Finnish speakers to make a speech. I try to arrange some events for the Seniors Week and going through the presentation fair in many places for instance the volunteer presentations (*vapaaehtoismissut*).

Recently, a big project was *Cultural Orienteering Day* (*Kulttuurisuunnistus*). It was an event representing the combination of the arts and sport. People could walk, run or roller-skate through cultural sites and the entry to every site was free. It was my idea in the beginning to combine this with our project, so people

could go on a Sunday afternoon around the city to pop in to cultural and art events. Last year, when I had no work, I had time go through this. This is one big part, of the so-called one day happening, only four hours. But it's still a big network and we have to find the resources and organizations behind them. I've been working on this over summer. This logo is quite similar to ours, but with a compass.

This spring, we had another event called *Loaning Day* in Finland (*Lainan päivä*). It was the 8th of February. Then we had the *Art and Culture Companions* participants' exhibition of their own works at the city library. This was a really big process, after that, we made a publication. I was so happy with it even though we were overloaded. It is a good example of further activities. The participants are almost like professionals when they create, exhibit, plan and organize these events and talk about some issues such as if volunteers are extra or a threat for museum working staff. This is the best achievement.

Recently, we have started the *Friday Art Talk* (*Perjantaiaporinat*) at the Jyväskylä Art Museum. We welcome people to come to talk about art and we serve them coffee. It was Sirpa who got this idea and applied to the *Art and Culture Companions*. At the beginning, we didn't know what it could contain. This Monday, we had a meeting and talked about the focus of the *Friday Art Talk*. This activity is developing.

This is the brochure of the *Upper City Night Festival* (*Yläkaupungin yö*), it's an old town cultural event and it will be held in May this year. The *Art and Culture Companions* volunteers participate in this big event. As you see, we cooperate with many events here.

Another is matching a volunteer with people who need service. Generally, when I receive calls from the nurses or some people who work with people with special needs in the social and health field, I ask about their needs and then try to find someone who wants to go with them. I contact volunteers to see if they're available to go. Sometimes I had to make tens of calls; it's not easy work. So many people have never visited the local museums here in Jyväskylä. Visitors have their own requirements about what they want and I check who wants to take them. Sometimes it's difficult to find a suitable guide due to the time table conflict. I'm like a mediator between visitors and these companions.

Yang: Your work is heavy and multi-faceted. Do you try to put different things and resources together...

Laitinen: Yes, I have many tasks. Volunteer training is also one important part. For instance, further education for volunteers ... We are planning a course for the volunteers to help blind people. We teach them how to use facilities in museums for blind people, escort blind people and describe artwork to blind people when guiding them in museums. We also have further education for the volunteers who help Alzheimer patients. We had 15 interested members. This is cooperative work and it's free for us. Besides, I routinely arrange the *Art and Culture Companions* members' meetings and seminars. Additionally, talking with museum visitors is also a kind of an art education. I try to do everything they ask, but it's hard to fulfil all their needs.

We have recently started an education program to environmental companions (*ympäristöluotsi*). We're still doing preparation work. This is for environment and nature lovers who have an interest in camping, recycling, renewable energy, environmental issue and policy, and knowledge of environmental art. We try to combine this with the *Art and Culture Companions*.

Yang: How do you try to deal with all these at the same time?

Laitinen: I often need to work with several projects at the same time. Basically, it's OK for me. As a coordinator, I also try to find ways to make this activity coordinate with different organizations in addition to museums and voluntary networks. The co-operators of different organizations might have different demands, so I try to fit the activity in with different demands. For example, last Monday morning, I went to negotiate with the head of one foundation that had one spot on our project. It is a big foundation that owns many galleries and cultural spaces in different places. It took me two hours to negotiate. It's good for us, for the city to cooperate with these third sections, but it's not possible to be active in everything.

I try to be aware of all the events in the cultural field all over Finland. Even though some of our members are old, they are still ready to learn. I'm always learning and they learn with and from me. When I'm active, it can have a positive effect on them. This is one way I can help them. The older people also have right to find new things. At that time I got the idea of going to retirement homes to getting to know people and telling the service staff about the *Art and Culture Companions* service and *Vapari*. I also thought that I could go to visit the old people with my laptop so I could show media art (e.g. short films and animations) to the elderly. I've collected media artwork from one artist and from my daughter as well. I could have a small chat with old people and show them artwork, even if they are lying in bed. I believe that it's a very good idea and let's see whether it will come about.

Yang: So, are you also doing volunteer work?

Laitinen: Yes, I also feel that volunteering is a part of my identity. I started from volunteering, so it's very natural for me to do this. Nowadays, I don't do as much volunteer work as before. However, I still guide people, especially when I receive a call and I can't find a suitable volunteer, I may do it myself.

A couple of months ago, two other volunteers and I had such a great experience describing Jude Griebel's artwork to five blind people. Jude Griebel just had an exhibition called *Life after Death* in this museum. The tour lasted for more than two hours. It was challenging to describe contemporary art to people who can't see. At that moment in fact the exhibition had already ended but the artists left certain parts in the museum. We had a minimal house made by the artist based on one piece of his work, so the blind visitors could touch that piece, feel the artwork and listen to our description.

Some coordinators don't do this, so they miss the experience of how it feels to be a volunteer: if there is problem with staff, or if there is problem with volunteers ... I have a lot of experiences. Undertaking volunteer work is a good

self-reflection. There are so many small things that can make volunteers feel that they are not wanted. You work four hours with them for an exhibition and no one asks you if you need something to drink. I'm used to that. I know the difficulties of being a volunteer, to work in institutions, at retirement homes as well as in many societies. There are always nice people as well as difficult ones. Many people need the encouragement; when you are working together, it's precious to have meetings, to talk and to process what we want to do to help and encourage the volunteers.

Yang: Can you tell me about some recent impressive experiences in your work?

Laitinen: We have had many successful meetings. Among our guided people, there are people who are in mental illness rehabilitation. One service user called me and told me that "this meeting you arranged in the natural museum is so significant, now my life is going on like spring time". I don't know from where he got the information, maybe from his nurse. Yesterday, he called me again; I told him maybe he could bring somebody with him next time. This is nice and this gives me strength. I think in a way, I helped a person to come back to normal life. It seems that art worked as medicine, I always use this word.

Additionally, I've taught elderly volunteers to use e-mail and computer; now you see they are surfing on the internet without any problem. These types of things give me strength, if we can make people and institutions work together widely.

I get positive feedback from people, I educate people and then I can see the change. They can go on, especially those older members. I got quite positive feedback from the service users last week. It is also about bringing out the best in people. You can see that some people have skills and techniques; it's good for them to be able to use their skills.

We have also been asked to present this project at the city anniversary in March and we made our own fliers there. We made a summary of last year's work. Sirkku helped me a lot. She's very talented and keen on the arts and culture. As a coordinator, I work with members, we do this together. There are many interesting and impressive experiences.

Yang: What's the most meaningful or significant thing do you think in your work?

Laitinen: The most meaningful thing is perhaps getting the new things, both for the service users and for our volunteers. There are new events, new chances, new ideas, new possibilities, and new perspectives to develop themselves for finding new ways of "who I am." This is mutual help, not only the service users get help from the volunteers, the service users also have a lot to give, to share with the volunteer members, it's beneficial for both sides. It's also beneficial for this place. One great advantage is that they can choose what they want; they can choose what they are interested in themselves. They get so much for themselves from this project. Besides, from my point of view, it's important to respect the ideas of guided people, their needs and their wills to talk about their experiences and to honour their points of view. We need to encourage them to

speaking, because they're often shy. There are several ways to point out something about art exhibitions and get it into conversation.

Yang: Do you think that your work is challenging? What challenges have you faced since you started working as project coordinator?

Laitinen: Yes. This activity requires eagerness and the ability to work hard. As a coordinator, I have to be highly motivated because it's challenging work.

As a coordinator, I have to find the network of volunteer training and network of the places people would like to visit. It is a challenge to negotiate with the people who are in charge of these things. Another challenge is in regard to the volunteers' time schedule; they are quite active but we need to fit the visitors' requests into their time table. The feedback issue is also challenging. Additionally, another challenge is funding. We don't have enough funding. You know, last year, I was once unemployed because of the limited funding. We have always been struggling to find more funding.

At the beginning, I had more doubt: what I should do, and where I should advertise the information etc. Sometimes there was nobody to help me. Cooperation with the library helped me a lot. The national network, I'm also doing that. Now, there are similar activities in different cities in Finland. Each city has its own strategy, but nobody works as a national coordinator. I try to work for this national network.

The main challenge is maybe the combination of leading an activity that has its basic idea and accommodating the ideas of the members. To integrate the project's request and the needs and initiatives of the members is not easy. There is a main direction, like a tree, the main body and many branches, you have to keep the main one and take care of people's different needs and respond to them and motivate them.

Professionals working at some sites are not so aware of the importance of voluntary work; they think it's not necessary to provide volunteers with the most up-to-date information. Some of them are not so cooperative. Some places don't have enough staff in charge of volunteer training. It's challenging to deal with them.

And also you have to see what the volunteers expect from this project, you need to listen to them. Maybe you have interviewed some volunteers, they have different backgrounds. Anyway the volunteer training is a big challenge. There is always uncertainty in volunteer work. One day someone asked me how I could be sure that volunteers behave properly, for example if they are friendly or if they fit for the task. I said that I could never be sure because there is always an element of uncertainty. But I trust that they are doing OK. Nowadays, I know the volunteers better, I know more about their specialties. When I get a call, I know who can, and who wants to, take this group.

As volunteers face these difficulties in their work, so, how to promote them is a big issue for me. I found that they don't want to go on if they can't improve themselves. If you want follow this project, if you want to be a good volunteer, you have to always follow the information. If you don't often come to the meetings, don't read the e-mails, you get lost quite easily. Because this

project is so information-rich, even I can't follow all, I just pick some interesting activities.

One practical difficulty with the volunteer training is the informing system when you have old volunteers. As I told you, Sanni and some other old volunteers don't have the internet, it was difficult. I don't have so much time to call them or write mobile phone messages.

Yang: How do you feel about getting new volunteers and promoting volunteering?

Laitinen: Most of our companions are retired. Their social groups disappeared after retirement and they thought that they could do something – learning more and doing something interesting. As you have seen, they are so active. We also have some young people, students, for instance, some art education students and students studying social sciences and also cultural producers. But it happens, that when they graduate, they find a job somewhere and then they leave. This year, just recently, 14 new volunteers completed their training and got the certification, among them, at least three young people. We try to get some young volunteers and it's nice to have volunteers of different ages.

To promote volunteer work, many things can be done. One nice thing we did last time was the *Art and Culture Companions* members' exhibition in library, called in English the *Art and Culture Companions Do Art Themselves*. It made all things visible, it was encouraging and I received lots of positive feedback from the exhibition. It was done easily; it was not a big effort. It worked perfectly. This is also good for the cooperation with the library.

Another thing is getting the project to develop, to get new activities. In 2010, we started the activity of dance companions; it's the result of co-operation with the Central Finland Dance Centre. They wanted to broaden their audience and they organized a dance course for the companions, then they took people to dance performances. Dance companions have many roles, and they have organized dance performances in retirement homes. But nowadays, the initiator of the dance companions' group has left; she's in another position, so these days there are not anymore activities. I think there needs to be more activity, as I reminded them.

We plan to have library companions; they can take people from their homes to the library and help to find out what they can borrow. We don't know yet. The library bus goes around the city; the volunteers take people to the bus and people can borrow books from the library bus, like a mobile library. It is all over the Finland. We have three buses like this in Jyväskylä. We plan to adopt this service in our project. All these things, to adopt new things for this project and to make this project ever growing, are challenging.

Yang: And do you think the volunteers also participate in decision making in museum and other cultural sites, for instance in regard to museum collections and events, exhibition planning and organization?

Laitinen: Yes, generally, we say that there is not only one way to be an *Art and Culture Companions* volunteer. Some of them are participating in decision making, but not so many. They have their voice somehow. Especially last year,

they participated in the exhibition planning of the artwork from the Jyväskylä City Art collection 2000–2010. The Jyväskylä Art Museum asked the volunteers to choose artwork for the city collection. They participated in the decision making; this is good, but not so often, I should say. I remember before, in 2009, the exhibition host asked for suggestions from the volunteers about the exhibition space decoration. When there are events, the volunteers also serve coffee, for instance, they help staff to host and protect the artwork in the exhibitions. Sometimes they perform and sing during the events. They also expressed their idea about where the work should be put. Last time they suggested that one art piece should be put in the Palokka Library. Not so long ago, some environmental companions also gave suggestion for the *Golden Forest (Kultainen metsä)* exhibition.

Yang: I know that you are an artist; you had your education in community art and art education in Lapland. Can you tell me something about your education experience in art and your working experience as an artist?

Laitinen: from 1994 to 2000, I was studying art education and community art in Rovaniemi. I've had work experience in environmental art to which I have a deep affiliation in my heart. Now, the experience with environmental art has something to do with the environmental companions' activity. I also like to paint in nature and with natural materials.

Yang: Are you a landscape painter?

Laitinen: No, I'm not landscape painter, but I paint something emerged from my heart about my experience with the nature. I also like to teach and to work with other people. I'm often inspired by the atmosphere of the place; I paint my feelings about nature. In addition, for my working method, I like to paint in nature and paint with natural material.

I go to nature and paint there with materials I found just in that place, such as leaves, branches, twigs, stumps and sometimes food such as blueberries. I use natural elements such as sunshine and wind in my painting. I really like to use natural elements such as the sunshine, wind and raindrops. For example I used the rain in my painting; pouring rain and small drops made the surface different. I also worked with fire. Sometimes, I try to use different materials such as food. For example, I used to make my artwork with rye bread and took it into nature and gave it to the mice. In this way the animals might eat my work. It was interesting to see that after some days my edible work was gone. My artwork includes installation, painting and performance.

Yang: Since you started working as the coordinator of this project, how did you try to combine your work as an artist with this work? Or shall we say, how did you combine being an artist with being a coordinator?

Laitinen: I haven't tried much. In 2008, there was a big environmental art exhibition in Harjo. We participated in the production of one piece of work, we were invited to go there and work in a group of five. It was one artist's idea and we helped her to complete the work. It was some kind of social happening.

After that, I did my own piece there. I put some bread, made like this. The next day when I went there, it faded away. It was interesting.

Yang: When you think about this project, not as coordinator but as an artist, what is your view about this project?

Laitinen: The point of view as an artist? I talked to some artists and they were thankful to be invited to talk about art at exhibitions. They thought we are doing a great job. But this project might be confusing for many artists who concentrate on their work. They don't know what the meaning of this activity is. We're doing many different activities to promote art experiences, but no matter how many different things we do, the main thing for us is that we help people to experience the arts. Not all understand the meaning of this activity. Not only artists, in fact, in the field of art, as well as the field of museum, there is some doubt about art education and an art educator's role. There is deep desire to spread art education to all museum staff members.

OK, we come back to artists, generally, some artists really understand this project, others say that this is not for me ... it varies. Some think that this project is just a form of social service. This is not only a social service; this is more than a social service. My perspective is that this project is a social service combined with art and art education. As an art educator, it's a new thing for me to be involved in this.

This activity contains certain parts of a socially engaged art or community art, though it's not total social art. I feel the volunteers and I are doing work in the way social artists do. It is a kind of social service, but based on art and culture. This is not only my personal view; this is one artist's thinking as well. We have done pieces of artwork together; we exhibited our work, painted with people suffering from memory loss and brought art to retirement homes.

Yang: What is your understanding of social art?

Laitinen: It is for empowering people, encouraging and inspiring them, and just letting them find new opportunities.

No matter whether we have done artwork individually or together, the basic element is improving the well-being of the people involved, both our companions and their service users. Firstly it offers them an opportunity to be involved in new experiences with the arts. Secondly it's a mutual encounter and that brings pleasure and reward for the volunteers and their service users. I think that making art is the third step of what we have done in our project from the well-being aspect. Our companions enjoy working together. We've made some workshops for companions and now they are ongoing, like the *Friday Art Talk* and the *Crafts Club (Käsityökerho)*. The companions can make artwork in these workshops. The companions have also started several groups, specializing in some field or art such as literature, painting or crafts.

Of course there are always difficulties when doing social art. You have to cope with so many groups and try to listen to everyone's wishes, and the different needs and expectations of the organizations and people involved. You have to take so many things into consideration. It's time consuming. Most

artists, even though they want to make the world a better place, are neither able nor willing to work so extensively and widely with many groups. They prefer producing art individually and are therefore free of common opinions and needs. Socially engaged art or community art is more about finding out problems or imperfections in societies, and maybe not only shortcomings but doing something worthwhile together to get added value for people involved and in that way increase the well-being of the whole community.

And the volunteers' experiences also vary; some are more involved in art than in other activities. The basic purpose of my work is to enhance people's well-being, to widen their view and get them to places where they might never go without the help of volunteer guides. There is art in this project. If we think about the whole project, it's also difficult to identify which sector it belongs to. Does it belong to the social service department or the cultural department? I think it belongs to both. As you see, I have different roles, completing different work, so I don't always consider myself an artist, most time I work as an office worker. It's a kind of social service, but based on art and culture. [It] offers art and cultural services as a way for improving people's well-being. Social service is not only financial help, medical care and housing etc; it also contains art and cultural services and affects people's spirits Social service here is used as a mechanism to fulfil arts and cultural service work.

Yang: As for making the information reach the people who need the service, I talked with Milka and we discussed the activity of Art Pharmacy, I think that for some very sick and weak people, they even can't tell their nurses that they want to go to arts and cultural activities, I mean they can't express their needs. Do you have any ideas for this problem?

Laitinen: My idea is that we go to those places where those ill and severely disabled people live. I can display small pieces of artwork to them, for instance. We can talk with them as well as those staff members. This is to say, the *Art Pharmacy* brochure is not the only way of informing, the personal touch is too a good way. We have an elderly person's information brochure created by the City of Jyväskylä, which goes to every elderly person. There is a need to develop other ways to inform the working staff, elderly and disabled people.

We are also trying to forward information to more staff members working in the field of social and health service; in this way, the nurses can take this project to their clients. In fact, there is a special companion, who is doing full-time work as a nurse for deaf people. Inspired by the *Art and Culture Companions*, she has started her own project, a kind of social art project and she combines art with care work. She's a very unique nurse and she considers herself an *Art and Culture Companions* volunteer though she's not very much into our project. So, you see, this shows that our project can encourage individuals to undertake their own volunteer work. There are a couple of examples in which our companions build their own projects based on ours.

Yang: Can you tell me about how has the Art and Culture Companions spread to other cities?

Laitinen: This activity is spreading to different cities. Kuopio and Turku have already started the activity. Under the influence of this project initiated in Jyväskylä, Kuopio started a similar project in 2010 and then Turku started the *Cultural Friend* project (*Kulttuuriystävä*) in 2011. In 2012, the similar activities were started in Oulu and Vantaa. Lahti also started the art museum volunteer education in March for the first time. Kemiö and Hanko held the similar courses on a small-scale basis. In addition, Rovaniemi also started an activity in 2012. In 2013, Helsinki, Mikkeli (*Kulttuurikaveri*) and Järvenpää started their own activities. Meanwhile, some other cities such as Tampere, Leppävirta, Eurajoki, Espoo, Lappeenranta, Kouvola, Kangasala and Kemi are planning their projects as well and they have contacted me. I also went to Helsinki to introduce the project. Generally, this project has inspired other projects throughout Finland; it's progressing well.

Appendix 4: Transcript of Interview with Wei

Interviewer: Yang Jing (art researcher)

Interviewee: Wei (*participant of the Art for the Disabled Scheme*)

Yang: Where were you studying before the earthquake?

Wei: I was in the second year of senior middle-school, Dongqi Middle School. I remember that there were 11 girls in my class and only one girl and I survived the earthquake.

Yang: Are rehabilitation therapy and study of art the main courses of your recent life?

Wei: At present, the fitting of the prosthetic leg is the primary issue. I was supposed to go back to school this autumn. Owing to the problem of the prosthetics, of course, together with some other small problems, I haven't yet gone back to school. My teacher and I finally decided that I should focus on the application for adult university. Like this, I don't have to stay two or three extra years in senior middle school. After all, I'm already 22 years old. As for the prosthetic leg, the poor basic condition of the left side of my body—without a good supporting point—has made a big problem. The bone can easily break the skin with just a little pressure; the doctors need to find new materials and then redesign and remake the left prosthesis for me. In addition, my right leg also has some small problems, a hangover from the amputation surgery.

Yang: You are tied down by this problem; the problem of prosthetic legs hampered not only your schooling, but also your daily life, yes?

Wei: Yes. This year, I went to Shenzhen and had two surgical operations during two months. The medical department of a frontier troop in Guangdong province managed my medical trip to Shenzhen; this troop rescued me from the earthquake ruins in 2008. I felt weak after two surgical operations. Excretion used to be a great inconvenience for me, like a daily torture. Now at least it's no longer a problem. Anyway, the quality of my life has been remarkably improved.

I was severely injured in the earthquake; I had my left leg amputated high and right leg amputated from below the knee. That was not the worst. I came down with gangrene. My doctors thought that I would die in several days. To control gangrene, the doctors had to remove nearby muscle and soft tissues and block the blood supply. Therefore, the wide muscle excision and poor blood supply made the left side of my body very fragile.

As you have seen, the other students can sit in wheelchair for hours, but I can't. The left side of my pelvis is just covered by a thin layer of skin, not even healthy skin, it's scary. If I sit too long, the bone will break the scarred skin. If

the skin is broken, the wound heals very slowly owing to the poor blood supply. A little wound can take several months or even one year to close up. I have to keep a reclining position in bed, like this, even when I draw and paint. If I sit up, every 15 minutes I have to release the pressure. All these factors have hampered my studying. My level is lower than other students and progress is much slower. For instance, I can't sit for a long time, so life sketching is so difficult for me, I often have to use a camera and I've made many copies because copying is easier for me.

Yang: Well, the camera is a good help. Copying is a good idea, to not be restricted by your physical situation.

Wei: Yeah, when the art instructor came, he sat or stood at my bed, and I just stayed in bed and enjoyed it. Besides sketching, drawing and painting, I made many handicrafts. This crochet bag is my work. All the crochet knitters you see here are my students. The handbag my mother carries is also my work.

Yang: Wonderful work!

Wei: One work in the Foundation's collection is mine. It looks like a tree; the lower part looks like a pumpkin and the upper part are peanuts with frogs climbing on the vine. I spent more than one month to complete this work. The pumpkin and peanuts grow from the soil. Frogs are from tadpole and they experience a way of transformation. I feel some connection with my own experience, like a rebirth.

Yang: Yes, it carries a symbolic meaning. I saw a couple of your works in the Foundation. In addition to drawing and painting, and doing handicrafts, how do you manage to study other subjects?

Wei: Well, I've lagged behind after staying so long in hospital. I've forgotten a lot what I studied before. While, I still try to catch up. During my stay in Shenzhen, the Bond Education Agency gave me software for studying English; the Bond Education Agency also sent their instructors to help me in mathematics and physics, more or less. In fact, our exhibition in Shenzhen was sponsored by this education agency. This time, my medical cost in Shenzhen was paid by the Agency.

Yang: When did you first get in contact with the 5Colours Foundation? Where and through whom?

Wei: In July or August 2008. At that time, some volunteers from Beijing brought Zhou and his friends to my hospital. I was in the ICU with two other injured students. They bought nutrients for me and other severely wounded students. Zhou asked me if I would like to study art, I said "yes". He also gave me some books. They are art books, including the collection of Frida Kahlo and Van Gogh. Soon afterwards, the Foundation held the first exhibition of the work by the disabled students. My work was a cross-stitch, around 50×50 cm and five strings of wind-bells, each more than 1m long.

Yang: For what reason did you decide to participate in this project?

Wei: You know, at that time, I was so severely injured, so sick. I couldn't even eat properly. I couldn't imagine what I could still do in the future. Suddenly, someone came to ask me if I would like to study art and they promised to teach me. I thought it might be a way out. When I was studying in senior middle school, there were also several hobby groups and I saw some students studying drawing and painting. I once also had this idea. We were in a hurry for the preparation of the first exhibition. The other students had studied only three months by then.

Yang: What have you studied in this project?

Wei: After the exhibition, I started studying art, following the instructor sent by the Foundation. I began with sketching; I made at least several sketches every day. These years, so long as my physical situation allows, I've been always continuing practising art.

Yang: What is the most significant benefit you have obtained from studying art in this project?

Wei: Through studying art, I feel broader and look on the bright side of things. Though I'm somehow more reserved, I always look on the bright side. You know, painting and drawing help to set off your emotions. Sometimes you want convey a certain message—a kind of secret that you don't want others to see so easily—and you can do it through art.

Yang: Yes, art is a constructive outlet for feelings. Do you think it's different from acting out by direct talking and writing.

Wei: Exactly, different. The outlet [of feeling and emotion] through art is more symbolic and indirect, not so concrete and direct ... others can speculate on what you think, but can't speak out so easily and clearly. This is pretty interesting. You see other people can read your mind through your work, through what you express in your work. It is a fantastic feeling! I've been studying art for a long time; although restricted by my poor physical situation I couldn't do very well, I've seen a lot. Throughout these years, from Zhou and other students, I've learned and seen a lot. I feel that although we are physically disabled, we can still do a lot; so I feel the value and purpose—the value and purpose of our existence—that can be realized through art ... I can't depict this feeling very well, but this is what I really feel.

Yang: Do you mean this change in mentality is the most valuable reward?

Wei: Well, it's a big change. You can have art as an outlet for your feelings; you communicate with people through artwork, your work. These are important rewards. In addition, one thing is very important, you know, disabled people sometimes are subjected to unjust treatment in society, so that sometimes they feel inferior. However, we study art within this project, in this group, all students are in a similar situation and the teachers treat us as their own family members. When we go for exhibitions, people respect us and treat us so kindly

and warmly, which makes me feel very good. People see our strong side ... [that we are] worth respecting and being an encouraging example ... rather than being pitied for our disability. In addition, we can also acquire artistic skills for future work. All these made a big change in my life.

The artistic skills are secondary. My skill, if compared with other students, is rather low. However, you know that I learn not only skills, the key point is the change to my life—studying art makes me happy. As we talked about, art is an outlet for your feelings ... even if you can't paint very well, you still feel so happy; even if you can't paint very well, others still can read your mind and you still have communication with people through your work. We also participate in events and exhibitions, so our horizon is broadened. That is why I say that the most important is not skills, but the changes brought to me, to our lives. There are many skilful people, but when we paint and draw, we present not only artistic skills, but also a spirit, the spirit of self-improvement. The spirit is the most valuable.

Yang: How about your participation in art exhibitions in recent years?

Wei: I've had my work in almost all exhibitions. Sometimes I attend the exhibition while sometime not, it depends on my health situation. I also participate in some events, like each year's Christmas party. The Foundation helped me with my pen-and-ink drawing solo exhibition. I tried oil painting as well. All handicrafts I handed to the Foundation are my design. Now, my teacher doesn't let me make copies; he emphasizes that I should express my own ideas, my own feelings, not necessarily through oil painting, also through pen drawing and marker sketching.

Yang: What is the biggest challenge in your art study?

Wei: First it's my drawing and painting level; it's not so solid. Secondly, my body, my physical situation sometimes bothers me. For example, my body hampered my art practising, so I'm not well-grounded in drawing and painting. Sometimes it's difficult for me to express what I want to express, and it sometimes causes me anxiety.

Yang: Do you think the experience of practising art has impacted other aspects of your life, for example other subjects?

Wei: I do not feel that practising art has had an impact on my study in other subjects. However, it definitely has had an impact on my personality and mind. You see these years, I've been restricted to a sickbed in hospital and I haven't gone back to school. Hospital is not a good place for studying. In addition, you know most people cannot move much. My poor physical situation also hampered me in my studies—I mean general studying, not only art. Under this kind of situation, a person can easily sink under the weight. However, in such hard circumstances, practising art kept me up. I've become more active. The benefit to the spirit is obvious.

Yang: How is your interaction with the media?

Wei: Now, life gradually goes back to its regular orbit. Before when I was in hospital, the media used to interview me; now it's much less. When media staff came, I understood that it's part of their job; maybe they thought that I had some news value. I always cooperated with them. They were quite all right; they didn't ask me questions I didn't want to answer. Generally, the relationship is OK.

Yang: How is your interaction with other students?

Wei: Well, we have good relationships. However, we are not always in contact, but I still have contact with my classmates ... but most classmates died; only two girls and nine boys survived. Maybe I'm a little reserved; even I like laughing, but I'm not so eager to contact with people.

Yang: What is your plan for future life and work?

Wei: Presently, I wish that the problem of the prosthetic leg could be solved as soon as possible, and then I can go home. Anyway, studying and living at home is more comfortable. I wish to resume the school courses. Picking up school courses is important for me if I decide to apply to study in an adult university because I need to pass the exam. Besides, subjects like Chinese, English and history are significant to art study. In addition, I wish to improve my drawing and painting skills. They are the bread and butter of all visual arts; even though I might not do easel painting in the future, having a sound ground is still important. Then I can find a way that allows me to develop my talent that at the same time suits my physical situation.

Considering my physical situation, it will not be practical for me to search for a job because it's too inconvenient. Nevertheless, I can work as a free-lancer, for example. I can combine art with handicraft. I like handicraft and I'm good at that. By the way, handicraft can also be a good artwork. I can do it even in bed. It's an interest or a hobby, later it can be professional and I can earn an income and even be a professional artist. I can make artwork in bed and that will be the best for me. Of course, from time to time, I can stand up to have a whole look. I can also make big works, works in huge volume.

Once I saw paper origami cranes in an art book. You know, many people can make origami cranes and we often hang them by string, but that work I saw was so huge. So many, so many paper origami cranes suspended from a high ceiling and scattered about. Magnificent! This kind of work looks huge; but it was made piece by piece. It inspired me and I think I can also do something.

Yang: Well, this sounds like a kind of paper sculpture. This kind of work can have a big volume. It is made piece by piece and finally all the small parts are put together. The forms of art are many. There are different materials and media for making art, easel painting for instance is just one of them. The basic thing is the artist's idea.

Wei: Yes, I should think more about the materials and media of art. Fiber art is very interesting. I think I will try that. Like this crochet bag, you make flowers one by one, and then you put them together. Everybody has different interests

and talents, so each way of doing art is different. I try to find a way to develop my own talent and to suit my own interest as well as my health situation.

Appendix 5: Transcript of Interview with Lin

Interviewer: Yang Jing (art researcher)

Interviewee: Lin (participant of the Art for the Disabled Scheme)

Yang: When and under what circumstance did you come to know the Art for the Disabled Scheme? From whom?

Lin: It was in July or August 2008. I was at that moment still in hospital and I heard of this project from my classmates. They told me that an artist was organizing *The Mobile Art Classroom* to teach disabled students artistic skills. They asked me if I would like to join. I said yes. Afterwards, in October, I left the hospital and returned to school. I already began to feel a heavy pressure on my study. One day, I heard about this project again from my art teacher with whom I was doing some basic art course. At the end of 2008, I saw Zhou for the first time. They were having an exhibition in a gallery and they invited us to visit their exhibition. That impressed me deeply and it confirmed my will to study art. In 2009, I joined the *Art for the Disabled Scheme*.

Yang: What were those important factors that drove you to participate in this project?

Lin: First, I've always liked painting but I had no chance to study it. In addition, the injury and medical treatment and rehabilitation dragged me behind in my studies in school; so it became more difficult for me to pass the college entrance examination. My choice was also a practical consideration for obtaining a higher education opportunity.

Yang: So, both interest and the practical consideration of higher education opportunity?

Lin: Yeah, it was like that.

Yang: What do you think is the most important positive impact on you since you started practising art in this project?

Lin: In addition to the opportunity of higher education, taking part in this project has benefited my mind. Before, I was restless and messy ... studying art, for example oil painting, requires a quiet and tidy environment as well as a long time. When you encounter difficulties, you can't just easily give up. You can't just rip the paper down and begin a new one. You need to think through the situation before you start and then you need to insist on painting on the canvas and try to solve the problem. By the way, painting is not easy work, you can't see progress in one or two days; it requires a large amount of persistent work. This process builds up my patience and persistence... Another thing is that since studying art, I've become more thoughtful than I was before, and than many others, because making painting requires the ability to think thoroughly. Before

you start painting, you need to consider the whole and many details like composition and colours, and then you begin little by little.

Yang: Do you think these changes expanded to other aspects in your life and made you more industrious in doing other things?

Lin: Yes, I think the impact is very great. I was careless and I often couldn't finish what I started—as somebody said, tiger's head and snake's tail. Now I'm much better. I can be more mentally focused, I'm more able to control myself and I'm more persistent. These are rewarding experiences for me, I think.

Yang: Do you feel the atmosphere in the group had an influence on you and you became naturally more industrious?

Lin: Yes, it did. We are in a group, if I don't study hard, I can't make progress. Then I will feel kind of embarrassed and bad for the people who are supporting us.

Yang: Did you feel pressure?

Lin: Of course, but I think that pressure is normal; pressure is also motivation. After all, the Foundation helps us not just by letting us paint for fun, they expect that we should make some progress, have some achievements.

Yang: How about your participation in exhibitions these years?

Lin: Well, I had my work in all the exhibitions.

Yang: How do you feel about your works in exhibition, are you satisfied with your works?

Lin: Relatively satisfied. Though I didn't paint well enough each time, I've given my best works to the exhibition and I've seen progress after each exhibition. Generally, I'm satisfied with what I've done.

Yang: What's the biggest difficulty you have faced?

Lin: It relates to my painting experience. I feel the gap between what I conceive and the actual visual effect of the artwork, the painting I made, especially the details in my painting. This is a gap between what I want to express and what I actually paint. In other aspects of my study and daily life, it's OK.

Yang: How was your interaction with the media?

Lin: The media have focused on us. More media reports can help the Foundation and consequently help other younger students realize their dreams. More media attention means more social support. However, as to my experience with the media, a somewhat disturbing thing was that some media people always asked me the same questions, just something related to the earthquake. For some experiences, it's unpleasant to recall them and talk about them over and over again. I felt somehow upset.

Yang: So, how did you deal with this kind of situation?

Lin: I tried to reply to them as thoroughly and politely as I could. I tried to be cooperative because I thought that anyway they were helping the Foundation, so they were helping us. The media reports bring social attention, though some media people are not so professional.

Yang: You are a cadre of the Students' Union. How many students do you serve, just your classmates? In addition, what are you responsible for?

Lin: Not only my classmates. I'm a student leader of the department. There are many degree programs in our department such as environmental design, decorative art (interior decoration), advertising design, and animation. My major subject is environment design. When the Students' Union organizes events, several students and I go to do shopping. We are in charge of the supply of materials for students' events.

Yang: I'm glad to hear that you serve other students.

Lin: Well ... nothing very special. I just want to toughen myself up. We should try our best to deal with our own affairs; we can't always depend on others.

Yang: Do you have an idea or plan for future work and life?

Lin: Yes, I have. I plan to find an internship position in a design company from the beginning of next year. I'll continue to practise painting. I'm the only child in my family, and my parents are already old. So I don't want to apply for a master's degree course, I want to start working as soon as possible to relieve the burden on my family.

Appendix 6: Transcript of Interview with Liu Danfang and Geng Bo

Interviewer: Yang Jing (art researcher)

Interviewee: Liu Danfang (staff member of the 5Colours Foundation), Geng Bo (artist, professional art educator of the 5Colours Foundation)

Yang: The Art for the Disabled Scheme provides aid to the disabled students in a variety of ways; as we know this includes the financial aid – a maintenance grant and the tuition fees for their higher education and of course, teaching them artistic skills and knowledge. How about other ways beyond these?

Liu: Exhibition is important. We help them to hold exhibitions. Sometimes we also organize them to go to visit art exhibitions. Then, another important way is presenting them to the public to call for more people to help them. These are important ways.

Yang: Yes, as we briefly discussed last time, the 5Colours Foundation created an opportunity to present these students to the public through the media. It's an opportunity to be able to mobilize more social resources for helping disabled students.

Liu: Right. Zhou is a media darling artist. Due to his personal influence, the 5Colours Foundation together with these aid-receiving students attracted a lot of attention from the very beginning. Zhou's idea is "to teach one fishing skill is better than give him a fish", an idea that focuses on encouraging them to create something helpful with their own hands for their lives. Without the 5Colours Foundation and the *Art for the Disabled Scheme*, these disabled teenagers wouldn't have a chance to experience higher education. These students showed awareness of self-dependence. They don't want to rely on the help of the Foundation forever. They are eager to improve themselves so that they can support themselves in the future and help their families. They also understand that they should help others in need when they have the capacity to do so one day.

Yang: The ages, educational backgrounds and degrees of disability of these students are so different. How do you deal with teaching according to their different situation, for instance how does it affect the goals and methods of teaching?

Geng: Yes, their age ranges from six to 20 years old; we roughly made several stages according to their age groups: primary school level, junior middle school level, senior middle school level and college level. Our teaching purpose is based on this. If our grouping is too complicated and the group size is too small, we can't conduct teaching work efficiently. For example in Youai School, we have two groups, one is for middle school students, and the other is for kids from seven or eight years old to 12 years old.

Yang: For each age group, how did you apply different teaching goals and methods?

Geng: For primary school students, our main task is to cultivate their interest in art. Then, for junior middle school students, we teach them some basic skills and knowledge of drawing and painting. For senior school students, we focus on improving their painting and drawing skill systematically; for the second and third year students in particular we have intensive instructions directed by the requirements of the entrance exams of art colleges. For college students, as you have seen, we help and support them make artworks independently.

Liu: Well, at primary school level the focus is on stimulating their interest; at junior middle school level, on developing talent; at senior middle school, on improvement of painting and drawing skills; at college level, on creating artwork independently.

Geng: For example, we begin studying painting and drawing from childhood. During the first years we do them mainly for fun; however when we grow up, we cannot always draw and paint as kids do and the study must advance, so basic knowledge and technique become necessary. In this project, from the junior middle school level we gradually teach them some basic skills and knowledge for painting and drawing. The college students can make artwork independently, in the way of professional artists. The students also hold exhibition and go to visit art exhibitions.

Yang: The tenets of the Art for the Disabled are written as "to soothe the soul, to inspire creativity, to master the skills and to pursue the value of life via art". Here we see the multiple goals ...integrated in one action. So, my question is, how have you in fact integrated the different aims in your practical work?

Liu: Initially, this was just the different phases of our work. Our foundation was established after the 5.12 earthquake. At that time, these students were suffering from the loss of family members, friends, classmates and body parts and that was an abrupt catastrophic change in their lives. The physical and psychological trauma these students suffered made them refuse to accept the reality. In hospitals and rehabilitation centres, there were many miserable scenes ...

Yang: So, do you mean at the very beginning, applying art to soothe or heal their injured soul was the main goal?

Liu: No, even from the very beginning, we already had the multiple goals. It was not initially designed as an art therapy project. However, perhaps we had to emphasize something in different phases. When these students were suffering from trauma, we had to first open their hearts. They had to accept the reality; since the disaster had already happened, it's pointless to always be anxious, depressed and complaining. After stepping out of the shadow, they could begin to study something. Then through studying art, gradually they obtained special skills. For instance, they could hold exhibitions, so they gradually obtained self-confidence. Therefore, you see, this process is a

continuous one with necessary stages within it. Maybe people only see us passing on artistic skills to those disabled students. But this process has dragged them out of a tragic situation and led them into a positive and optimistic life. We have been fulfilling all our goals from the very beginning to now.

Geng: Well, the multiple goals were set from the beginning. In different phases, based on the situation of the students, the focus of our work varied somehow. Maybe in the beginning stage, the work more focused on dragging them out of depression and anxiety; then it shifted to more serious skill learning. Anyway, it was based on the students' situation.

Liu: Exactly.

Yang: Can you tell me more about the situation and your work in the early days?

Liu: Just after the earthquake and before the establishment of the Foundation, Zhou and his friends often went to hospitals, rehabilitation centres, and the ruined area to visit disabled teenagers and offer them some material aid. He asked the students if they would like to study art. I think for those disabled students in such miserable situations—just think, they were lying in hospital, disabled and thinking perhaps they had to spend all the rest of their lives in hospital. Then somebody came to visit them and asked them if they want study art. Even if they didn't understand so much about art, they still felt an interest. Zhou and other artists were sending a message to them, sending encouragement and hope to them. This was like a lamp in the darkness, though at that time nobody could say how long this lamp could be lit.

Geng: Zhou and his artist friends went to visit and help the disabled students, not only once or twice, they went there so often. They established a friendly relationship with those students and naturally they began to talk about studying art.

Liu: Yes, Zhou and his artist friends went to the ruined area as well, for example the area where Dongqi Middle School was. I was a reporter, following Zhou and reporting on his activities. Also in their group was the Indonesian Chinese who later donated the vehicle to us. I remember at that time we had already started discussing how we could help those disabled kids. Just several days after the earthquake, the first idea already began to grow.

Yang: That is to say this project was designed not only as therapy from the beginning.

Liu: No, not only as art therapy, but it contains factors related to therapy. Instructors asked the students to make self-portraits, which is a kind of therapy, for instance. It was to make them face reality and re-recognize themselves ... it might be interesting for research work. In fact the first step work of this project was at the end of 2008 when Zhou made a documentary *Tomorrow* that was about all aid-receiving students in hospitals and rehabilitation centres. That was even before the establishment of this Foundation in March, 2009.

Yang: By then, those students hadn't yet started studying art, had they?

Liu: No, they hadn't started. But, they already knew of this project and knew of Zhou. They had already expressed their desire to take part in this project. Their parents also encouraged them to study art. The shooting of this documentary was very helpful. I remember after watching that film, as a reporter then, I really felt that I must let more people know their real situation and ask more people to help them. Zhou invited many of his friends, artists and collectors to watch this film, and many shed tears after watching. So after the establishment of the Foundation we received a great deal of help from different people.

Geng: At the beginning, we had many instruction units. There were not many students at that moment and they were dispersed: there was one unit in Deyang, in a prefabricated house, one unit in Shifang and Yinghua, one in Nanbu, one in a hospital and one in Hanwang, in a student's home. Sometimes, we went to several units during one day. The road situation then was especially bad. In a mountainous area like Yinghua, it was often rainy and the road was really terrible. One student with his family was living in a shelter built with wood planks and plastic film. That was just several months after the earthquake, and the reconstruction work hadn't yet been completed. That was the beginning of *The Mobile Art Classroom*. You see, some students were living at home, some in hospital, some in a prefab house; we couldn't put all students together.

Liu: Yes, that's why we adopted the idea of *The Mobile Art Classroom*. In addition, if we put them together as a normal school, we would have to take care of their other courses like physics, mathematics, and language and so on. We know something about art and art education, but we can't teach them all the other subjects, nor can we take care of their daily life. At that moment, many students were still in rehabilitation therapy, some in psychological therapy and we were not professional in all those fields.

Yang: Both of you are full-time staff members. Have you faced difficulties in your work?

Geng: I mainly undertake teaching work. I did art-teaching work even before I joined the Foundation and I'm not a novice; so there is no big challenge for me in this work. In my work, I treat them as totally normal students. I never treat them as disabled, so I myself feel more relaxed in my work and I believe it's better for them as well. I can't treat them as disabled, as different people, and give them special care—that's not good for them. I just treat them naturally and equally, and if they make some mistakes, I simply point them out just as I would to any students. I try to make them know that even if they are physically handicapped, they can still do many things the others can do. If they understand and believe in this, they can be strong and useful in future life and work.

Liu: When I was studying at university, my major subject was media communication and I worked as a reporter. For example, Li Qianru was doing teaching administrative work at university before, so she's now charge of

teaching management in our foundation. Everybody in this team has a professional skill, and everybody does what he's good at, so there is no obvious challenge or difficulty. In addition, we help each other. This team is immersed in a friendly and cooperative atmosphere while everybody is professional about his own work.

Yang: Have you faced obstacles from outside?

Liu: Not really, on the contrary, we obtained a lot of help. For example, for making our website, first we employed some designers to do this, and then a design company contacted us and provided us with free technological support. This is an example of the support of social resources.

Yang: How did you come to know the 5Colours Foundation and what made you decide to work in this Foundation throughout these years?

Liu: I was a media reporter at that time and I was following Zhou in the ruined area. Then when I knew that he was planning to establish this Foundation, I thought it was very meaningful work. I believe that once in your life, you can have this kind chance to use what you can to help others, this is meaningful. Besides, the friendly atmosphere also kept me staying here and working.

Geng: Firstly, I saw in a newspaper that Zhou was planning to establish such an organization; afterwards, I heard again from my previous art teacher who is also an artist that the Foundation was enrolling art instructors. Zhou asked my teacher to introduce one or two instructors and my teacher introduced me to him. Then, I remember I went to Zhou and we had a talk. He told me that this work could be tough because it would be different from teaching in a fixed classroom or studio. Teaching in this project requires going to different places, especially to remote areas. I thought that it would be meaningful work; although I didn't have money, I could help others in such a way. You know, I'm also from Sichuan, and after the earthquake I kept on watching TV without sleeping for several days and nights. I was continuously watching how the relief work was getting on and I remember I saw some teenagers who were rescued from the ruins. Some of them are now my students. It is good to do this in my life. Since then I've been working here.

Yang: How do you balance the time budget between their art study art and their study of other courses?

Geng: We always teach them during their spare time; in fact, this is extracurricular—studying for instance at weekends, in summer and winter holidays and after school in the afternoon. We arrange teaching time according their time schedule rather than our time schedule. The principle is that studying art can't disturb their regular school hours.

Yang: How do you balance passing on artistic skills and cultivating their characters?

Geng: The cultivation of characters is a long-term and accumulative process, not so obvious in a short time. In my work, I mainly pass on drawing and painting

skills to them. Practicing art really can make them more focused and persistent in doing many things. Of course, I also introduce them to the life stories of many artists, knowledge of art history, and aesthetic concepts, etc. Making art, I can see, really helps them to find inner peace and become more mentally focused on working. Besides, the self-reliant and cooperative attitude and persistence we felt from our students are related to their long-term practising of art. Also the belief of “although I’m physically disabled, my spirit is never disabled” is obvious in our students. These effects can’t be obtained in a short time.

Yang: In this long-term and large project, in addition to a small but sound team, volunteers are also involved. Who are they and how have they helped?

Geng: Most of them are artists who are based in the Blue Roof Art Base. They are actively committed and we should really thank them.

Yang: How many volunteers about?

Liu: About 50. They come from time to time; some of them come more often and some less. Among them, some are overseas returnees.

Yang: Some other support from the society?

Liu: In addition to this, we obtained support from different enterprises. I should say something again about the media; all media, such as TV, newspaper, magazine, and web media helped us in publishing ads and they never charged us money. They are actively committed and we should really thank them.

Yang: Yes, they are not volunteers but they also offer important support.

Liu: Without the help of the media how can people get to know the situation of these students? This is a window. Our Foundation is a window, but it is the media that opened this window to the broader public.

Yang: In addition to the Heart & Whisper exhibition, what other important exhibitions have you held?

Liu: One was the *Heart & Wish exhibition*. It was held at the end of last year, in Shangri-la Hotel in Chengdu. Another important exhibition is *Heart & Path*, held in Shenzhen, in November 2011. It was sponsored by the Bond Education Agency. The vice mayor of Shenzhen was present at this exhibition. This exhibition in Shenzhen also created a good chance for a severely disabled student. During the exhibition in Shenzhen, the officers and soldiers of a rescue troop knew about her situation, they helped to contact hospitals and finally found a hospital where the student could have an operation. This made her life quality much better than before. Exhibition is a good forum for displaying students’ artwork, their achievements and their spirit; meanwhile media reports can magnify the impact of exhibitions and mobilize more public awareness and social resources. In 2009 we hosted a charity dinner. Since then we have this almost every year. We just had one big charity dinner in January and we collected almost RMB 1,502,0000. It was beyond our expectations. Money was

collected from a charity auction, many artists donated their works. Last year, owing to the scandal of Guo Meimei and the Red Cross Society of China, people's trust in charity work dropped. We still collected a lot of money, this shows the public recognition of and trust in our work.

Yang: As young art workers, how do you think about many projects that combined art, education and social work?

Liu: I know of many projects, such as art therapy projects and special education projects. For example, art was employed to help autistic children. Our project is different. We share some similarities with all these kinds of projects mentioned above, but there are different features in our project.

Yang: Can you provide a more detailed explanation of the special features of this project?

Liu: I think this project has done more and better than many other projects. It's not only art therapy that uses art for rehabilitation, nor simply art in special education, nor some charity project just offering money or material help. As for art and artists in charity, we know that many just donate money for charity auctions, but this project is different. We focus on passing skills and knowledge on to them rather than just giving money. Another difference is the sustainability of our project. There were many projects for helping people after the earthquake, but by now only our project is still ongoing and having a large impact. We have been sending teachers every week. Almost every day instructors go to teach the disabled students in different units. In addition, we have a long-range perspective of care for the students, not just offering help at one time. Furthermore, we offer the students a forum. For instance the exhibitions we hold are high-level ones. The artist resources we have are excellent—many are well-known both home and internationally. We also have a wide cooperation with galleries, collectors and the media. All of these are definitely beyond most art therapy projects and special education projects.

Here I should emphasize that this project is not a special education project. Some people think that this is special education for the disabled, but it's not. We don't consider them as students with special needs; there's almost no different teaching method for them. We are also different from many art therapy projects because basically we don't consider them as people with psychological problems, nor do we put them in a closed environment and give them treatment by professional therapists.

Geng: Yeah, we don't treat them as patients, nor separate them from society; on the contrary, we try to push them into society. We can't just create an asylum and put them in it forever. We've created a good community in which they study together, play together and live together; then they also keep in close touch with the media, art circles and other people in society. This project makes them feel that they are useful, they have value, they are able to create many things as well as help and inspire other people. Of course the therapy has had positive effects. But the most important thing is to guide them to real life in

society. This is the only way to make them strong; otherwise when they really step into society, perhaps just some small practical difficulty, a glance of prejudice, a refusal, or maybe just a joke, can cause problems for them again.

Yang: Yes, I understand. For disabled people to be psychologically sound, they need to really integrate themselves into society. Finally, these students will go into society and have their independent life.

Liu: Of course, we should say that for helping handicapped people to integrate into society, art on its own is not enough. There is not enough care for people with disabilities in our country. For example the sidewalk for the blind is often piled with bicycles, like this, how can blind people use it? Many public spaces are not equipped with barrier-free facilities. In many developed countries, there are parking places for the disabled. Our government and society need to do more for disabled people. Another issue is jobs; the government needs to develop policies that offer more positions to the disabled. But one positive thing is that now public awareness of the welfare of the disabled is quickly growing—more and more people have realized that helping the disabled is not only the duty of state and government, but also everybody's responsibility.

Appendix 7: Transcript of Interview with Zhou Chunya

Interviewer: Yang Jing (art researcher)

Interviewee: Zhou Chunya (artist, founder of the 5Colours Foundation)

Yang: On the second anniversary of the 5Colours Foundation, there was an exhibition in the Today Art Museum in Beijing. A number of media interviewed you, I remember that in your interview with ARTRON, you mentioned that three days after the earthquake you attended a charity auction, organized by the Red Cross Society of China, as one of the promoters. Was it initially your idea to call for that charity auction?

Zhou: Yes, I was one of the promoters, together with the Poly Auction House and art critic Lv Peng. However, I have to say that the charity auction was not organized by the Red Cross Society of China. It was the artists' voluntary action. I first had this idea based on a charity work I attended before: in 2007, several artists and I held a charity auction to help a girl with leukaemia. So after the earthquake, I immediately thought about what we could do to help the relief work. We can't rush to the front-line, but we have our own way to help people, for example, by donating our works for charity auctions. Our call received an enthusiastic response from artists. Many well-known Chinese contemporary artists such as Wang Guangyi, Zhang Xiaogang and Zeng Fanzhi donated their artwork. The artists acted so quickly after they received our call. Many Chinese contemporary artists have a strong sense of social responsibility, which relates to their attitudes towards life and ensures that they progress on the path of art.

The auction was held at Beijing Poly Auction House. We collected RMB 48,000,000. It was a big success, almost the biggest charity auction in China. All collected money was donated to the Red Cross Society of China (RCSC). Later we heard that a big part of the money collected was used in reconstruction work for the ruined area. Of course, the RCSC has the right and responsibility to manage the use of money from charitable donations and we can't step into the role as advisors. However, I just began to think, to think about the faces of those disabled children and teenagers – they are the ones who need help most. As artists, what can we do to help them more directly and efficiently? If we had our own philanthropic foundation, we could clearly see what money was used and for whom and we could offer help to those groups most in need.

Yang: One point in your interview impressed me. You said, "Besides doing artwork, artists are always thinking creatively and artists can do more than donate artwork or donate money". According to you, is establishing a foundation for helping the disabled students, such a big social project, also an expression of artistic creativity?

Zhou: I called for the charity auction and I attended several other auctions later. Soon after that, I began to think about whether we could help the relief work in a more direct way. You asked if this philanthropic activity has something to do

with an artist's creativity. They are closely related to each other. After I came back from Beijing, I often went to hospital to visit those wounded. After the earthquake, Chengdu became the relief base and headquarters; there were so many wounded and disabled kids and teenagers at that time, everywhere in hospital, even in corridors! We had several auctions after that one held in Poly; the collected money was given to different philanthropic organizations. We didn't know very well where the money went.

One thing important for philanthropy is the will of charitable donors: if the donors' will can be respected, the philanthropic activity can be better and more sustainable. I thought for a long time what we should do. In fact, at that time, I was not the only artist in the hospitals; there were some younger artists with me as well. We began to discuss together that perhaps we could establish a foundation for helping those disabled children and teenagers. They are the ones who need help most. Before the disaster, they were happy and healthy, in their best years. Suddenly they have become a burden on society and their families. It was like a sudden big blow, both physically and psychologically. How could we help them? We could do something via art; of course, we all are artists and it's easy and practical for us to think in this way. We can teach them artistic knowledge and skills; therefore in the future, they can have more choices – to be an artist or study applied art. It's very practical and feasible. Most of them are lower limb-disabled, and even if some have one arm amputated they still can paint and draw.

I knew very little about the world of disabled people. These years, because of this philanthropic work, I've had more understanding of disabled people's lives. There are over 80,000,000 disabled people in China and among them around 30,000,000 to 40,000,000 limb-disabled. However, in the streets, we don't see many disabled people owing to the lack of barrier-free facilities. It's so hard for the disabled to get out without being accompanied by someone. Anyway, disabled people face many difficulties in their lives. Especially as you see, most of these disabled students are from remote countryside areas, if we don't help them, they can't have the chance to go on to higher education; so in the future they have to return home and become a burden on their families. Obviously, their physical situation doesn't suit agricultural labour.

Another concern was to soothe their souls through art. This is also very important. You know, when a person suddenly becomes disabled, it's a heavy blow, and sometimes he can't accept the reality and easily loses confidence and interest in life. We wanted to bring confidence and happiness back to them. Now it works so well. They don't consider themselves disabled; on the contrary, they feel they are very able in many respects. For example, in art, they are even more capable than many non-disabled schoolmates are. As you have noticed, among these students, you can't see desperation and anxiety. They are so active, happy and optimistic nowadays, but at the beginning in the ICU it was very different. The contrast is so great.

I think this project for me is not about doing a piece of artwork directly. It is something different to my artwork. However, they connect with each

other – the most important is the human concern. A contemporary artist should not stay numb to what is going on, should not just hide in his studio. Everything that happens in his life, around him in this society, has an impact on his mind and his art.

Yang: Can you say something about the difference between your work and this project?

Zhou: Some artists' works are directly engaged in social activity. They do their work through social action and have an immediate social impact. Maybe my work is less demonstrative and works more slowly. This project has immediate and direct effects. I can't say that the work of this project is my artwork. For instance, this is a group project, not my personal work. Nevertheless, the ideas are interlinked, and the way of working is also connected. For example, I obtain money and resources from my artwork and through that, I can support this project.

Yang: Do you mean that it seems not directly relate to your artwork, but it represents the artist's contemporary concern, the concern for humanity. From this point, your art and this project have a common viewpoint.

Zhou: Yes, exactly.

Yang: The basic method of the Art for the Disabled Scheme is to transport teaching aids, professional art instructors and books to the residence of the disabled students, often in the ruined area, to perform on-site art teaching, a so-called Mobile Art Classroom. Was it initially your idea?

Zhou: It came from a group discussion.

Yang: How did you get this idea?

Zhou: We initially thought of establishing an art school to gather together all the disabled students because it would be easy for instructors to teach as well as for students to learn from each other. But there were some practical difficulties. These disabled students are dispersed geographically; it's difficult, therefore, to gather them together, especially those severely disabled. The cost of establishing an art school for the disabled would be too high. Furthermore, those students are within the age range of "nine-year compulsory education" or senior middle school education. We can teach them art, but we can't take care of their other school subjects such as mathematics and language. They need compulsory full-time education and that must be undertaken in public schools; we therefore had the idea of *The Mobile Art Classroom*. It sounds like door-to-door delivery!

Hence, we made a simple plan. We had several stages according to their age groups; for those who want to apply for higher education, we assist them; for those junior groups, we focus on fostering their interest. That group of students enrolled in the Huaxin College was also our concern; we prefer that they study in the same college, so we could offer financial aid for barrier-free facilities on campus to make their study and daily life easier. Nowadays in China, no higher education institution would overtly reject disabled students;

however, in practice, there are many practical problems. In addition, even if higher education institutions do not refuse the disabled, the entrance exam standard for non-disabled and disabled students is the same and there are not any special favourable terms. Disabled students have to work much harder than others do. These disabled students study hard; they know that the Foundation is helping them and they cherish this opportunity. They are a close group and they stay together like brothers and sisters.

Yang: Yes, the idea of The Mobile Art Classroom is a fantastic idea because it's different from concentrated teaching in conventional art schools or classes. Furthermore, as you said, what you do is not only collecting money, you are actually organizing and implementing this project. Could you tell me more about it?

Zhou: The 5Colours Foundation is a philanthropic foundation; but different from many foundations that collect money and allocate money to one or more projects, we've been running this project ourselves. Running this project is our primary work, not collecting money. In addition, our money is mainly from art auctions rather than from public collecting. With the collected money, we did a lot of work and had concrete effects. We have held four big exhibitions and more small exhibitions for displaying the artworks made by these students. People can see how these students have grown from green hands into skilful painters and the big progress they have made. This can be a special attribute of our foundation. The ways to conduct a philanthropic work should be different from one to the next. As artists, we should find a way suitable for us. Another important issue is sustainability. It is easy to begin a philanthropic work because everyone is enthusiastic, but the more important thing is the sustainability. How about 10 years or 20 years afterwards? Even if the founders have died, the work should be still going on. This is not easy. We have kept a rather low profile and we are not inclined to over expand the scale of our foundation. If the scale is too big, it's difficult to control the work quality. We conduct our work meticulously and thoroughly, which is significant for the sustainability of this project. As a philanthropic organization, we are careful with the use of money, so our full-time staff members receive only a modest salary. Without passion, our staff members can't keep on working such a long time.

Yang: Sustainability is not easy, we see many one-time charity projects and soon or later they are gone. Since 2009, this project is ongoing. You have changed the idea of The Mobile Art Classroom into reality and have continuously worked on his project through these years. Can you talk about your work with this project?

Zhou: For example, many artists who undertake philanthropic work own popularity and social influence. In my case, I have some influence and artists and collectors trust me as well. With many people, together we worked on this project. Everyone can engage in philanthropic work and it depends on one's capacity. With a larger capacity, he can establish an organization for helping more people; with a small capacity, he can also help one or two persons in need. Many artists like Zhang Xiaogang donated artwork for helping us. Many young

artists, even if their works can't reach a high price, come to help us as volunteers. Though I was the founder of the 5Colours Foundation, the project is operated mainly by other staff-members. As you see, this is teamwork and it's different from my artwork.

Yang: You are a famous contemporary artist. In recent years, the media often call you an enthusiastic philanthropist. Artist and philanthropist, how do you look at your two identities?

Zhou: Art can have a healing function for many human issues. The purpose of our life is not only eating and dressing well, not only the material development and satisfaction. Life is colourful and meaningful; culture and art are for making people living better. Our philanthropic work always integrates with art. Recently we are helping a severely disabled boy from Nantong, Jiangsu province for his solo exhibition. With two arms and one leg amputated, he paints with only one foot. We are planning a tour exhibition for him all over China. This exhibition will tell society that he's doing creative work under such an incredible situation. I hope that a lot of people will come to visit this exhibition and they will not only appreciate the artwork, but also have a new understanding of life. We hope that this exhibition can have great social impact and educational significance to more people. Besides, in China, there is still a wrong perception of disabled people. One important purpose of our work is to raise public awareness of the disabled and other disadvantaged populations. This is not only the mission of artists, but the mission also of all people.

Art needs to reach more people; it's not only for the disabled. Art should play a more important role. As an artist, I believe that the combination of art and philanthropy is very meaningful. In a sense, an artist is a philanthropist; through his work, he's helping society, helping people by soothing their souls. That is why I say the combination of philanthropic work and art is significant. In the future, we plan to help more disabled artists to have their exhibitions, not only our own current students. We can bring encouragement for life to society through exhibitions. That will be good for all disabled students. That will have multiple effects.

Yang: The tenets of the Art for the Disabled are "to soothe the soul, inspire the creativity of disabled people, master skills and pursue life value via art". Here, we see the multiple goals of this project, how did you try to integrate different goals in the initial plan and implementation of this project?

Zhou: This project is not an art therapy project. However, in this project, art did function as a healing mechanism. People need to have confidence and interest in life. If one has confidence and interest in his life, many psychological problems can be resolved. Art can help. When you are drawing and painting, you are happy because you feel the enjoyment of creating ... like game-playing, it's a kind of complex mental activity. Teaching the disabled students to do art can firstly offer them a hobby, something to do to fill their life and drag them away from tragic daily life. After that, through studying art, they can go to study at college or university. You see, when they have achieved this, it has

helped a lot in the rebuilding of their self-confidence. Otherwise, if all their non-disabled classmates go to college and university while they can't go, they will feel so lost. This points to the need for an integration of healing and skills obtainment. For those youngsters, if they can continue their education, they can obtain self-confidence, at least for the current period; otherwise, there is no real healing effect.

In addition, you see their works, a lot of them depicted themselves buried under the ruins, the broken human body, limbs and collapsed buildings. These are from their experience. I don't know so much about art therapy, but I think that through the creation of art, we can let show our feelings. Art is a way to let off feelings; by expressing their feelings, negative feelings are released. In many other works, they also depicted the sea, the sunshine, their home, etc., which expressed the survival's love and hope for life.

The ultimate purpose is to help a person to obtain interest and self-confidence for life so that he can live better in the world. Letting off the feeling is one side, the other side is finding a new hope, a new supporting point – just like a lovelorn person, if he can find a new love, he can step out the shadow and then he's healed, otherwise he's always in the pain.

Yang: In my interviews with many students, when asked about their plan, most told me that they wish to do design work, or apply for civil service job, or do business work. I asked them if they would like to continue practising art after graduation, they said they would like to continue and take art as leisure, but not as a professional artist. What do you think about that?

Zhou: It fits in with our initial plan. Of course, we hope some of them could become good artists, it's quite possible, but that's not our main focus. Our purpose is to help them reach a better life in society. The overwhelming impression is that it is successful. Just a few days ago, one design agency came to ask us to introduce some students. The agency needs designers and meanwhile wants to give a hand to the work of helping the disabled. One student graduated this year and he soon found a design job. According to the students' current skills and knowledge, they can fulfil most work in the field of art and design. For example, though they move about with difficulties, they can still work in art and design agencies.

Yang: There is one question, nowadays many celebrities are doing philanthropic work, what do you think of this?

Zhou: I believe it is a positive sign. That points to social progress. The media pays a lot of attention to celebrities because of their popularity and appeal; once they do something, there will be great social influence. Our society needs this. Society needs more public figures standing out. There are not too many philanthropists and philanthropic organizations in China; on the contrary, there are too few. Maybe some celebrities conduct philanthropic work for the purpose of self-publicity, but that is not a big problem. The most important is if his action has really helped somebody in need. So long as he helps the people in need, and at the same time he obtains higher visibility, that would be OK.

Nevertheless, there are more and more people engaging in philanthropic work and that is a very good sign.