

Art of Healing and Sensitivity: “Feeling Arts”

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● What is “Feeling Arts”?

Feeling Arts (hereinafter referred to as “the Art”) is a composite experiential art created by Yoshihiro Kitamura, who combined paintings with illumination and music to express the following themes: earth, universe, life and celestial world. By casting lights of various colors upon a huge canvas where an abstract image is painted, subtle shades are created on the painting, giving it a sense of movement. Another essential component of the Art is the beautiful and soothing music and/or live songs played for the audience. The combination of painting, lights and music is controlled in a delicate manner to produce a healing effect. The Art is designed to evoke emotion in the audience. What people can see or feel in the Art may differ from person to person because, after all, the audience themselves give the final touch to the Art. The Art and everything surrounding it, namely, the people, the painting, the sound, and the lights, all resonate with each other to create one harmonious space, and give the audience the sense of healing.



<Hospice>

1 Activities of “Feeling Arts”

● Activities in Japan

After graduating from the Fine Arts Department in Osaka University of Arts, Yoshihiro Kitamura went to the US in 1980 to study more about creative activities. After returning to Japan, he produced Feeling Arts and started to conduct the Art activities. Pursuing the Art as a work of art, he has been giving public exhibitions domestically and abroad in medical (including hospices), welfare, and educational facilities; as well as, temporary housing units and reconstructed housings built after the Great Hanshin Earthquake; and also at medical and environment symposiums, academic conferences, workshops etc. His activities are not only

limited to involvements in art, medical field, welfare, and education. In 1995, after the Great Hanshin Earthquake, the “Feeling Arts” Volunteer Committee was established to enable the smooth running of public exhibitions.

● “Feeling Arts” 1000 Times Presentations Project ¹⁾

In April 2004, Kitamura started the 1000 Times Presentations Project. By November 2013, 990 presentations have been held at medical, welfare, and educational facilities. The project name derives from his aim to conduct 1000 presentations.



<Disabled Children Center>



<Nursing Home>



<Facility for Disabled>



<Hospice>

● International activities of “Feeling Arts”

Kitamura has given presentations in many Asian and European countries (listed below). His future plans are focused on promoting the Art in Asian and African countries at the grassroots levels and expanding its network. He hopes to meet various people around the world through the “Feeling Arts” and continue to enhance the interaction among people, draw the light (hope), and to inspire people to heighten their sensitivity and discover their true potential.

1985: International Scientific Exposition, Tsukuba '85, Japan

1988: Japan-Germany Center, Berlin, Germany

1998: Eye Hospital in Chittagong, Chittagong, Bangladesh

2001: National Nikkei Heritage Center, Vancouver, Canada

2001: The 13th World Transplant Sporting Games, Kobe, Japan

2002: First Global Community College, Nong Khai, Thailand

2002: Cancer Center, University of Arizona (Sponsored by Program in Integrative Medicine, University of Arizona), Tucson, U.S.A.



< Cancer Center, University of Arizona >



< Dr. Andrew Weil and Authors >

2003: Tucson Medical Center (Sponsored by Heart Science Foundation and Program in Integrative Medicine, University of Arizona), Tucson, U.S.A.

2003: Continuum Center for Health and Healing, Beth Israel Medical Center, New York, U.S.A.

2004: University of West Florida (Opening Ceremony of Japan House), Pensacola, U.S.A.

2004: Lake View Center, Baptist Health Care, Pensacola, U.S.A.

2004: Mut Mee Guest House (Nong Khai Rotary Club), Nong Khai, Thailand

2005: 2005 Special Olympics World Winter Games (co-sponsored by Art and Cultural Program), White Ring Sports Arena, Nagano, Japan

2005: Rongzhi Hotel, Malipo (Southeast of Wenshan Prefecture of Yunnan), China

2006: Health Science Academy of Klaten, Klaten, Indonesia

2006: Central Java Nursing Academy, Semarang, Indonesia

2007: Exhibitions to Victims of the Central Java Earthquake on May 2006, At Gading Daton Village of Bantul, Bantul, Indonesia

2007: Exhibitions to Caregivers of the Central Java Earthquake on May 2006, At Bantul RSD Hospital, Bantul, Indonesia



< Gading Daton Village of Bantul >



< The elders of the village and authors >

2007: Nursing Program, Faculty of Medicine, Diponegoro University, Semarang, Indonesia

2007: Central Java Nursing Academy, Semarang, Indonesia

2007: Ungaran Nursing Academy, Semarang, Indonesia

2007: Health Science Academy of Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

2007: Faculty of Nursing, Indonesia University, Jakarta, Indonesia

2007: Welfare Facility for Old People (Karya Bhakti), Jakarta, Indonesia

2007: Nursing Program, Faculty of Medicine, Diponegoro University, Semarang, Indonesia

2007: Welfare Facility for Children (Sos Desa Taruna), Jakarta, Indonesia

2007: Hospital (Harapan Kita), Jakarta, Indonesia



< Sos Desa Taruna >



< Harapan Kita Hospital >

2007: Primary School (Notre Dame Kembangan), Jakarta, Indonesia

2007: Hospital (Puri Mandiri Kedoya), Jakarta, Indonesia

2007: Primary School (Islam Cikal Harapan BSD), Jakarta, Indonesia

2008: Medical Clinic (pediatric clinic) in Kibera (slum areas), Nairobi, Kenya

2008: National Nurses Association of Kenya, Nairobi, Kenya

2008: Welfare Facility for Children (Matumaini Children's Home), Nairobi, Kenya

2008: Welfare Facility for Children (Saidia Furaha), Kitengela, Kenya



< Matumaini Children's Home >



< Saidia Furaha >

2009: Welfare Facility for Children (Hy Vong Children's Home), Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam

2009: Centre for Orthopaedic and Functional Rehabilitation in Ho Chi Minh City, Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam

2010: Midcity Model School (Primary School), Chittagong, Bangladesh

2010: Center for Social Research, Chittagong, Bangladesh

2010: Dongmyeong Welfare Center for Children, Seoul, Korea

2011: Balakot Public School (Primary School) in stricken area of 2005 Kashmir (North Pakistan) Earthquake, Balakot, Pakistan



< Balakot Public School in stricken area of 2005 Kashmir Earthquake >

2011: School of Special Education for Slow Learners and Mentally Challenged Individuals (Institute of Behavioral Psychology), Karachi, Pakistan

2012: Primary and Secondary School (Kivimaan Peruskoulu), Lahti, Finland

2012: Salpaus Further Education (Hanako Seminar Nov 2012), Lahti, Finland

2012: Omnia Vocational College, Espoo, Finland

2 “Feeling Arts” and Healing

Based on his experience, Kitamura²⁾ explains the healing effect of the Art as follows:

“I firmly believe that deep emotion gives people power to live. The Art inspires patients and families who are in great pain and distress, giving them the power to acknowledge and accept the way they are. Once they become at peace with themselves, their suffering eases and they regain the power to live, which helps speed up the natural healing process. The key to healing, I believe, is to accept the way you are and to live in harmony with the negative aspects within. This is something that I have been trying to express with my art work. Space is made up not only of light but also of shadow. Harmony is not just about beauty, it is about the coexistence of light and shadow. All forms of arts have healing power, but what makes the Art different from other forms of arts is that it does not reflect the creator’s message or story. Practically, the Art has different meanings to different people enabling everyone to reflect their own feelings on the Art.”

The Art and everything surrounding it, namely, the people, the paintings, the sound and the lights, all resonate with each other to create one harmonious space that can inspire and give positive feelings (pleasure) to people, encouraging them to unleash their imagination, accept the way they are, and be at peace with themselves. It is important to remember that the audience is allowed to make their own interpretation of the Art.

● “Feeling Arts” and Imageries

A general survey³⁾ to research what kind of images people were evoked by the Art had been conducted to 1,394 people who experienced the Art in the classes at universities, academic meetings, events etc. More than 50% of the people wrote down their imageries provoked by the Art in the questionnaire. Also, in the case of interactive presentations including the dialogue, more than 70% of the people expressed what they envisioned and felt. As a whole, the result obtained from the survey indicates that the Art provide the audience with opportunity to freely envision and express their own images. In addition to experiencing the Art, it is important to have some external influential factors to promote their imagination. The Art also has a similar effect on both genders and all age-groups.

On the other hand, according to the survey⁴⁾ conducted to 199 victims of the Great Hanshin Earthquake, approximately 90% of all the respondents gave some comments regarding the images that were inspired by the Art (Table 1) varying from “nature,” “gods,” “people,” “animals” to “past events”. The result of the survey shows that the people in pain and suffering, such as the victims of the earthquakes, were more willing to express the images inspired by the Art. This is only natural because those people generally tend to be more sensitive than others.

Table 1: Imageries Inspired by “Feeling Arts” and Proportions of Images Types

		Total (n=199)		Comments related to “comfort”(n=58)		Comments related to “deep emotion”(n=54)		No comments related to feelings(n= 63)	
Nature		83.0		81.1		61.2		101.6	
	Forests		28.7		27.6		16.7		42.9
	Ocean		20.1		19.0		13.0		25.4
	Mountains, Earth		14.1		12.1		16.7		12.7
	Sky, The universe		12.1		13.8		9.2		12.7
	Seasons		8.0		8.6		5.6		7.9
Gods		21.0		13.8		33.3		19.1	
People		16.0		15.5		18.5		20.6	
	Faces		8.0		5.2		11.2		11.1
	Personality		8.0		10.3		7.4		9.5
Animals		12.1		17.2		11.1		11.1	
Past events		11.6		8.6		18.5		9.5	
Other images		41.2		46.6		38.9		42.9	
Respondents providing one or more comments about the images inspired by the Art		185.0		182.8		181.5		204.7	
Respondents making no comments at all about the images inspired by the Art		9.5		10.3		11.1		7.9	

Values in this table are percentage.

● “Feeling Arts” and feeling

As a result of the general survey³⁾, Table 2 summarizes the degree of positive feelings inspired by the Art. The percentages of respondents indicating that they experienced either strong or moderate feelings of “deep emotion,” “comfort” and “hope” amounted to 70%, 80% and 50%, respectively. This result indicates that the Art inspires positive feelings (pleasure) in majority of the audience. No significant gender differences and age-group differences were detected.

Table 2: The degree of “deep emotion,” “comfort” and “hope” which the respondents felt through “Feeling Arts”

	Inspiration	Comfort	Hope
[1] Strong	23.1	40.2	12.7
[2] Moderate	47.8	40.7	37.2
[3] Minimal	16.4	7.9	32.8
[4] None	2.5	1.5	6.2
No response	10.2	9.7	11.1
Total (n=1394)	100.0	100.0	100.0

Values in this table are percentage.

● “Feeling Arts” and Narrative

Niregi⁵⁾ defines narrative therapy as follows: “The majority of clients who visit a therapist for a narrative therapy are confused and distressed, and they have their own story of how they bring in behavioral problems in the context of the society in which they live. The main purpose of a narrative therapy is to replace the old story arousing the problem with an alternative one having different perspectives.”

He describes the process of narrative therapy⁴⁾ as follows:

- listen to the narrative in which a client’s suffering lies;
- externalize the problems and separate them from the client; and
- replace the story with an alternative one.

A narrative told by an individual depicts his/her own understanding of certain behaviors. Externalizing the problem and replacing the story with an alternative one is a process of reinterpreting certain behaviors. This is exactly what the Art is trying to do, i.e. to externalize problems through images inspired (but not forced) by the Art and to find alternative meanings in the harmonious interpretation. The most challenging and mysterious aspect of narrative therapy is to generate alternative meanings through the externalization of problems. The greatest advantage of the Art is its power to inspire certain degrees of positive feelings (pleasure), which may encourage people to generate an alternative story.

Overall, the results obtained from the survey³⁾⁴⁾ suggest that the Art inspires positive feelings such as “deep emotion,” “comfort” and “hope” in the audience, giving them the opportunity to freely envision certain images in their minds. As stated above, the Art can also be very effective as a narrative therapy because the Art can, not only help externalize problems, but also generate alternative meanings through imagination and the positive feelings it inspires in the audience. Particularly, the art entrust itself to audience’s imagination in less forceful manner, yet in harmonious setting, which promotes “externalization of problem,” and “replacement with alternative story.”⁶⁾

● Deep Emotion and Harmony by “Feeling Arts”

“Deep emotion” can be categorized into two types, namely, the deep emotion that is “positively” evoked through the audience’s act of envisioning certain images in their minds, and the deep emotion that is “passively” evoked through beautiful music and lights accompanying the Art. People in pain and suffering, such as those devastated by an earthquake or patients/residents at medical and welfare facilities, are generally apt to be more sensitive than others and they; therefore, tend to get more actively involved in the process of creating their own imageries of what they want to see in the Art, which brings about “positively” evoked deep emotion. The Art affects all the people and things surrounding it, creating an atmosphere of harmony. There are very few external factors that may force the audience to feel or think in certain ways. The audience is practically free to envision whatever images that come into their minds. Reflecting on why such images have come into their minds helps them make a step forward to accept and live in harmony with the disharmonious aspects within.⁶⁾ As stated above, certain incentives could of course be essential in encouraging the audience to envision images in their minds. Yoshioka claimed that, although the Art is by itself very appealing to the audience, Kitamura’s attitude of non-denial and the minimal remarks on the Art further encourages the audience to free their minds and express what is inside their hearts.²⁾

● Heighten sensitivity of children: “Kids Feeling Arts”

“Kids Feeling Arts” is a program for children. Kitamura has given presentations at orphanages, schools for disabled children, institutions for handicapped children, hospital classes, nurseries, support centers for

child-raising; and has held events in children’s institutions, such as the Kids Plaza Osaka, Subaru Hall (Tondabayashi City), Panasonic Center (Tokyo), The Tokyo Metropolitan Children’s Hall, Warabekan (Tottori City), just to mention a few. Also, he has given presentations at elementary schools and orphanages in Indonesia. In the presentations for children, in addition to viewing the Art presentation, they can operate the illumination controller and enjoy the color changes which they created. Moreover, when children draw pictures after the Art activities, they are able to draw various pictures which display more sensitivity and are technically better drawn.

In such a way, great masterpieces have been drawn by children from 1 year old to elementary school students. The teachers and school staff that usually spend time with those children commented with much appreciation that this program, accompanying the presentation, does have an effect of making children emotionally stable and heighten their sensitivity.

● Comprehensive Learning of “Feeling Arts” in Special Schools

It is difficult to experience the illumination controller in terms of operability for disabled children using the regular system; hence, the interactive system has been developed so that all disabled children can operate the illumination controller easily and be proactive in taking part in the activities regardless of their disability level. With the cooperation of special schools (secondary), Kitamura has given the comprehensive learning of the Art and verified its effect ⁷⁾. The students who attended the class commented that they were deeply impressed by the art, and that it was simply a fun experience to be able to operate the lights and draw an abstract painting with the help of the system. Moreover, according to the analysis of the observational results by the teachers who pretty much know children’s behavior to the full extent, it is very good to have the mentally disadvantaged students experience using the illumination controller in the Art presentations and that it is possible to develop positive affectivity and intent such as “sensitivity,” “concentration,” “positive attitude,” “satisfaction” and “composure” through having a series of such workshop using a comprehensive learning activities. (viewing, controlling illuminations, drawing etc.).

● Achievement of varied drawings as a result of continuous “Feeling Arts” experience at child-raising support centers

In the presentations for children, they draw pictures after experiencing the Art. Children who have been experiencing the Art continuously at the support centers were analyzed as case study on how their pictures changed after experiencing the Art, and its effects are considered. The following are two such distinctive cases ⁸⁾.

(1) The sample of a child who developed artistic talent (4 year-old girl, drew 7 pictures in 6 experiences)

This girl drew many pictures which strongly highlight the uniqueness throughout all the presentations. The pictures in the early stage are generally disorganized and lacking unity of tone, mainly abstracts using dark colors. Many of those pictures can be construed as expression of anxiousness and stress, but the more she experienced the Art, the more she drew well-balanced and sophisticated abstract pictures. At the end, she drew landscape picture with herself in the flower garden, showing changes in her drawings from that of disorganized to well-organized peaceful expression. In terms of variation of the pictures which was originally very unique, they became even more original and well-balanced, indicating that the Art inspired the development of the girl’s artistic talent.



<Early phase example of developing aptitude>



<5th example of developing aptitude>

(2) The case of the subject whose drawings reflected the mental state at the time of drawing (12 year-old boy, drawing 10 pictures in 4 experiences)

His style of drawing is consistent and shows strength of creating original pictures. However, the motif in the pictures varies from day to day and the care he takes in drawing also differs from day to day, which means that the images he drew reflected his mental state.



<Early stage example of reflecting mental state>



<4th example of reflecting mental state>

● Comparison of drawing after experiencing “Feeling Arts” in Japan and Indonesia

In August 2007, Indonesian elementary school students had a chance to experience the Art⁹⁾. Therefore, the difference of the drawing between Japanese and Indonesian students was analyzed after experiencing the Art. The differences in the drawings were examined based on originality, dynamism, impact, and so on, from a subjective viewpoint; and on thoroughness, strength of stroke, graduation, percentage of blank space, main colors, total number of colors, and so forth, from an objective viewpoint. As a result from the subjective viewpoint, the drawings by Indonesian elementary students showed a higher originality, and from the objective viewpoint the difference were apparent in terms of the main colors and the total number of colors used. Table 3 shows that Indonesian students were using overly abundant colors.

Table 3: Number of the colors in drawings after experiencing “Feeling Arts”

	Indonesian elementary school students (n=86)	Japanese elementary school students (n=23)
3 colors or less	3.4	47.8
4-5 colors	23.3	26.1
6-7 colors	23.3	17.4
8-9 colors	31.4	8.7
10 colors or more	18.6	0
Total	100	100

Values in this table are percentage.



<Drawings by Japanese elementary school students>



<Drawings by Indonesian elementary school students>

● Comments from volunteers participating in “Feeling Arts”⁶⁾

(1) Itsumi Asahina (Feeling Arts vocal therapist, Osaka School of Music)

Among the places I have visited through my involvement with the Feeling Arts 1000 Tour Project, there is

one place that has left an especially strong impression on me, and that is the psychiatric institution for children. I had never visited institutions of this type before and was quite shocked to see children locked up inside the old and dark building with barred windows. The children were expressionless, and there was a very strange atmosphere about them. They appeared to be locked up, not only physically but also, inside themselves as if the door to their hearts is tightly shut. Some were just roaming around in the corridors. I could not help but wonder what could possibly have happened to those kids and why they had become the way they were. They seemed so helpless that I simply did not know what to do.

At that time, the only song I could sing properly was "My Grandfather's Clock". My strong wish in singing the song was to convey a message of love through the song, bring a smile back on the faces of the children, and be at one with them. I felt it was the Art that actually connected me with the children and united everything and everyone present in that room in harmony. The room was lit with warm light and there was an atmosphere of kindness and comfort in the air. I saw the keenness in the children's eyes and I could tell that they were all listening to my song as if they were responding to my strong wish. Before long, we were all resonating one another and singing together. They were so innocent, so amazing!

My heart went out to them. They must miss their family, being parted from them and were struggling everyday to cope with their psychological problems. The only thing I could do was sing for them, and yet they thanked me sincerely and told me that I sang great. How happy they made me feel! I was truly encouraged by these kids. I think of them often still, and they remain a great source of inspiration for me. I just cannot thank them enough.

The truth is that, on that day in front of those kids, I felt truly helpless. All I could do was convey the message of love through one song. How happy it made me feel when I felt the children's enthusiasm and eagerness to join me! It gave me a great sense of confidence to know that even an insignificant person like me could do something to help people.

"Feeling Arts" creates an atmosphere of harmony among people with various feelings and thoughts. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could all live thankfully and meaningfully as if every moment is special and irreplaceable?

(2) Ayako Matsuura (Feeling Arts vocal therapist, Osaka School of Music)

I would like to refer the letter I received from a relatively young woman I met at a hospice (Palliative Care Department, Hikone Municipal Hospital) during the presentation.

"I was thrilled by the Art. I saw the stars in the middle of the painting. The evening stars glowed as the light moved across the image while "When You Wish upon a Star" was being played. I was reminded of the fact that these stars exist for everyone, inspiring love and hope in the hearts of all people. I have listened to "When You Wish upon a Star" so many times before, but never realized that the song was about the stars that shine in our hearts until now. We all have these shining stars in our hearts, but unfortunately, they are obscured by the harsh realities of life. The Art reminded me once again of the true brightness of these stars. I want every child and adult with physical and/or psychological problems to realize how precious and irreplaceable these stars are, how they shine with love and hope, how he/she can make them shine again and brighten everything that surrounds him/her, and how his/her disabilities can only make these stars shine brighter. Despite the fact that the Art utilizes many high-technology equipments, it gives out very warm feelings. Perhaps this is due to the material (mud) with which the image is painted and the use of live audio instead of just a song from a CD. I liked the mauve color because it reminded me of the early morning sky when the sun has not yet come out, but the sky is dimly lit by the approaching sun, ready to awaken from

darkness. Lastly, I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to participate in the presentation. I am very grateful to everyone at the presentation for reminding me of a very important thing (Midori Nadamoto)."

During the presentation, the young woman who wrote this letter was holding the hand of an elderly woman whom she met for the first time that day at the same hospital ward. I still remember the enthusiasm in her eyes as she watched the Art. After the presentation was over, the old lady sitting next to her told her that she had always liked the song "Hometown" and wanted to sing together, but could not because of her throat condition. The young woman then took the old woman's hands and told her that she had the same throat condition, but that it could be cured by surgical operation, and reassured her that everything was going to be fine and that once the surgery was over, they would both be able to sing again. I knew that the young woman was suffering from a serious condition. I was moved by the strength and kindness that she showed towards the old lady who happened to sit next to her during the presentation. Her willingness to help might have come from the fact that she and the old lady were both suffering from the same condition. In the end, they were both encouraging and reassuring each other. Looking at them, my heart was filled with emotion and I was lost for words.

They both returned to their rooms looking cheerful. I wonder what beautiful images they had envisioned in their minds during their experience of the Art. Although they were looking at the same image, they might have perceived totally different things from it, because, after all, a certain reality can have a different meaning to different individuals depending on their mental state. Looking at these women, I felt that true happiness is not what the eyes can see, but what the heart can feel. I will probably never forget the day I met these two women.

● Message of recommendation for "Feeling Arts"

(1) Dr. Hinohara's comments on "Feeling Arts"

"I would like to introduce a wonderful type of art to you. It creates a visionary world of beauty in your mind with lights, sound, and an abstract painting on canvas. The art created there changes completely depending on the state of your mind. In that, you are guided to the world of your own imagination. Being so deeply wrapped up in this pure world of art, I think you can even forget where you are, which eventually brings you peace of mind."

Shigeaki Hinohara, MD (Chair, Board of Trustees, St. Luke's International Hospital; Chair, Board of Trustees, Japanese Music Therapy Association; Advisor, Feeling Arts Academy)

(2) Dr. Weil's comments on "Feeling Arts"

"The experience was very meditative. At the beginning, I concentrated on images on the canvas. Later, my attention turned inward, and I became very relaxed. At the end, I had a feeling of peace and happiness. I believe that this kind of presentation for the eye, ear, and mind has great therapeutic potential as well and could be very useful for many kinds of patients."

Andrew T. Weil, MD (Director, Program in Integrative Medicine, University of Arizona; Advisor, Feeling Arts Academy)

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