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Making Art and Recording Public History: A Case Study from the “Future’s History” Activity

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Abstract

This is a case study of a durational art activity, “Future’s History,” organized in a space called “Bangsaen Museum (ad-hoc).” Inspired by the tale of Butades, who traced the shadow of her loved one, this activity recruited 50 local participants to draw with the aid of a projector and, at times, the assistance of the author. These drawings were exhibited alongside other artworks during the “Gallery’s Night Bangsaen” festival. The objectives of this project are 1) to create a platform for Bangsaen residents to share their own views through self-made drawings without relying on intermediaries and 2) to offer an alternative way of connecting with art through the act of drawing, especially for those with limited opportunities to access the art world. The method includes artistic experiment and participatory observation. Data collection was in the form of field notes, photographs, and videos, which were analysed descriptively. Through the activity, participants overcame their fear of the drawing process and revealed themselves through self-portraits and portraits of loved ones, especially those no longer with them. They represented the residents of Bangsaen, who have their own reasons for staying, sometimes away with their beloved. Through the activity, the space was temporarily transformed into a public space where the artist is no longer a sole hero, but part of a community of like-minded individuals. Although not intended as historical documentation, the participants’ drawings captured relationships, grief, and memory. Viewed collectively, they reveal an emotional landscape of Bangsaen rarely represented in formal records, offering fragments of lived experience that may contribute to a broader sense of public history.

Keywords Bangsaen; Public history; Durational art; Participatory art; Process art

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Introduction

Bangsaen, or Saen Suk sub-district, was a quiet fishing village in the early 20th century. Due to its proximity to the Bangkok metropolitan area, it became a tourist destination and university town in the 1970s, following the founding of Burapha University. Today, it remains relatively calm on weekdays, when students attend classes and the locals go to work but becomes lively on weekends when tourists arrive.

In 2019-2020, Bangsaen became temporarily quiet as students returned home to study online and tourism halted. Local businesses (and many citizens) survived due to the rise of mobile delivery applications such as Grab. When people returned in 2021, the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Burapha University, decided to organize the festival “Gallery’s Night Bangsaen” in collaboration with the Embassy of France in Bangkok. The idea was to display art in cafés and restaurants to welcome visitors and announce that businesses were still alive while opening new venues to showcase the school’s output in arts and design. The theme of the first event was “Art is the Solution.” Many faculty members and students actively participated in this festival, strengthening the bond between the school and local businesses. The festival repeated in 2022 with the theme “Now,” in 2024 with the theme “Fuse”, and in 2025 with the theme “Art Incantare”.

As the public history of contemporary Bangsaen had yet to be collected or presented from the perspective of its residents, and with the 2022 festival theme being “Now”—three faculty members who co-teach the history of Western art, namely Phandharakrajadej, Lekutai, and Kunphunsup, proposed that the time was ripe for an artistic intervention. We converted an unused house into a public gallery to present artworks regarding the past, present, and future of Bangsaen, collected from its residents. The space was called “Bangsaen Museum (ad-hoc)” due to its temporary nature. We hope that someday there will be a permanent museum where the public history of Bangsaen will be told and retold as the city continues to thrive. (Phandharakrajadej et al., 2022)

This article presents a case study of the author’s post-studio artwork, *Future’s History*, which was part of the exhibition in *Bangsaen Museum (ad-hoc)*. The artwork took the form of a durational art activity, inviting 50 local participants to create drawings with the aid of a projector and occasional assistance from the author. Participants included locals with and without artistic backgrounds who voluntarily joined the activity after learning about the project on social media. Each drawing was completed within one hour and exhibited adjacent to the activity space during the Gallery’s Night festival. Afterwards, the author mailed each drawing back to its maker, along with a certificate of participation recognizing their status as artists.

Objectives

- 1) To create a platform for Bangsaen residents to share their own views through self-made drawings without relying on intermediaries, which can offer fragments of lived experience that may contribute to a more inclusive sense of public history as Bangsaen is not just a tourist destination but also a place where people live. This activity is not intended as historical documentation, but rather as an opening of space where certain forms of public history may organically emerge from the bottom up.
- 2) To offer an alternative way of connecting with art through the act of drawing, especially for those without an artistic background or limited opportunity to access the art world. This activity is not intended to replace the experience of viewing art or engaging in art therapy, as there are many possible ways to encounter aesthetic experience depending on one's individual context or circumstances. For many who live in small towns, being creative may be the most convenient way to experience art, aside from viewing it online.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of Future's History began with the theme of the Gallery's Night festival, which was "Now." This theme was interpreted in relation to three intersecting factors: (1) the current conditions of Bangsaen, particularly post-COVID; (2) references to related artworks and practices; and (3) the specificity of the exhibition site.

These analyses occurred during the pre-production phase and were necessarily compressed—both conceptually and logistically—due to limited budget and time. The resulting activity functioned as a focused intervention: a one-hour drawing session facilitated by the artist using a projector and personal interaction. This minimal format allowed participation without requiring prior artistic skills, making it accessible to locals.

Conceptually, the activity acted as a prism receiving diverse personal stories from Bangsaen residents and refracting them into a broader reflection on public consciousness and the essence of community. Rather than producing a singular narrative or object, the work allowed ephemeral moments and individual contributions to shape a diffuse, shared sense of presence in post-pandemic Bangsaen. The process reflects a post-studio, process-based approach in which meaning emerges not from isolated creation, but through interaction, temporality, and situated participation.

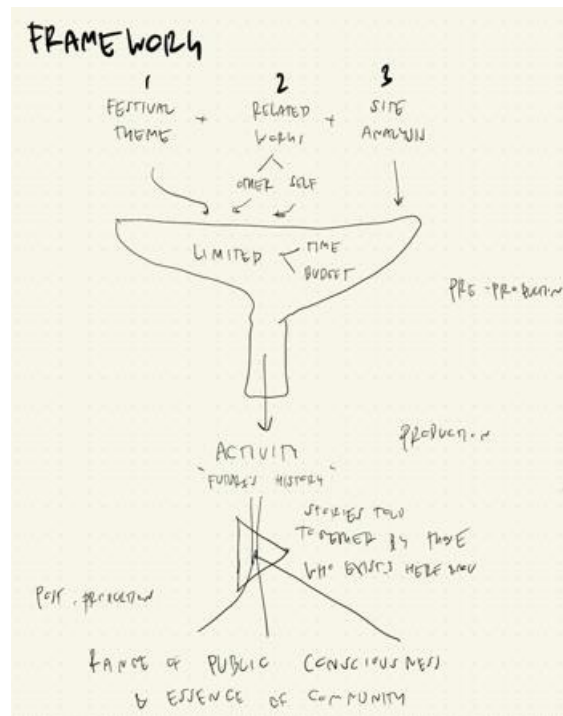


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework (Kunphunsup, 2022)

Bangsaen “Now”, Site of Exhibition and Related Artworks

The philosopher Henri Bergson (1936), quoted by Arin Rungjang (2023), stated that “Between ourselves and our own consciousness, a veil is interposed, a dense veil for the common man, a thin, almost transparent veil for artist and poet.” What is unknown to consciousness but known to the self is, therefore, the knowledge uncovered by art. Rungjang, a well-known contemporary artist from Thailand, further explained that when the artwork reveals what is covered or eclipsed by dominant discourses, a particular type of truth or knowledge emerges. This is the type of knowledge the author believed to be embedded in the everyday experiences of people in Bangsaen, awaiting exploration. (Rungjang, 2023)

Historically, Bangsaen has been remembered as a seaside town for weekend recreation. Over one million tourists visit this city annually. Research related to Bangsaen in recent years focuses mainly on tourism, environmental impact, and tourist behavior (Boonsiritomachai & Phonthanukitithaworn, 2019; Thushari et al., 2017; Pruksorranan et al., 2020). However, seaside tourism is just one of Bangsaen’s many aspects. As Burapha University accommodates over 30,000 students each year and more than 2,000 full-time staff, this city is where many start living away from their family for the first time. Bangsaen is also a permanent home to over 40,000 registered residents, some of whom must decide, like the rest of the country’s citizens, whether to stay in their hometown or move to Bangkok. And there are even more undocumented residents who move to Bangsaen for work.

Living outside Bangkok requires surviving with fewer public facilities and cultural opportunities. Vehicle ownership is necessary, and there are fewer options for work, education, and healthcare. However, staying in Bangsaen has benefits apart from being close to nature. The town, though small, is partly urbanized and quite convenient. The lower population density means a more relaxing atmosphere, while the cost of living is still affordable. Many other reasons, such as having family members or some mission to complete, may encourage people to stay in Bangsaen. This is the author's impression of Bangsaen, but it is not yet the history.

History, according to Hegel (quoted by Evans, 2018), is the record of the dialectic process where the old meets its opposition and transforms into the new. The changes in each period collectively contribute to the overall transformation. Things are dead when they stop transforming. Meanwhile, the public, according to Arendt (1969), is the arena where multiple heroes emerge and interact, exchanging many stories. Therefore, the public history should not be a story told by a single authoritative figure but should rather be written from multiple perspectives. Ricoeur (2004) further elaborated that our perception of the past involves both history and memory. Memory is a representation of something that no longer exists, yet it can become a shared experience among those who inhabit the same world. When others remember similar events alongside us, it affirms the validity of our own memories. History, on the other hand, enables our memories to coexist with those of others, especially when those memories differ, by opening a space for dissensus. In this way, history broadens our perception of the past, shifting it from a self-centered concern to a more inclusive view of change. This is how we can fulfil our duty of being fair to others' memories (Ricoeur, 2004).

Phu Kradart, or Thanat Thammakaew, addressed a similar issue in his novel *24-7/1* (24 hours, seven days, in one week), which entered the final lists of the SEA Write Awards in 2022. He deliberately let his characters tell their own stories in similar proportions, so his book is not a history, or a story told through one person's eyes, but rather a public history told by multiple, sometimes opposing, characters. (Kradart, 2020) This technique allows readers to look at the story from all angles and decide what to agree with. The technique is not new in narrative art forms and can be found in famous films such as *Rashomon* (Kurosawa, 1950) and *Hero* (Yimou, 2002). It is also close to the triangulation process in research, where the conclusion is made after comparing information from different sources or analyzing data with various perspectives. In documentary filmmaking, it is akin to following multiple characters and showing their experiences simultaneously for comparison. This paradigm guides the author's thinking in this project, that she must work with other residents of Bangsaen if she wants the artwork to reflect the experience of being in Bangsaen now.

The author is especially interested in a combination of durational art, process art, and participatory art, which can be grouped under the umbrella term “Post-studio art”. Post-studio art refers to artistic practices that take place outside the traditional studio context, where the artist is not required to work alone, and the boundaries between creation and participation are fluid. This approach can be found in *Conference of Christmas Cactus* (2001) and *Dash of Spider Plants* (2004) by Denise Ziegler. These works do not emphasize technical skill or the expressive quality of the art object, but instead prioritize the concept and audience participation. In such works, the artist functions as a planner and director of the creative process, while participants are integral to the work’s unfolding. The essence of artwork lies in its immaterial and impermanent nature. (Ziegler, 2010) Similarly, in *Future’s History*, what is collectively created in the present will be perceived in the future - hence the title reflects the project’s approach and conceptual paradigm.

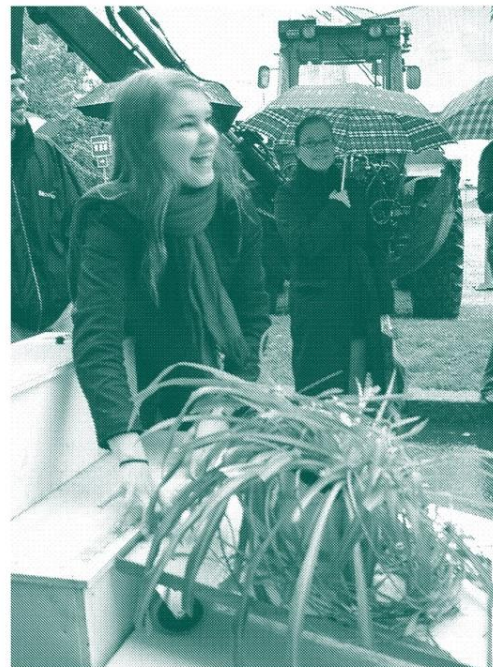


Denise Ziegler, *Conference of Christmas Cactus*, 2001. Plant installation: Christmas cactuses (Schlumbergera) brought from private homes. Gallery Sculptor, Helsinki, Finland.



Denise Ziegler, *The Change of the Spider Plants*, 2004. Event: Downhill race of spider plants, Anti Festival, Kuopio, Finland.

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Denise Ziegler, *The Change of the Spider Plants*, 2004. Event: Downhill race of spider plants, Anti Festival, Kuopio, Finland.

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Figure 2. *Conference of Christmas Cactus* and *Dash of Spider Plants* (Denise Ziegler, 2010)

The project is also influenced by the physicality of the exhibition site, the Bangsaen Museum (ad-hoc). This space was converted from an unused house on the main street of Bangsaen, which originally served as the town's first gas station and the family home of a resort keeper. Located within walking distance from the beach and Burapha University, the house is in a highly accessible area. With the approval of the house’s owner and the school’s support, the author and two colleagues managed the clean-up process and divided the space into three areas to display artworks regarding the past, present, and future of Bangsaen.



Figure 3. *Bangsaen Museum (ad-hoc)*. Phandharakrajadej, Lekutai & Kunphunsup (2022)

As the present is closest to now, it was decided that this part of the exhibition would be the first zone that audiences encounter. It consists of three rooms divided by a glass panel, covering approximately 50 square meters. At night, two rooms are visible from the main street and thus suitable as display areas. During the daytime, the space is illuminated by natural light, with a partially dark zone in the middle room where there is no window. For the author, this dark zone signifies a private realm where nothing would be judged as embarrassing, making it suitable for sensitive activities such as deep conversation and making art.

Drawing may be the most basic art skill of all. It is a natural activity for some, especially children. However, for adults who believe that drawing should be realistic, it often seems like a daunting task. If strength is a personal quality that empowers a hero to leave their private hiding place and emerge in public, drawing skill has been considered the strength of an artist since the Renaissance. The ability to draw realistically often brings confidence that one's artwork will be appreciated and admired by the public. This artistic strength, like heroic strength, must be diligently practiced to achieve a higher level of proficiency.

But what does it take to practice drawing? One must be able to make a living by other means for a period of time until their drawings can be sold. Practicing art then requires support from family, school, or sponsors. Consequently, drawing seems intimidating for many who have no access to the support. Nevertheless, in the tale of the origin of image-making written by Pliny the Elder (Kenaan, 2013), it did not take much practice to draw, as Butades, a daughter of a potter, simply traced the shadow of her lover on the wall. This story inspired the author to create a process where participants can overcome their apprehension and find their own artistic strength through guided practice and preparation.

In her previous work "Love and Remembrance" (Kunphunsup, 2021), the author found that it was relatively easy for participants with no artistic training to draw with the aid of a projector and, at times, the author. When participants who had lost their loved ones focused on tracing the photographs projected onto the drawing surface, they no longer try to create a realistic likeness of the deceased. Instead, they simply spent time observing the lines in the pictures and marking the lines' positions with paint. This process seemed to help them cope with grief by providing an opportunity for them to look closely at the deceased again and then be aware that the loving memories still exist, and for the community to reassure them that the bond with their loved ones continues despite the loss. Furthermore, the project could be possible within a small budget. In this case, the author chose the Chinese ink and unbleached cloth as drawing material for their visual quality, convenience of storage, and nontoxic smell.



Figure 4. Love and Remembrance (Kunphunsup, 2021)

Methodology and Procedures

This study employed the methods of artistic experiment and participatory observation. By artistic experiment, the author refers to an iterative process where previous art-making experiences guide the continuation or cessation of activities spontaneously. Participatory observation involved the author taking on a dual role as both observer and member of the 'artists' team.' Consequently, the creative process could be unconsciously synthesized into the photographs and videos. Simultaneously, the author also recorded conscious perception into field notes. These artefacts from the activity were analysed descriptively to explore the themes and motivations in the participants' drawings and to examine how the activity transformed a private space into a public forum for artistic expression and fostered connections among people. Participants provided informed consent, and their privacy was protected throughout the study.

Procedures could be divided into three phases: pre-production, production, and post-production. It should be noted that while working on this project, the author was also responsible for teaching nine hours per week and fulfilling other requirements of the school, while raising two children who live in Bangkok (which is 80 kilometers away). The project began no sooner than 17 days prior to the production phase, and the total budget was 10,000 THB. The procedures were designed with this condition in mind. Below are the procedures in each phase, not including the organization of Bangsaen Museum (ad-hoc).

Pre-production Phase:

1. Designed the overall process for the activity.
2. Prepared and tested the required equipment and materials.
3. Recruited participants through social media channels (Line groups, Facebook pages).
4. Created a Google form for participants to indicate availability and a Google sheet to show the schedule.
5. Confirmed appointments with participants in advance.

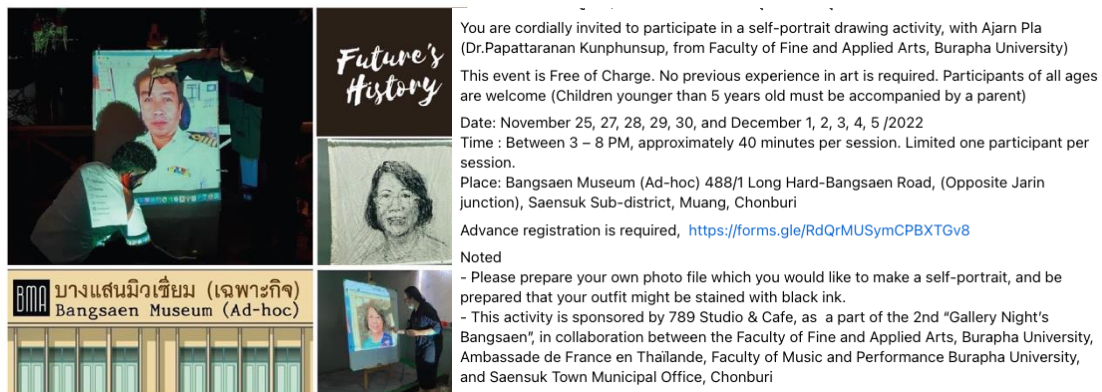


Figure 5. Call for participation on Facebook page of the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Burapha University, posted on November 22, 2022 (Kunphunsup, 2022)

Production Phase:

1. Participants arrived at Bangsaen Museum (ad-hoc) according to the schedule. There were five sessions daily, between 3 pm – 8 pm, during the ten days of the Gallery's Night Bangsaen festival 2022. (November 25th – December 5th, 2022)
2. Participants selected photographs for projecting onto a drawing surface (80cm x 80cm unbleached cloth), then began to trace the photographs. Each session of drawing was limited to under one hour.
3. The author provided instructions and assisted participants with drawing using Chinese ink and brushes.
4. The process was documented in photographs and video recordings.

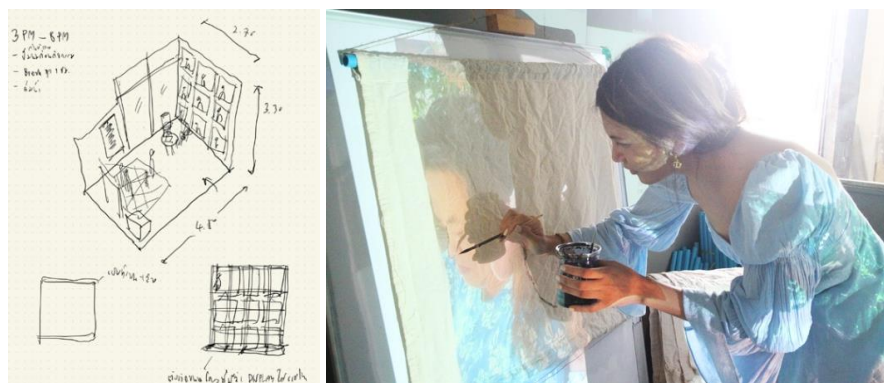


Figure 6. Sketches of the Activity (Left) and the Process (Right), (Kunphunsup, 2022)

Post-production Phase:

1. Collected all drawings from the exhibition.
2. Mail the drawings to participants with a certificate of participation.



Figure 7. Certificate of Participation (Kunphunsup, 2022)

After reflecting on the festival's theme, exhibition site, related artworks, and resource limitations, the author decided on a process where participants are invited to select their own photographs for projection onto a drawing surface using a computer and a projector. The author then provided the participants with Chinese ink, brushes, unbleached cloth, and instructions for tracing and creating the drawing. The author would draw alongside some participants to help them become familiar with the drawing process, but if participants were comfortable drawing on their own, they were encouraged to do so. The activity and the drawings could be observed in Bangsaen Museum (ad-hoc) as part of the Gallery's Night Bangsaen festival. Once the exhibition concluded, the drawings were sent to the participants along with a certificate of participation. In this way, it is possible for the residents of Bangsaen to become artists in this festival, with or without previous artistic training.



Figure 8. QR Code of the Timelapse Video and Screen Shots of the Video, Taken by the Author with the Permission from Participants (Kunphunsup, 2022)

During the activity, participants became acquainted with the drawing process through three steps. First, they traced the parts of the images that seem the least intimidating, such as the hair or outlines of the face or clothing. As they gained confidence, they proceeded to trace the details of the facial features. After approximately 30 minutes of tracing, most participants felt confident enough to draw without the projected image, instead referring to the reference image on their smartphone screen. By the end of the hour, the participants would sign their work and take a picture with their completed drawings.



Figure 9. Screenshots from Video Recordings (*Not Included in the Timelapse*), (Kunphunsup, 2022)

Results

The subjects of the drawings can be divided into three groups. The first group consists of the participants' self-portraits, mostly in a frontal position. (Figure 10) The second group includes self-portraits of participants depicting themselves together with their loved ones, or sometimes just their loved ones who are currently with them. (Figure 11) The third group comprises portraits of the participants' beloveds who are not presently with them (Figure 12).

The portraits in group 1 (Figure 10) represent a wide range of individuals, showcasing diversity in age, gender, and appearance. This suggests a theme of inclusivity and the celebration of different identities within the community. Bangsaen has always been a family-friendly place, as there are recreational options where all age groups can enjoy, such as the aquarium, beaches, cafés, and restaurants. Additionally, Burapha is one of the LGBTQ friendly universities where students are allowed to dress according to their preferred gender, even in the graduation ceremony. The expressions in these portraits convey the states of being at peace with oneself, from happy, confident, calm, and content, to a thoughtful and mildly sad state. This may reflect the participants' feelings of living in Bangsaen in 2022. Meanwhile, the author's 'handwriting' can be seen in most drawings, except in the

case of participants who came with children, who would then be able to draw together without the author's assistance.



Figure 10. Participants' Drawings, Group 1 (Kunphunsup, 2022)

The portraits in group 2 (Figure 11) seem to represent a slightly different theme. As they often depict pairs or groups, such as family and friends, the theme could be love and connection. Expressions from the portraits in this group seem happier compared to those of the first group. There is a sense of happiness, joy, and comfort in being together. The author's 'handwriting' could be found much less in this group, indicating that the participants in this group were more confident in drawing. Meanwhile, the styles of depiction could be found in a wider range, from semi-abstract, expressionistic to realistic. In the author's view, being with their loved ones encourages participants to be bolder in revealing themselves.



Figure 11. Participants' Drawings, Group 2 (Kunphunsup, 2022)

Portraits in group 3 (Figure 12) consist of the people loved by the participants, who might not actually be in their lives. For example, three of the portraits in this group were traced from photographs of Korean idols. Two were the participants' deceased parents, and some were the loved ones who live in other part of Thailand. The theme in this group is longing and sacrifice, as the participants must continue to be strong and live their best lives despite being away from their loved ones.



Figure 12. Participants' Drawings, Group 3 (Kunphunsup, 2022)

Statistically, the activity engaged 50 groups of participants, ranging in age from 4 to 68, primarily living in Chonburi province. Over 60% of the participants were faculty members, students, alumni, and staff from various departments of Burapha University. Additionally, there were also long-term residents and families with children. Tourists comprised a mere 4% of the participants. Some participants attended in groups of 2-4 individuals, with each group able to create 1-3 drawings within an hour. And 76% of participants opted to collaborate with the author during the drawing process.

Interestingly, most participants indicated that they love drawing, although they could afford to invest time in practicing different degrees. The majority of participants in this project came from the non-art field, such as health sciences, education, law, and business. As they work hard to fulfill their career goals, being able to draw seems like a new experience that gives them solace and energy. The author heard similar stories from the participants that they have been wanting to draw, but it is rather hard to find a venue that allows them to make art while working to support themselves and their families. They seem to be highly aware of who they are and what they want to be, although it comes with the cost of sacrificing some passion. This is why the author sent the certificate of participation along with their drawings to remind the participants that they, too, can make art and display their works at the art festival. It also serves as a token of being accepted into the art community. And after the activity, some participants still contacted the author to make art together or discuss our artworks and ideas. They became a loose and small network of individuals who share similar experiences.

Discussion

The *Future's History* activity successfully provided a platform for 50 Bangsaen residents to engage in a meaningful artistic experience. While participants did not set out to produce historical accounts, personal memories and personal resonance nonetheless emerged organically during the process. The resulting drawings collectively conveyed messages of love, whether directed toward oneself, others, or those no longer present. This public expression of affection and self-acceptance reflects the project's aim to democratize art and affirm personal narratives within a shared space. In some cases, participants used their drawing to tell stories of personal sacrifice, such as giving up private passion in pursuit of larger responsibilities. The act of participating then became a quiet declaration of courage. As Arendt (1969) suggests, the public realm is where individuals appear before others, not merely as members of a group but as unique beings capable of speech and action. In this context, each participant who chose to draw publicly took part in this act of appearance. (Arendt, 1969) These gestures, though modest in scale, align with Arendt's idea of heroism in the public sphere, where the act of stepping forward contributes to the fabric of plurality. By transforming a private space into a public art venue, the project created a space where participants could reveal personal truths through visual expression, contributing fragments of lived experience to a more inclusive understanding of Bangsaen's public history.

This study remains limited in scope, as it was not able to reach certain segments of Bangsaen's population, particularly older residents who are non-digital natives and service-sector workers. Interestingly, these groups were more visibly represented in Tawan Wattuya's work, which also took place during the Gallery's Night Bangsaen festival. Wattuya's watercolor portraits reflect a wide range of ages and genders, likely due in part to the choice of location (the beach) and schedule (weekend), which attracted both locals and tourists. However, the role of the audience in Wattuya's project was

limited to that of a model—someone who is looked at, rather than someone who creates. In contrast, Future’s History was designed to offer an alternative way of connecting with art—through making, not just viewing or being represented. For people with limited access to the art world, particularly those living in small towns like Bangsaen, the act of drawing may be the most direct and convenient way to engage with art, aside from viewing it online. Some participants affirmed the author’s observation that accessing art exhibitions in Bangkok is challenging, due to distance, time, or unfamiliarity with the art world.

Future post-studio art projects could build on this shift—from offering participants visibility to offering them authorship. As the artist, I find joy in drawing—not because of the outcome, but because of the act itself: the quiet happiness of making something from within. Through this project, I hoped to share that experience with others, particularly those who may not see themselves as part of the art world. There is a simple but powerful feeling in realising that one has the capacity to create. Much like the delight people find in generating Ghibli-style images through AI tools in early 2025, something is deeply satisfying in becoming the maker, even for just a moment.

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Authors' Bio

Papattaranan (Pla) Kunphunsup is an artist and academic interested in exploring the so-called 'dichotomies' such as visual and sound, arts and sciences, theory and practice, digital and analog, neurotypical and neurodivergent, and so on. She holds a PhD in Visual Arts and Design from Burapha University, an MA in Communication Arts from New York Institute of Technology, and a B. Arch in Architecture from Chulalongkorn University. Currently, she is a lecturer at the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Burapha University. She works in the form of academic research, articles, drawings, graphic design projects, animation, and short documentary films. Her interdisciplinary practice explores grief, memory, and creative self-disclosure through participatory and post-studio approaches. She focuses on artmaking as a form of agency, especially under social, emotional, or material constraint.