



Project 2 AGO *Presentation*

Jamie Tse, Melissa Leung, Jimmy Nguyen
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About *us*

Our project focused on how wellness as a concept is articulated in museum practice as free choice learning sites.

We wanted to build a short program within the AGO that would improve the wellbeing of all AGO visitors that participated in our three-part program. As Education majors, we also wanted to incorporate an educational aspect in each of our activities.

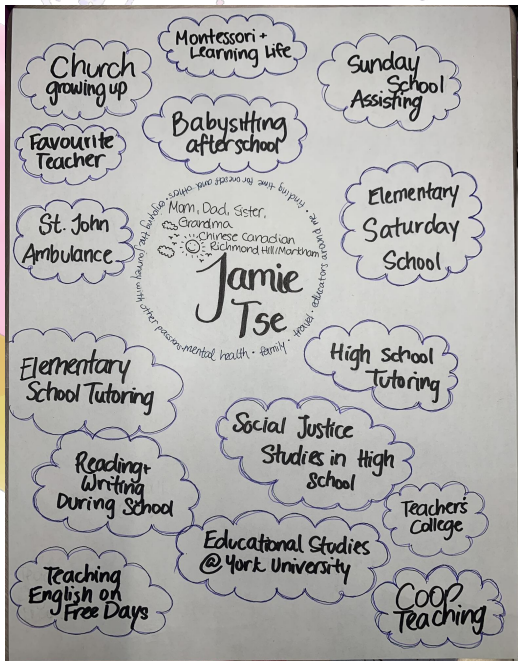


Our team



Jamie Tse Melissa Leung Jimmy Nguyen

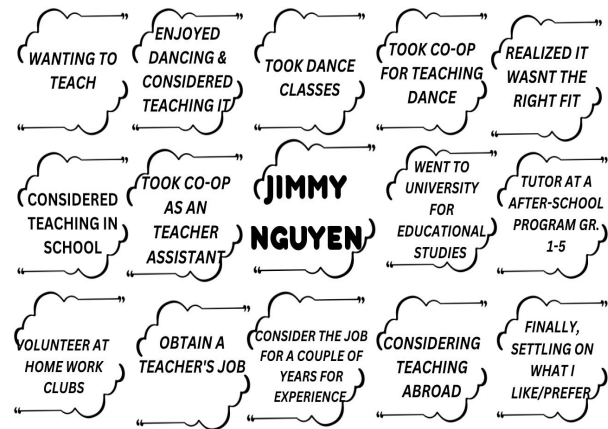
Our my paths



Jamie's



Melissa's



Jimmy's

Our sponsors



Melissa Smith

Our primary sponsor
Program Curator, Collaborative Learning
(Education and Programming)



Natalie Lam

AGO Curatorial Assistant

Our learnings



Prior Experiences



Program Planning



**Scope of
Museum-learning**

Our challenges

Hypothetical program execution

Coming up with a creative concept regarding mental health and wellbeing and integrating it with the Art Gallery of Ontario and thinking about which specific locations to propose each activity.



Time constraints

We found out that managing time was difficult, due to our different school and work schedules. It was challenging maintaining a schedule that don't interfere with both ourselves and our sponsors.



Knowledge about whereabouts

One challenge we encountered was the ability of not having the perception of where we would execute our activities until we visited the AGO in person.



Our proudest *takeaways*

What are you most proud of?



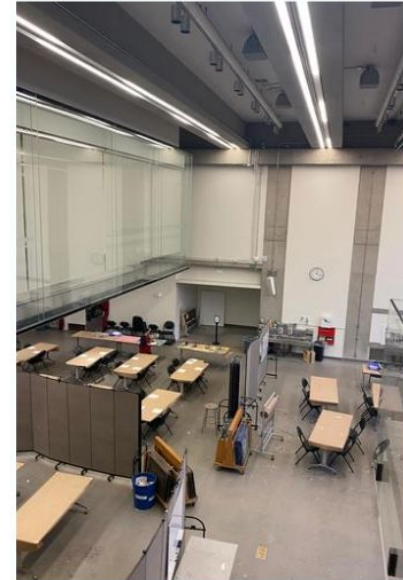
**Finalizing our
proposal/activities**



**Visiting the AGO
in Person**



**Composing Our Final
Proposal**



Our future *application*



Gallery Understandings

- As educators, we can utilize this experience in our curriculum where visiting museums allows students to develop critical thinking skills
- Historical and Cultural Awareness: By providing an opportunity for students to learn about history and culture through first-hand experiences.



Teaching Curriculum

- Planning our program proposal is applicable to the skill of lesson planning in education
- Lesson planning involves considering which elements of an activity make it effective, what the possible learning outcomes/impacts will be, and how the activities will realistically be executed

A snapshot of our Powerpoint

Forest Therapy

How does this work?



- Exhibit will take place outdoors, in the Grange Park, outside of the AGO
- Allow easy access to the park from inside the museum, staff at entrances
- Forest / scenery themed art area, can have a few nature paintings + sculptures set up around the space
- Variety of plants and flowers + colour
- Elements of meditation
- Calm music with nature sounds (bird sounds, water sounds)
- Help relieve visitors from stress
- Acts as a space where people can escape from reality and take a break

How is the concept of wellness manifested in this free choice learning?



The article, "Measuring the impact of museum activities on well-being: developing the Museum Well-being Measures Toolkit", states that the relationship between arts and health, in which "music, paintings, and performance has been shown to impact positively upon health and wellbeing".



It is also mentioned that discussions based on art, heritage walks, and museum-focused therapeutic activities, have demonstrated to have positive benefits for people with mental/physical ill health or simply struggling with stress, like most of us are.

Thornson, Linda J., and Helen J. Dwyer. "Measuring the Impact of Museum Activities on Well-Being: Developing the Museum Well-being Measures Toolkit." Museum management and curatorship 19(5) 301 (2013): 44-62. Web.

How is the concept of wellness manifested in this free choice learning?



<https://www.oulight.com/2-substrate-free-clipart-tree/>



Positive emotions



Negative emotions

The study in the article used a "Generic Well-Being Questionnaire" where visitors and staff answer questions regarding their emotions and feelings before and after visiting the museum. Results presented significant increases in reported positive mood, health and wellbeing.

Thornson, Linda J., and Helen J. Dwyer. "Measuring the Impact of Museum Activities on Well-Being: Developing the Museum Well-being Measures Toolkit." Museum management and curatorship 19(5) 301 (2013): 44-62. Web.

Art Therapy

Live Music Painting Cont.



With this activity, we want to explore the deep connections between auditory and visual senses, by having participants paint whilst enjoying live music, or music in other forms.

In this activity, we will have a comfortable open space with light and air flowing throughout, set up with organized easels and art materials much like an art classroom. We will also have a live band playing in the room, and participants can paint freely (or with guidance) alongside the soothing live music.

We hope to bring an uplifting and exciting form of artistic expression with the combination of two art therapies. Participants are welcome to paint whatever they want to express in the moment, and engage with their creative side, or paint according to the music being played. Having music in conjunction with the opportunity to paint (or other plastic arts mediums of their choice) can double their creativity and inspiration in their piece.

Live Music Painting in Action

This concept isn't new! Here is the first of two examples of live music painting in video:



"Four selected paintings were placed in front of the painter, one at a time. As he improvised, the artist painted live what he heard without looking at the artwork."

This art piece is by Dimitri Pavloutsky, the live painter, and the music performance is by Brad Robin. This exhibit, "Performance: Playing Games" was performed in Orbit Gallery, Chicago, in 2018.



The first piece, "New Crisis" - IMPROVISATION, 60x48 in 2019, acrylic and charcoal on paper

It is also known as action painting. There was no rehearsal prior to the exhibit, in order to express the musician's own feelings, reflected in the art piece.

What is it?

After the Covid-19 pandemic, everyone has had difficulties finding themselves again, facing their emotions and physical/mental health. While there may be imitations on some traditional places such as museums like the AGO to relieve stress due to COVID-19, it's essential to find new ways to cope with stress, such as practicing mindfulness, staying physically active at home, creating art or writing, or connecting with loved ones virtually.

Most people concur that separating oneself from the issue makes it simpler to express hurts and regrets or recognize them. Because of this, the postcard activity can be a helpful tool for self-discovery because it helps answer the question, "What would I say to someone if I didn't have to do it face to face?" or "Why do I feel so much built up inside?"



Postcardpress.com (n.d.). Five never use an original postcard design with flowers and leaves hand-drawn illustration. Toprak. Retrieved February 2, 2023, from <https://www.postcardpress.com/the-vegetable-and-wood-postcard-design-by-five-never-use-hand-drawn-illustration-774929.html>

How Does This Work?

- In the AGO there are stations such as the Educational Commons area that allows you to participate in events/ workshops.
- While doing the activity think about something that makes you sad, angry, or frustrated about. Take a moment to just think about what happened, how it felt, and what they would like to say to the person about how they felt during the experience.
- Ask participants to draw or create a visual representation of how they felt or still feel about the experience on the postcard blank side. Explain that they can make anything they want with any materials and that this gives them complete freedom.
- Participants can write anything they want to say on the lined side of the postcard.
- Discuss how they might begin to work toward a healing resolution using what they draw and write to investigate their feelings further.



Voile, S. (n.d.). People are using postcards to express their feelings and thoughts. Retrieved February 2, 2023, from <https://www.postcardpress.com/people-are-using-postcards-to-express-their-feelings-and-thoughts-774929.html>

Further Evidence

A study found that "both the paintings and the music lowered depression by about a third... music was more effective at lowering anxiety than art." "In the antenatal clinic they found that live music also helped to reduce anxiety and depression. A short 30-minute recital of music had a similar effect on mothers attending the postnatal clinic."

Even the hospital staff were affected, they "felt the paintings and music reduced their stress and made them more likely to stay at the hospital." Art in hospitals is an intuitive and effective strategy for recovery from physical and mental ailments. As the article concludes: "After all, if music or paintings can take the place of a course of antidepressants, it has to be better for everyone."

A potential cause of why arts and music help patients recover could be placebo effect and/or displacement, which is essentially distracting them from their worries, into their imagination. We see how our activities can simulate a similar environment for our participants, and believe our proposal can affect that.



Thornson, Linda J., and Helen J. Dwyer. "Measuring the Impact of Museum Activities on Well-Being: Developing the Museum Well-being Measures Toolkit." Museum management and curatorship 19(5) 301 (2013): 44-62. Web.

Learning Outcomes

The majority of us have been in a position where we were unsure of our next move. As a result, we frequently experience feelings of overwhelm and lack of direction regarding the issue. Writing down your thoughts and feelings can help you organize the chaos in your mind and better understand the situation. You can get a clearer picture of what is essential and what is not by taking a piece of paper or, in this case, a postcard and writing down everything that is going on in your life. We mean everything from your obligations at work or school to your social commitments and everything in between.

It cannot be easy to comprehend our thoughts when our minds are busy. You can better process these emotions and determine what's most important by expressing your thoughts in writing. You will gain a deeper understanding of your goals for your life and the obstacles that stand in your way of achieving them the more you put your thoughts down on paper.



6096. (n.d.). Self-Reflection Writing Exercise Homework Kit Download. Pappas. Retrieved February 2, 2023, from <https://www.postcardpress.com/self-reflection-writing-exercise-homework-kit-774929.html>



1 IMMERSIVE FOREST

"A walk in nature walks the soul back home."
- Mary Davis

1. Activity

To connect well-being and mental health with free-choice learning spaces, we want to embody forest bathing therapy through an immersive forest experience in Grange Park, outside of the Art Gallery of Ontario.

Everyone deals with stress and deserves downtime to rest their mind and body. Especially due to the recent COVID-19 lockdowns and the prevalent transition to online work and school settings, many have not had the opportunity or motivation to go outside and appreciate the natural beauty that surrounds them. This Immersive Forest implements elements of meditation through ambient music and nature sounds, as well as incorporates other forms of art throughout the space, such as sculptures and paintings. Visitors walking through the forest will be able to engage in all five senses, individually and simultaneously. With this Immersive Forest, we hope to create a stress-free environment and a therapeutic experience for everyone.



2. Location

This exhibit will take place at any outdoor space with an abundance of trees and flowers that make the forest visually appealing and dense. The location must also be open enough for sculptures and art works to be placed throughout it.

3. Research

Forest bathing therapy allows for the healing and restoration of one's mind and body, simply by just spending a few minutes in a forest environment. The article, "Measuring the impact of museum activities on well-being" explores the relationship between arts and health, in which "music, paintings, and performance has been shown to impact positively upon health and wellbeing." Discussions based on art, heritage walks, and museum-focused therapeutic activities, have also demonstrated to have positive benefits for people with mental/physical ill health or simply struggling with stress, like most of us are.



4. Benefits

There are numerous advantages to the Immersive Forest. The combination of forest therapy, calming music and nature sounds, and artwork, is proven to boost our immune systems, lower our blood pressures, reduce stress, improve mood, and enhance creativity and concentration in individuals.



5. Education

The main purpose of this exhibit is to serve as a therapeutic and captivating experience for visitors. However, we also want this experience to be educational and informative. An article noted that well-being improvement involved thinking, meaning making, and new learning opportunities.

Thus, this exhibit will feature information stands to not only inform visitors about the different plants and ecosystems present in the forest, but also to educate individuals about current urgent environmental issues as well as some mitigation tips and strategies.



2 ART THERAPY

Live Music Painting

"Arts can bring respite and stimulation to existing spaces"

1. Activity

Our activities all address wellness, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. In this second activity, we use two main forms of art to treat and relieve mental health struggles, such as anxiety, depression, and other troubles affecting one's well being. These forms are painting and music, and by combining them, we hope to create a soothing and relaxing environment for participants to destress and express.

We want to highlight the connections between auditory and visual senses in creating and enjoying art. Participants are welcome to paint whatever they want to express in the moment, and engage with their creative side, or paint according to the music being played. Having music in conjunction with the opportunity to paint (or other plastic arts mediums of their choice) can double their creativity and inspiration in their piece. This activity is more self directed learning.



2. Location

For this activity, we need a comfortable open space with light and air flowing throughout, set up with organized easels and art materials much like an art classroom. We will also have a live band playing in the room, and participants can paint freely (or with guidance) alongside the soothing live music. If a live band is not available, surround sound music is the next best option.

3. Research

Most of the peer reviewed studies referenced for this activity studied the effects of art within hospital settings. Thus, these studies have a more controlled environment, reviews past evidence, and interviews patients.

A study found that hospital patients benefited "socially, emotionally and physically", and that "simply pleasing the eyes and the ears will help people recover." The hospital felt that music was "a cheap and effective way of relieving patients' anxiety", and some studies "seemed to suggest that music could also lower blood pressure and reduce the need for painkillers."



4. Examples

This activity has been done before all over the world Here are some adjacent examples of art painted with live music...



5. Education

As educators, we feel that curriculum and class should be exciting and appeal to as many learner types as possible. The inclusion nontraditional forms of teaching can only help students' broaden their perspectives and world understanding.

School is a stressful time, especially for older grades. Giving students the chance to destress with music and painting will help them improve their focus, energy, or simply be a needed break outside of their tougher courses. Not all students have the chance to take electives, most of which are art courses, so offering this opportunities to people of all ages can enjoy both forms of art therapy and self expression.



3 POST CARDS

Infographic

1. Activity

This activity signifies health and wellness attributes. This activity focuses on the recovery we all need after being isolated for a long time during the pandemic. It allows us to understand that expressing your emotions through postcards can be an excellent way to process your feelings and emotions tangibly and creatively.

We want to explore how being cooped inside throughout the pandemic strains your mental and physical health. This allows us to reflect on this day, showcasing how we are feeling or what's on our mind or even giving kind words of affirmation. Expressing your feelings through postcards or any form of art can signify a healthy and creative way to cope with stress, process difficult emotions, and connect with others.



"Don't Be Afraid To Express Yourself"

2. Location

In this activity, it's essential to have an atmosphere conducive to creativity and productivity. The lower level should have plenty of room to accommodate multiple stations and be quiet enough for each person to focus on their task without distraction. Proper lighting is also essential, so it's great that the room is well-lit. The comfortable stations will ensure everyone can work comfortably and efficiently.

3. Research

Making postcards can be a great way to help reduce stress and express your emotions during the COVID-19 pandemic. It can be a creative outlet for processing the emotions and events you have experienced.

Studies showed that postcards would be therapeutic for support groups that promote social connectedness. Group members said, they would like to receive a postcard even if they could not attend that month. "Such ways allow people to express their emotions if it's challenging to say themselves or be distant from one another." Postcards are a cheerful event in people's lives. "It is a way to send affirmation and bring people together, thus causing more interactions and better mental health on the receiving and sending end."

4. Example

There have been similar outcomes for activities such as postcard making. Each result pertains to a message that can be either aspiring or relieving to one's self. In this case, a museum setting inspires others to express their thoughts while knowing it's a safe place to tell them.



5. Education

Writing and drawing your emotions can be an educational experience with many benefits. We must acknowledge and stray from hiding one's emotions and being allowed to express ourselves through any form, such as art or writing.

1. Increases self-awareness and understanding.
2. Provides a safe outlet for difficult emotions.
3. Improves emotional regulation and coping skills. Boosts self-esteem and self-confidence.
4. Enhances empathy and connections with others.
5. Improves cognitive, motor, and creative skills



Our infographics

Our proposals

Immersive Forest Activity Proposal

Overview

After the pandemic, the transition back to in-person school, in-person work and commuting can be stressful, time consuming, and tiring. The **Immersive Forest Experience** is meant to be calming, therapeutic, and of course: immersive.



Target Audience

Since this Immersive Forest is an open area that is filled with trees, flowers, and nature, this exhibit is **open for people of all ages and backgrounds**. We hope that anyone who walks through this stress-free exhibit will feel as if they have escaped from reality.



Location

This exhibit will take place outdoors, in the **Grange Park**, outside of the Art Gallery of Ontario. This setting would be perfect due to its proximity to the museum as well as its easy accessibility from inside the museum. It acts as a great space for free-choice learning where visitors can explore at their own pace.



Learning outcomes

The main purpose of this exhibit is to serve as a **therapeutic and captivating experience** for the visitors as they walk through the open forest garden, filled with calming music and nature sounds. However, we also want this experience to be **educational and informative**. Reasons for well-being improvement involved thinking, meaning making, and new learning opportunities. Thus, this exhibit will feature information stands to not only inform visitors about the different plants and ecosystems present in the forest, but also about urgent environmental issues as well as some tips for taking action and solutions.



Inspiration

The idea of an exhibit that can evoke such strong emotions from the audience is inspired by the **Joni Trafton** (Obsidian) exhibit in the Art Gallery of Ontario. The installation features

Art Therapy Activity Proposal

Overview

This art therapy activity is called **Live Music Painting**, and utilizes the combination of music, ideally with live artists, and painting or other forms of visual art as a collaborative activity medium. The intention of the activity is for participants to be in a soothing environment where they can release their stressors, explore their creativity, and improve their overall wellbeing.

We made this activity to meet the needs of mental health decline after the global pandemic, and want to highlight the power of art as an expressive and holistic medium, for non artists.

Target Audience

These parameters are somewhat flexible, but we believe they should be followed as best as possible for the most optimal outcome. This individual activity is a part of our three part Wellbeing Project Program.

Demographics



Psychographics



Challenges



We believe the age range for this activity can be for any age, or any person physically capable of completing it. If available and within reasonable cost, there could be supporting program assistants to work with any struggling participants.

Naturally, any gender and people of any background, sexual orientation, and identity can participate in the activity. The only scenario where this would differ is if the organizers wanted to do a "Women's Focus" or "LGBTQIA+ Focus" version to highlight those visual and musical artists, or something to that effect.

Ideally, the cost of the program would be free, or a very low affordable cost. It should not be an amount that leaves a dent in people's wallets! It is vital that the activity is accessible, especially because people of all financial backgrounds struggle with mental health, and some can argue those in lower financial brackets even more so.

As with income, the program should be open to people of any occupation. Occupation should not affect the participant and the activity.

This activity does not require any particular lifestyle or hobbies in our participants. We have chosen our target audience to reflect as many people as possible, so there are no expectations or requirements in their personal life.

Ideally, one would hope that the participant values art and creative expression, but this may be their first introduction into an art based activity and we want to include those people as well. Thus, beyond appreciation for art, the participants should value self-expression, learning, and open mindedness.

Some challenges that we could foresee in the execution of this activity lie in the promotion and assumed value of the activity in the audiences' perspective. As with many artistic ventures, their value may not be apparent until it is happening or until after. So we hope that either longtime patrons of the AGO will join the program or the larger audience is willing to take a risk and try out the program.

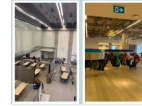
Another challenge could be in obtaining live music for the program, which we believe will be much more effective than simply playing music on speakers. With this activity, we want it to be unique and useful, and having the live band makes the difference from being able to just watch at home. As a part of the Toronto community, we want to support local artists and ideally we would be able to book small local artists as a part of this collaboration.

Postcards Activity Proposal

OVERVIEW

This activity acts as a coping mechanism that allows you to relieve stress throughout the pandemic. Expressing your feelings through postcards can be a thoughtful and meaningful way to communicate with others. It will enable you to connect personally, be creative, and tangibly share your feelings, especially in a museum setting.

Location



The location designated for this activity would be the Dr. Anne Tannenbaum Gallery School inside The Art Gallery Of Ontario (AGO) on the lower level shared with the Youth Educational Commons above. This area utilizes explicitly its space and resources to give that art/workshop atmosphere which is crucial for the experience. It is a very open space that allows one to think to themselves and a positive place to be trusted to share one's feelings. Working in this area aims to provide a welcoming and inclusive space for art education and creativity and to inspire and engage the community through the transformative power of art.



Within the Youth Educational Commons area is a Welcome to our Community Garden wall that showcases works of art done by visitors.

Interactive installation in the AGO's Weston Family Learning Centre is part of the AGO's educational commons. The Weston Family Learning Centre is a space dedicated to art education and interactive experiences for all ages. The visitors will see the "Welcome to the Community Garden Wall" during the activity, thus allowing its installation to introduce visitors to the AGO's Community Garden Wall and inspire them to show their work to everyone. The AGO's educational commons also include other learning spaces and resources, such as a library, a studio, and a classroom, used for workshops, lectures, and other educational activities.

This area is also suggested to consider where the atmosphere allows the visitors to have that connection and feel comfortable. We aim to make them feel welcome and happy while participating in the activities.

Target Audience

Our target audience for this project is the youth, but we welcome people of all ages to join in. Our project can benefit people of all ages and backgrounds by providing creative and informative content that is entertaining and educational. We strive to create enjoyable and educational content with our space and activities, so everyone can participate and learn something new. While also enjoying and being inspired by artworks worldwide in the museum and admiring the work of previous visitors.

Problems/Challenges

The pandemic has created challenges that can make it more difficult for people to express their emotions and manage their mental health and also the ability to visit places that help cope with their mental health. Individuals need to prioritize their mental health and seek support if required, whether through therapy, social support, or other resources.

1. **Limited social support:** Physical distancing and social isolation have made it difficult for people to connect with others and receive social support.
2. **Lack of resources:** The pandemic has created a sense of isolation, including



Thank you!

Hope you enjoyed our presentation~
Do you have any questions?