

# "Feeling Arts" as a Narrative Therapy

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## I. About Feeling Arts

Feeling Arts (hereinafter referred to as “the Art”) <sup>1)</sup> is a unique and exquisite composite experiential art created in 1981 by Yoshihiro Kitamura, a contemporary artist who combines a painting with illumination and music to express the following themes: earth, universe, life, and celestial world. By means of controlled illumination, lights of various colors are cast upon a huge canvas where an abstract image is painted using mud, Indian ink and gold paint. The lights have the effect of creating subtle shades on the painting, giving it a sense of movement. Another essential component of the Art is to present beautiful and soothing music and/or songs for the audience. The combination of painting, lights, and music is controlled in a delicate manner to create a healing space. The Art is designed to evoke various feelings such as “deep emotion”, “comfort”, and “hope” in the audience. What people can see or feel in the Art may differ from person to person because, after all, the audience themselves freely give the final touch to the Art. In other words, the Art is a fusion and dialogue of image, light, sound, and the emotion of the audience.

In 1989, a member of Kitamura’s family suffered from a serious illness. During the days of making hospital visits, Kitamura met many patients and their families at the hospital who were suffering from great pain and distress. Realizing that the Art may help to ease such pain, he started actively giving FA performances at grass roots level, at health, medical and welfare institutions to demonstrate what the Art could do. He even visited the evacuation centers, temporary housings, and restoration housings in Kobe City after the devastating Great Hanshin Earthquake. At child welfare and educational facilities, he let the children use the illumination controller to operate the lights in tune with the music. After experiencing the Art, children were asked to participate in the “Kids Feeling Arts” activities in which they expressed what they felt by drawing freely. He has also given presentations in the United States as well as in Europe and many Asian countries. His future plans are focused on promoting the Art in the Asian and African countries at grassroots levels.

To date, his presentations have proven to be quite successful. Many patients, individuals with disabilities, elderly people, and disaster victims and their families, who came into contact with the Art, expressed that it has a healing effect. An increasing number of health, medical and welfare professionals are beginning to recognize the Art as “Healing Arts”. Some of them stated that the Art can help children develop sensitivity at child welfare facilities, schools for children with disabilities, and after-school-daycare centers.

Kitamura’s academic and research activities have also evidenced a great advancement. In 1993, his work received acknowledgement and endorsement from Eishu Matsuoka, the first chairman of Life Science Promotion Association, and from Yonezoh Nakagawa, the first chairman of Japan Academy for Health Behavioral Science. Since then, he has been giving presentations home and abroad, at various health, medical, and welfare-related academic conferences and lecture meetings, including, but not limited to, Feeling Arts Life Sciences (human studies and physics) Lecture Meetings (1994-1995, hosted by Life Science Promotion Association), Annual Conferences of the Japan Academy for Health Behavioral Science (1994, 2000, 2002, 2006), International Conferences of Health Behavioral Science (1996, 2001), Annual Conferences of the Japanese Society of Hospice and Homecare (2001, 2003), World Congress of the International Association of Gerontology (2001), Annual Conference of the Japanese Music Therapy Association (2002), Asia Pacific Hospice Conference (2003), and Annual Conferences of the Japanese Society of Medical Secretary (2004, 2005). In 2001, the Feeling Arts Academy (FAA) was created to further promote the use of the Art to enhance the social wellbeing of people. FAA activities are endorsed by Shigeaki Hinohara, president of St. Luke’s International Hospital and executive president of the Japanese Music Therapy Association, and by Andrew Weil, a world-class authority on integrative medicine and a director of Program in Integrative Medicine at the University of Arizona, both of whom serve as advisors of FAA.

Since April 2004, with the collaboration of local companies and schools, Kitamura started 1000 Times Presentations Project at health, medical, and welfare facilities throughout Japan. As of the end of December 2006, he has given 262 speeches and presentations, introducing over 10,000 people to the Art.

## **II. Feeling Arts & Narrative Therapy**

Based on his experience, Kitamura <sup>2)</sup> 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 inner disharmonious aspects. This is something that I have been trying to express with my artwork. 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. What makes the Art different from others is that it does not reflect the creator’s message or story, but rather it entrust itself to audience’s imagination. Practically, the Art makes it easier for audience to reflect their own inner feelings and thoughts.

The Art and everything surrounding it, namely, the people, the painting, the sounds, 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, which all lead to healing. It is important to remember that the audience is allowed to make their own interpretation of the Art.”

Niregi <sup>3)</sup> 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 (narrative) of how they bring behavioral problem onto themselves in the context of the society in which they live. The main purpose of a narrative therapy is to replace the old story containing the behavioral problem with an alternative one having different perspectives.”

He describes the process of narrative therapy <sup>4)</sup> 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 the imagination inspired (but not forced) by the Art and to find alternative meanings from the harmony of coexistence. The most challenging and mysterious part of narrative therapy may be the processes of generating alternative meanings through the externalization of problems. The greatest advantage of the Art is its power to inspire certain deep emotion. Even if the emotion is not so deep, the inspired positive feelings (pleasure) may encourage people to generate an alternative story. The Art could be the best tool to achieve this.

### **III. Imagination and Feelings Inspired by Feeling Arts**

This section describes the images and feelings inspired by the Art based on the results obtained from two types of surveys:

#### **1. Survey carried out at the areas devastated by the Great Hanshin/Awaji Earthquake (hereinafter referred to as the disaster victims survey) <sup>5)</sup>**

##### **1) Subjects and Methodologies**

An analysis was conducted based on the questionnaires collected from a total of 199 respondents who had experienced the Art through their participation in one of the following lecture meetings:

- two lecture meetings held in February and March 1995, respectively, at an evacuation center in Nishinomiya immediately after the Great Hanshin/Awaji Earthquake (Attendance: 42);
- seven lecture meetings held from March to December 1997 at temporary housings in Kobe City and Akashi City (Attendance: 98); and
- one lecture meeting held during an earthquake disaster reconstruction event held at a shrine located in Kobe City in 1998 (Attendance: 59).

At the above-mentioned meetings, Kitamura (founder of the Art) presented the Art by moving tri-color lighting over an actual abstract painting as the music played. The age of respondents ranged from 14 to 81 years, with 41 respondents aged 10-29 years, 44 respondents aged 30-49 years, 58 respondents aged 50 years or older, and 56 respondents not indicating their age. The respondents included 49 males, 108 females, and 42 not indicating their gender. The questionnaire, which merely asked the respondent to write down their impressions of the Art, was completed by the respondents during the lecture meeting. The exact percentage of responses is unknown, however, most of the respondents wrote down some comments. Reasonable care was exercised in the handling of personal information provided in the questionnaire.

The method of analysis is summarized in six steps, as shown below. Chi-square test was used in Step (1) to evaluate percentages. A P-value <0.05 was considered as significant.

- (1) The percentage of respondents who commented on the images inspired by the Art was calculated. It was also calculated by gender, age group, and place of survey.
- (2) Taking into account the kinds of images (hereinafter referred to as “image types”) the respondents had envisioned, responses were categorized into different “image types” and the relative proportions of the “image types” were subsequently calculated.
- (3) Responses were categorized into different groups of “feelings” according to the types of

feelings the respondents sensed about the Art. Identification of one or more “image types” associated with each of these groups of “feelings” was attempted. The relative proportions of “image types” associated with each “group of feelings” were subsequently calculated.

- (4) Responses were categorized by gender and the relative proportions of “image types” were calculated according to the gender.
- (5) Responses were categorized by age group (i.e., 10-29 years, 30-49 years and 50 years or older) and the relative proportions of “image types” were calculated for each age group.
- (6) Responses were categorized by place of survey (i.e., evacuation centers, temporary housings and at the reconstruction event site) and the relative proportions of “image types” were calculated for each place of survey.

## 2) Results

- (1) Of the 199 respondents, 180 respondents (90.5%) commented on the **images** inspired by the Art. Gender, age group or place of survey had no significant impact on the relative proportions of “image types”.
- (2) Both the “image types” (note that some respondents gave several responses about the images inspired by the Art) and their relative proportions are shown in the “total” column of Table 1. The number of “image types” divided by the number of questionnaires collected equals 185%, meaning that, on the average, each respondent provided two responses related to the images inspired by the Art. 83% or a great majority of the “image types” associated the Art with “nature”, commonly: forests, mountains, ocean, earth, sky, and the universe; followed by “gods” (21.1%); “people” (16%) such as someone’s face or some personality; “animals” (12.1%); and “past events” (11.6%). Other miscellaneous “image types” made up 41.2%. Of the 19 respondents (9.5%) who wrote nothing about the images inspired by the Art, 16 gave very simple comments indicating that the picture and sound were very beautiful or that the Art was comforting; 2 indicated that they did not understand the Art very well; and 1 indicated that he/she felt nothing in particular.
- (3) Of the 199 respondents, 136 respondents (68.3%) wrote something about the feelings inspired by the Art. The responses can be broadly categorized into those related to “comfort” (29.1%), “deep emotion” (27.1%), “hope” (3%), and the combination of the three (9.1%). Table 1 shows the relative proportions of “image types” for three “feeling” categories, namely, “comfort”, “deep emotion”, and “no description of feelings”. In all categories, a similar trend as that shown in the “Total” column was observed. However, for the “deep emotion” category, the relative proportions of the “image types”, “gods” and “past events”, were larger than those shown in the “Total” column. Similarly, for the “comfort” category; the relative proportion of the “image types”, “animal” was larger, but the relative proportion of the “image types”, “gods” was smaller than those shown in the “Total” column.
- (4) There was no significant gender difference in the number (percentage) of respondents

commenting on the images inspired by the Art (note that some respondents gave several responses about images). Similarly, a slight difference in gender was registered in the proportions of “image types”, although male respondents gave more comments related to “people”, whereas their female counterparts gave more comments related to “animals” and “past events”.

- (5) Significant age-group differences were detected in the number (percentage) of respondents commenting on the images inspired by the Art (note that some respondents gave several responses about the images), namely, 226.8% for the age range of 10-29 years; 197.7% for the age range of 30-49 years; and 167.2% for the age range of 50 years or older. Younger respondents tended to provide more comments about the images inspired by the Art than their older counterparts. The proportions of “image types” were more or less the same across all age groups although respondents in the age range of 10 to 29 years gave more comments related to “nature” and “animals” and gave less comments about “past events” and “people”; whereas respondents in the age range of 30 to 49 years gave more comments related to “gods”; and respondents in the age range of 50 years or older gave more comments related to “past events”.
- (6) The place of survey had a significant impact on the number (percentage) of respondents commenting on the images inspired by the Art (including multiple comments provided by certain respondents). For example, at the evacuation center, the percentage of respondents commenting on the images inspired by the Art was 133.3%, which indicates that the majority of the respondents provided only one comment related to the images inspired by the Art. The proportions of “image types” were more or less the same across different places of survey. However, no one at the evacuation center mentioned anything about “past events” and they tended to give less comments related to “animals”. At the temporary housings, respondents tended to give slightly more comments related to “other images” and “nature”. At the reconstruction event, respondents tended to give slightly more comments related to “gods” and “past events”.

**Table 1. Imageries Inspired by the Art and Proportions of “Image Types”**

		Total (n=199)	Comments related to “comfort” (n=58)	Comments related to “deep emotion” (= 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
Percentage of respondents providing one or more comments about the images inspired by the Art		185.0	182.8	181.5	204.7
Percentage of respondents making no comments at all about the images inspired by the Art		9.5	10.3	11.1	7.9

## **2. Survey carried out through classroom sessions, academic conferences, and other public events (hereinafter referred to as the general survey) <sup>6)</sup>**

### **1) Subjects and Methodologies**

Comments collected from 1,394 individuals who experienced the Art through classroom sessions at universities, vocational schools, academic conferences, and public events between May 2001 and June 2002, were analyzed. The age of respondents ranged between 18 and 83 with 499 respondents aged 18 to 19 years, 223 aged 20 to 29 years, 258 aged 30 to 49 years, 86 aged 50 years or older, and 328 who did not indicate their age. There were 218 male respondents, 1,040 female respondents, and 136 respondents who did not indicate their gender. The questionnaire used for the survey was for the most part similar to the one used for the disaster-victims survey. However, in addition to the comment column in which respondents are expected to express freely their opinion of the Art, the questionnaire used in the general survey also included some closed-ended questions asking the respondents to rate the degree of “deep emotion,” “comfort” and “hope” generated by the Art on a four-point scale ([1]: Strong, [2]: Moderate, [3]: Minimal, and [4]: None). The exact response rate of the survey is unknown, however, most of the respondents wrote down some comments. Reasonable care was exercised in the handling of personal information provided in the questionnaire. The method of analysis is summarized in five steps, as shown below. Chi-square test was used in Steps (3) to (5) to evaluate percentages. AP-value <0.05 was considered as significant.

- (1) In agreement with the disaster-victims survey, the percentage of respondents who said nothing about imageries inspired by the Art was calculated.
- (2) Based on the responses corresponding to the closed-ended questions, the degree of “deep emotion”, “comfort” and “hope” produced by the Art was estimated.
- (3) An analysis on how the results obtained from Step (1) and (2) may differ between genders was carried out.
- (4) An analysis on how the results obtained from Step (1) and (2) may differ across age groups (18-19 years, 20-29 years, 30-49 years and 50 years or older) was carried out.
- (5) An analysis was carried out on how the results obtained from Step (1) and (2) may differ across the different methods in which the Art was introduced to the audience. A total of 1,394 individuals was included in the analysis, of which, 234 participated in the presentation by Kitamura, using the original painting (the actual abstract image painted by Kitamura) (hereinafter referred to as the original image presentation); 64 participated in the presentation by Kitamura, displaying a huge digital video disc (DVD) image of the Art along with the original painting (hereinafter referred to as the original image + oversized DVD presentation); 253 participated in the presentation by Kitamura, using a huge DVD image of the Art (hereinafter referred to as the oversized DVD presentation); 551 participated in the presentation by Kitamura, using a DVD image of the Art (hereinafter referred to as the DVD presentation); and

292 participated in the presentation in which a DVD image of the Art was presented with no verbal explanation of the Art (hereinafter referred to as the DVD show).

Note: An oversized DVD presentation is a presentation in which a DVD-recorded image of the Art is projected on a big screen. On the other hand, a DVD presentation is a presentation in which a much smaller screen is used. A presentation is a session in which the Art is presented along with an explanation by Kitamura, whereas a show is a session in which a DVD is played, but with no verbal explanation.

## 2) Results

- (1) Of the 1,394 respondents, 782 (56.1%) commented on imageries inspired by the Art; 538 (38.6%) commented about their feelings and opinions, but made no reference to the imageries inspired by the Art; and 74 (5.3%) provided no comments about the Art.
- (2) Table 2 shows the degree of positive feelings, namely, "inspiration," "comfort" and "hope" produced by the Art. As many as 70.9% of the respondents indicated that they felt either strong or moderate "deep emotion" from the Art, 80.8% stated that they felt either strong or moderate comfort from the Art, and 49.9% said that they felt either strong or moderate hope from the Art.
- (3) No significant gender differences were detected either in the number of respondents who commented on the imageries inspired by the Art or in the degree of positive feelings evoked by the Art.
- (4) The percentage of respondents commenting on the imageries inspired by the Art was 46.7% among the respondents aged 18-19 years, 61.4% among those aged 20 to 29 years, 62.4% among those aged 30 to 49 years old, and 55.8% among those aged 50 years or older. A significant age-group difference was detected ( $p < 0.01$ ) in the percentage of respondents commenting on the imageries inspired by the Art. Younger respondents aged 18 to 19 years old were less likely to, and those aged 50 years or older were somewhat less likely to comment on the imageries inspired by the Art. No significant differences were detected in the degree of positive feelings instilled by the Art across age-groups ( $p < 0.01$ ), except for the respondents belonging to the 18-19-year-old age range, who indicated to have had less positive feelings compared to the other age groups.
- (5) The percentage of respondents commenting on the imageries inspired by the art was calculated by the method of presentation, which was 47.9% for the original image presentation, 67.2% for the original image + oversized DVD presentation, 58.5% for the oversized DVD presentation, 72.6% for the DVD presentation, and 27.1% for the DVD show. Significant differences ( $p < 0.01$ ) were detected across the methods of presentation. The percentage of respondents commenting on the imageries inspired by the Art was markedly small for the DVD show and relatively large for the DVD presentation. On the other hand, the

percentage of respondents who indicated to have experienced strong inspiration from the Art was 28.6% for the original image presentation, 29.7% for the original image + oversized DVD presentation, 39.1% for the oversized DVD presentation, 19.1% for the DVD presentation, and 11% for the DVD show. The percentage of respondents indicating to have felt “strong comfort” through the Art was 42.3% for the original image presentation, 51.6% for the original image + oversized DVD presentation, 57.7% for the oversized DVD presentation, 35.9% for the DVD presentation and 28.8% for the DVD show. The percentage of respondents who indicated to have felt “strong hope” through the Art was 13.2% for the original image presentation, 17.2% for the original image + oversized DVD presentation, 20.6% for the oversized DVD presentation, 11.3% for the DVD presentation and 7.2% for the DVD show. Significant differences ( $p < 0.01$ ) were detected across the methods of presentation. In fact, the respondents participating in the DVD presentation and DVD show tended to have less positive feelings. An additional analysis to identify if there was any difference in the methods of presentation across the different age groups was performed, the result of which indicated a significant difference ( $p < 0.01$ ). The respondents participating in the DVD show consisted only of 18-19-year-old individuals while the majority of the respondents participating in the DVD presentation included either those aged 18-19 or those aged 20-29 years old. On the other hand, there were very few respondents aged 18-19 years who participated in the original image presentation, original image + oversized DVD presentation, or oversized DVD presentation.

**Table 2. Degree of “deep emotion,” “comfort” and “hope” the respondents felt through the Art**

	Deep Emotion	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

### **3. Discussion about the above general survey and disaster-victim survey**

In the disaster-victim survey, approximately 90% of all the respondents gave some comments regarding the images inspired by the Art (Table 1) varying from “nature,” “gods,” “people,” “animal” to “past events”. Even in the general survey, more than half of all respondents commented on the images inspired by the Art. As a whole, the results obtained from the two types of surveys indicate that the Art inspires the audience to envision certain images in their minds. The fact that people living in areas devastated by earthquakes or that people at medical and welfare institutions were more willing to express the images inspired by the Art indicates that

people who are in pain and suffering may be using the Art as a means to express their inspired images. This is only natural because people in pain and suffering opt to be more sensitive than others. On the other hand, in both surveys, no significant gender differences were observed with respect to the number of respondents commenting on the images inspired by the Art. This observation indicates that the Art has a similar effect on both men and women. Although no significant age-group differences were detected in the number of respondents commenting on the images inspired by the Art in the disaster victims survey, significant age-group differences were confirmed in the general survey ( $p < 0.01$ ) with the number of comments provided by respondents aged 18-19 years old being particularly small. However, this can probably be attributed to the fact that approximately 60% of all respondents belonging to the 18-19-year-old age group had only been exposed to the DVD show with no verbal explanation (by Kitamura, etc.) of what the Art means. In fact, the methods of presentation had a significant impact on the number of respondents commenting on the images inspired by the Art ( $p < 0.01$ ). Among the respondents who were only exposed to the DVD show, less than 30% actually expressed the images inspired by the Art, which is an extremely low percentage. On the other hand, when the DVD projected on a small screen was accompanied by a speech by Kitamura, providing dialogue (delivering a narrative of the Art), more than 70% of the audience gave some feedback on the images inspired by the Art. This observation indicates that the audience is more likely to appreciate the true meaning of the Art when it is accompanied by certain stimulus that encourage them to express what it is that they see in the Art.

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 were detected. The significant age-group differences ( $p < 0.01$ ) in the degree of positive feelings inspired by the Art can be mainly attributed to the relatively low number of 18-19-year-old respondents expressing positive feelings, which can be explained by the fact that approximately 60% of this age group were exposed to the DVD show and another 40% to the DVD presentation. No significant differences were observed among the other age groups. As to the methods of presentation, they definitely had a significant impact on the degree of positive feelings ( $p < 0.01$ ). The degree of positive feelings inspired by the Art was relatively small among the respondents who were exposed to either the DVD show or DVD presentation. Although presenting the Art through the DVD presentation did not affect the percentage of respondents describing the images inspired by the Art, it did affect the degree of positive feelings inspired by the Art. In fact, the DVD presentation proved to be just as ineffective as the DVD presentation in terms of inspiring positive feelings in the audience. To sum up, compared to the original image presentation or oversized DVD presentation, the use of a DVD image

projected on a small screen has minor disadvantages in terms of inspiring the audience to envision certain images in their minds and has moderate disadvantages in terms of evoking positive feelings in the audience.

Overall, the results obtained from the surveys suggest that the Art inspires positive feelings in the audience, giving them the opportunity to envision certain images in their minds. As stated above, the Art can be very effective as a narrative therapy because it can, not only help externalize problems, but also generate alternative meanings through envisioned images while inspiring positive feelings in the audience.

What makes the Art so special is that it brings out the deep inner emotion and the images it evokes in people. Deep emotion can be categorized into two types, namely, the “positive” deep emotion that arises through the audience’s act of envisioning certain images in their minds, and the “passive” deep emotion that is evoked through beautiful music and lights accompanying the Art. People in pain and suffering, such as the ones devastated by an earthquake or patients and residents at medical and welfare facilities, generally are apt to be more sensitive than others; and they therefore, tend to get more actively involved in the process of creating their own images of what they want to see in the Art. 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 emerge in 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 their internal negative aspects. As stated above, certain stimulus 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 verbal input about the Art further encourages the audience to free their minds and express what is inside their hearts.<sup>2)</sup> The questionnaire which the audience is asked to fill out after experiencing the Art may also serve as a part of the process of externalizing problems and generating an alternative story.

#### **IV. Feeling Arts: Comments from Volunteers**

In the Feeling Arts 1000 Times Presentations Project that started in April 2004, many music therapists and vocal therapists have volunteered to assist in the presentations held at medical, welfare, and educational facilities. The following are some excerpts from the comments given by such volunteers who have participated in over 100 presentations.

**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 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 sung. I was reminded of the fact that these stars exist for everyone, inspiring love and hope that shine in the hearts of all people. I have listened to "When You Wish upon a Star" so many times before, but never realized until now that the lyrics are also about the stars that shine in our hearts. 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 challenges 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 from the Mother Earth (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 along 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 a surgical operation. She reassured the elderly lady that everything was going to be fine and after the surgery, they would both be able to sing again. I knew that the young woman was suffering from a serious condition and was moved by the strength and kindness that she showed towards the old lady who just 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, I was deeply touched and 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. People looking at the same image may perceive totally different things from it, because after all, a certain reality can have a totally 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.

***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?



## V. Conclusion

This paper explores the potential of the Art as a narrative therapy and also contemplates the Art’s ability as fine art to evoke “deep emotion,” “imagination,” “interaction” and “harmony” based on the results obtained from several surveys on the subject. Although the concept of a narrative therapy is original, it is quite possible that artists in the Renaissance Era 600 years ago were already using the combination of art and narrative far more often than today to heal and inspire people.

I hope that the Art continues to enhance interaction among the audience, volunteer workers and people working at medical, welfare, and educational facilities; and to inspire people into heightening their sensitivity and discover their true potential.

Lastly, I would like to thank all the people who provided us with valuable feedbacks through their participation in the general survey and disaster-victims survey. I would also like to thank the graduates of Kobe City college of Nursing including Asuka Masuda, Eriko Yoshimura, Michiko Kurauchi, and Miki Tanaka for their contribution to the analysis of the results obtained from the surveys.

An excerpt from Midori Nadamoto’s letter, introduced in the “IV Feeling Arts: Comments from Volunteers” section has been essential in understanding the Art from the point of view of the audience. I would like to thank her for giving us the consent to quote her letter, and Dr. Takaharu Kuromaru from Hikone Municipal Hospital, without whom I would not have had the access to Midori Nadamoto's letter.

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