

# Creative Thai Art Learning for Urban Society's Well-being

Apichart Pholprasert,<sup>+</sup> Soamshine Boonyananta,<sup>++</sup> Intira Phrompan,<sup>3</sup> Suchart Imsamraan,<sup>4</sup> Wanalee Chanrangsri,<sup>5</sup> & Priyasri Promchinda<sup>6</sup> (Thailand)

## Abstract

Lifestyles in crowded, fast-paced urban societies have created conditions that negatively affect physical, mental, and social well-being. This research aimed to develop and implement creative Thai art learning activities to promote well-being in urban communities. A mixed-methods approach was employed in four stages: (1) documentary research and community surveys, including interviews with 5 community leaders and 100 residents in the Rama IV area; (2) development of creative Thai art learning kits; (3) implementation of learning activities with a sample of 500 community residents; and (4) data collection involved satisfaction and well-being assessments and follow-up interviews; the resulting data were then analyzed to assess participant outcomes. The research produced three learning kits: Creative Thai Ornament Drawing, Creative Thai Craft, and Creative Lifestyle Products from Thai Ornaments. Assessment results showed high satisfaction and improved well-being among participants. The research also provided evidence for developing policies that integrate creative Thai art into urban well-being strategies. This includes fostering careers in the creative economy, promoting community-based tourism, preserving cultural heritage, and encouraging collaboration with government agencies to strengthen community networks through the arts.

**Keywords:** *Creative Thai Art, Urban Well-being, Community-based Art Activity, Cultural Heritage, Art Therapy*

<sup>+</sup> Apichart Pholprasert, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand.  
email: apichart.p@chula.ac.th.

<sup>++</sup> Soamshine Boonyananta, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand.  
email: soamshine.b@chula.ac.th.

<sup>3</sup> Intira Phrompan, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand.  
email: intira.p@chula.ac.th.

<sup>4</sup> Suchart Imsamraan, Master's Degree Student, Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand.  
email: Suchart\_imsamraan@hotmail.com.

<sup>5</sup> Wanalee Chanrangsri, Master's Degree Student, Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand.  
email: wanalee.chan36@gmail.com.

<sup>6</sup> Priyasri Promchinda, Doctor of Philosophy's Degree Student, Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand.  
email: priyasri.promchinda@gmail.com.

## Introduction

In contemporary urban society, people face crowded living conditions, hectic lifestyles, and intense competition, compounded by the persistent effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. These factors have created unhealthy living environments that negatively impact both physical and mental well-being, leaving many urban dwellers experiencing chronic stress. Recognizing these challenges, Thailand's National Economic and Social Development Plans - both the Twelfth edition (2017-2021) and Thirteenth edition (2022-2026) - have emphasized the importance of improving quality of life, health, and well-being for citizens of all ages (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2017; Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2022).

Art-based interventions have emerged as effective tools for enhancing life quality, alleviating stress and anxiety, and strengthening social connections. Thai traditional arts, with their exquisite craftsmanship and intricate designs, represent a valuable cultural heritage that offers multiple benefits. These art forms not only deserve preservation but also hold potential for adaptation into therapeutic activities that promote mental peace and creative expression. Furthermore, they can be developed into innovative products that meet contemporary needs while preserving cultural identity.

The application of Thai arts extends beyond personal well-being to economic benefits. Currently, these traditional art forms are being successfully integrated into tourism initiatives, generating income for families and communities while promoting cultural appreciation. Building on these existing applications, this research aims to develop innovative Thai art learning kits and implement community-based art activities with dual objectives: to restore urban well-being and to enhance career opportunities within Thailand's growing creative economy.

## Objectives

1. To develop product prototypes and creative Thai art learning kits aimed at improving well-being in urban society. 2. To implement creative Thai art activities that enhance well-being within urban populations.

## Research Questions

1. What forms should the product prototypes and creative Thai art learning kits be in to effectively promote well-being in urban society? 2. How do creative Thai art activities influence well-being in urban society?

## Scope of Study

**1. Scope of contents:** The development of product prototypes and creative Thai art learning activity kits focuses on enhancing urban well-being through the study of significant examples of Thai traditional arts. These include artifacts preserved in national museums and temples across Bangkok and Thailand's central region, as well as existing Thai art forms found in communities surrounding the Rama IV area. The product prototypes and learning kits consist of three main categories:

- Creative Thai Ornament Drawing Learning kits,
- Creative Thai Craft Learning kits, and
- Creative Lifestyle Products from Thai Ornaments Learning Kits.

**2. The scope of areas:** The study focuses on five specific communities in the Rama IV area of Bangkok: Wat Duang Khae, Trok Salak Hin, Charat Mueang, Railway Flat, and Chulalongkorn University.

**3. The Scope of the Sample Groups:**

- For data collection purposes before the development of product prototypes and creative Thai art learning kits, the research subjects include urban residents aged between 19 and 70 years.
- For the implementation of the learning activity kits, the study involves 500 participants from the Rama IV communities who express interest in and are physically prepared to engage in creative Thai art learning activities.

### Terminology

1) **Urban Society's Well-being** refers specifically to the well-being of individuals living in urban environments. This research focuses on creating art-based interventions and product prototypes designed to enhance well-being primarily through stress reduction and increased enjoyment. The assessment of urban well-being follows the World Health Organization's Well-being index, adapted to evaluate participants' responses to the art activities and prototypes developed in this study.

2) **Creative Thai Arts Learning** encompasses educational activities centered on traditional Thai arts and crafts, incorporating contemporary creative elements that make them relevant for modern lifestyles. This approach blends cultural preservation with practical applications for daily living.

### Related Concepts and Theories

The research project, "Creative Thai Arts Learning for Urban Well-Being," has conducted extensive literature reviews of relevant theories and concepts to establish a solid foundation for developing learning innovations aimed at urban well-being enhancement. The theoretical framework incorporates multiple disciplines including Thai traditional arts, Thai pattern drawing techniques, Thai craftsmanship, lifestyle product design, creative cultural tourism, art therapy principles, public art applications, urban community development as tourist attractions, well-being assessment methodologies, and the intrinsic values of art in community development.

The primary theoretical foundations shaping the creative Thai arts learning activities include:

#### Thai Traditional Arts

Thai traditional arts represent a delicate and distinctive cultural heritage that reflects the aesthetic sensibilities and lifestyle values of Thai people throughout history. These art forms serve as tangible records of national heritage and historical evolution. Originally, most Thai artistic creations were intended to adorn religious spaces and objects associated with Buddhist practices. Consequently, Thai national arts have developed through the integration of Buddhist philosophy and spiritual beliefs (Buabut, 1970:1-5). Art scholars have systematically classified Traditional Thai arts into four major categories: 1) Thai traditional painting, which serves as the foundation for Thai pattern studies including Kranok (ornamental patterns), Naree (human figures), Krabi (monkey figures), and Kacha (elephant and other animal depictions); 2) Thai sculptures, three-dimensional artworks created through molding, carving, casting, and assembling techniques; 3) Thai architecture, encompass-

ing religious structures like pagodas and temples as well as traditional residences; and 4) Handicrafts, functional art objects combining aesthetic and practical purposes (Paknam, 1991; Pothiprasat, 2013; Leksukhum, 2001; Saising, 2013).

### Thai Traditional Painting

Thai traditional painting constitutes a significant fine art form with substantial artistic and scholarly value. These paintings provide important insights for studies in religion, history, archaeology, lifestyle evolution, cultural practices, traditional costumes, and regional entertainment forms across different historical periods. As such, Thai paintings serve as visual documentation reflecting national cultural development. Art historians typically classify Thai paintings into three main stylistic categories: linear Thai painting, Monochromatic Thai painting, and Multicolor painting.



Figure 1. Thai Lacquer work, Ayutthaya Period (1350–1767).

Thai lacquer work is a traditional form of decorative art with a long history in Thailand, dating back to ancient times. It was primarily used to adorn furniture, doors, cabinets, and religious artifacts. Known for its intricate designs and glossy, smooth finish, Thai lacquer work is highly valued for its craftsmanship and aesthetic beauty.

A distinctive technique within Thai lacquer work is “Lai Rod Nam,” which translates to “designs washed with water.” This technique involves applying layers of black lacquer, made from tree resin, onto wood or other surfaces. After the lacquer is applied, artisans cover the surface with gold leaf over a pre-drawn pattern. The gold leaf is then washed away from the unwanted areas, leaving intricate gold designs on the black lacquer background.





Figure 2. Mural Painting, Wat Khongkha Ram Temple, Ratchaburi Province. This mural painting from Wat Khongkha Ram Temple in Ratchaburi Province depicts mythical creatures in a dynamic aquatic setting. The central figures are beings with horse heads and fish tails, shown swimming among stylized waves. The overall style reflects traditional Thai art, characterized by intricate detail and imaginative subject matter.

### Characteristics and Styles of Thai Traditional Painting

Thai traditional paintings are primarily created using tempera and appear in various forms, such as murals, Buddhist manuscripts, banners, and cabinets. These paintings traditionally depict stories rooted in Buddhist beliefs. The style is typically characterized by flat, colored surfaces, gilding, and finely detailed outline drawings (Intralip, 1994: 1-10). With the influence of Western art, certain characteristics of Thai painting began to evolve. Notable changes include the use of linear perspective to create a sense of pictorial depth, as well as tonal gradation to convey three-dimensionality within the composition.

### Applications of Thai Traditional Arts on Creative Products

Thai traditional arts have been adapted and applied to a wide range of creative products. These adaptations often involve modifying traditional elements to serve new functions that align with contemporary consumer needs. Scholars, artists, designers, and art students have incorporated Thai traditional art into graphic design and product development, commercializing it in various forms such as book illustrations, animations, packaging, and decorative patterns on everyday items like utensils and textiles.

### Thai Arts and Well-being

The relationship between Thai arts and well-being stems from art's ability to contribute to personal development across various dimensions. Well-being represents a state of happiness achieved through balanced mental, physical, and spiritual health, resulting in harmonious relationships between personal aspirations and social connections (White, 2008: 1-2). Art maintains an inseparable connection with society (Barbosa, 1992: 1), possessing both intrinsic artistic value and significant community-level benefits. Guetzkow (2002: 1) identifies three primary ways community art activities positively impact societies: by strengthen-

ing social capital and community cohesion; by improving community image and stimulating local economies; and by providing mental and physical health benefits to participants. Consequently, art serves multiple important functions - as an educational medium that makes learning more engaging when integrated with other disciplines, and as a therapeutic tool that enhances life quality by reducing stress and anxiety.

In the specific context of Thai traditional art, its intricate nature promotes focused attention and cultivates refined aesthetic appreciation among practitioners. Additionally, Thai art activities foster self-esteem development and strengthen interpersonal relationships among participants, ultimately contributing to broader societal well-being. These therapeutic benefits align with established principles of art therapy, which typically progresses through four developmental stages: rapport building, exploration, experiential engagement, and empowerment. Art therapy techniques may incorporate various media including drawing, painting, sculpting, printmaking, and crafts (Rugmai, 2021: 202-204).

### Well-being Assessment

Well-being assessment requires specific methodological approaches to ensure validity and reliability. Researchers employ various assessment tools including interviews, questionnaires, checklists, rating scales, and semantic differential techniques (Lawthong, 2018: 150). The World Health Organization has developed a standardized Well-being Index that serves as a quality measurement scale. This assessment tool uses rating-scale questions to measure various well-being indicators including health perceptions, life satisfaction, work concentration, functional capability, and interpersonal relationships (World Health Organization, 2004: 45-48).

This research adapts the WHO assessment methodology, employing participant responses to rating-scale questions as indicators of well-being improvement. The five-level assessment scale ranges from 5 (all the time) to 1 (never), measuring frequency of positive well-being experiences across various dimensions.

After the implementation of the Thai art activities, the participants' well-being was analyzed and interpreted using the arithmetic mean. The interpretation of well-being levels is as follows:

An average score of 4.51–5.00 indicates the highest level of well-being.

An average score of 3.51–4.50 indicates a high level of well-being.

An average score of 2.51–3.50 indicates a moderate level of well-being.

An average score of 1.51–2.50 indicates a low level of well-being.

An average score of 1.00–1.50 indicates the lowest level of well-being.

### Methodology

This research employed a mixed-methods approach, consisting of the following steps:

#### Step 1: Data Collection for the Development of Product Prototypes and Creative Thai Art Learning Kits

Data were collected through documentary research, community surveys, interviews with community leaders, and needs analysis. The sample groups consisted of:

- 5 community leaders and coordinators, selected through purposive sampling.
- 100 Rama IV community members, aged between 19 and 70 years, selected through volunteer sampling.

## **Step 2: Data Analysis and Development of Product Prototypes and Creative Thai Art Learning Kits**

The data collected in Step 1 were analyzed to create a walking map and design product prototypes and creative Thai art learning kits aimed at improving the well-being of urban society. Three creative prototypes and learning kits were developed:

- Creative Thai Ornament Drawing Learning Kits
- Creative Thai Craft Learning Kits
- Creative Lifestyle Products from Thai Ornaments Learning Kits

## **Step 3: Implementation of the Creative Thai Art Learning Kits**

An experimental study was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the Creative Thai Art Learning Kits on the well-being of urban residents. Creative Thai art activities were organized for 500 residents in the Rama IV area, including the following communities: Wat Duang Khae, Trok Salak Hin, Charat Mueang, Railway Flat, and the community of students and staff at Chulalongkorn University. Data were collected using well-being and satisfaction assessment forms, as well as interviews conducted with participants after completing the activities.

## **Step 4: Data Analysis**

The quantitative data collected from the pre-experimental study were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, mean, standard deviation, and percentage. The qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis.

## **Research Results**

From the community surveys conducted in the Rama IV area, foundational data were collected to support the creation of a walking map and the development of Thai art product prototypes and Creative Thai Art Learning Kits.

The Rama IV area, located in central Bangkok, comprises several urban communities with diverse social and cultural characteristics. Traditional cultural values remain strong, especially in temple-centered communities such as Wat Duang Khae and Trok Salak Hin. Local religious practices, community ceremonies, and neighborhood festivals continue to play a vital role in shaping cultural identity. Wat Duang Khae temple houses notable examples of Thai traditional art, including murals, high-reliefs sculpture, and distinctive architectural features. In contrast, cultural artifacts found in a shrine within Trok Salak Hin reflect Chinese heritage, fostering a sense of identity and continuity among the Chinese-Thai population. These enduring traditions harmoniously coexist with modern urban influences, which are evident across multiple generations.

Art and creative practices are deeply embedded in these communities. Over the past decade, numerous art initiatives have been implemented, such as community mural projects and collaborative art-making activities involving local residents, volunteer artists, and students. These creative endeavors demonstrate a collective interest in using art as a means of community development, environmental beautification, and social cohesion.

Although some neighborhoods face challenges typical of urban environments, such as limited space and economic constraints, residents exhibit strong community spirit and active participation in local initiatives. The proximity of Chulalongkorn University adds an academic and cultural dynamic to the area. Students and faculty often collaborate with the surrounding communities through research, outreach programs, and artistic activities, contributing to the area's cultural vitality.

Overall, the findings reveal a high level of enthusiasm for art among community members. Residents consistently expressed interest in using art to improve their surroundings and to promote the well-being of individuals and the community as a whole.



Figure 3. Surrounding views of communities in the Rama IV area. The image showcases red lanterns with intricate designs at a Chinese shrine in Trok Salak Hin, a traditional Thai-style building at Wat Duang Khae, and a modern basketball court in the Railway Flat community – illustrating the area's rich cultural heritage and dynamic urban life.

### Community Walking Map in Rama IV Area

The community walking map highlights significant locations within the Wat Duang Khae, Trok Salak Hin, Charat Mueang, and Railway Flat communities. These include religious sites, local food stalls, and communal spaces used for organizing activities and events. In addition to serving as a navigational tool, the map also reflects both the traditional and contemporary occupations of residents in each community, providing insight into their cultural and socio-economic contexts.



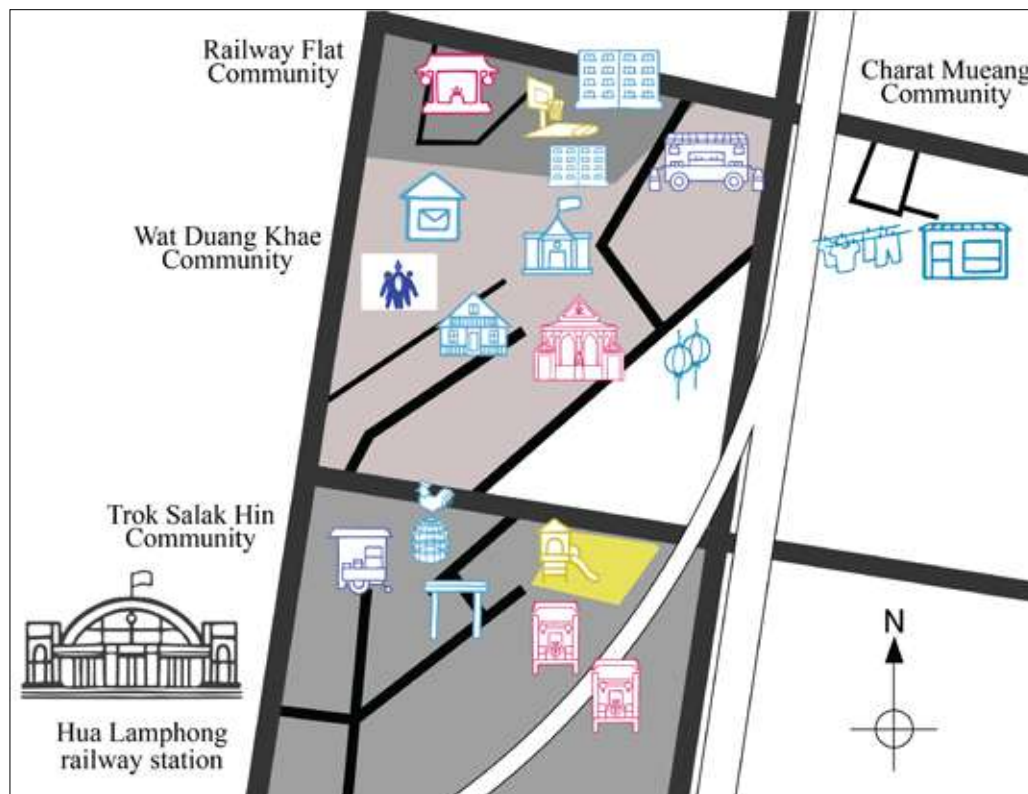


Figure 4. Community walking map in Rama IV area.

### Analysis of conditions and pain points of the Community

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with the closure of Bangkok Railway Station (Hua Lamphong), significantly affected the economic and social conditions of the local communities. These events led to a sluggish local economy, rising unemployment, and a sharp decline in household income. As a result, the psychological well-being of residents was adversely impacted, with many experiencing heightened stress levels and reduced social interaction.

Interviews with community leaders and surveys conducted among residents revealed a strong interest in participating in art activities as a means of stress relief and emotional support. Most residents indicated that they were available for such activities on weekends.

In cases where on-site participation was restricted, community members were able to engage through online sessions or learn independently by following video-based instructions. The majority of participants expressed interest in art-based activities such as coloring in painting books, decorating fabric bags, and creating handicrafts using sewing and embroidery techniques.

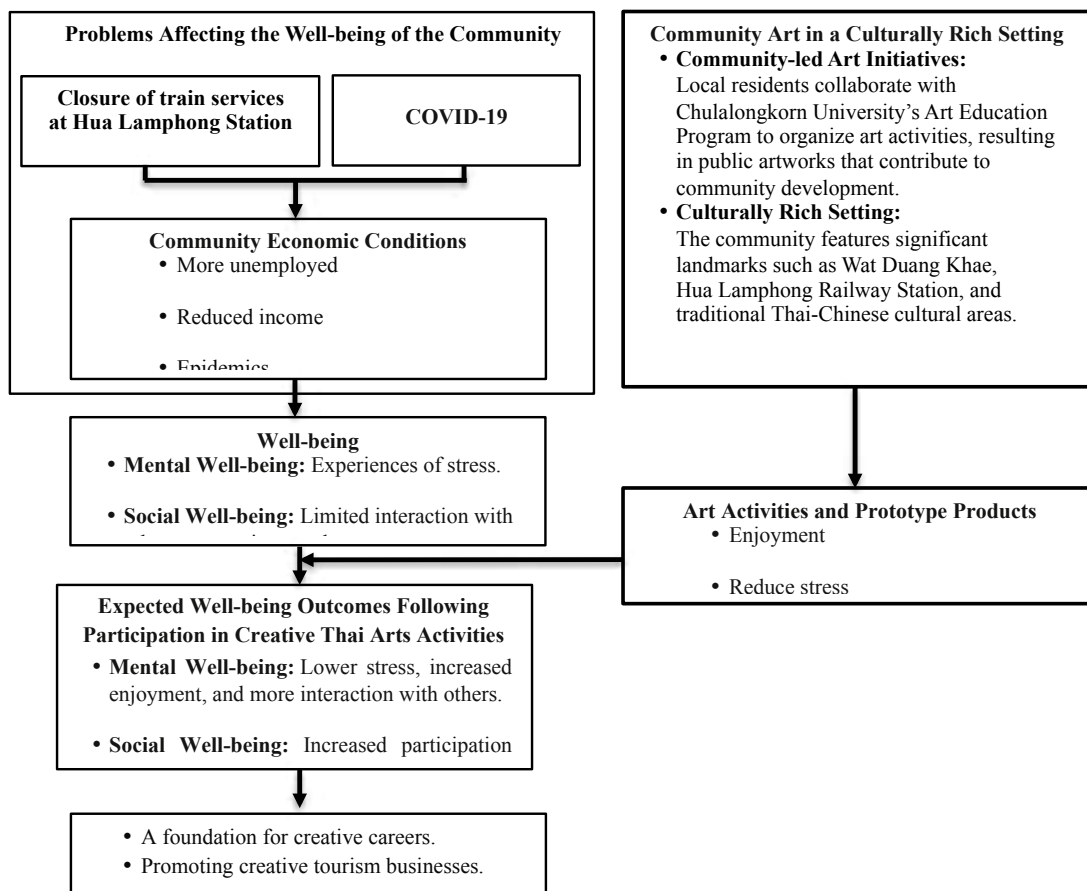


Figure 5. Analysis of conditions and pain points from community surveys.

### Results of product prototypes and Learning Activities Development

The development of product prototypes and Creative Thai Art Learning Kits, aimed at enhancing the well-being of urban residents, resulted in three key outputs: 1) Creative Thai Ornament Drawing Learning Kits; 2) Creative Thai Craft Learning Kits; 3) Creative Lifestyle Products from Thai Ornaments Learning Kits.



Figure 6. Three sets of product prototypes and Creative Thai Art Learning Kits.

1) *Product Prototypes and Creative Thai Ornament Drawing Learning Kits* – introducing traditional Thai motifs through drawing-based activities. The kit includes three themed drawing books: *Beginning Thai Drawing*, *Imaginative Land*, and *Bangkok: A Creative Community*.

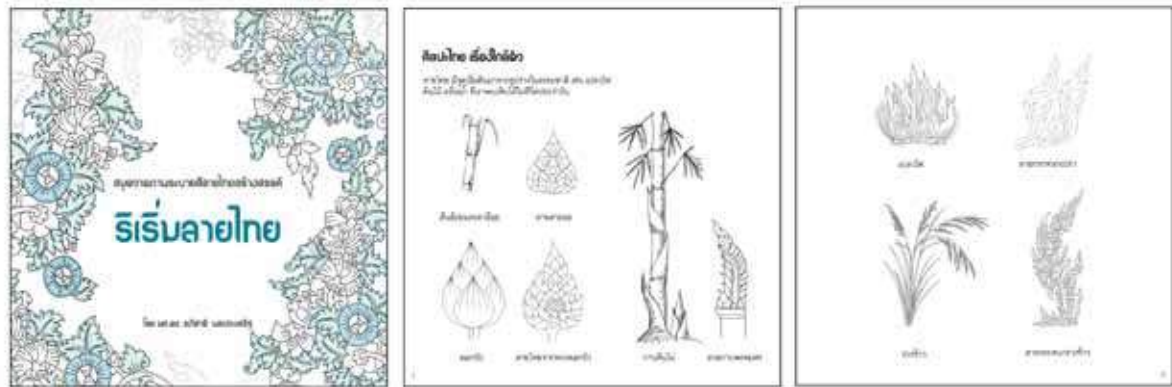


Figure 7. Drawing and Coloring Book 1: “Beginning Thai Drawing” introduces the origins and four main categories of traditional Thai art – Kanok, Naree, Krabi, and Khacha – through introductory explanations and simple activities for practicing drawing and coloring traditional Thai motifs.



Figure 8. Drawing and coloring book 2: “Imaginative Land” is a coloring and image-completion book that combines the traditional artistry of ancient Thai painting with modern imagination. The main illustrations are inspired by the scenes and mythical creatures of the Himmaman celestial forest – a mythical realm from Thai literature, filled with fantastical creatures and symbolic imagery.



Figure 9. Drawing and coloring book 3: “Bangkok: A Creative Community” is a coloring and image-completion book that showcases the beauty of notable locations in Bangkok – such as Hua Lamphong Railway Station, a mix of modern and traditional architecture in communities around the Rama IV area, and other charming and culturally rich places throughout the city.



2) *Product prototypes and creative Thai Craft Learning Kits* – featuring hands-on activities that emphasize sewing and ornamentation techniques. The kit includes: 1) *Auspicious Embroidery Activity* – an embroidery set for decorating small bags; 2) *Lucky Knot Weaving Activity* – a rope-knotting set for creating symbolic Thai knots; 3) *Mindfulness Beading Activity* – a beading set for making decorative straps for medical masks.



Figure 10. Product prototypes and Creative Thai Craft Learning Kits.

3) *Creative Lifestyle Products from Thai Ornaments Learning Kits* – applying traditional Thai patterns to contemporary lifestyle products. The kit consists of three main activities: 1) *Rama IV Community Creative Souvenir Activity* – designing cloth bags printed with outline illustrations that represent each community's identity; 2) *Rama IV Community "New Normal" Healthcare Activity* – decorating face masks and alcohol spray containers with community-themed stickers; 3) *Rama IV Community Creative Tourism Activity* – decorating postcards and coloring a community walking map as a means of cultural engagement.



Figure 11. Creative Lifestyle Products from Thai Ornaments Learning Kits.

### Results of Participation in Creative Thai Art Activities

Following the implementation of the Creative Thai Art Learning Kits with 500 community members, survey results indicated a high level of participant satisfaction ( $x = 4.37$ , S.D. = 0.588). Participants expressed particularly high satisfaction with the quality of materials and media used in the activities ( $x = 4.44$ , S.D. = 0.699). Moreover, their appreciation for the cultural value of Thai arts and crafts increased as a result of their participation.

In terms of well-being, post-activity evaluations revealed that participants' overall well-being was rated at a high level ( $x = 4.33$ , S.D. = 0.632). Many participants reported experiencing a strong sense of pride and enhanced self-esteem after completing the activities. A majority also expressed interest in continuing the activities on a regular basis.

Participants recommended expanding the program to include additional activities, such as crafting necklaces, designing shirts with local motifs, creating community murals to foster self-expression through color, and establishing check-in spots at culturally significant locations within the community.



Figure 12. Implementation of the Creative Thai Art Learning Kits at the Foundation for Child Development, located near Wat Duang Khae, Trok Salak Hin, Charat Mueang, and the Railway Flat community. The foundation typically serves as a hub for various activities within the surrounding communities.





Figure 13. Implementation of the Creative Thai Art Learning Kits was carried out across the Rama IV area, with the intention of minimizing the risk of COVID-19 exposure. The research team collaborated with community representatives to distribute the kits and share knowledge with members of the target communities, encouraging them to engage in the activities in small groups or with family members.

When analyzed by age groups, the results of the participants' well-being and their opinions toward the activities are as follows:

#### 1. Participants Under 25 Years Old:

The results of the well-being analysis indicated a high level ( $x = 4.25$ , S.D. = 0.848). Participants in this age group reported that they liked the flexibility of the activity, which allowed them to choose their own colors and designs. They didn't have to worry about making mistakes, which gave them the freedom to make their own decisions. They used the activity as a way to take a break from stressful thoughts and to focus on the present moment, which helped relieve anxiety related to the pandemic.

#### 2. Participants Aged 26–35 Years Old:

The results of the well-being analysis indicated a high level ( $x = 4.45$ , S.D. = 0.615). Participants in this age group stated that the activity was practical, easy to do, and genuinely useful. They appreciated the incorporation of auspicious stories and Thai patterns, describing it as both charming and modern. They felt that it could inspire the creation of products reflecting the community's unique identity and help generate income.

#### 3. Participants Aged 36–45 Years Old:

The results of the well-being analysis indicated a high level ( $x = 4.29$ , S.D. = 0.742). Participants in this age group felt that the activity was easy to follow, with simple steps, while still allowing them to think creatively. They also valued the opportunity to spend quality time with their families.

#### 4. Participants Aged 46–55 Years Old:

The results of the well-being analysis indicated a high level ( $x = 4.30$ , S.D. = 0.785). Participants in this age group felt that the activities effectively blended traditional Thai patterns with modern elements and incorporated cultural beliefs. This made them enthusiastic about using the finished products.

#### 5. Participants Over 55 Years Old:

The results of the well-being analysis indicated a high level ( $x = 4.50$ , S.D. = 0.611). Participants in this age group felt that the activity provided a welcome break for people in urban communities, who often have limited free time and are constantly working. It offered relaxation and positively impacted family life. Members of the household felt happier and more at ease, which helped strengthen family bonds and enhanced the livability of the community. One suggestion for future development was to create larger tote bags suitable for community use, such as for grocery shopping or carrying personal belongings.

### Discussion

Based on the outcomes of developing creative Thai art product prototypes and implementing art activities for urban residents in the Rama IV area, three major aspects of well-being were identified and are discussed as follows:

#### 1. Social Well-Being

The art activities played a significant role in enhancing the social well-being of the community. Although the population is diverse and each community, such as Wat Duang Khae, Trok Salak Hin, Charat Mueang, and Railway Flat, has distinct characteristics, they share a collective goal of improving community well-being through the expression of cultural identity.

Several projects and initiatives organized in the Rong Mueang area reflect this mission. Key factors contributing to these efforts include strong community leadership, support from external organizations, partnerships with development networks, and, most importantly, the active participation and commitment of local residents.

This observation is supported by Boonruangsak and Iem-On (2018: 68), who assert that community well-being is best achieved through a systematic, structured approach in which local leaders serve as catalysts. Similarly, Pru Krathok (2015: 238) emphasizes that community well-being is driven by social capital, internal potential, cultural harmony, strong social networks, and collaborative leadership within urban communities.

The research finding also echoes Bussakorn Binson's call for integrating the arts into community care. While her editorial specifically focuses on the elderly, she emphasizes that the arts play a vital role in enriching lives and revitalizing the spirit of urban communities. This perspective supports the broader application of creative art activities to promote well-being in diverse urban settings. (Binson, 2024)

#### 2. Emotional and Mental Well-Being

The product prototypes and Creative Thai Art Learning Kits were developed by drawing on both national artistic heritage, such as Thai ornamental patterns found in historic sites, and insights from local community surveys that revealed the unique identity of the area.

These designs became central to the art activities, which guided participants through step-by-step processes: from learning to draw simple Thai motifs, to coloring intricate designs, creating handicrafts, and producing lifestyle products and souvenirs.

Embroidery kits also featured auspicious symbols associated with good fortune and prosperity, further connecting the art-making process to the cultural beliefs of participants. This thoughtful integration of identity, creativity, and cultural meaning fostered a sense of pride, enjoyment, and emotional fulfillment among community members.

These findings align with the research of Tymoszuk et al. (2021: 1), who concluded that participating in art activities can improve social connectedness, reduce symptoms of depression, and enhance overall well-being. Pöllänen (2015: 58) similarly found that handicraft activities among women aged 19 to 84 provided a meaningful outlet that improved both mental and physical health. Notably, Kaimal et al. (2017: 81) observed that art therapists in the United States are increasingly drawn to craft-based activities due to their therapeutic effectiveness, especially in promoting self-esteem and relaxation.

### 3. Economic Well-being

The Rama IV community network encompasses culturally rich areas with distinctive identities and landmarks, including Wat Duang Khae Temple, Chinese shrines, Hua Lamphong Railway Station, and traditional Thai-Chinese cultural enclaves. These features offer strong potential as sources of inspiration for the design of craft products and tourist experiences that contribute to the local creative economy.

This research has developed product prototypes and art learning kits that promote skill development in arts and crafts while supporting income generation through creative tourism. The incorporation of local cultural motifs into these products adds authenticity and marketability, both of which are key to sustaining economic well-being.

Mancini (2005: 15) emphasizes that local identity is essential for the tourism sector, as visitors seek distinctive and culturally resonant experiences. Morgan (2001: 10-11) adds that local crafts, souvenirs, and handmade goods are powerful attractions that draw tourists and support local livelihoods. According to Kuntaja (2014: 88-89), the success of cultural tourism also depends on collaboration between residents, community networks, and institutional partners. Establishing learning centers that host workshops and facilitate skills-sharing is a strategy that enhances sustainability and participation. In line with this, the current project not only provided skill-based activities but also produced a practical guidebook for organizing arts and crafts workshops. This guide supports community centers in continuing the work in collaboration with their networks, thereby strengthening long-term economic and cultural sustainability.

### Research Limitations

The implementation of the Creative Thai Art Learning Kits to the target groups took place during the COVID-19 outbreak, when the Thai government enforced public health measures to minimize the risk of viral transmission. As a result, the research team had to adjust the planned activities accordingly. The number of locations and the frequency of events involving large gatherings were reduced to minimize the risk of COVID-19 exposure. In an effort to resolve this issue, the research team assigned community representatives

who attended the on-site activities to distribute the learning kits, transfer the knowledge to members of the target communities, and encourage them to engage with the activities individually or in small groups. Although the activities, data collection, and well-being assessments successfully covered the targeted areas and reached the planned number of 500 participants, the researchers had fewer opportunities to directly observe and interact with participants compared to normal circumstances.

### Conclusion

The outcomes of this project demonstrate not only immediate benefits in social, emotional, and economic well-being but also point toward longer-term impacts. By embedding cultural knowledge in community-led creative activities, the project contributes to the preservation of intangible heritage and strengthens a shared sense of identity among diverse urban populations. Furthermore, the integration of arts-based approaches into local development offers a model that can be adapted and applied in other communities and can inform policy, particularly in areas related to cultural education, public health, and sustainable urban revitalization.

It is also worth noting that the project demonstrated an effective approach for conducting community-based activities under restricted conditions, such as public health regulations during the COVID-19 outbreak, by decentralizing facilitation through trained local representatives – a strategy that maintained participation and ensured continuity despite limitations on in-person gatherings.

### Suggestions

#### Suggestions for Application of Research Results

- When designing products and activities for communities, designers and educators should take into account the specific needs and willingness of community members to participate. Consideration should also be given to the local social context, traditional knowledge, and available materials.
- Facilitators of creative Thai art learning activities should schedule sessions at times that are convenient for community members and ensure that the activities can be completed within the given timeframe. Individual differences such as age, skill level, and personal aptitude should also be taken into consideration to support successful participation.
- For classroom implementation, educators should allocate adequate time for students to complete the assigned tasks and adopt flexible evaluation methods to accommodate diverse learning styles and paces.

#### Suggestions for Policy Development

- Creative Thai art learning activities should be integrated into initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality of life and well-being of youth and all members of urban communities.
- These activities should be utilized as tools to develop practical skills among urban populations, contributing to career development and the promotion of the creative economy.
- Creative Thai art initiatives should be incorporated into community-based tourism strategies to help stimulate local tourism industries.

serve as a medium for strengthening relationships and collaboration between community networks and nearby educational institutions.

### Suggestions for Further Study

- Future research should focus on developing creative products and learning activities with commercial potential, in collaboration with government agencies responsible for urban community development, to enhance communities' economic well-being. 3.2 Additional studies should aim to design and evaluate creative Thai art learning activities tailored to students across various educational levels, supporting both cultural learning and skill development.

### Acknowledgments

This research and innovation activity was funded by National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT).

### References

- Barbosa, Ana Mae Tavares Bastos. "The Role of Education in the Culture and Artistic Development of the Individual: Developing Artistic and Creative Skills." Paper presented at the *UNESCO International Conference on Education*, Geneva, Switzerland, September 14-19, 1992.
- Boonruangsak, Chayaporn & Sutthipong Iem-On. "Community Health Management to Strengthen the Community in the Area of Subsomboon Sub-District Administrative Organization, Phetchabun Province." *Area Based Development Research Journal* 10 (2018): 55-69.
- Buabut, Jit. *Siamoid Civilization*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University, 1970.
- Binson, Bussakorn. "The Vital Role of Art Therapy in Enriching Urban Senior Lives: A Call to Action." *Journal of Urban Culture Research* 28 (2024): 1-2.
- Guetzkow, Joshua. "How the Arts Impact Communities: An Introduction to the Literature on Arts Impact Studies." Paper presented at the *Taking the Measure of Culture Conference*, Princeton University, Princeton, USA, June 7-8, 2002.
- Intralip, Sonthiwan. *Thai Traditional Paintings*. Bangkok: Amarin Printing Group, 1994.
- Kaimal, Girija, Gonzaga, Adele & Schwachter, Victoria. "Crafting, Health and Well-being: Findings From the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts and Considerations for Art Therapists." *Arts & Health* 9 (2017): 81-90.
- Kuntaja, Sarawut. "The Management for Increasing Efficiency of Learning Resources and Cultural Tourism of Handicraft Communities in Muang District, Chiang Mai Province." *Journal of Integrated Sciences* 11 (2014): 88-111.
- Lawthong, Nuttaporn. *Creation of Educational Research Tools*. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 2018.
- Leksukhum, Santi. *History of Thai Art (Abbreviated Version)*. Bangkok: Muang Boran Press, 2001.



- Mancini, Marc. *Access: Introduction to Travel and Tourism*. New York: Delmar Cengage Learning, Clifton Park, 2005.
- Morgan, Nigel & Pritchard, Annette. *Advertising in Tourism and Leisure*. Great Britain: Butterworth Heinemann, Oxford, 2001.
- NHA Housing Knowledge Center. (2020). "List of Communities in Bangkok in 2020." Housingkc.nha.co.th. <https://housingkc.nha.co.th/files/article/attachments/e68bdabe12ee50ab4b85280813bcf2de.pdf>. (accessed May 25, 2021).
- Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board. *The Twelfth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2017-2021)*. Bangkok: Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2017.
- Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board. *The Thirteenth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2022-2026)*. Bangkok: Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2022.
- Paknam, N. Na. *Ancient Art in Siam*. Bangkok: Muang Boran Press, 1991.
- Pöllänen, Sinikka. "Elements of Crafts that Enhance Well-Being." *Journal of Leisure Research* 47 (2015): 58-78.
- Pothiprasat, Nart. *Architecture in Thailand*. Bangkok: Faculty of Architecture Chulalongkorn University, 2013.
- Pru Krathok, Nittaya. "Accumulation of Social Capital to Promote Community Mental Health." *Academic Journal of Human Social* 3 (2015): 238-256.
- Rugmai, Tuenrudee. "The Process of Creating a Work of Art from Sensory Integration of Students with Intellectual Disabilities of The Panyanukul Schools in Eastern Thailand." *Journal of Urban Culture Research* 22 (2021): 195-216.
- Saising, Sakchai. *Buddha Images in Thailand: Patterns, Developments and Beliefs of Thai People*. Bangkok: Faculty of Archaeology, Silpakorn University, 2013.
- Tymoszuk, Urszula, Spiro, Neta, Perkins, Rosie, Mason-Bertrand, Adele, Gee, Kate & Williamon, Aaron. "Arts Engagement Trends in the United Kingdom and Their Mental and Social Wellbeing Implications: HEartS Survey." *PLoS One* 16 (2021): 1-35.
- White, Sarah C. "But What is Wellbeing? A Framework for Analysis in Social and Development Policy and Practice. Center for Development Studies." Paper presented at the Regeneration and Wellbeing: Research Into Practice, University of Bradford, UK, April 24-25, 2008.
- World Health Organization. *Promoting Mental Health: Concepts, Evidence and Practice*. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2004.