Independent Study Write-Up
Hero Winsor

In spring and Winter Quarter I have been working on an independent art therapy model and working with the international storytelling group. My initial goals for these projects were to form professional bonds with members of my group and do career exploration into therapeutic modalities. I have achieved my initial learning goals, but what I am most impressed with is how these projects have evolved to spark new interests and goals. In doing my project into art therapy I explored consciousness, calligraphy, language, and personal growth. In the storytelling group, I was able to explore narrative, free-writing, and development of voice. In this write-up, I will demonstrate what I created, how each of my goals have been met, and how these projects will influence future paths of study.

Initially, my plan was to research art therapy and hypnotherapy. I was specifically interested in how Japanese and Chinese calligraphy can be used for art therapy. I found that research into the psychological benefits of Japanese calligraphy went back at least a hundred years before I started my project. In Arakawa's article about the history of art psychology in Japan, multiple instances of psychological research into calligraphy are highlighted (2016). In general, the article references a broad scope of Japanese research into art psychology, expanding upon culture-specific art psychology. One of the earliest sources included was the work of Mantaro Kido, who in 1919 wrote a book on calligraphy titled *Research on Calligraphy and Writing*. Included in this text are studies conducted by Kido on individual responses to calligraphy fonts. Arakawa cites calligraphy research in psychology as something unique to Japan and China. In all, this article served as a foundation for the study into calligraphy I would

do these past two quarters. It expanded on my knowledge of the history and systems of psychology, expanding it outside of a Western perspective.

This led me to collect three other articles regarding Calligraphy and Art therapy. Chu et al. conducted a meta-analysis of the effectiveness of Chinese Calligraphy therapy which included studies published in English and Chinese (2018). Studies had to include a control group that did not participate in calligraphy therapy and instead received general care. Neuropsychiatric conditions involved in the studies analyzed ranged from Schizophrenia and Alzheimer's. Also included were studies done on general members of the public such as college students. A wide range of age ranges were included. In total, 21 studies were used. The data analysis showed that Chinese Calligraphy therapy was effective in treating the symptoms studied, however more research on the therapy is required. The meta-analysis also found that randomized controlled trials were the best method for testing the efficacy of Chinese Calligraphy Therapy.

Tai et al. conducted a study on the use of calligraphy therapy along with other methods for patients with Alzheimer's (2016). Twenty-four subjects were split up into a control group that continued their normal routine, and a test group which participated in two 3-hour sessions of calligraphy, Tai Chi and drawing per week. The study was conducted over a period of six weeks. Both groups were tested on their quality of life, cognition, and strain on caregivers. The study found that the test group had significantly decreased distress in comparison with the control group. The experimenters do warn about the limitations of the study because of the limited sample size. Nevertheless, the methods introduced showed significant promise on the treatment of patients with Alzheimer's.

Kao et al. conducted a study comparing the efficacy of calligraphy therapy with meditation to decrease stress (2014). The sample was taken from a group of staff and graduate

students at the National Central University of Taiwan. The sample consisted of thirty people

divided among three groups, a control group, a calligraphy group, and a meditation group. Each

participant was tested for their baseline physiological parameters, administered a Stroop test to

induce stress then tested again. The test groups then underwent twenty minutes of their

respective treatment. Calligraphic characters were chosen at random. The meditation group

focused on mindfulness and deep abdominal breathing. All groups were then tested on their

physiological parameters. Both Chinese Calligraphy Therapy and meditation served to decrease

heart rate significantly, with calligraphy proving to be the most effective of the two. As with Tai

et. al (2016), the sample size was limited, but statistically, the changes were significant.

This last study played a large part in the development of my therapeutic model. I decided

that because calligraphy and meditative practices proved effective for stress reduction,

incorporating deep breathing into a calligraphy-based art-therapy could add to the healing nature

of the session. For this project, I decided that an in-class art therapy session was the best way to

display my learning. This session became a synthesis of all I had been researching and

practicing the past two quarters and included foundations from the fall quarter of this program.

To prepare for this session, I created a script for the session to guide the practice. I practiced this

script multiple times before presenting the session to the class. I also prepared three short videos

two visually guide the practice in a clear, non-obtrusive way.

In addition to the peer-reviewed articles I collected, I also incorporated information from

other sources. I listened to multiple episodes of the podcast "Art Therapy Decoded," on Spotify

which included interviews from practicing art therapists (Cody & Winslow, 2019-2020). I used

this as career exploration for art therapy. Through this auditory medium I also was able to

examine the tone and voice of the art therapists hosting and being interviewed. Their calm but

grounded and assertive tones led me to start thinking about how I can use my own voice to create a therapeutic and healing environment. Although I recognized doing artistic practices on one's own can prove to be healing, I recognized that having a facilitator there could add depth. This is something I incorporated into my in-class presentation during the Festival of Health.

My therapeutic voice was also enhanced by work in the international storytelling group. The group met for two to three hours weekly and included free-writes as well as improvisational workshops provided by Æ (Ash).   I was able to learn an incredible amount from the other students in this group. In both writing and speaking, I was able to practice having a more developed voice. This aided me when I was scripting my art therapy session as well as when I was presenting. I also incorporated the storytelling techniques I learned in this group into my session. Instead of randomly choosing the characters as in Kao et. al (2014), I chose 平和 which means peace with an emphasis in balance and tranquility. It is pronounced heiwa in Japanese and pinghua in Chinese. 平 means flat, or calm and 和 indicates balance and tranquility. 和、pronounced wa is an ancient name for Japan, originally given by China (Mason & Caiger, 1997). This was replaced by the kanji for sun and book, 日本、which are pronounced Nihon or Nippon. I wanted to tell a therapeutic story through the characters themselves, adding a depth of meaning to the practice. I recognized that because of recent global events, stresses from the end of the quarter and ongoing stress from the Covid 19 pandemic, peace, balance, and tranquility would be more important than ever. Through my facilitating, I tried to set participants on a path to adding meaning to the practice. I also incorporated a free-write portion to the presentation, inviting participants to write around the characters they formed.
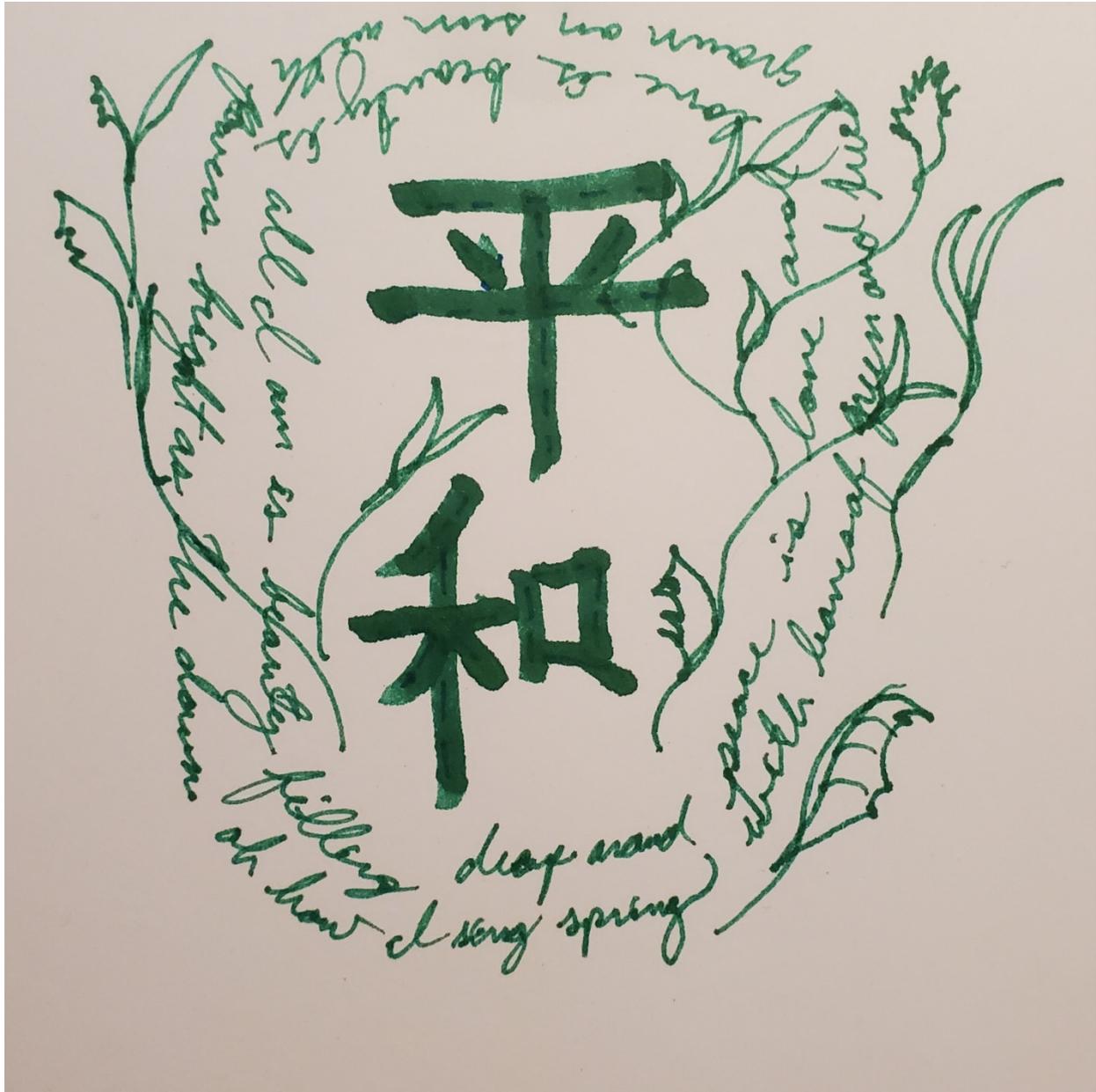
Originally, I wanted to also research hypnotherapy for this project, but ended up centering more on art therapy. I did however research the use of cognitive hypnotherapy through an article from the International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis (Alladin, 2010). In this article, the methods of cognitive hypnotherapy are described as well as their specific use for Major Depressive Disorder. Among reasons hypnotherapy can be effective are expanding awareness to break free from rumination, create positive associations, increasing self-esteem and

using posthypnotic suggestion to break depressive thinking outside of hypnosis. While this article and research served more to spark my interest in research in future programs or on my own, I also included techniques from the field of hypnotherapy into my session. Going back to fall quarter, in our discussions of ecopsychology, I read the article *The Nature of Hypnotherapy* where it was suggested that a natural environment could lead to a better therapeutic space and an easier shift in consciousness (Floyd et. al, 2020). I took this idea and added natural suggestions into the session. I suggested participants think about the relationship of peace and nature. I used colors seen in a natural environment: blue and green. At the end of the session, I invited participants to add leaves or other natural decoration to their image. Although I could not have the group meet in nature or in a space decorated to be more like a forest, I was able to incorporate natural imagery for healing. Through this I hoped to create an internal therapeutic space.

In addition, or as an alternative to a free-write around the characters, I invited the participants to do a wide Zen circle around the image. This is inspired by the work of Kazuashi Tanahashi, whose work I learned about from the documentary *The Brush Mind* (Brescius, 2015). The documentary follows Kazuashi calmly over the course of his days. He often does large circles in vibrant colors called Zen circles. His work also inspired the aspect of the session revolving around color. Kazuashi often uses ink other than the traditional black for his ukiyo-e pieces. This provides a great depth of emotion in his work.

The unique nature of this time made it impossible to not acknowledge the pandemic in my studies. Because of this, I explored digital forms of art therapy. While my workshop was already held in a digital space, I went further to research and practice digital art. Through a series of case studies, Thong (2007) raises the argument that digital art is a helpful tool for art

therapy. Adolescents undergoing art therapy in a hospital setting found a healing impact through photoshop, digital drawing, and collage. Over the past two quarters I have been using the free digital art program Krita to create images for deepening reflections and for personal healing. Through this I have personally found it to be a useful tool. Digital art has the benefits of being mess free, and available with limited space and supplies. This is an area which I am interested in doing further research into. I believe this can be an important tool for teletherapy as demonstrations can more easily be done through screen sharing. One of my early inspirations for this project was a piece I created for the lunar new year. The piece features an ox, as this year is the year of the ox, along with the Chinese character for ox embedded into the structure of its horns. I created this piece through Krita, and used both calligraphy and digital art. Some of the techniques I used in this piece became incorporated into my therapeutic model as well as sparking inspiration into further research into digital art and its use in art therapy.

A large part of my work this quarter has been expanding communication through a digital space. In the international storytelling group, I was able to form close bonds with students half a world away. Although our time-zones differed and we existed in completely different spaces, we were able to collaborate. Because of this, we found it fitting to tell a story together that explores both time and space. Participants each wrote a section of the story of a time traveler along the path of the Hero's Journey. The goal of our protagonist, dubbed the traveler, was to grow and heal in unique ways across their journey. I selected the sections of the Hero's Journey entitled "Meeting the Mentor," and "Approach to the Innermost Cave." I chose a historical figure who has been important to me since an early age to appear in these selections: Nikola Tesla. Tesla always stood out to me as someone whose innovative spirit was inseparable by his eccentricity. Unlike his rivals, he did not become purely motivated by profiting by his creations. His life gave me a sense of wisdom. To reflect this, the traveler meets Tesla as an old man, surrounded by pigeons. Although he cannot help the traveler fix their time-machine, he gives them the advice that the machine will take them where they need to go. The second time the traveler meets Tesla, it is in a far different context. An animatronic version of Tesla is among many historical figures in a time museum. The traveler is unsettled by this use of Tesla's image without any of the spark of creativity of the original that they hit the false Tesla. This is my interpretation of approaching the innermost cave, a moment where the hero must address a conflict deep within. Here the traveler must reckon between a goal of being a traveler and observer and this sudden entrance of destruction.

In writing this story, I learned how to collaborate with others in creative ways. I was able to learn more about my group members through their weekly check-ins and their writing. I found that storytelling is an inherently collaborative process, a relationship between audience

and creator. In writing my selections, I served as both as I wove elements from other's work into my own. I have now formed long-lasting bonds with both my classmates from Evergreen and with the international students on our team.

In both projects I worked on, I maintained a balance between observation and practice. The research I gathered laid the foundation for my art therapy model. Personal practice allowed me to observe the effects of what I was creating. This research allowed me to investigate the process of creating a therapeutic model and feel what performance in a facilitating role is like. My career exploration went beyond a level of research into practice.

The presentation of these projects served to prepare me for both future study and future career opportunities. I was able to improve the confidence of my voice in a very tangible way. In writing, I was able to embrace my own narrative style while working with others. Although I was only able to present a summary of my sections of the collaborative story project, I endeavored to tell it in an engaging way. For my art therapy workshop, I was able to use my voice to create a calm, cohesive environment to guide the class through what I had been working on. This will help for years in the future in group presentations, and professional practice.

I believe I met my original learning goals well. If I were to structure an independent study program again, I would perhaps include more scheduled activities. That said, I felt very good with how the project evolved and changed organically over the past quarter. I had some difficulties finding time to work on my project on certain weeks, however a more detailed schedule may help with that later.

These projects have opened the door to future study of art therapy, hypnotherapy, digital art, and storytelling. As I try to do with every program, I intend to weave what I have learned through these projects into the tapestry of my time at Evergreen. I may conduct my own

research into one of these topics or incorporate them into a future internship. I hope to keep in contact with the international students I met through this program, which potentially opens future collaborative opportunities. I hope to practice art therapy in the future as I plan to attend graduate school in the field of Clinical Psychology. This project has given me the opportunity to see that I truly enjoy sharing this form of healing with others. I hope to also study calligraphy further, both at Evergreen and perhaps in Japan after I graduate.

The over sixty hours I have put into these independent projects have served to expand my facilitating skills, form partnerships, and excite further study. The experiences I have forged will continue to guide me for years to come. I now have the tools to develop therapeutic scripts, facilitate sessions, and write collaboratively. I have learned to take clinical research and transmute it into practice. My wish is that all observers of the work I have done in these projects experienced even a fraction of the healing I have felt in their creation.

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