

Social Inclusion and the Arts—Cases of Collaboration with Social Welfare

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In recent years, social inclusion—a concept that aims to create conditions for everyone to be embraced by society and to find the willingness to live—has become a key concept in community welfare policy at both the national and local level. One driver of social inclusion has been the growth of arts activities. We introduce two leading collaborations between the arts and social welfare, and explore the role that the arts can play in the society and community.

1. Introduction

Broadly defined, social inclusion is a concept that seeks to create the conditions for everyone to be embraced by (or included as a member of) the society and community and to find the motivation to live.

For many years, social inclusion has been pursued through collaboration between social welfare and the arts. As a result, both the approach and range of activities have grown significantly. This paper introduces some examples of collaboration, and then examines the possible role of the arts in achieving social inclusion.

2. Social Inclusion and the Arts

(1) Social Inclusion

In the West, social inclusion is already well developed as a key concept in social security and community development policies at both the local and national level.

Social inclusion aims to overcome the sources of social exclusion—including disabilities, age, senility, unemployment, low income, and nationality—that deter or at least limit people from participating more fully in society. Proponents of social inclusion believe that

greater diversity is in the best interest of society.

In Japan, social inclusion was first advocated by the Ministry of Welfare in a December 2000 policy report, *Report of the Study Group on Social Welfare for People Who Need Social Assistance*.¹ The report presents social inclusion as a necessary concept for the public sector to develop a new form of social welfare. As a result, many local governments including Chiba Prefecture, Osaka Prefecture and Yokohama City, along with local community NPOs, have adopted social inclusion as an organizing concept in basic plans for community and social welfare.

(2) Collaboration with Welfare

The interface between social welfare and the arts is already familiar in several forms—for example, in leisure or hobby activity programs to motivate people, or as wheelchair ramps for barrier-free access to art museums, theaters and public halls. However, for many years, programs have supported elderly and disabled persons to pursue activities in art appreciation, self expression, and creativity. Ongoing forums and symposiums have also sought to build a social consensus for such activities. As a result, in recent years, arts activities have grown significantly in terms of activity type, arts genre, and range of participating groups.

According to an authoritative source called *Access Arts 2007—Arts Guide for People with*

Disabilities (compiled by *Tanpopo-no-ye* Foundation), 106 organizations are now engaged in arts activities ranging from art theater and art space gallery to fine arts appreciation, fine arts groups, performing arts, performing arts and movie appreciation, halls, and networks. Below we describe some of the more salient characteristics (Exhibit 1).

① Fine arts

Fine arts has traditionally been the most active genre, covering a broad range of participation activities including creative and production, education, and art center and art space. Providers are mainly social welfare corporations and NPOs.

In addition, public and private art museums provide disabled persons with access to exhibitions through guided tours, audio guides for the visually disabled, collaborative exhibitions, and support groups for art appreciation.

② Performing arts

Many new activities have emerged in performance genres such as theater and contemporary dance. Public theaters and halls offer workshops and theatrical productions for elderly persons.

③ Intermediary groups

A growing number of NPOs and other voluntary organizations act as intermediaries who build

Exhibit 1 Collaboration of the Arts and Welfare

Genre/activity	Activity and examples
Art center, art space, gallery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social welfare corporations set up art center, art space, and gallery at day care and other facilities they operate in the community-- <i>Tanpopo-no-ye</i> Art Center HANA (Nara Pref.), Art Karen (Kanagawa Pref.) ▪ Art space, community space, and gallery are often operated by NPOs-- Art Planets Miyagi (Miyagi Pref.), Gallery TOM (Tokyo)
Art museum, art appreciation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Audio guide produced in collaboration with visually disabled persons-- Sendai Mediatheque (Miyagi Pref.) ▪ Museums offer art appreciation programs for visually disabled persons (tour, workshop, etc.)--Art Tower Mito (Mito Geijutsu-kan); Setagaya Art Museum; Nagoya City Art Museum ▪ Art appreciation groups include Museum Access Group MAR and Museum Access View ▪ Study groups and collaborations are also conducted between art museums and art appreciation groups ▪ Mori Art Museum conducts programs such as gallery talk, kids' tour, parent-kids' tour, sign language tour, and experiencing art through the ears and hands
Performing arts, public theater/hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Participatory projects for theater, dance, and music performances-- Able Art On-Stage; <i>Oto-asobi-no-kai</i> (music therapy group) ▪ Sessions for explaining performances to the visually disabled (Setagaya Public Theater); public theaters and halls conduct workshops for children and the disabled--Kanazawa Citizen's Art Center; Fujimi Community Center ▪ Sendai Engeki Kobo 10-Box conducts an exchange project with a neighboring facility for intellectually disabled persons

Sources: *Tanpopo-no-ye* Foundation, *Access Arts 2007* (in Japanese); Able Art Japan, *Hyaku-mimi wa ikken wo shinogu* (hearing is believing; 2005); web sites of organizations mentioned.

networks or produce projects.

A good example is Coco-Room, a café in the old Festival Gate theme park in Naniwa-ku, Osaka. Coco-Room provides a unique job referral network for formerly homeless people who are now on welfare and trying to get back on their feet, and for disabled young persons. It is operated by an NPO called *Koe-to-kotoba-to-kokoro-no-heya* (room of solace and comfort). The program's uniqueness lies in the way it harnesses the arts to tackle contemporary social issues such as unemployment and seclusion of young persons.

3. Two Leading Collaborations

Below we describe two leading programs that provide creative activities for disabled and elderly persons. Able Art Japan explores the possibility of the arts for disabled persons in many ways. NPO Art Resources Development Association (ARDA) offers “art delivery courses” at welfare facilities for the elderly and children.

(1) Able Art Japan

Located in Nakano-ku, Tokyo, Able Art Japan began in 1994 as the Japan Art and Culture Association for Disabled Persons, and was renamed in 2000.² It was created in response to the need for a horizontal network linking various arts activities for disabled persons. The term “Able Art,” which was coined separately from the group, expresses the aim of rediscovering the possibility of art and human being.

In 1995, the Able Art Movement was formed in collaboration with the venerable *Tanpopo-no-ye* Foundation, which pursues the arts as a means of self expression for disabled persons.³ The festival that emerged from this collaboration was well received by art museums as well as the corporate community, and led to exhibitions and workshops at art museums.

Past exhibitions include Dialogue of the Spirit—Able Art 97 (Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Art); VIVIRA—Beginning of Life

(1998, Benesse Communication Gallery); and Art to Revitalize—Able Art 99 (Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Art). In addition, the Able Art Award was established in fiscal 1998 with the help of corporate funding.

In fiscal 2003, they forayed into the performing arts genre, launching the Able Art Course to Cultivate Performers. In fiscal 2004, a performing arts production project called Able Art On-Stage was launched in collaboration with a corporate philanthropy program.⁴ It consists of three parts:

- ① *Activity support program*—Provides up to 1.5 million yen in funding for performing arts projects in which disabled persons participate.
- ② *Collabo-Theater Festival*—Showcases the performances of groups participating in the above program; also conducts forums.
- ③ *Tobi-ishi (steppingstone) project*—Collaborative workshop with stage directors from the U.K; promotes interchange and produces stage productions.

Thus starting from the visual arts, the group has expanded into genres of physical expression such as dance and theater.

(2) ARDA—Art Delivery

Art Resources Development Association, based in Sugunami-ku, Tokyo, was established in 2002 as a special nonprofit organization.⁵

In 1999, believing that the arts can play an increasingly important role in restoring family and community bonds, members of the contemporary art community in Tokyo's Sugunami-ku launched an activity that breaks out of the box of the conventional art museum and gallery.

That activity is “art delivery.” The group dispatches promising artists to public welfare facilities for the elderly (special nursing homes, daycare centers, etc.) and children, where they conduct workshops in the performing and fine arts. The aim is to offer something more than

ordinary leisure activity—the opportunity for all participants to share creative time and interact with each other.

In 2005, they launched the Art Delivery for Long-term Care Givers and Receivers with corporate funding support and in collaboration with special nursing homes in Suginami-ku.⁶ The program aims to rejuvenate nursing home residents and employees so that they can rediscover themselves and integrate art into daily care activities.

Workshops also offer physical activities. In fiscal 2005, dancers were invited to hold a “Loosen the Body” workshop, and musical composers invited for an “Improvise and Play with Music” workshop. In fiscal 2006, dancers were invited for a “Become Free Step by Step” workshop.

(3) Common Characteristics

Able Art Japan and ARDA not only perform an operational role, but an advocacy role in a movement for social improvement, and an intermediary role to support other groups. This characteristic derives from their NPO status. Able Art Japan puts great effort into organizing forums to adopt groundbreaking methods and concepts from abroad in the areas of disabilities, the arts, and social inclusion, and building support networks for participation programs in the visual and performing arts. ARDA also emphasizes building networks to bring together welfare facilities and the arts.

Second, elderly and disabled persons play the central role in the creative output of the programs. Members of the arts community—art curators, contemporary art artists, directors of contemporary theater, and contemporary dance choreographers—are deeply involved, but play a supporting role.

Third, both groups have close ties to welfare institutions. In fact, they would cease to function without the interest, understanding and collaboration of the welfare side. Thus collaboration is essential to their long-term sustainability.

4. Possibilities and Issues

(1) Social Inclusion and the Arts

Collaboration between the arts and welfare has already produced significant benefits for participants in terms of psychological comfort and motivation.

According to ARDA, the benefits of art delivery include: (1) creative opportunities that transcend the realm of simple leisure activity; (2) opportunities for exchange at the creative, personal, and community level; (3) psychological relief for caregivers who work with seniors every day; (4) education and accumulation of expertise for facility staff; (5) a source of creative energy for artists. For the institution, a clear benefit has been confirmed—employee morale tends to surge when caregivers can see their residents’ faces light up with enthusiasm.⁷

Facility residents—who tend to lose ties with society—benefit because the entire institution effectively renews its relationship with society. By opening its doors to artists and organizers, or inviting local residents to attend an onsite concert or exhibition, the institution engages with the community. For example, “hospital art”—in which medical institutions invite artists to draw a mural or hold a concert in the lobby—has been confirmed to create new ties between the facility and local community.

(2) Further Collaboration

Through a meticulous process of trial and error, collaboration between the arts and welfare has made significant progress and gained wider social acceptance.

Still, a major problem of collaboration is the fact that participants often need specialized care and consideration due to disability, aging or illness. Welfare institutions tend to be skeptical about collaborating with the arts because the activities and intended effects are hard to grasp. On the arts side, collaboration can involve a painstaking level of consideration and expertise that would not ordinarily be needed.

To deepen the collaboration, the key is for the arts side to verify the effectiveness of activities, and for both sides to work together on issues and to publicize them in a report or other tangible form. However, the verification process can take considerable time and effort—particularly since follow-up questionnaires and interviews to measure effectiveness require the welfare institution’s cooperation.

Tanpopo-no-ye and Able Art Japan have released symposium proceedings and case studies on Able Art and care for caregivers. But more intermediary groups need to perform such functions, and more support is needed from corporate philanthropy programs. In addition, when public facilities and organizations carry out projects, they need to set aside funds for follow-up surveys and reports on exhibitions and performances.

On the arts side, NPOs engaged in arts programs and activities need to share, evaluate, and accumulate the expertise and experience of artists and human resources.

Essentially, the arts derive their worth from the diverse values and expressions of artists. According to Mr. Yoshiyasu Ota, executive director of Able Art Japan, “Disability makes one person different from another, and thus gives rise to individuality. The immense possibility of the arts lies in creating a social consensus that values the creativity and self expression of this individuality.”

By enhancing the diversity of expression—and leading society toward greater diversity—the arts can play a key role in achieving social inclusion.

End notes

1. MHLW, *Report of the Study Group to Improve Social Welfare for Persons Needing Social Assistance* (in Japanese at <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/>). The report describes social inclusion as “a key concept underlying the recent reorganization of social welfare in European countries such as the U.K. and France. The aim is to restore the civil rights of indigent, unemployed, and homeless persons—persons seen as being excluded from society (expatriate)—so that they can participate again in society. Comprehensive measures are taken to achieve this aim, including the

provision of public assistance, job training, and job opportunities.”

2. The Able Art Japan web site is <http://www.ableart.org/> (in Japanese).
3. The *Tanpopo-no-ye* web site is <http://popo.or.jp/> (in Japanese). *Tanpopo-no-ye* Foundation was established in 1976 as a work center to assist disabled persons. Its goal is to create a society in which disabled persons can thrive as human beings in the community. Today there are three units—*Tanpopo-no-ye*, an NPO that pursues the theme of social inclusion through programs to promote social awareness of the arts, human rights, and culture of care; *Wataboshi-no-kai*, a social welfare corporation that operates facilities and services such as the *Tanpopo-no-ye* facility to support disabled persons, *Tanpopo* support center for daily living, and Cotton House Welfare Home; and *Nara Tanpopo-no-kai*, a volunteer organization that supports the other two units. For many years, *Tanpopo-no-ye* has pioneered in arts activities that enhance self expression of disabled persons.
4. Meiji Yasuda Life Insurance Co.’s philanthropy web site is <http://www.meijiyasuda.co.jp/profile/society/welfare/index.htm>
5. The ARDA web site is <http://www.arda.jp/> (in Japanese)
6. “Pfizer Working for a Healthier World” (in Japanese) is at http://www.pfizer.co.jp/pfizer/company/philanthropy/pfizer_program/index.html
7. Materials from a symposium organized by *Tanpopo-no-ye*, “Caring for Caregivers—Course on Work Environment Considerations,” March 17, 2007.