

***Mind-Recentering in Globalization Context: Mindful Zen Tray Garden Workshop
through Performing Artistic Perspective***

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Abstract

Amid our contemporary materialistic context of globalization, the complexity at our subconscious level has also increased. We have found ourselves looking more for the process which could recentering us from within, in order to be able to cope with and to find the way out of our increasing inner problems: meditation practice or artistic practice. The mindful zen tray garden practice was introduced in this research as an experimental workshop. It was designed to help participants become more centered within from being mindful of their present state of mind, which would lead to self-acceptance and inner peace. Certain performing artistic techniques were also applied in the workshop. This research aims to study the application of these performing artistic techniques in the mindful zen tray garden workshop. The qualitative research methods were used in data collecting and data analysis. The research result has shown that the performing artistic techniques, especially simulation technique through the use of miniature dolls in the tray garden arrangement, together with the mindful zen practice, could bring about inner recentering, self-awareness, self-acceptance, and inner peace to workshop participants.

Keywords: Recentering, mindfulness, zen, tray garden, performing artistic techniques, inner peace

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Introduction

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Objective

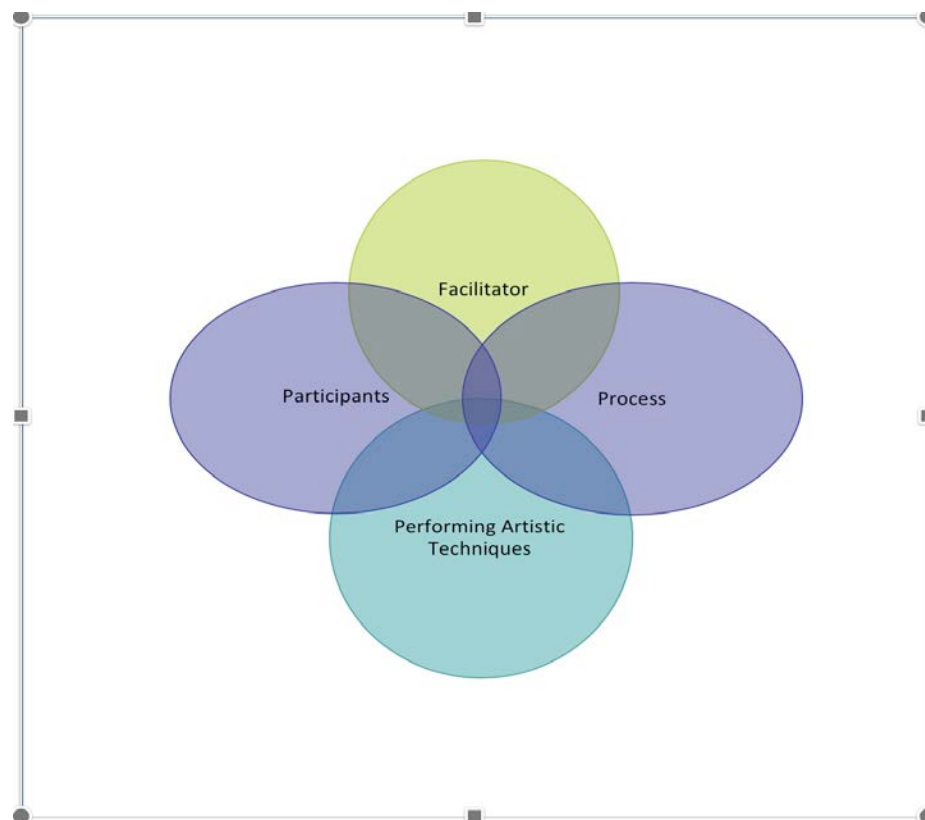
1. To study the application of the performing artistic techniques in the mindful zen tray garden workshop

Methodology

The qualitative methodology was used in data collecting and analysis: participant observation, in-depth interview, and content analysis. Key informants were selected through purposive samplings.

Conceptual Basis

In the process of mindful zen tray garden practice, the balance and harmony in the interaction among the process, facilitator, participants, and the performing artistic techniques applied, could enhance mindfulness for the participants.



Literature Review

The following topics were reviewed:

1. Mindfulness Practice
2. Transformative Learning: learning at the tacit level
3. Zen Garden Design: being in the here and now, Japanese rock garden design
4. Symbolic Interaction Theory and Performing Arts

Results

Participants reflected on key issues as following:

1. Miniature dolls as participant's 'self' in tray garden

After the process of zen tray garden arrangement, a performing artistic process was added in: the use of miniature dolls. Participants were invited to choose a miniature animal ceramic doll to represent her/himself in the tray garden. This process could help participants to reflect on their present state of mind and their selected space in relationship.



2. Dialogue of pebbles and sand

One of the major elements of zen tray garden arrangement process was the deeply listening to the dialogue of pebbles and sand: where they would like to be placed, if they could communicate. Each pebble had its own unique shape and character. When deeply observing them, one could intuitively feel certain dialogue among them. The participants were instructed to listen to such dialogue, which naturally required deep concentration.



This process could be comparable to the performing artistic dialogue of actors, the nonverbal language among them.

3. Candle light as symbols

Lighting could make a big difference for performing artistic stage. In this process of zen tray garden arrangement, candle light was provided for participants to be used. Most participants had reflected that candle light could symbolically convey their inner feelings: their life goal, dream, or hope.



Candle light could also lead participants to feel calmer. It could create sacred atmosphere. It could also give participants a sense of spiritual ceremony. This somehow could be conducive for mindfulness practice.

4. Taking picture of finished tray garden: capturing the moment

Certain contemporary process of using camera to capture the moment was adopted.



This process gave participants the chance to discover new viewpoints on themselves.

5. Into the present moment with concentration and mindfulness

In the process of tray garden arrangement, participants were guided to be truly in the present moment, that is, trying not to go back to correct or change what they had arranged once placing pebbles and sand on the tray. This would require deep concentration and mindfulness, being fully in the here and the now.

Participants were encouraged to trust their intuition in listening to the dialogue of pebbles and sand, taking time to go at their own pace.



Discussions and Conclusion

In the workshop process of mindful zen tray garden arrangement, these following performing artistic techniques had been effectively applied:

1. Miniature dolls as participant's 'self' in tray garden

Miniature dolls could be comparable to the actors, representing the participant in the stage of tray garden.

2. Dialogue of pebbles and sand

In place of actors' dialogue in performing arts, this zen rock garden technique was adopted: listening to the rocks when placing them next to each other in a group. With respect to pebbles and sand as the Earth element, the essential element in Nature, patterns and forms of them were being deeply observed/listened to in the process of arrangement.

3. Candle light as symbols

As much as lighting works in a performing art stage, candle light could play an effective symbolic role in a tray garden space. Its position and meaning given by participant could in turn reflect her/his inner feelings.

4. Taking picture of finished tray garden: capturing the moment

Photos taken were comparable to the tableau vivant or 'living picture', a moment of a performance frozen for eternity.

5. Into the present moment with concentration and mindfulness

This freshness of being in the present moment in the process of zen tray garden arrangement workshop was similar to the freshness of improvisation in performing arts: full of concentration and mindfulness.

It is found that the performing artistic applied in this zen tray garden workshop could effectively bring about the mindful state of participants, re-centering them in the present challenging, complex social context.

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