
Sukhothai, THAILAND

"Craft the Craft Project" of Sukhothai: Adapting to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Introduction

"Craft the Craft Project" is one of the initiatives as part of the UCCN application of Sukhothai since October 30, 2019. Referring to the Sukhothai UCCN five-year action plan (2021–2025) for craft and folk arts, the project aims to develop creative skills for craft creators and entrepreneurs in Sukhothai to achieve quality and excellence. More importantly, the project objectives were adopted and adapted to the uncertainties of the COVID-19 crisis which have significantly reduced income generation from cultural-based tourism and the creative and craft sectors. This project was supported by the Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (DASTA Area 4) and carried out by the Faculty of Architecture, Art and Design, Naresuan University.

Craft the Craft Activities

A training and an interactive workshop were held in Sukhothai Sriwilai Resort on the April 11, 2021. There were five main activities organised for targeted participants who are crafts-creators and entrepreneurs in and around Sukhothai province. The total number of participants and audience were 43 persons (23 crafts-creators, 10 experts, and 10 staff). The activities were designed and implemented in line with the COVID-19 control and prevention (Ministry of Public Health); the temperatures of all participants were checked before registration and each of them was required to change to a new mask and to wear a face shield before entering the venue.



A group photo was taken, in accordance with the COVID-19 control and prevention (photo by Wanyu Yamsaonthong, 11/04/2021).

The welcome speech was made by Associate Prof. Dr. Witiya Pittungnapoo who is the project manager, followed an opening speech presented by Mr. Nattapong Sookvisit, a delegate of the governor of Sukhothai Province. Then tokens of appreciations were presented to all speakers, experts, and committee members, followed by a group photo of the delegates.

Firstly, a training on creative skills, business model development and good practices in product design; especially when technology meets crafts was presented by experts from Naresuan University. The first session was



Left, Mr. Nattapong Sookvisit, a delegate of the governor of Sukhothai Province; *right*, A group of experts at the opening ceremony (photos by Wanyu Yamsaonthong, 11/04/2021).



Left, Design inspiration and business model development presented by Asst. Prof. Dr. Somlak Wannarumon Kielarova; *right*, Design concept, standards and good practice presented by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nirat Soodsang (photos by Wanyu Yamsaonthong, 11/04/2021).

presented by Asst. Prof. Dr. Somlak Wannarumon Kielarova from the Industrial Design, Decision and Development Research Unit, Faculty of Engineering. The second session was presented by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nirat Soodsang who is the Dean of Faculty of Architecture, Art and Design.

Secondly, an interactive workshop was conducted by a group of scholars and designers (jewellery, ceramics and pottery, wicker work, and textile products) to encourage all participants to work on their own story boards, and coach them to reflect their inspiration behind each craft-creation in this



Interactive workshop on crafts-inspired storytelling under the supervision of experts (photos by Wanyu Yamsaonthong, 11/04/2021).



All 19 craft-creators presented their own crafts-making inspiration and how Sukhothai knowledge and understanding can be integrated with special production (photos by Wanyu Yamsaonthong, 11/04/2021).



Nineteen crafts were displayed at the venue (photos by Wanyu Yamsaonthong, 11/04/2021).



Assessments were conducted by the 10 committee members from both oral presentations and show case (photos by Wanyu Yamsaonthong, 11/04/2021).

time of uncertainty.

Then each participant (19 out of 26 craft-creators) would present their own crafts storytelling for all audience members and the committees for further award selections.

Thirdly, all crafts were displayed in the conference room to allow a final assessment made by the 10 authorized committee members (Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nirat Soodsang, Asst. Prof. Dr. Somlak Wannarumon Kielarova, Asst. Prof. Dr. Sittipong Permpitak, Dr. Sirodom Seurklay, Dr. Chomcharun Manopun, Mr. Songpot Saisueb, Mr. Lakkana Wongsawada, Mrs. Pramual Chanthawarang, Miss Pailin Poomchan, and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Witiya Pittungnapoo).

Fourthly, all attending craft-creators were presented with certificates of attendance, conferred by the Dean of Faculty of Architecture, Art and Design, Naresuan University.

Finally, the ten highest scores out of the 19 crafts were awarded with



The Top 10 crafts awardees (photos by Wanyu Yamsaonthong, 11/04/2021).



The Top 10 crafts were displayed at Sukhothai Sriwilai Resort.



The Top 10 crafts were also displayed at Sukhothai Ban Ban Craft Fair in Suan Nam Prem Sook (photos by Wanyu Yamsaonthong, 11/04/2021).

a PIPIT iPad bag, Lucky Bird Mobile by Namu Handicraft, Unique bag by Proud, Little Girl Pottery by Pun Sook Garden, Bat Cushion by Tepphranom Hattagram, Bag Handling Wrap by Crochet Tham Ngen, Wickerwork Laundry Basket, Bamboo Cup Holder, Happy Buffalo Pottery by Hom Klin Din Sukho, and Lai Sue Tai Wooden Crafts (as illustrated in the next section).

Then at the end of the event, the Top 10 crafts were publicly exhibited at the Sukhothai Sriwilai Resort and at Sukhothai Ban Ban Craft Fair in Suan Nam Prem Sook.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Craft the Craft Project was successfully implemented and it contributed to improve four dimensions of creativity including the 4Ps: People, Process, Product, and Place. 1) Local artisans should be upskilled with creative design thinking; 2) Creative processes would lead to productive creations; 3) Creative products should be developed based on specific purposes; and 4) Creative spaces and places could also encourage all ages to access and enjoy creative crafts and folk arts. More importantly, sharing inspiration behind the craft-creation could connect emotional ties with targeted new normal customers in this time of uncertainty during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, each city has different paths of development and capacities for adaptation; this is

no different for Sukhothai UCCN mission which has taken time to adopt and adapt its own approaches for achieving resilient and sustainable development in the longer-term.

Witiya Pittungnapoo

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