



ENGAGING THE ARTS AND DESIGN FOR WELLBEING//

DR JESVIN YEO PUAY-HWA // NTU – SCHOOL OF ART, DESIGN AND MEDIA
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Art and Wellbeing

The connection between art and wellbeing has long been recognized. Arts activities are complex activities that include many different components known to promote health, including social interaction, emotional expression, cognitive stimulation, and physical activity.

The idea that creative expression can make a powerful contribution to the healing process has been embraced in many different cultures. Throughout recorded history, people have used pictures, stories, dances, and songs as healing rituals.

Over the past quarter century, there has been considerable research exploring art and wellbeing. Five main types of arts activities have been identified, which include the following:

1. Performing arts activities such as singing, dancing, and playing an instrument
2. Visual arts activities such as photography, painting, and crafts
3. Literature activities such as reading and writing
4. Cultural activities such as attending galleries and museums
5. Online art activities such as animation and the digital arts



World Health Organization. (2022a). Arts and health: supporting the mental well-being of forcibly displaced people, Technical Document.

Robertson, S. (2019). The arts play an important role in improving well-being. News Medical Life Sciences.

Image credit: WHO

Art and Wellbeing

The positive association between engagement in the arts and wellbeing is reflected in four areas: Emotional Functioning, Social Functioning, Physical Functioning and Cognitive Functioning.

Emotional Functioning

Increases in self-awareness, self-esteem, happiness, confidence, sense of self-achievement, positive attitude toward ageing, competence, motivation, empowerment, psychological safety, feel valued, reductions in negative affect and mental health distress.

Social Functioning

Increased in social cohesion, social activity, social connectedness, decreased in social isolation and loneliness after arts intervention.



Pesata et al. (2022). Engaging the Arts for Wellbeing in the United States of America: A Scoping Review. Front. Psychol. 12:791773.

Moore et al. (2017). Development and pilot randomized control trial of a drama program to enhance well-being among older adults. Arts Psychother. 52, 1–9.

Deng, L. (2017). Equity of access to cultural heritage: museum experience as a facilitator of learning and socialization in children with autism. Curator 60, 411–426.

Image credit: WHO

Art and Wellbeing

Physical Functioning

The impact on physical activities of daily living included increased physical, social and psychological fitness, lower disease burden, longer lifespan, more energy and a stronger body. For example, the findings of an intergenerational program for children and adults in an urban community showed positive physical benefits as well as increased community engagement and enjoyment.

Cognitive Functioning

The impact on cognitive function demonstrate the cognitive benefits of music and art. Painting, sketching, mixed media, and creative writing can improve the ability of older adults to concentrate.



Pesata et al. (2022). Engaging the Arts for Wellbeing in the United States of America: A Scoping Review. Front. Psychol. 12:791773.

Schroeder et al. (2017). Dance for health: an intergenerational program to increase access to physical activity. J. Pediatr. Nurs. 37, 29–34.

Cantu, A. G., and Fleuriet, K. J. (2018). Making the ordinary more extraordinary: exploring creativity as a health promotion practice among older adults in a community-based professionally taught arts program. J. Holist. Nurs. 36, 123–133.

Image credit: WHO

Art and Wellbeing

Negative Outcomes

Art-based interventions can have negative outcomes.

A Drama Workshop (DW) intervention group was found to have greater anxiety and less happiness following weekly sessions of the DW group (Moore et al., 2017).



Moore et al. (2017). Development and pilot randomized control trial of a drama program to enhance well-being among older adults. *Arts Psychother.* 52, 1–9.

Image credit: WHO

Potential Gaps

Not many studies addressed online, digital, or electronic arts.

Lack of standard measures and outcomes, including the lack of core outcomes for arts in public health. This may be due to a lack of standardized scales for wellbeing.

Lack of exploration of the effects of interventions in groups with diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Lack of longer-term follow-ups to assess the sustainability of outcomes over time.

Transfer research from hospital to community settings.

Investigate the relationship between art and wellbeing from a range of disciplinary perspectives.



Study Design to explore Art and Wellbeing

Outcome Studies and Descriptive Studies

Two main categories: Outcome Studies and Descriptive Studies

Outcome Studies measure the outcomes of art interventions or report the outcomes of engaging in art on wellbeing.

Outcomes Evaluation Studies

Designed to measure program goals, including psychosocial and cohesion outcomes. These designs can involve both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach

Involve a process wherein researchers and community stakeholders act as equal partners in the research process. The goals generally are educating the community, improving practice, or social change

Ka'Opua et al. (2016). Look to the source: gathering elder stories as segue to youth action-oriented research. Int. Public Health J. 8, 271–282.

Tremblay et al. (2018). Understanding community-based participatory research through a social movement framework: a case study of the Kahnawake Schools Diabetes Prevention Project. BMC Public Health 18:487.

Teti et al. (2017). Portraits of well-being: photography as a mental health support for women With HIV. J. Creat. Ment. Health 12, 48–61.

Pesata et al. (2022). Engaging the Arts for Wellbeing in the United States of America: A Scoping Review. Front. Psychol. 12:791773.

Catalani, C., and Minkler, M. (2010). Photovoice: a review of the literature in health and public health. Health Educ. Behav. 37, 424–451.

Photovoice --
“a public health strategy in which underserved individuals use photography and narratives to identify, record, and share their personal and community health experiences”
(Catalani & Minkler, 2010)

Study Design to explore Art and Wellbeing

Outcome Studies and Descriptive Studies

Experimental Studies

To establish evidence of cause and effect. Essential elements include manipulation of independent variables, control groups, and random assignment of subjects to study groups. For example, two studies of drama and chorus interventions with older adults yielded increased self-esteem, confidence, happiness and interest in life, and decreased loneliness (Moore et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2020)

Correlation studies

Establish the strength and direction of relationships between variables. For example, a longitudinal correlation study of cognitive musical training in older adults found a correlation between the ability to read music and improved performance on various test measures, including the Animal Naming Test (ANT; Semantic Linguistic Fluency) and Logical Memory Story Immediate Recall (LMI; Episodic Memory) (Gooding et al., 2014)

Gray, J., and Grove, S. (2021). Burns and Grove's The Practice of Nursing Research, 9th Edn. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Moore et al. (2017). Development and pilot randomized control trial of a drama program to enhance well-being among older adults. Arts Psychother. 52, 1–9.

Johnson et al. (2020). A community choir intervention to promote well-being among diverse older adults: results from the community of voices trial. J. Gerontol B Psychol. Sci. Soc. Sci. 75, 549–559.

Gooding et al. (2014). Musical training and late-life cognition. Am. J. Alzheimers Dis. Other Demen. 29, 333–343.

Study Design to explore Art and Wellbeing

Outcome Studies and Descriptive Studies

Descriptive Studies describe the characteristics of an individual, situation, group or population. These studies typically focus on describing participants' perceptions, motivations, meanings, and attitudes in relation to art interventions.

For example, a study investigating school activities and community programs indicated that high school students who enrolled in artistic programs (including drama and fine arts) exhibited higher self-motivation than students who participated in academic clubs. In addition, more positive outcomes (e.g., wellbeing) were reported among activity participants vs. non-participants (Ja, 2014).



Gray, J., and Grove, S. (2021). *Burns and Grove's The Practice of Nursing Research, 9th Edn.* Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Ja, N. (2014). *School Activities and Community Programs as Contexts for Adolescent Self-Integration, Social Connection, and Well-Being: The Role of Participant Characteristics, Key Features of Activity Participation, and Engagement In Reflective Practices.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University.

Image credit: WHO

Study Design to explore Art and Wellbeing

Creative Research Methods

Creative Research Methods can be used in studies that:

Seek to address more complex research questions, particularly in relation to emerging trends or aspects of social life, where more traditional methods are not always sufficient to answer these questions. For example, how does daily use of TikTok affect the psychological wellbeing of young people under 16s?

Focused on specific problem or issue. For example, if art can empower people and transform relationships, what mechanisms exist?

Are new and emerging, where there is a large degree of uncertainty. For example, views and beliefs about the effects of the Russian-Ukrainian war on the wellbeing aspect of society.

Have a specific aim in challenging, changing or responding to dominant assumptions in society. For example, how does society in general perceive people with mental illness, and what shapes this perception?

Study Design to explore Art and Wellbeing

Creative Research Methods — Arts-Based Approaches and Design Research Methods

Two main areas of creative research methods:

Arts-Based Approaches and Design Research Methods

Arts-Based Approaches

Focuses on the use of artistic processes (written, visual, oral, and performance) as the primary means of understanding and exploring experiences of a topic by both the researcher and the participants.

Art-based research methods can be effective in exploring:

- peoples' subjective experiences or abstract concepts for which verbal descriptions may not be sufficient to explore or understand them
- sensitive topics or topics that focus on exploring feelings and emotions
- vulnerable population of human subjects including children, people with communication difficulties, or groups with mixed abilities.

Examples of arts-based research methods include:

- Visual arts – painting, drawing, photography, collage, video production
- Performing arts – dance, drama, role-play, music
- Writing – story, prose or poetry based activity



Study Design to explore Art and Wellbeing

Creative Research Methods — Arts-Based Approaches and Design Research Methods

Design Research Methods (aka Applied Arts Research)

Theoretical and practical implications for the development of creative concepts in the design process.

Three ways to conduct design research - research of, for, and with design.

Human-centred Approaches

A problem-solving technique that puts real people at the centre of the development process, enabling you to create products and services that resonate and are tailored to your audience's needs. For example, design thinking, systems thinking, or collaborative design.

Practice-based Approaches

The development of design projects is not the goal of research, but a means of acquiring knowledge, including action research and interpretive methods.

Practice-centred Approach

The development of design projects is viewed as a form of research. In this approach, creative design methods, creative processes, and practical design activities are used as fundamental tools for research; therefore, research questions, methodologies, or discourses in the process may not be included.

The first rule to know before designing a human-centric approach: “Don’t focus on who your audience is, but what they want to do.”

(Paul Boag, 2020)

Case Study

Designing wellbeing: the role of design in developing open-mindedness in mental health

Mental disorders: an association with distress or impairment in important areas of functioning, such as cognition, emotional regulation, or behaviour.

According to the World Health Organization, mental disorders are among the leading causes of disability-adjusted life years worldwide. Approximately one in four adults has experienced mental disorders at some point during his or her lifetime.

Open-mindedness through design

Due to the misconceptions of the illness and its invisible psychological nature, people experiencing mental disorders may not seek help. While psychologists investigate the cause and effect of mental illness to provide treatments, graphic designers may contribute to improving the present mental health situation through a call for open-mindedness. This pilot test aims to understand how graphic design can encourage:

1. users with mental disorders to become more open-minded towards support services
2. society to be more empathetic and accepting of people with mental illness for who they are
3. designers to approach healthcare design with open-mindedness

Case Study

Designing wellbeing: the role of design in developing open-mindedness in mental health

Strategies of Inquiry (Richard Buchanan, 2007)

A design research approach that seeks to explore the design capacity of the human-made world in the service of human beings. This project engaged the three procedural steps:

Dialectic

The process of data collection, which takes the form of role-playing to search for unifying ideas of mental disorders.

Inquiry (two aspects)

Rhetorical Inquiry examine the creative action and practical thinking of the participants

Productive Science considers the function, form, and materials of the design objects.

Design Science

Underlying meanings are investigated to provide an understanding of the complexities of the design process and the function of design in the area of mental health.

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Participants

12 participants (9 female and 3 male)

enrolled and participated in the entire pilot test.

Professional fields: Design and Media;

unemployed (students)

Buchanan, R. (2007). Strategies of Design Research: Productive Science and Rhetorical Inquiry. In Design Research Now, edited by Ralf Michel, 55–66. Berlin: Birkhäuser Verlag.

Yeo, J. P.-H., & Teo, C.-T. (2020). Designing wellbeing: The role of design in developing open-mindedness in mental health. In K. Christer, C. Craig, & P. Chamberlain (Eds.), Proceedings of the 6th European Conference on Design4Health (Volume 4, pp. 766-773). Sheffield Hallam University.

Case Study

Designing wellbeing: the role of design in developing open-mindedness in mental health

Dialectic

Role-playing technique – enable participants to begin by answering this question: What does mental illness mean to a mental health patient, a medical expert, and a family member?

Participants formed a group of three to conduct research on a specific mental health disorder – anxiety disorders, mood disorders and depression, stress-related disorders, and disruptive behavioural disorders.

Each participant was assigned a role (patient, medical expert, or family member) to study symptoms associated with the mental illness pertaining to their role.

Research techniques, including desk research, printed material reviews, and interviews, were used to answer these questions collectively:

- What are some common symptoms that patients experience when affected by the specific mental health disorder?
- What other information do you think will help people better understand this mental health condition and seek appropriate help?
- What are local mental health resources/services available for helping and supporting people affected with this mental disorder, as well as their family members What are some risk factors in mental illness?
- How is the specific mental health disorder you researched diagnosed?
- What are the general methods used to treat this mental disorder?

Saunders, Lorna. 2016. "Online Role Play in Mental Health Education." *The Journal of Mental Health Training, Education and Practice* 11 (1): 1–9.

Loh, Matthew. 2020. "With Youth Mental Health Issues on the Rise, Government Calls for Ideas." *Today Online*, March 8.

World Health Organization. (2022b). *Mental disorders. Fact Sheets*. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-disorders>

Yeo, J. P.-H., & Teo, C.-T. (2020). *Designing wellbeing: The role of design in developing open-mindedness in mental health*. In K. Christer, C. Craig, & P. Chamberlain (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 6th European Conference on Design4Health (Volume 4, pp. 766-773)*. Sheffield Hallam University.

Case Study

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Inquiry

Rhetorical Inquiry and Productive Science

Rhetorical Inquiry – focus on the participants’ creative and inventive ability and how their thinking contributed to the process of social change. Such as “What” the participants have experienced and “how” they have directed the experience into practical design actions to support and improve the present mental health situation.

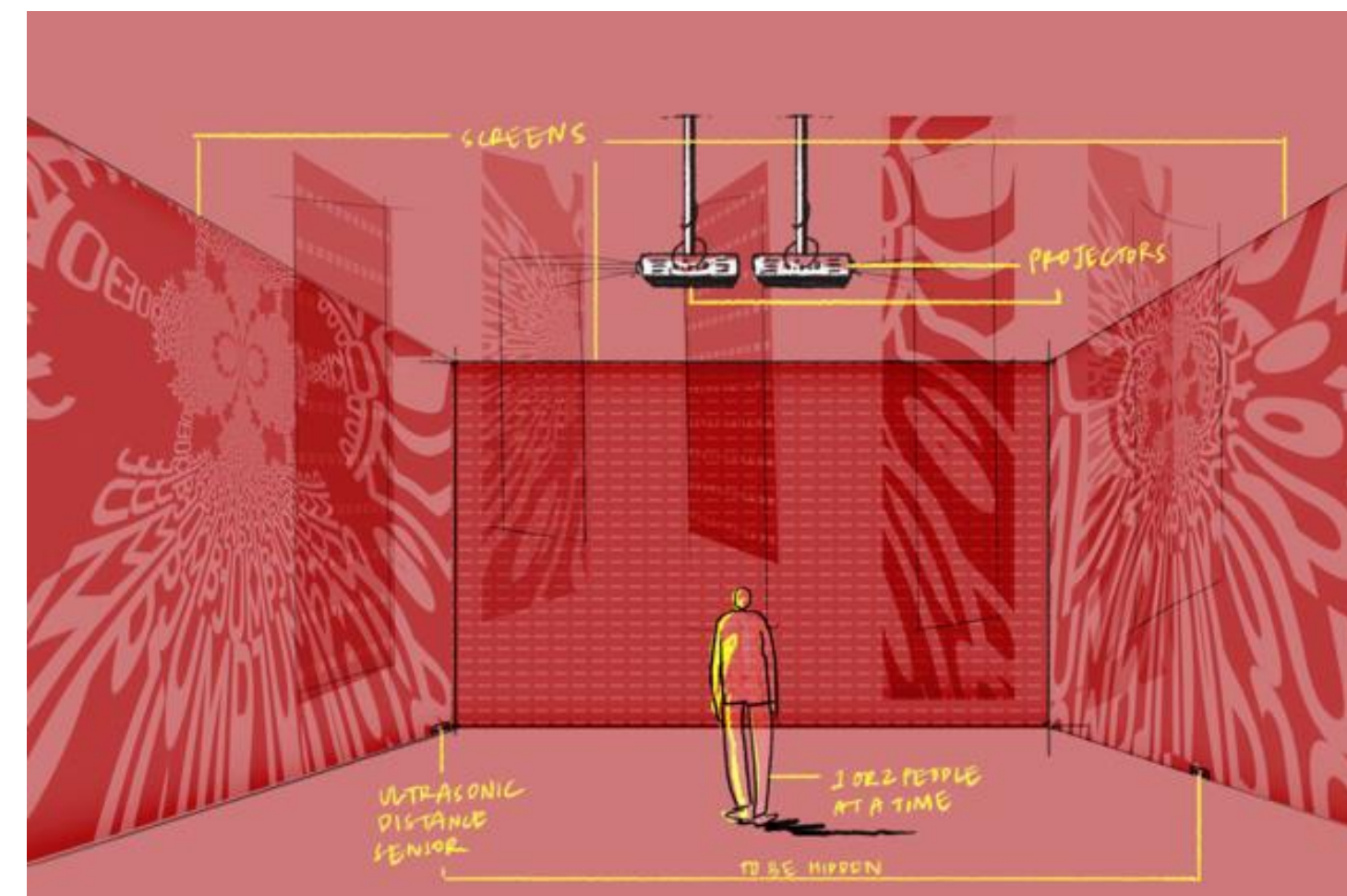
Productive Science – focus on examining how the students make decisions on the function, form, and materials of the design applications. Through this process, numerous sketches, and computer printouts—from thumbnails to roughs to comprehensives—were created to develop and illustrate design ideas. The rationale behind each idea was explained, and constructive feedback was given by peers and the lead person. Refinement and improvement were made consistently before the final critique session.

Case Study

Designing wellbeing: the role of design in developing open-mindedness in mental health

Design Science

Design Science – investigate underlying meanings to provide an understanding of the design process and the role of design in mental health. Design outcomes included a series of graphic and digital design applications (book, website, and mobile apps) and design concepts (wayfinding design and installations).



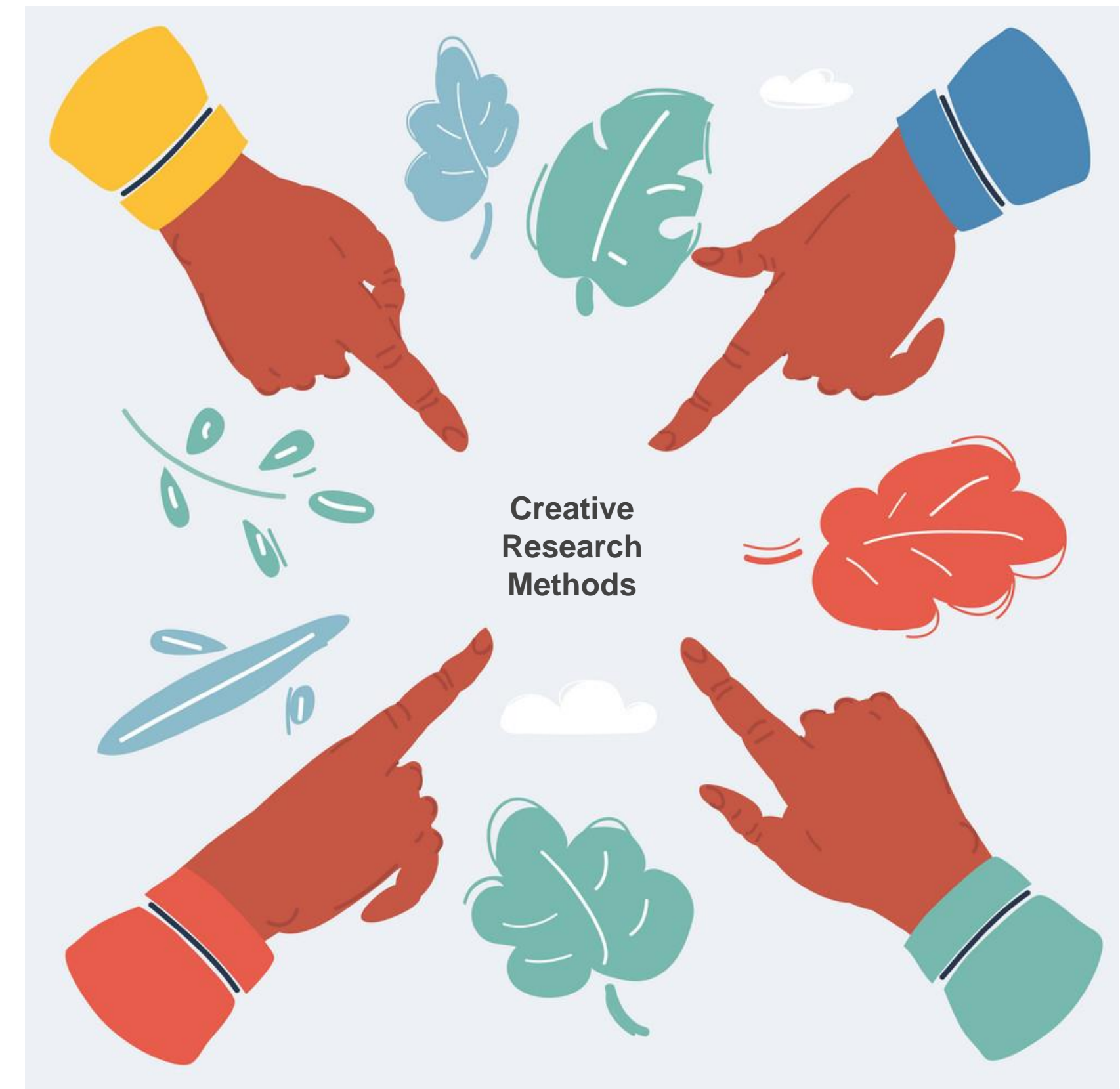
Left to right: "ALT" Wayfinding concept, "Phases" App design, "Typotherapy" installation concept.

Creative Research Methods

However design research implies designing but design is not always research.

Many design researchers agreed that Research has to be (Zimmerman et al., 2007):

- a purposeful and well-documented process with a degree of systematic rigor
- result in an invention: it should produce a novel result that advances the field
- of relevance to the field – rather than be valid: it should move the field towards a preferred state
- be extensible so that others can build on it



thank you.