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# YOUTH PEACE LEARNING THROUGH ARTISTIC CREATIVE PROCESSES

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## ABSTRACT

*This study aimed to foster peace-oriented learning among youth through artistic creation, drawing on art-for-peace processes developed by artists in Thailand's southern border provinces identified in a preceding phase of the research. Employing a qualitative research design, the study was conducted through peace-oriented art workshops, behavioral observation, and analysis of youth artworks across three artistic disciplines: sculpture, Thai art, and local art. The findings indicated that learning through artistic creative processes enables youth to understand peace through their lived experiences rather than perceiving peace as an abstract or purely structural concept. These processes provide a cultural space in which youth draw upon personal experiences, identities, and cultural capital to express meanings of peace through symbolic and non-confrontational artistic forms. The results highlight the role of art as a cultural and learning space that encourages youth participation and supports peaceful coexistence within a multicultural society.*

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**KEYWORDS:** Art for Peace, Youth, Arts-Based Learning, Artistic Creative Process.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Thailand's southern border provinces constitute a protracted conflict setting that has profoundly affected social relations and the formation of youth identities. Many young people grow up amid fear, mistrust, and experience social division, conditions that have long-term implications for their emotional, social, and identity development (Betancourt et al., 2017). Within this context, conventional education systems that prioritize academic achievement have been increasingly criticized for their limited capacity to address youth psychosocial needs, opportunities for self-expression, and learning grounded in lived experience (Bajaj, 2015).

In response to these limitations, contemporary peace education research emphasizes the importance of learning environments that enable youth in conflict-affected settings to participate actively, engage in self-reflection, and construct meaning from their lived experiences, rather than relying solely on the transmission of abstract concepts (Masten & Barnes, 2018). Experiential learning theory further underscores that learning through action and reflective engagement with direct experience serves a crucial role in fostering self-understanding and meaningful learning processes (Kolb, 2015). Within this framework, art for peace has been conceptualized as a cultural and educational process that functions as a safe space where youth can express their experiences and emotions through symbolic forms of communication (Thompson, 2015). Moreover, studies in community-based art suggest that artistic creative processes facilitate shared learning and collective meaning-making by allowing participants to select modes of expression aligned with their cultural contexts and identities. Such processes have been shown to stimulate social imagination and inspire peaceful coexistence in diverse, multicultural societies (Kester, 2011; Barrett, 2019).

Within contemporary peacebuilding frameworks, peace is understood not merely as the cessation of violence but as a process of transforming social relationships and ways of thinking about coexistence in society (Mac Ginty, 2021). This perspective aligns with contemporary approaches in art education, which view practice-based creative processes, including Thai art, local art, and sculpture, as holistic learning spaces that integrate cognition, emotion, and lived experience (Eisner, 2017). Providing opportunities for youth to create from their own experiences has been shown to foster a sense of agency and inspiration, supporting positive forms of social participation (Leavy, 2020). At the policy level,

this framework has been extended to emphasize youth identity formation, recognition of cultural diversity, and peaceful coexistence within multicultural societies (UNESCO, 2019). These aims align with peace education frameworks that seek to develop learners' capacities to live respectfully and creatively with others in an interconnected global context (Hess & Avery, 2018). Furthermore, research on youth-led peacebuilding highlights the significant role of artistic and creative activities in inspiring hope and meaningful engagement among young people in conflict-affected settings (McEvoy-Levy, 2022).

Accordingly, this study aims to design and explicate arts-based learning processes across multiple artistic disciplines, Thai art, local art, and sculpture, as a foundation for peace-oriented learning among youth in Thailand's southern border provinces. Emphasizing art as an experiential learning process and a symbolic communicative space rooted in local cultural capital, the study offers youth opportunities to select creative modes aligned with their lived contexts and identities. Through this approach, the research seeks to contribute to youth development and to the long-term cultivation of peaceful coexistence in a multicultural society.

### 1.1. Research Objective

The objective of this study is to develop and implement arts-based creative processes to inspire peacebuilding among youth.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study, Youth Peace Learning through Artistic Creative Processes, employed a qualitative research design to examine artistic processes and learning experiences emerging from youth art creation. The research conceptualizes artistic creation as a symbolic communicative space through which youth construct meanings of peace based on their lived experiences. The study focused on understanding how engagement in arts-based creative practices facilitates meaning-making, reflection, and peace-oriented learning among youth.

The research procedures were carried out in the following stages.

### 2.1. Participants And Sampling

The participants were selected using purposive sampling and consisted of 30 youth aged 14–18 years from secondary schools under the Office of the Secondary Educational Service Area in Thailand's southern border provinces, including Yala, Pattani, Narathiwat, and Songkhla. The participants were

grouped according to their artistic interests into three categories: sculpture, Thai art, and local art, with ten participants in each group.

This grouping approach enabled youth to engage in creative practices aligned with their lived experiences and personal identities, thereby supporting meaningful participation in arts-based learning processes.

## 2.2. Research Instruments

The research instruments were developed within an art-for-peace conceptual framework and consisted of the following:

1. Behavioural observation conducted during the art-for-peace workshops to examine youth levels of participation, forms of expression, and attitudes throughout the creative process.
2. Post-workshop reflective responses were used to explore the youth's meaning, making processes and interpretations of peace as expressed through their artworks across the three artistic disciplines.

## 3. DATA COLLECTION

Data were collected through a series of art-for-peace workshops designed based on findings from a prior study examining the forms and processes of art-for-peace practiced by local artists in the region. The researcher collaborated with six local artists across three artistic disciplines to develop learning activities that integrated lived experiences, local cultural capital, and symbolic communication as a shared creative learning space for youth. During the workshops, data were gathered through Behavioural observation and youth reflective expressions. These data were subsequently used to synthesize patterns of peace-oriented learning and inspiration emerging from the artistic creative processes.

### 3.1. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using a qualitative approach. Data from behavioral observation notes, post-creation reflections, and youths' artworks were categorized and synthesized into key themes that reflected patterns of participation, symbolic

communication, and peace-related inspiration. The analytical process involved continuous review to ensure consistency and comprehensiveness in interpretation. To enhance credibility and methodological rigor, data triangulation was employed by comparing findings across observation data, reflective accounts, and artistic outputs. This process was complemented by researcher reflexivity and peer debriefing to ensure the interpretations' validity and coherence.

## 4. RESULTS

The findings of this study, Youth Peace Learning through Artistic Creative Processes, can be categorized into several key themes. The results reveal patterns of learning, artistic, and creative processes, along with outcomes related to youth perceptions and attitudes toward the concept of peace. These findings illustrate how arts-based creative engagement shapes youth understanding of peace through experiential learning and symbolic expression.

### 4.1. Youth Conceptual Understandings of Art for Peace

#### 4.1.1. Findings from Behavioural Observation during the Art-for-Peace Workshops

Drawing on a prior study of art-for-peace practices used by artists in Thailand's southern border provinces, the artistic creative process was characterized by the integration of lived experiences, local cultural capital, and symbolic communication as a safe space for expression. Building this framework, the current research applied these ideas and methods to design of arts-based workshops for youth to explore how learning through art-for-peace processes fosters learning, expression, and inspiration related to peace.

The findings in this section are derived from behavioural observations, youth reflective responses, and analyses of creative artworks produced during the workshops. The analysis was organized around four key observational dimensions, which are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1: Analysis of Observed Youth Learning Behaviors during Arts-Based Creative Processes for Peace Inspiration.**

| Process Stage                                      | Observed Learning Behaviors                                                                              | Observed Outcomes Related to Peace-Oriented Meaning-Making                                                                                                                                                   |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Conceptual Understanding and Awareness of Peace | Understanding art as a medium for peace through creative processes in sculpture, Thai art, and local art | Youth articulated concepts of peace through symbolic forms in sculpture, Thai art, and local art; employed motifs and visual symbols rooted in cultural references; and connected artistic meanings to lived |

|                                                     |                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                     |                                                                                                      | experiences and social contexts in a reflective manner.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|                                                     | Recognition of diversity in artistic forms across sculpture, Thai art, and local art                 | Youth demonstrated the ability to distinguish differences in creative processes across art forms, including materials, techniques, and modes of expression. They also identified appropriate approaches for conveying peace-related meanings in ways aligned with each artistic discipline and cultural context.                                         |
|                                                     | Exchange of perspectives through the creative process in sculpture, Thai art, and local art          | Youth showed openness to diverse viewpoints through discussion and reflection on artworks. They acknowledged cultural diversity, engaged in collaborative learning, and developed an understanding of working together across differences in forms, experiences, and modes of expression.                                                                |
| 2. Practice-Based Creative Processes                | Development of youth personal concepts through artistic design in sculpture, Thai art, and local art | Youth selected forms, materials, motifs, and symbols across artistic disciplines to design artworks that articulated their personal ideas. These creative choices were meaningfully connected to lived experiences, identities, cultural values, and social contexts.                                                                                    |
|                                                     | Experimentation with techniques and materials during the creative process                            | Youth experimented with diverse techniques and materials, such as constructing forms and arranging compositions in sculpture, adapting techniques of Thai art elements, and applying materials and stylistic approaches associated with local art. These experiments supported the development of artworks aligned with intended peace-related meanings. |
|                                                     | Adaptation and problem-solving throughout the artistic creation process                              | Youth demonstrated adaptive thinking by adjusting creative approaches in response to material, technical, or conceptual constraints. Through iterative experimentation and reflection, they refined their artworks and strengthened their capacity to communicate peace-related ideas through symbolic forms.                                            |
| 3. Attitudes and Learning Orientations toward Peace | Development of awareness of peace through symbolic communication                                     | Youth demonstrated an understanding of peace as cooperation, coexistence, and acceptance of difference in everyday life. These understandings were communicated through symbolic forms in sculpture, the use of motifs and patterns in Thai art, and references to lived contexts in local art.                                                          |
|                                                     | Use of symbolic communication to convey meanings of peace                                            | Youth preferred indirect and symbolic forms of communication, through shapes, materials, and visual narratives, across sculpture, Thai art, and local art, rather than depicting conflict or violence directly.                                                                                                                                          |
| 4. Participation and Collaborative Learning         | Collaboration through artistic creative processes                                                    | Youth engaged in planning, discussion, and collaborative creation across artistic disciplines. These collaborative processes functioned as learning spaces that supported dialogue, shared understanding, and respect for difference.                                                                                                                    |

|                            |                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                            | Extension of learning into everyday life contexts | Some youth reflected on how learning from sculpture, Thai art, and local art could be applied to everyday life, including learning to work with others, expressing ideas constructively, and resolving differences peacefully. |
| 5. Additional Observations | —                                                 | Variations were observed in levels of confidence and modes of expression among youth, which appeared to be related to prior experiences and individual motivational factors.                                                   |

As seen in Table 1, the results indicate that art-for-peace creative processes enhanced youth learning in a progressive sequence, moving from conceptual awareness and personal meaning design to artistic creation and the development of peace-oriented attitudes. Behavioral observations suggest that the three artistic disciplines, Thai art, local art, and sculpture, functioned as distinct learning foundations, while together helping youth to articulate meanings of peace grounded in their lived experiences in concrete ways. Notably, the youth's preference for positive symbols and their avoidance of violent imagery reflect an understanding of peace as something that can be cultivated in everyday life through learning processes and artistic expression.

## 4.2. Youth Artistic Creations as Sources of Peace Inspiration

### 4.2.1 Learning Outcomes from the Art-for-Peace Workshops in Sculpture

The results from the sculpture workshops indicate that the youth were able to apply acquired knowledge and skills in diverse and flexible ways. The use of cardboard as an alternative to clay expanded opportunities for experimentation with three-dimensional sculptural forms, allowing participants to adapt artistic techniques in alignment with the peace-related concepts they intended to communicate.

Furthermore, this material choice supported creative growth beyond sculpture, including collage, craft-based works, and other applied art forms. Participants also recognized the potential of these practices for community-based applications, such as income-generating activities, knowledge sharing with peers and family members, and as a foundation for future participation in art-related activities or competitions. Overall, these outcomes illustrate how practice-based sculptural processes functioned as accessible and transferable learning experiences that promoted peace-oriented creativity grounded in everyday contexts.

### 4.2.2 Analysis of Youth Art-for-Peace Concepts through Sculpture

The first group of youth participants in the sculpture discipline ( $n = 5$ ) produced ten sculptural works that articulated concepts of peace through abstract forms and symbolic elements. The artworks reveal learning processes that integrated material selection and technical experimentation with the construction of socially meaningful symbolism. These sculptural practices demonstrated how artistic making functioned as a medium through which youth connected artistic practice with their perceptions of peace embedded in everyday life. Representative examples of these works are presented in Figure 1.

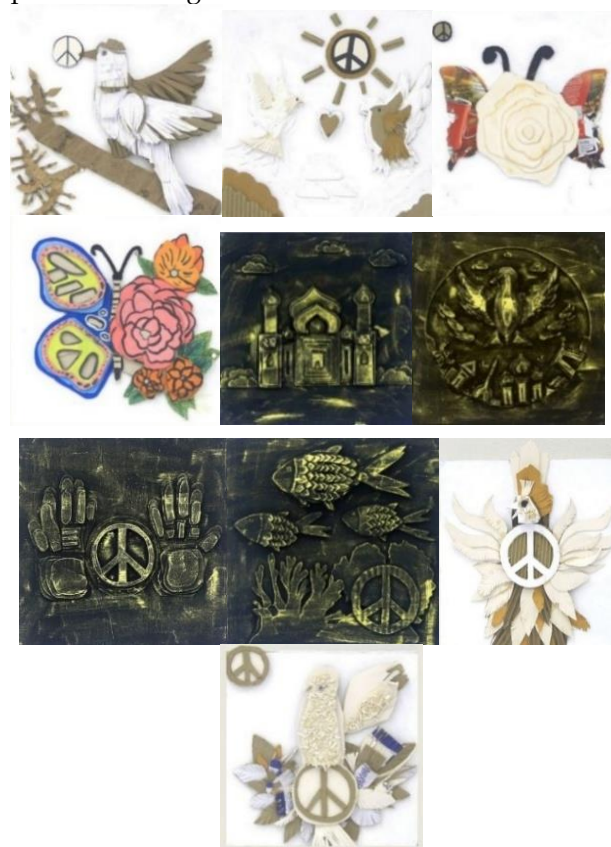


Figure 1: Youth Sculptural Works Representing Art-for-Peace Concepts (Group 1).

The sculptural works created by the first group of youth participants demonstrate a systematic use of natural and religious symbols to communicate concepts of peace. Recurrent motifs such as birds and butterflies, along with clustered compositional arrangements, were used to convey ideas related to harmony, coexistence, and collective life. In several works, religious symbols, including mosque imagery and gestures of supplication (du'a), appear alongside peace symbols, indicating a form of symbolic communication that combines lived experience, belief systems, and social contexts. These visual strategies reflect how youth in multicultural settings draw upon culturally meaningful symbols to articulate peace-oriented meanings grounded in everyday life.



*Figure 2: Youth Sculptural Works Representing Art-for-Peace Concepts (Group 2).*

The sculptural works produced by the second group of youth participants reflect their understanding of art-for-peace concepts through symbols associated with freedom, faith, and coexistence in a multicultural society. Prominent visual elements include bird imagery, particularly white doves, alongside religious architectural forms, such as mosques and universal peace symbols. The three-dimensional compositional arrangements reveal how youth amalgamate lived experiences, belief systems, and social contexts through symbolic communication, while deliberately avoiding direct representations of conflict.

#### ***4.2.3 Learning Outcomes from the Art-for-Peace Workshops in Thai Art***

The findings from the Thai art workshops indicate that youth were able to adapt concepts and visual forms of Thai art to their own life contexts and further develop these ideas into creative works across diverse media. This learning process supported the growth of cognitive skills and symbolic communication, enabling youth to

The second group of youth participants in the sculpture discipline ( $n = 5$ ) created ten sculptural works characterized by the use of three-dimensional forms and a diverse range of symbols. The artworks combined natural symbols, religious sites, and universal peace symbols, reflecting an integrative approach to peace-oriented meaning-making. The spatial arrangement of the works discloses a close relationship between material selection, technical processes, and the communication of social meanings through artistic creation. These sculptural practices illustrate how youth creative processes connect form, technique, and symbolism to articulate understandings of peace grounded in lived and social contexts. Representative examples are presented in Figure 2.

articulate ideas through culturally rooted visual languages. Within this process, Thai art functioned as a bridging medium through which social issues and contexts of unrest could be addressed in a non-confrontational manner. Using of traditional motifs, compositional principles, and symbolic elements opened spaces for perception and reflection, facilitating dialogue and meaning-making within a multicultural social context.

#### ***4.2.4 Analysis of Youth Art-for-Peace Concepts through Thai Art***

The first group of youth participants in the Thai art discipline ( $n = 4$ ) produced eight artworks that conveyed ideas of peace through compositional arrangements and abstract symbolic elements. The artworks demonstrate learning processes that combined materials, techniques, and socially oriented meanings, revealing a close connection between artistic practice and youth perceptions of peace grounded in real-life experiences. These works illustrate how Thai art served as a culturally rooted visual language through which youth articulated peace-related ideas without direct confrontation.

Representative examples are presented in Figure 3.



**Figure 3: Youth Thai Artworks Representing Art-for-Peace Concepts (Group 1).**

The Thai artworks created by the first group of youth participants convey art-for-peace concepts through cultural and natural symbols. The dove appears as a shared motif representing peace, while individual works express distinct personal perspectives, including freedom, difference, respect for belief, and harmonious coexistence. Symbols such as lotus flowers, fish, leaves, and butterflies are employed to communicate meanings related to spirituality, freedom, and trust. Collectively, the artworks reflect a positive view of peace and demonstrate the potential of Thai art a visual language for meaning-making and coexistence within a multicultural social context.

The second group of youth participants in the Thai art discipline ( $n = 6$ ) created twelve artworks that expressed concepts of peace through integrative compositional arrangements and cultural symbolism. Symbols such as birds, religious sites, and universal peace signs were combined within the compositions, demonstrating the connections between Thai art forms, creative techniques, and the construction of social meaning. Collectively, the artworks reflect youth perceptions of peace as a shared experience rooted in belief systems, cultural practices, and everyday life. Representative examples of these works are presented in Figure 4.



**Figure 4: Youth Thai Artworks Representing Art-for-Peace Concepts (Group 2).**

The Thai artworks produced by the second group of youth participants interpret concepts of peace through the visual language of Thai art, integrating religious symbols, sacred sites, and symbolic forms associated with belief systems and spiritual dimensions in a multicultural society. Symbols drawn from nature, animals, and human figures convey meanings related to freedom, calmness, gentleness, and unity. Collectively, the artworks depict peaceful coexistence among people of diverse religions and cultures in a non-confrontational manner, highlighting Thai art's role as a cultural mediating medium for communicating peace-related ideas within broader social contexts.

#### **4.2.5 Learning Outcomes from the Art-for-Peace Workshops in Local Art**

The learning outcomes from the art-for-peace workshops in local art indicate that youth were able to integrate artistic creative processes with community identities and everyday ways of life through the use of locally meaningful patterns, forms, and symbols. The application of techniques introduced during the workshops supported the youth's progressive development of artistic concepts and skills. Some participants were able to articulate ways these skills could be further extended, both within educational contexts and for potential vocational applications.

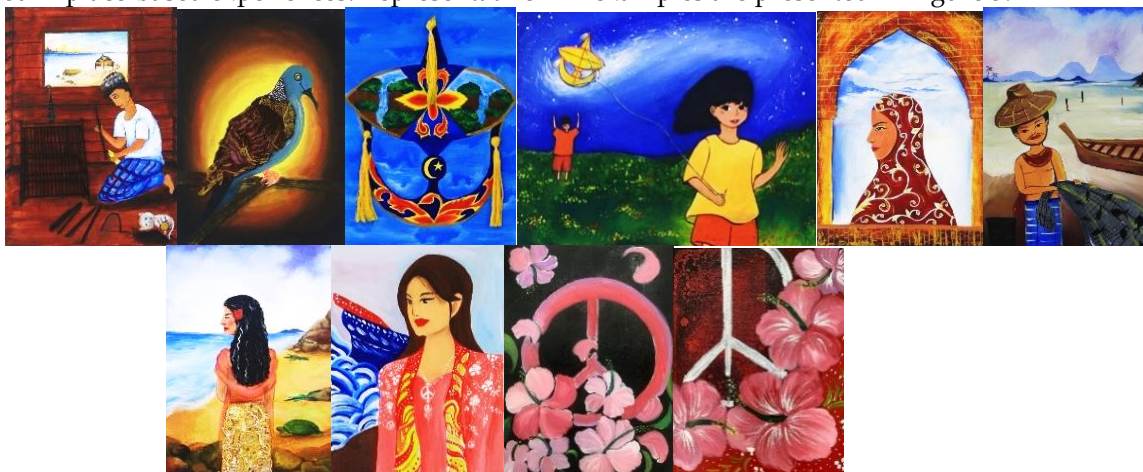
The resulting artworks also reflect youth awareness of social issues and coexistence as part of their lived realities. Rather than depicting conflict directly, youth employed symbolic communication and indirect narrative strategies to convey meanings related to social relationships and peaceful living. These findings highlight the role of local art as a culturally grounded medium through which youth construct and communicate peace-centered understandings rooted in everyday experience.

#### **4.2.6 Analysis of Youth Art-for-Peace Concepts through Local Artworks**

The first group of youth participants in the local art discipline ( $n = 5$ ) created ten artworks that conveyed concepts of peace through compositional arrangements and abstract symbolic forms. The artworks demonstrate learning processes that clearly connected identity, material choices, technical approaches, and socially oriented meanings within the context of Thailand's southern border provinces. These creative practices illustrate how local art functioned as a culturally situated medium through which youth expressed peace-related meanings

grounded in place-based experiences. Representative

examples are presented in Figure 5.



*Figure 5. Youth Local Artworks Representing Art-for-Peace Concepts (Group 1).*

The local artworks created by the first group of youth participants draw on local art to convey concepts of peace through symbols closely connected to community life, identity, and lived experiences in Thailand's southern border provinces. Everyday symbols, such as the zebra dove, crescent-shaped kites, young women in Malay attire, and local flowers, convey meanings related to coexistence, calmness, and freedom. Most works express peace through indirect narrative strategies and positive symbolism rather than direct conflict representation. These visual approaches highlight learning processes in which artistic practice is closely linked to youth perceptions of peace as embedded in everyday life.

The second group of youth participants in the local art discipline ( $n = 5$ ) created ten artworks that conveyed peace concepts through abstract symbolism and storytelling techniques. The works articulated interconnected themes of peace, human relationships, nature, and freedom as situated within everyday life contexts. Like the first group, most artworks emphasized indirect storytelling and positive symbolic representation rather than direct depictions of conflict. These creative methods show how youth employed local art as a culturally grounded medium for expressing peace-oriented meanings rooted in lived experience. Representative examples are presented in Figure 6.



*Figure 6. Youth Local Artworks Representing Art-for-Peace Concepts (Group 2).*

The local artworks created by the second group of youth participants employ abstract symbolism to communicate meanings related to peace. Representational imagery, such as birds, butterflies, boats, and universal peace symbols, is used to express ideas of freedom, movement, and the pursuit of calmness in everyday life. The artworks focus on symbolic storytelling rather than direct representations of conflict, highlighting youth learning processes in which understandings of peace through reflection on their lived experiences.

Across all artistic disciplines, the analysis shows

that art-for-peace creative processes empower youth to combine artistic knowledge and skills with material choices, techniques, and culturally meaningful symbols to convey peace-related meanings in concrete, lived contexts. Although modes of expression differed across sculpture, Thai art, and local art, the artworks consistently reflected learning patterns grounded in lived experience, identity, and social perception. Youth primarily employed indirect narrative strategies and positive symbolism rather than direct conflict representations. These findings demonstrate that

artistic processes function as a cultural communicative space through which youth develop understandings of peace rooted in their everyday experiences within a multicultural social setting.

## 5. DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates that artistic creative processes function as culturally embedded learning spaces that connect culture with youth's lived experiences, enabling youth to understand and construct meanings of peace grounded in their everyday lives rather than approaching peace as an abstract or purely structural concept. This interpretation is consistent with Barrett's (2019) perspective on art as a form of cultural practice that actively engages learners in meaning-making through participation and creative action. It also resonates with Lederach's (2005) conceptualization of peace as an emergent process shaped through relationships, practices, and shared meaning in social life, rather than through structural conflict management alone.

From a process-oriented perspective, the art-for-peace framework derived from artists' lived practices functioned as a guiding framework for learning design. When applied to youth contexts, this process positioned learners not as passive recipients of concepts but as active agents who constructed meaning through artistic symbols reflecting their identities, beliefs, and lived experiences. In this regard, Cohen-Cruz (2016) emphasizes that community-based art connects personal life narratives to broader social contexts, positioning art as relational rather than representational. At the same time, Mac Ginty's (2021) concept of everyday peace helps explain youth preference for indirect storytelling and symbolic expression, underscoring the role of art as a shared, intermediary space that enables non-confrontational communication within multicultural societies.

From an educational perspective, artistic creative processes supported youth development across cognitive, skills-based, and attitudinal dimensions

through hands-on engagement observed during the workshops, enabling them to connect concepts of peace with their own lived experiences. This finding aligns with Eisner's (2017) view of art as a holistic educational space that integrates thinking, emotion, and experience. Similarly, Bajaj (2015) argues that peace education should prioritize experiential learning and respect for difference, thereby creating opportunities for learners to actively participate in interpreting peace-related concepts. McEvoy-Levy (2022) further emphasized the active roles of youth understanding and applying peace concepts grounded in lived experience, a position that resonates with the findings of this study. In a related vein, Bamford (2006) highlights that arts-based learning fosters comprehensive development, including creative thinking, participation, and social awareness. Despite the use of different artistic disciplines, sculpture, Thai art, and local art, the learning processes in this study collectively demonstrate how art opens spaces for youth to draw upon personal experience and identity in constructing peace meanings, while strengthening participation and a sense of ownership in contextualizing within a multicultural social context, where meanings of peace are continuously negotiated through everyday cultural practices (Gauntlett, 2018; UNESCO, 2019).

In conclusion, this study examined the role of art-for-peace creative processes as culturally grounded learning spaces for youth in conflict-affected contexts. The findings suggest that art functions as a culturally embedded medium through which young people mobilize lived experiences, symbolic expressions, and local cultural capital to construct meaningful and tangible understandings of peace. These processes not only cultivate knowledge, skills, and dispositions but also foster active participation and peaceful coexistence within socially fragile multicultural environments. From policy and practice perspectives, integrating experiential art-based approaches into peace education frameworks may constitute a sustainable pathway for nurturing everyday peace.

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