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Mirasol Worx: Exploring an Integrated Performance Art in Communicating Mental Health Messages through the Lens of Embodied Cognition

Julius Neil Piala

University of the Philippines Mindanao

Correspondence

Department of Humanities,
College of Humanities and
Social Science,
University of the Philippines
Mindanao, Mintal,
Davao City 8022

E: japiala@up.edu.ph**Keywords**

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Abstract

What remains to be the gap in mental health awareness, prevention, and treatment in the Philippines is the humanistic reinforcement of health initiatives that mainstream lived experiences. This paper examines the communicative potential of integrated performance art in representing the schema of embodied knowledge on mental health conditions. Specifically, this practice-led research of the artist-mental health patient as the proponent aims to (a) ascertain the appropriate creative process in embedding mental health messages in an integrated live performance exhibition with audiovisual elements, (b) to determine the audience's reception of representations of mental health struggles. With theoretical underpinnings from the Theory of Embodied Cognition, the integration of mental health messages from previously produced 60-second short films as the video art form complemented with a live kinesthetic and aural stimulation in a performance art space at La Herencia Davao in 2023. This two-run exhibition elicited narrative-based insights from live audiences consisting of psychologists, communication students, and practitioners in the field of visual and media arts. Anchoring on Stuart Hall and David Morley's concepts of audience positioning and "interpretive communities", the sentiment analysis yielded themes on how both the artist-patient and the audience can initiate discourses on the therapeutic value of artistic practice and expression, which can augment preexisting efforts that facilitate a culture-sensitive health promotion on mental illness and conditions. Moreover, the communicative and persuasive potential inherent in various audio-visual creative executions employed in this study provides a rich opportunity for synergy among scholars and experts in the field of public health and the humanities and creative arts with messages that resonate beyond the ideals of contemporary science communication.