

# Healthy masculinity through creative expression

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The process of creating art can have huge benefits for individuals and communities.

In a project designed to access and explore these benefits, Griffith University researchers from the [Queensland College of Art and Design](#), [School of Education and Professional Studies](#) and [School of Allied Health, Sport and Social Work](#) partnered with [Rekon Youth](#) and young men aged 16-24 years to create a community mural at the Wilbur Street Youth Centre in Logan Central.

Over three weekly sessions, a group of young men worked collaboratively to design and install the 7m x 3m mural in the gaming room at the centre.

[Dr Simon Degroot](#), artist and Director of LiveArt at Griffith University, who led the project, said it was born out of a desire to give young men the opportunity to engage in artistic self-expression and build a sense of pride in their community.



Dr Joe Liang, Dr Simon Degroot and Associate Professor Tasha Riley

“Not all young men are drawn to traditional outlets like sport – art is a powerful alternative that deserves to be taken seriously and actively encouraged,” Dr Degroot said.

“Mural painting is surprisingly physical work, and that hands-on energy makes it a genuinely great outlet for young men who might not see themselves in more conventional creative spaces.

“As a male artist myself, I think it matters that young guys who are interested in art can look around and see themselves represented – both in the people leading these projects and on the walls of their own community.”

[Associate Professor Tasha Riley](#), a collaborator on the project, encouraged discussions during the sessions and interviewed the participants about their experiences.

It was the first time some of the students had painted on such a large scale, and one 17-year-old participant said he was surprised to have enjoyed it so much.

“I found it really relaxing,” he said.



“Through the collaborative process of painting, these young men appeared to feel more comfortable speaking about the social issues shaping their lives, including their experiences at school, peer relationships, social pressures, and social media, as well as the things they felt proud of,” Associate Professor Riley said.

“The arts can be a great facilitator for talking about things people have a hard time saying.”

[Dr Joe Liang](#) worked with the other researchers, bringing his expertise in promoting psychosocial well-being of vulnerable individuals and groups from a social work perspective.

“The workshop played a significant role in promoting a sense of belonging amongst the young men and was a step forward in increasing their participation in community,” Dr Liang said.

## Featured

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*Dr*

**Simon Degroot**

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*Associate Professor*

**Tasha Riley**

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*Dr*

**Joe Liang**

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