

Tai Chi Workshop at the Christchurch Art Gallery, 13 June 2021 at 1-2pm
Sandy Jiang, Blue Sky Qigong Studio



On 24th of May I received an email from Nick, the Visitor Programmes Coordinator of the Art Gallery to ask me if I would be interested to do a one-hour drop-in Tai Chi workshop in their foyer on Sunday 13th June at 1pm.

It was a welcoming surprise that he contacted me through my advertisement on eventfinda.co.nz. I said that I would like to promote Tai Chi in such a beautiful foyer. Nick told me that they have done Yoga in their foyer before, but never done Tai Chi. I felt honoured to lead the first Tai Chi class in the Art Gallery.

To help complete beginners to experience the flowing Yang Style Tai Chi with beauty and strength, I modified the Tai Chi sequence as below:

1. The Beginning (after stepping to the left, then down and up 3 times)
2. Repulse the Monkey with horse stance - right and left 3 times
3. Part the Wild Horse's Mane (walk forward 4 times, starting from carry a ball - left)
4. Play the Lute
5. Cloud Hands (walk to the left 3 times and walk to the right 3 times)
6. Golden Rooster Stands on One Leg L-R (2 quick ones and 1 slow one)
7. Heel Kick R-L (2 quick ones and 1 slow one)
8. Cloud Hands (walk to the left 3 times and walk to the right 3 times)
9. Turn left to do one Part the Wild Horse's Mane
10. Cross the Hands
11. The Ending

Also included was the essential 15 min warm-up and 5 min Qigong nourishment at the end.

If there are a large number of people at a drop-in Tai Chi Workshop, beginners need experienced Tai Chi people to stand at the front line to help them follow. This made me look for experienced Tai Chi people to join us.

In my Monday Tai Chi class, most participants are beginners who practise Tai Chi for Arthritis. However, in that class, I also have four students with experience in Yang Style Tai Chi – 24, with one that was able to come to the Gallery to help. Further to this, I also asked other Tai Chi teachers for help. Luckily Geraldine, Jingsi and two teachers from the Rewi Alley Chinese School's Tai Chi Class, Lily and Kim agreed to join. Knowing that four advanced Tai Chi teachers were coming to help, made me more relaxed and happier.

On Sunday, I arrived at the Art Gallery 20 min early. Participants quickly arrived one by one. To my surprise, most of them arrived early. It showed that they really wanted to experience the ancient Chinese flowing art of Tai Chi. I was pleased to see that the participants were of a variety of ages, with an overall young group at the Gallery. As we know with any art, the earlier we start to practise, the better we will be.

The sound system of the Art Gallery was excellent and played the tranquil music that I provided soothingly. The head mic was also useful to allow my soft voice to be able to be heard well by everyone.

As I am a Zhineng Qigong practitioner, Qi-field in Zhineng Qigong is very important for healing and improvement. So, I guided everyone to form a loving Qi-field in the open-close movement during the warm-up.

The warm-up included gentle Tai Chi movements and full stretches, and also included crouches which are the foundation to longevity. I hope people can understand that gentle Tai Chi is not only for the elderly, but also for agile young people who are able to crouch more easily.

During the workshop, I also spoke a little bit of Chinese because I knew several Chinese participants did not know English very well.

In addition to my step-by-step teaching, I had the four Tai Chi teachers guiding from the front, which helped the participants follow the movements much better.

I thank Geraldine for her nods of agreement when I was explaining the meaning of some of the movements, as it encouraged me to continue despite my limited English.

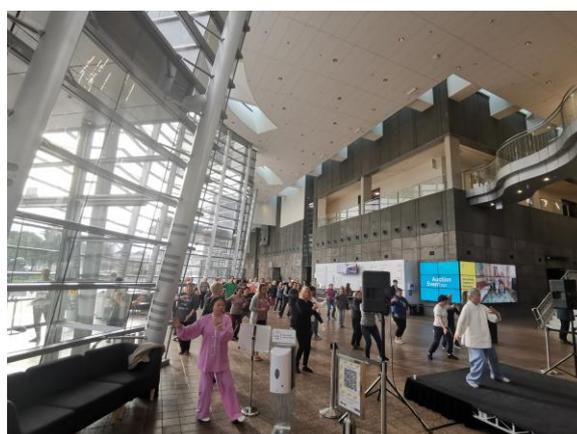


While teaching Cross the Hands, after the pose of Part the Wild Horse's Mane, I thank Kim for first posing Part the Wild Horse's Mane. It helped me to face the participants and demonstrate a mirror image (the reverse side) of Cross the Hands on the stage, to help the participants to see the movement clearly.

While practising Repulse the Monkey, I explained that through concentrating on the movement, we repulse our “Monkey mind” which is the everyday mind, always thinking of different things like a monkey jumping from here to there. Thus, we can return to our pure consciousness, the true nature, with peace and calmness.

While practising Cloud Hands, we were like clouds floating in the sky.

While teaching, for a short time, the sun parted the clouds and sunshine came through the huge glass wall on my whole body. It allowed me to enter the state seeming as if we were practising outside, surrounded by nature.



Of course, I also made few mistakes on the left or right because sometimes I tried to face people to do a mirror image but was too nervous to make it wrong. Ha, ha, ha, poor Sandy!



I planned to teach on the mini stage (3m x 3m) and practise Tai Chi walk, Part the Wild Horse's Mane, Cloud Hands and the whole sequence on the ground with people. However, the space of the foyer was limited, so I adapted, taught and practised the above movements on the stage. The stage was also smaller than I anticipated, so I practised Tai Chi walk and Part the Wild Horse's Mane diagonally. It was an interesting experience for me to do the above movement without being parallel to the participants.

At the end we lifted up the universal Qi from all directions for healing the whole body and mind. We visualised our family, friends or anyone else who needed our help were also in our Qi-field, sending them good messages. We wished everyone to be healthier, more relaxed, more joyful and freer.



The workshop was a team effort. Prior to the workshop, there were 41 emails between Nick and me, discussing how to do it well, my bio on the Art Gallery's website, the sound system, the mic, the position of the stage, on the date reminding participants keep their belongings in the bag check place, etc. Nick counted the numbers of the participants to be 60+, including a few people who left early and new people who attended from the middle. After the workshop, he emailed me that they have had many great responses from people who took part.

We also had the best teamwork and great help from my Tai Chi friends, Geraldine, Jingsi, Lily and Kim. Without their help, we could not to have led such a successful, enjoyable and relaxing Tai Chi workshop at the Art Gallery. Another friend Rose appeared at the end of the workshop. After participants left, Geraldine, Rose, Jingsi, Lily and I still talked to each other for a long time and it made me think, wow, Tai Chi brings friends together, forever!