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2017-18 Franchise Proposal

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You're Not Sick, You're Weak

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Franchise location: Nagoya, Japan

'You're Not Sick, You're Weak' derives from the perception of mental illness in Eastern culture, notably Japan, where a popular belief is that a strength of will is what is lacking to cure oneself. This exhibition seeks to provide a platform for artists who have experience with mental illness to let their works express their perspective to the public, giving the artists a voice to shout from their works in a culture that has them on mute.

The subject of mental health is taboo in a majority of Eastern cultures and represses people from seeking help, leading to a harrowing suicide rate. Japan itself has the third highest suicide rates of a developed country in the world. Those in need of mental health are discouraged from seeking help because speaking up leads to being avoided by others when you're classified as "sick" because they don't want to adopt your behavior.

There is little education about mental health in Japan. People often are not aware of even common conditions like anxiety and depression. Some believe simple remedies such as rest and hydration will provide a cure for everyday sadness. The stigma attached to those who associate with those with mental illness leads to an acute shortage of psychiatrists. No government-mandated system of training and qualifying clinical psychologists exists, discouraging people from seeking professional help. Because of this, there are very few counseling centers. There is an innate fear of seeking help, or announcing your issues because doing either can cost you your peers, and even cause you to be institutionalized for a condition as treatable as depression.

The exhibition will be presented on or near a Japanese university. The fastest growing suicide rate is of young adults in Japan, making it the number one killer of the age group. Education and job pressure are the leading cause of anxiety and depression in young generations. The exhibition will provide a prompt for conversation in young adults facing the pressures of school and beginning a career. The audience of the university will be a more global representation of people, allowing for different cultures to converge on the subject.

'You're Not Sick, You're Weak' will feature both Western and Eastern artists who deal with concepts of mental illness. This will provide a platform for multiple cultures and views on mental health to be represented in which the viewer may relate to and understand many points of view. It will explore cross-cultural commonalities in experience and depiction of mental illness and exemplify the acceptance of expressing mental illness in the public realm. Art has a strong power to communicate and to comfort. Art touches and inspires. Breaching the taboo of mental illness through art will raise awareness of how common mental illness is and how seeking help is strength, not weakness.

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