

Chicago Hospital NewsTM

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HEALTHCARE REAL ESTATE, CONSTRUCTION, DESIGN & FACILITY PLANNING

All Art is Not Created Equal

Whether your facility is building a replacement hospital, giving a face lift to an existing space or preparing for a complete unit renovation, the main three factors which will insure a successful project are: design, design and design. After the floor plan has been created and wonderful interior finishes have been selected, chances are something resembling art will go on the wall. A good art consultant will make sure that art is not arbitrarily selected for the walls. We need to work with the architect and the hospital administrators to tailor an art program to suit the community served, the function of the unit and the philosophy and vision that the hospital wants to convey. We need to keep up with the latest research on art in hospitals and healthcare design trends through continuing education, attending art shows and industry round tables. This type of research allows the consultant to understand which types of images reduce stress and promote healing in certain patient populations or in certain medical arenas.

In other words, a geriatric unit will require different art than a pediatrics unit; a heart transplant unit will look different than a birthing unit or an emergency department.

A growing number of hospital administrators understand how appropriate art selections improve the hospital experience, even the healing process. They also understand that creating a beautiful environment is a marketing expense too. Sure when a patient selects one of the many good hospital facilities, they know that they will receive top quality medical treatment. But an art program that calms an anxious patient, creates a haven for a waiting family, or improves the work environment for staff alike is creating a patient centered healing environment. This new and beautiful work space will even aid in employee retention. >From an evidence based design perspective, we all want better healthcare environments; fewer falls from better room layout, greater patient care from direct visual access to patients, and shorter and more pleasant stays due to use of appropriate art. How much will this new art program cost? Whether we are specifying originals, limited edition prints or poster quality, we can tailor a program to fit most budgets.

Artwork is an integral part of a patient's positive emotional well being; in that state, a patient can contribute to modern medicine with self-healing. An expanding quantity of research supports using art to promote wellness. In a study conducted at London's Chelsea Westminster Hospital in England, patients, visitors and hospital employees confirmed that



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the facility's art displays helped take their minds off their stressful situations. "we have...evidence that has been very clearly demonstrated that a length of stay in hospital can be reduced, the amount of analgesics can be reduced, just because(of) the presence of art, appropriate art," stated that study's originator, Dr. Rosalie Staricoff, at a 2003 panel discussion in England entitled, "The Effect of Healthcare Architecture and Art on Medical Outcomes"

Recently we completed a project for Saint Mary Hospital in Madison. Our mission was even more specific, having been directed to select original art from local artists so that it would be familiar to those occupying the space. The creative theme in designing this project was to use imagery representing the 4 seasons as a metaphor for the cycle of life which is the healing process itself. The centerpiece of this project was a curved wall installation in the cardiac rehab area. Thinking outside the box we realize that art does not have to be limited to a print and a frame. As you can see by the attached image, we selected one nature photograph of each of the 4 seasons paired with a sporting endeavor specific to that season. Aside from radiating the healing power of a natural landscape, the installation also subtly conveys a message of change, rejuvenation, and human activity.

A dedicated art consultant should have a professional mission to use design and art to create an environment that increases comfort and eases the stress of a hospital stay for patients and loved ones.

To create healing environments which enhance the impact of healthcare and transform lives.

Can you imagine a world without music, poetry or art?

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