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Art for Health: Use of Art in Hospital Space

Hospital space can provide healing at all levels: psychological, spiritual and physical, with the architecture and interior design affecting all of them. Art has been used in hospitals since the 14th century. In spite of this, for decades the concept of art in hospitals remained a marginal one. In the 1980s, however, views began to change.

In recent years, increased debate about the importance of art in health environments, and numerous studies conducted in this field, have shown that the quality of the visual environment can have a positive impact on users of that space. In the case of hospitals and healthcare buildings, art can have an impact on the staff and recovery process of patients. The interior arrangement of hospitals seeks to humanise space, and art can be a significant element in achieving this.

Research by Lelchuk Staricoff R. (2004) with Chelsea and Westminster Hospital Arts shows that the visual and performance arts reduce stress levels, improves mood and act as welcome distractions. In the UK, since the 1970's there have been working organisations and institutions engaged in consulting and promoting art programmes for hospitals.

Art in Architecture: The role of the Architect in Creating a Healthy Space

The architecture of hospitals is at the intersection of two disciplines - the artistic and the technical - reflecting the development of thought in medicine, technology and medical techniques. Hospital space must serve patients and assist hospital staff in their work and mission, which is to bring health and relief from illness.

Integration of art into healthcare is not linked only to pictures on walls, it promotes engagement through performing arts, working with artist at the design stage of hospitals and truly integration art within the hospital. Patients can take an active part in the creation of art; known as "therapy through art." For this purpose, hospital space may include an art workshop, or an artistic programme with art workshops, music and more.

Conclusion

Good hospital design can improve medical outcomes, satisfaction, and efficiency as administrators and providers everywhere face strong pressures to increase quality, become more patient oriented, reduce costs, and in some locations establish a positive market identity in the face of strong competition from other providers.

As research by Professor Ulrich shows, the integration of art within well-designed hospitals not only provides a restorative and pleasant environment, but also reduces stress and improves clinical outcomes through other mechanisms such as increasing access to social support, and providing opportunities for positive escape from stressful clinical settings.

Art helps to heighten patient and family satisfaction with the healthcare provider and the overall quality of care, and also increases staff satisfaction with the workplace.

A hospital is a place where we encounter human suffering and pain, but it is also a place where we struggle for life and human dignity, which restores faith and hope. In addition to the technological aspect in which hospitals operate, there is the second one: the spiritual, (invisible and difficult to measure), as expressed through the form and detail, colour and light, nature and art, acting through beauty.

Case Study: Shannon Clinic, Knockbracken (Northern Ireland)

One example of the integration of art and landscape in a hospital space is the Shannon Clinic in Knockbracken (Belfast, 2005). The project was designed by the UK based architectural design office of Devereux Architects (London), in collaboration with Ostick + Williams Architects (Belfast). This modern medium secured facility for 36 patients was inspired by need to create a space that ensures a sense of dignity, respect and an adequate standard of living for patients, staff and visitors.

Integration of the Art

At the main entrance (Figure 1), the first element of art, (a ceramic mural set against the screen wall), creates a unique sense of identity for the Shannon Clinic, where the first impression is one of a private educational facility or exclusive hotel, rather than a publicly- funded mental health facility. In 2003, the South and East Belfast Trust at Knockbracken Healthcare Park employed artistic coordinators Vivien Burnside & Helen Shields, whose task was to develop and lead the art strategy for the project. A selection process which included a representative of the Arts Council, architects and Knockbracken's artist in residence then short listed 12 artists from wide ranging artistic disciplines including sculpture, environmental art, stained glass, mural artists and painters. These short listed artists were then commissioned to create site specific pieces of

work which were incorporated into the building.

Therapy by Design: Wards

The entrances to each of the units are highlighted by built-in colourful ceramic wall panels, similar to the main entrance artwork. The wards therefore satisfy the conditions of security and the creation of a therapeutic space, whilst providing a sense of individuality. Calming and pastel colours in all wards provide a base for a variety of artistic elements. Through the use of the colour of the wood in both the floor finishes and the furniture, the interior is more reminiscent of the environment inside the home or of a hotel. Adequate and varied lighting also helps create a diverse atmosphere for the different nature of the interior.

Art of Nature: Landscape

Patient contact with the landscape was an important guideline in developing the idea of the hospital. Nicholas Pearson Associates designed the landscape, which included provision for calm and safe environments to promote a sense of well being and lower emotional tensions for both staff and patients. This has been achieved by using soft colours in surfaces, the use of plants and lighting. Externally-accessed spaces have been orientated to maximise exposure to sunlight to ensure that they are useable for long periods throughout each day. To create and maintain connections with the outside world, the landscape design sought to heighten awareness of seasonal change. Plants were chosen for their seasonality and users of the landscape have access to and experience of natural weather changes. Birds and insects are encouraged in many areas through the provision of suitable plants. Sensory stimulation has been provided by ensuring patients and staff have access to a variety of landscapes with different textures, smells, sounds, attractions and overall character.

Case Study: Langley Green Hospital, (England)

Langley Green Hospital, opened in 2008, provides a 69-bed Adult Mental Health Unit on the outskirts of Crawley. The main aim in the design was to create a modern facility and respectful environment where architecture and landscape, interior arrangement and the arts, have a positive impact on the process of patient recovery. The concept design centered on providing meaningful activity, with therapies and social care at the heart of the new unit. A number of various forms of therapy/recreation areas have been provided, including a gymnasium, recreation hall, arts/crafts rooms, a café/shop, and gardens. The building and grounds benefit from the art projects working with art consultant Impact Art, specially commissioned through Sussex Partnership NHS Trust, incorporating ideas from people who use the services.

This project has combined architecture, landscape and interior design with art to contribute positively towards the healing process and explore pre-conceptions around mental health for visitors, staff and service users.

In order to achieve a contemporary, considered environment Devereux Architects, landscape architects Standerwick Land Design, and art consultants Impact Art collaborated with an inspirational team of administrators, staff, and service users, together with clinical and non-clinical staff from Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.

Impact Art worked together with the team to develop a range of works which included prints, sculptures, wood carving, ceramics, etchings and poetry. Artists were appointed to use the build programme as part of the creative and learning experience, to relax, uplift, inspire and contribute to the healing journey.

Lead artist Sasha Ward, through consultation with hospital staff, created over 12 window designs for hand painted and fired glazed panels for offices and conference rooms. In the Therapies and Faith Rooms, etched glass windows incorporate patterns of foliage and gentle natural forms (Figure 2).

In the Intensive Care Unit garden, artists David Watson and Stig Evans designed a Colour Bench (Figure 3). This project included colour bathing lighting and a recycled plastic colour bench based on a colour emotion diary workshop. Recycled glass bottles were used in the creation of a pavement surface. Another sculpture in the garden is the oak Hope Stick. Enlarged and printed sketches by one of the hospital's patients are used in the corridors.

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