

ESTRADA FINE ART NEWSLETTER – September 2009

This month I would like to explore a topic that has been on everyone's mind the past months – healthcare. However, I want to focus on a very positive subject:

Healing Art – Creating a Therapeutic & Healing Environment Through Art.

Hospitals are high-stress environments. Given the challenging background, staff and patients alike can benefit from the soothing and contemplative qualities of art.

Images that impart the appropriate messages of hope, dignity, joy and concern have been shown to enhance the healing process. The benefit of positive art (defined below and usually scenes of nature) has been studied in depth by Roger Ulrich, Ph.D. His studies indicate that "healing art" images affect:

- the automatic nervous system
- hormonal balance
- brain neurotransmitters
- the immune system
- the blood flow to all organs in the body

Neurophysiologists have further determined that art connects us to the worlds of imagery, emotion, visions and feelings. This connection can be critical in the healing process.

Placement of the appropriate art has also been shown to:

- Reduce patient stress
- Create a sense of security
- Promote a bond between the patient and caregiver
- Act as a de-stressor for staff
- Perpetuate an image of excellence for the facility

For example, in a study conducted in Sweden by Roger Ulrich, heart surgery patients in an ICU who were shown nature scenes with water, trees and high depth of field, showed lesser anxiety, suffered less intense pain, and required lower strength pain medication, than those shown abstract scenes or no image at all.

- Additionally there are economic benefits including: lower cost of pain medication, reduced length of stay, and increased patient and staff satisfaction.

Ulrich and Gilpin's chapter on Healing Arts, in Frampton's *Putting Patients First*, is one of the most comprehensive resources and recommends the use of positive art:

1. **Waterscapes** (calm or non-turbulent water)
2. **Landscapes** (with visual depth or open foreground, trees with broad canopy, Savannah landscapes, verdant vegetation, or positive cultural artifacts)
3. **Flowers** (familiar, healthy and fresh, in natural settings with open foreground)
4. **Figurative Art** (depicting emotionally positive faces, diverse and leisurely in nature)

The type of art placed in patient and public areas can differ from staff-only areas, administrative offices and research areas. For example, placing abstract art in research areas has been shown to increase creativity and mental stimulation.

There are well-researched guidelines in place today for appropriate healthcare art based on rigorous research findings, which can be implemented, creatively, by experienced art consultants.

The following landscapes from **Estrada Fine Art** fit the above criteria for art in a healthcare facility: <http://www.estradafineart.com/peterson.asp?PageIndex=2> . For more information on this fascinating topic, feel free to contact me at: estradafineart@verizon.net.

- Geneen Estrada

Geneen Estrada is the owner of Estrada Fine Art. We represent established mid-career artists. More information can be obtained at www.estradafineart.com.