

# Selling Wall Art to Healthcare Facilities

By Barbara Markoff

Winning healthcare accounts means knowing the kinds of artwork that create the kinds of environments that medical facilities want

The field of healthcare offers a variety of ongoing opportunities for art consultants. In both challenging and healthy economic climates, the healthcare sector remains a steady and buoyant market due to population growth, population aging, and the need to update older facilities with new technology. Increasingly, since the millennium, medical facilities including hospitals, clinics, senior living residences, and dental and medical offices have recognized the importance of providing healing and aesthetically pleasing environments. Art budgets are factored in when preliminary budgets for furniture, lighting, signage, floor and wall treatments, and other essential furnishings are presented to project managers during the early stages of construction. Artwork is no longer looked at as frivolous; it is an integral part of the design plan.

Public artwork serves many functions in healthcare facilities. Strategically placed artwork helps soothe and welcome patients and visitors. It also assists with wayfinding. Artwork helps clarify the boundaries of public and non-public areas of hospitals. Common areas displaying artwork are entrances, waiting rooms, corridors, patient rooms, and cafeterias. Usually, art consultants working on healthcare projects are part of a design team, and a

committee of decision makers such as the project manager, architect, interior designer, facilities manager, and administrators makes art selections.

In hospitals, the goals of the design team are to incorporate the benefits of environmental sustainability while designing an uplifting environment conducive to healing. The artwork selected is theme based, with the most common theme being nature and its beauty. From poster art to high-end sculptures, nature themed artwork is specified and purchased in new and remodeled healthcare facilities.

While neighborhood clinics and doctors' offices may require a substantial amount of artwork, hospitals require art programs much larger in scale. The artwork specified in new hospitals complements cutting-edge architectural design and adds to the ambience of the space. With such features as atriums, waterfalls, etched and stained glass walls, and large open spaces with natural lighting, the demand for upscale artwork is high. Artwork is part of the equation to introduce a harmonious and uplifting environment for patients. It is equally

important to the staff working at the facility.

Healthcare administrators and their committees are open to purchasing a variety of types of artwork from photographs, one-of-a-kind mixed media pieces, paintings on canvas, ceramic and metal wall pieces, to all kind of sculptures. Reproductions such as posters are often used in patient rooms. Color palettes are inspired by nature ranging from soft to deeper greens, as well as beige, brown, yellow, amber, and blue. With sensitivity to blood, the color red is



*In the planning stage of this healthcare project niches were specifically designed to house nature-related artwork in some procedural areas of the hospital.*



*In this southern California medical office, scenic photographs of the nearby shore were installed to echo the beauty and familiarity of the beach community.*

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generally avoided or used only slightly as an accent color.

The trend in healthcare is green and sustainable design. In this era of environmental concern, it is compulsory that architects and designers adapt to integrating new systems that affect external and internal factors such as energy efficiency, water use, and indoor air quality. LEED, the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, plays a significant role in directing green design of new and future medical facilities with incentives and ratings awarded for sustainability and environmental protection.

The type of artwork specified for a particular kind of facility varies depending on the population being served. Senior residences usually have artwork that is more traditional than artwork installed in a typical medical office. While newer hospitals may use some abstract work mixed with contemporary nature motifs, senior assisted living communities tend to specify landscapes with gardens and florals, and generally do not opt for abstract images. Regions of the country also have defined looks, such as tropical and beach in California and Florida versus scenes of full foliage and pastures in the Midwest.

Although challenging, entering the healthcare market can provide a new revenue stream. To test the market and build up confidence, start by bidding on smaller medical and dental offices. It is a gradual process to work up to higher budget jobs. In order to be considered for larger jobs, years of experience are essential. Understandably, decision makers at a new or remodeled hospital will not turn over an art program to an art consultant who has not demonstrated expertise and past performance.

It has been my experience in southern California that hospitals require art consultants and art installers to take dust maintenance classes, contractor protocol classes, and to pass a double set of TB tests. Consultants do not need badges to make a proposal, but if they are intending to participate in the art installations, badges are necessary. Badges with photo identification are issued to art consultants and their installers once they have completed the nec-

essary paperwork including proof of immunizations.

Badges are issued annually and art consultants cannot work in a hospital without wearing a current badge. It is the responsibility of the consultant to be on top of getting badges renewed. If consultants and their installers do not follow contractor protocol, such as dust and debris cleanup, they may be asked to leave the hospital. This can, of course, seriously impact your chances of being rehired for future projects.

At all times, art consultants need to be sensitive to the hospital environment and notify staff about noise expectations during the installation. If it is necessary to ask a patient or visitor to move while installing in waiting rooms, the installation crew should always be polite. When installers are loading carts of artwork and equipment into elevators, they should always give medical staff and visitors the courtesy of using the elevator first.

In some hospitals, art consultants and their installers are escorted to the security office before unloading the artwork. At times, art consultants and their installers may be fingerprinted. Some hospitals require a staff member to be with the installers at all times. Areas such as the Intensive Care Unit or Burn Unit may take extra time for installation due to the condition of the patients.

Unexpected circumstances such as infectious diseases in the ICU may prohibit installers from entering rooms, which means return trips need to be scheduled. Understanding the hospital's procedures is important. Because there are protocols that must be followed, art consultants cannot schedule an installation a day or two before the art needs to be hung; it has to be planned and scheduled at least 2 - 3 weeks in advance. With unforeseen circumstances, healthcare installations may require return trips and extra time. Keep this in mind when trying to estimate how long an installation will take.

When completing an installation at a healthcare facility or any corporate job, our company presents a receiving form that is signed by the project manager. The form lists the number of pieces installed, the purchase order, the address of the job site, the contact person, and the date. It



*Framed posters in this hospital soften an otherwise sterile corridor.*



*Soothing nature-themed artwork, blending with the soft color palette of green, blue, and camel, was installed in this waiting area.*

is critical to have a signed delivery receipt, especially when trying to get paid for a job. In several cases when tracking overdue receivables, I have been asked to send proof that all of the artwork was received. Make a point of getting a signed delivery receipt for all finished work.

Getting on board with healthcare companies can be a time consuming and tedious process. Pages of forms must be submitted with information about workers compensation, insurance, business documents, banking, references, etc. Contracts are lengthy. Turnaround times are sometimes unrealistic. With that being said, working in the field of healthcare can be satisfying and lucrative. It takes a very detailed, focused, and hard working individual to succeed.

### Types of healthcare facilities:

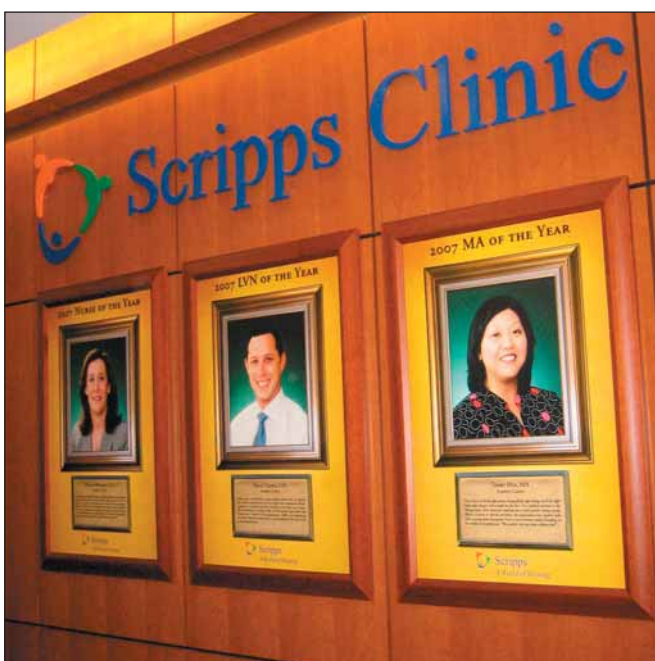
1. Hospitals
2. Clinics
3. Outpatient facilities
4. Senior living residences and assisted living facilities
5. Dental offices
6. Medical offices
7. Occupational therapy and rehabilitation centers
8. Cancer and medical research centers
9. Eye clinics

Art consultants working with hospital staff may also be called upon to coordinate the framing of donor portraits, promotional ads, historical photographs, awards and certificates, and display cases containing memorabilia and historical items belonging to the hospital. One hospital we worked with had us reframe 150 donor portraits dating back over 50 years. Each portrait had to be identified and a brass plate made with the donor's name. Some photographs needed restoration. The original identification plates were missing on some photographs and, consequently, we had to work with the hospital archives department to research and make proper identifications. Another

job in a psychiatric area of a hospital required us to round the corners of the joined wood frames so there were no sharp corners for possible self inflicted injury. Medical facilities not only need artwork, but they need an art consultant who knows framing design well enough to solve the many situations that may arise.



*Calming nature images of bamboo enhance the ambience of this hospital waiting room.*



*Medical clinics provide many opportunities for framing of awards, documents, postings, and ads.*

### Goals of healthcare artwork and framing

1. To soothe and welcome patients, visitors, and staff.
2. To assist with wayfinding.
3. To reduce stress and create a healing environment.
4. To add visual interest and complement architectural features.
5. To display and archive historical information.
6. To display mission statements and information pertinent to client safety.
7. To display ads and promotional material.

### Guidelines for selecting healthcare artwork

1. Nature related subject matter.
2. Soothing color palette, with little or no red.
3. Avoid threatening subject matter such as scenery with cliffs.
4. Peaceful landscapes such as meadows, gardens, and fields of flowers.
5. Images depicting summer, fall, and spring.
6. Avoid images that can be interpreted as lonely and deserted scenes such as empty piers on a beach.
7. No photographs of people with recognizable faces.
8. Steer away from abstract artwork in patient rooms, especially in psychiatric patient rooms.
9. Avoid scenes with sharp objects such as rugged rocks or jagged trees.

Some hospitals or clinics require an artist identification plate hung next to the artwork. The identification usually lists the artist's name, title of the piece, date the piece was

created, and what type of medium (such as giclee, photograph, mixed media, etc). In a neighborhood healthcare clinic requesting artist identification information, our company prepared the computer graphics and fabricated acrylic covers with sanded edges. The covers were attached to the wall using brass escutcheon pins inserted through predrilled holes in the acrylic. When making identification plates, be sure to charge appropriately and to confirm with the client that the cards are formatted to their standards. It is a good idea to have a proof of the output approved by a responsible party.

Healthcare clients offer an ongoing opportunity for art consultants to have a steady flow of work as a result of upgrading facilities, remodeling efforts, and through expansions of additional buildings. Often one department receiving artwork will spur an interest in other departments requesting artwork. Some art consultants with a good grip on providing solutions will specialize in healthcare art and not work with other types of clients. The projects are large scale in comparison to selling 10 to 20 pieces for a corporate office. It is definitely a market worth exploring.

The power of artwork cannot be underestimated. I began my career as an art therapist working with sexually abused girls in a residential treatment center. Art creating sessions provided a point of departure for the girls to discuss family issues. During one art therapy session, a girl actually drew a picture of the person who had molested her. Up until that point, she could not verbally express the trauma. The drawing was used as evidence in court to convict her stepfather, the man who had molested her. I testified in court with the drawing. From that point on in my career, I understood the power of artwork as a form of self expression.

Artwork in healthcare facilities evokes emotion. Connecting with nature is in our DNA and viewing nature related artwork instills a sense of calm within us. Interior designers discuss evidenced based design and have been conducting studies with the purpose of showing a documented relationship between the use of nature related artwork and its

healing properties. Evidenced based design will become a familiar phrase that will be part of the dialogue when art consultants and design professionals specify artwork in the years to come. ■

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