

Healthcare Facilities

A Great Market for Wall Art

By Barbara Markoff

The field of healthcare offers a variety of ongoing business opportunities for art and framing companies. In today's economy, healthcare remains a steady and strong market due to population growth, population aging, and the need to constantly update older facilities with new technology. Over the past decade medical facilities, including hospitals, clinics, senior living residences, dental, and medical offices, have recognized the importance of providing healing and aesthetically pleasing environments. Framed artwork is no longer an afterthought or looked at as frivolous. It is factored in when preliminary budgets for furniture, lighting, signage, floor and wall treatments, and other essentials are presented to project managers during the early stages of construction.

Framed artwork serves many functions in healthcare facilities. Strategically placed artwork helps soothe and welcome patients and visitors, and it helps them find their way. Artwork helps clarify the boundaries of public and procedural areas. Common areas displaying artwork are reception desks, waiting rooms, hallways, entrances, patient rooms, exam rooms, and cafeterias.

What kind of artwork do healthcare facilities purchase? Studies show that the well being of the patient is elevated when the human spirit connects with nature, so most healthcare professionals specify artwork with nature imagery. The goals of the architect and interior design team are to incorporate the benefits of environmental sustainability while designing an uplifting environment conducive to healing. The artwork selected is often theme-based, with the most common 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 nationwide.

The good news for contract framers is that the market is growing. New hospitals require art programs large in scale, and art budgets reflect the desire to complement cutting edge architectural design and add to the overall ambience of space. With such features as



Public areas of senior living facilities are prime locations for quality pieces wall art, providing attractive settings that add to the overall ambience. This setting is at Royal Oaks, Southern California Presbyterian Homes. The interior designer was Young + Company of San Diego.

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 purchasing artwork today are open to a variety of art selections. Posters provide a

The healthcare industry continues to offer contract framers an active market for many kinds of wall art

cost-effective solution for corridors and patient rooms. High traffic areas like entrances and seating areas lend themselves to an upgraded look found in sculptures, giclees, canvas art, and original photography. Color palettes are inspired by nature ranging from soft greens, beige, camel, brown, yellow, and blue. With sensitivity to blood, the color red is generally avoided or used only as an accent color.

The trend in healthcare is green and sustainable design. Architects and designers are sensitive to the environment and are integrating long-lasting materials. Green design will continue to be a major goal in the future, especially as the building industry requires and rewards sustainable, efficient design. With the high cost of building materials and land scarcity in large cities, designers must not only maximize space but also incorporate energy efficient systems.

Framing materials vary from job to job, but as a rule wood frames matching casework and blending with seating fabrics are selected. Several frames are usually specified throughout the job, adding more visual interest and helping differentiate one area from another. For example, in a clinic the pediatric artwork will be child-friendly and may be framed in brightly colored frames. A gynecology unit would have artwork more feminine in presentation, with complementary softer-looking wood frames, such as those with gold and silver washes. Common areas have artwork that flows as a

Types of Healthcare Facilities

- Hospitals
- Clinics
- Outpatient facilities
- Senior living residences and assisted living facilities
- Dental offices
- Medical offices
- Occupational therapy and rehabilitation centers
- Cancer and medical research centers



Many hospitals like to provide upbeat images for patient rooms. While the framing tends to be simpler, the prints still make the patients' stays there cheerier.



Sitting areas at many healthcare facilities are often adorned with modernistic prints with nature elements that provide restrained yet colorful images that help visitors pass the time more pleasantly.

collection, with continuity in size and look. For example, a hallway may have framed artwork that depicts plants native to the area. The frames would probably be maple, walnut, cherry, or mahogany to harmonize that section of the facility. In the cafeteria, images of food or café scenes are common, and the images may be more whimsical in nature.

The type of artwork specified for a particular kind of facility varies depending on the population being served. Senior living residences usually have artwork that is more conservative than artwork specified for a typical medical office. While newer hospitals may use some abstract artwork mixed with contemporary images with the nature motif, senior assisted living facilities tend to specify landscapes with gardens, florals, and generally do not opt for abstract images. Regions of the country also have definite looks, such as beachy and



Artwork in corridors helps healthcare facilities communicate the message that they want to uplift their patients' spirits while tending to their medical needs.



Sometimes, artwork can serve a double purpose of livening up corridor walls while promoting a facility by focusing on staff and their commitment to patient care.

tropical in Florida and California versus wildlife nature scenes in the Midwestern states.

How do art and framing companies approach the healthcare market? While networking plays a large part in finding out who to contact and the most opportune time to be considered as a vendor, anyone who has the right combination of inspiring art and the ability to produce contract framing can be a player in the market. It takes persistence and can be very time consuming, but the payoff is worth the effort. To win a large contract, you must be prepared to decipher blueprints, determine and advise art selections, make presentations showing an impressive selection of many artists, and meet budget requirements.

Often decision-makers will ask you to determine what the budget should be, the size of each piece selected, and where each piece needs to be placed in a facility. This process can be labor intensive, with no guarantee of being rewarded with a contract. Smaller jobs, such as dental offices or private medical offices, are easier to approach and the competition is often not as fierce. With experience in smaller facilities, it is easier to gradually build up to larger and more demanding jobs.

In addition to providing framed artwork for medical facilities, there are many other opportunities to frame items for health-care clients. Many clinics and hospitals have historical photographs or donor portraits to frame. Inquire about diplomas for doctors and dentists. Ads and donated artwork are other items to discuss when meeting with decision-makers. Most clinics have postings that need framing, and these are usually hung in each waiting room. A recent health clinic had our firm frame 20 postings, which was a great add-on to the order.

Healthcare facilities have a definite need for imagery that unifies the architect's and interior designer's overall vision for the facility. It can be a challenge



Healthcare facilities also present opportunities for framing images in staff areas. They might be historical images of an institution or photos of graduating classes of nurses, such as these at Scripps Mercy Hospital in San Diego.

to enter this market, but art and framing companies land contacts regularly. To test the market and build confidence, start by bidding on smaller medical and dental offices. Large hospitals and clinics want to work with companies with prior experience in the field. It is a gradual process to work up to larger budget jobs, but the opportunity is there and will continue to be there.

Healthcare is a market that is growing and allows art and framing companies to provide innovative, specialized designs that cannot be bought on the Internet or through big box retailers. It is a niche meant for highly creative and trained art and framing companies. ■



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