

HEALTH CARE — DESIGN

Art programs can promote healing and grounding

The amount of tense energy and heartbreaking news floating through health care settings often can be unsettling. Ways to relieve such hovering anxieties in hospitals can be remedied through thoughtful curated art programs to introduce contrasting senses of tranquility, healing and joy. The powerful correlation between art and healing both for those receiving medical care and for loved ones has been supported continuously by scholarly research.

A widely used design approach in the building industry known as biophilic design is commonly used by health care art consultants to bring the outside world indoors. Designers implement this process by selecting organic imagery of nature such as flowers, trees, landscapes and clouds to breathe life into clinical areas. Although this strategy is successful, health care art consultants recently have pushed past the boundaries of biophilic design and redefined what “outdoors” truly means. Outdoors does not need to be confined to subjects related to nature, but also it can include anything beyond the brick and mortar of an institution, such as architecture, landmarks, cultural events and community life.

St. Anthony North Health Campus and the Denver Health Outpatient Medical Center are two esteemed hospitals in the Denver area that are each pivotal representations of both the traditional and the redefined version of the biophilic approach. This essay will empha-



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size the likenesses and differences between the two institutional spaces. St. Anthony North Health Campus, a Centura Health hospital in Westminster, was designed with the traditional biophilic prototype. A large niche on each floor exhibits a different part of the Colorado landscape, such as grasses and flowers, trees and trunks, mountains, and imagery of the sky. In curation of this space, every shape, color, texture and medium are reflective of a healing element of nature, which offers an omnipresent healing energy to the space. One artwork from the St. Anthony North Hospital project that embodies this concept is Jutta Golas’ mountainscape, which is located in the fourth-floor reception area. Golas, a local Denver artist, created a five-panel installation of multi-colored ceramic pieces, arranged in a continuous mountain landscape. The concept of bringing the outside in lies not only within the mountain subject matter but also the clay medium that comes from the earth. This example of traditional biophilic art creates a sense of grounding in what is often an uneasy setting.

In contrast to the traditional

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Darrell Anderson stands next to his work, My 5 Points, oil on canvas and mosaic, which hangs behind the reception desk on the fifth floor of the Denver Health Outpatient Medical Center and consists of three canvases separated by two mosaics. The paintings depict three scenes that identify the Five Points neighborhood, and the pattern in the mosaics illustrates the five streets coming together to form Five Points.

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