

Transformation



BY **PAM ROSENBERG**, ASID, IIDA; PHOTOGRAPHY BY **CONNOR STEINKAMP**

The executives at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago know that art has an emotional component and an ability to transform the experience of all who visit their facility.

H. Marion Art Consulting Services was hired by the Executive Art Coordinating Group, consisting of five individuals representing upper management, purchasing, philanthropy, the board of trustees, and the Office of Transformation. Meeting monthly for 14 months, a plan was crafted to identify the 1,400 pieces of art that would be installed in Rush's new 14-floor, one-million-square-foot tower, which opened in January.

"We wanted to represent Rush as the premier city hospital of Chicago," H. Marion President Jan Marion explains. All art selections needed to complement the world-class, contemporary architecture, celebrate the unique urban environment, and include healing imagery.

"This hospital serves a wide range of ethnic, social, racial, and economic groups," he emphasizes. "We were instructed to ensure our palette was approachable and accessible to all: nothing

overly elaborate. The client described themselves like the Donny and Marie song: 'We're a little bit country; we're a little bit rock and roll.'"

The art committee sought to develop an art program that follows these three tenets:

- The art needs to act as an interior finish, complementing the contemporary, curvilinear midcentury architecture;
- The art program should represent Chicago as a world-class city, showcasing the diverse cultures of the neighborhoods the hospital serves; and
- The art must include healing Midwestern organic imagery.

The selection and placement of pieces throughout the many floors and departments was carefully orchestrated to create a thread of consistency throughout the entire hospital as well as to maintain sensibility to each individual department's art requirements. All placements work beautifully with signage and the architecture itself.

Special consideration was given to the family lounge areas of each floor, where patients and visitors gather to relax together.



A child-friendly area was created through bold imagery, bright colors, and three-dimensional figures found in wall art that is hung high on the wall, away from inquisitive hands.

Some of these lounges are themed to the particular department, such as pediatrics, which includes brightly colored children's art and sculptures on the walls of figures climbing ropes. "All the art in that section of the hospital is bright and whimsical," Marion says. He points out some other specialty-related choices: Artwork in the labor and delivery areas is more feminine in colors and imagery, while in the orthopedic surgery area, Marion installed a "wonderful series of kinetic art—an X-ray of a hand grasping

a ball, about to pitch."

H. Marion also relied heavily on local art. This approach helps patients and families feel that the venue has a distinctive character specific to the regional culture and landscape, setting it apart from other area healthcare institutions. Through evidence-based design, and especially through references to nature and organic imagery, artwork can reduce stress and be a first step in the healing process.

The art selected and installed by H. Marion spans a wide



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Branding of Rush University Medical Center as a premier city hospital was achieved through the use of 31 separate photographic panels, matched to deliver a spectacular panoramic view of Chicago.

range of media. From the towering 30-foot-by-20-foot multipanel photo installation in the four-story Brennan Entry Pavilion—welcoming visitors to the new ground floor entrance with a bird’s eye view of Chicago—to an original oil painting gifted by donors, to prints, posters, and archival items, Marion made sure that all artwork fulfilled the client’s objectives.

Presenting options, processing comments, and securing signoff approvals were done efficiently through the use of an online art portal. Through use of a password-

protected website, the client can log in 24/7 to review art selections and forward comments on to the firm directly.

User groups throughout the hospital were also encouraged to use the portal. Art subcommittees were formed, and one representative from each departmental unit liaised with Marion, disseminating the concepts to their coworkers and providing feedback within the context of the approved design framework. These user groups not only shared personal preferences, but also provided keen insights on



The curved wall acts as a divider between the children’s play area and the main Smith Lounge waiting room.



H. Marion worked closely with hospital archivists and restored more than 80 years of annual women's board fashion show posters that celebrate its history of commitment to support Rush's mission.



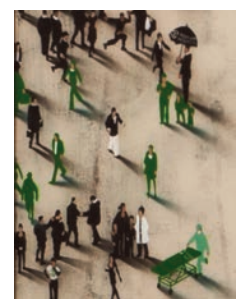
A family lounge features organic Midwestern imagery in a photographic montage format, which complements the contemporary architecture.



In another family lounge, contemporary Chicago architectural photography reflects the high-tech orthopedic procedures that are performed in this unit.



A commissioned five-panel art piece comprised of figures performing everyday activities, such as riding bikes, walking, and running, was included. The piece was also customized to reflect medical-oriented duties, such as pushing a gurney, carrying a doctor's bag, or escorting a patient in a wheel chair.



The Rush University Medical Center name was repeated for branding purposes through some of the figures appearing in hospital green and the use of an imprinted logo on briefcases and umbrellas.

how art selection and placement can enhance family and patient experiences within the department. "If staff is engaged in the correct way, we're able to secure a higher level of employee satisfaction," Marion says. "The care providers are looking at the art more often than anyone, so their buy-in is vital."

Marion trolled the hospital archives in an effort to pay homage to the hospital's more than 170-year history. In existence longer than any other healthcare institution in the city, it received its charter two days before the City of Chicago itself was incorporated. From his research, Marion created an engrossing installation of posters advertising the Women's Board Fashion Show, from its inception in the 1920s to present, fittingly installed beside the entrance to the Women's Board Gift Shop. He also created a photo series of an ornate Louis Sullivan-era staircase in the neighboring Jones building.

"I'm proud of the project. I feel good about achieving the client's objective, and being able to do it within budget," Marion says. "We've gotten tremendous feedback from the administration, user groups, and staff. Now, we look forward to hearing from the patients." **HCD**

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