


...Healing Design

[working title]



"This publication is intended to introduce you to the principles of healing design; and to provide you with some inspirational examples and helpful tools which will make it easier for you to evaluate your own workspace constructively, and take some steps to improve its quality in relation to those it serves, and those in it who serve others...."

WHAT MAKES A HEALING ENVIRONMENT?

Effective healing of the body requires an approach and methodology which integrates body, mind and spirit. It requires the development of a new model of health delivery—a true “Healing Environment”, one that is patient-focused, value-based, and that integrates the best of western scientific medicine with complementary healing traditions, practices, and approaches. The design and the ambience of the hospital setting also profoundly affects the quality and effectiveness of care by determining the comfort level for care-givers as well as that of patients and visitors. What the care-givers do and what the built environment provides combine as a potent and positive force to counteract the mechanization and impersonality of modern life—factors which have contributed to human illness.

Linked to the design and construction of a true healing environment is a painstaking, conscientious effort to use materials which are safe, derived from sustainable resources, and manufactured in ways which are non-toxic and even beneficial to the planet. There is care taken to insure that the air quality is healthy and that the noise level is carefully controlled. The goal is to design without harm. The effort is driven by giving priority to human issues and human needs, and a firm belief in the power of art and nature to heal—as much by real contact and interaction as by symbolic association.

Conceive a labyrinth, for example: The concept is mythic, connected to rituals of rebirth and fertility for thousands of years; that built at Chartres Cathedral in France has been walked since the early 13th century for meditative healing. At least once every month the Chartres Labyrinth pattern, replicated on fabric, is laid out on the floor of the University Hospice’s Conference room, to be walked by visitors and patients; in the Meditative Gardens at High Rock there are two, open to the public as paths to inner peace. The first hospital in the country to install a Labyrinth Garden as part of its healing services is the California Pacific Medical Center in San Francisco.



... Healing Design



Consider a garden, its color, texture, and above all, its fragrance: both herbal lore and layout figured prominently in early medicine; modern facilities such as the San Diego, California, Children's Hospital have constructed a series of spectacular play and therapy gardens filled with sculptures and color as well as plantings to delight and heal the young. At the Howard A. Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine in Manhattan, part of NYU Medical Center, the fully ADA-compatible Glass Garden for restorative therapy has been lovingly maintained since 1959. [picture]. Therapeutic gardens, active gardening spaces used by patients indoors and outdoors, are built specifically to incorporate the comforting proximity and care of nature as a factor in patient therapy. Hands in the earth, like bread for the soul, literally grounds us in life's constant renewal.

Contemplate the water: why not? We frail animals are made of more than 95% of it. If we become dehydrated, we faint and die. To bring a fountain, a pool, a waterfall, into a healthcare facility seems natural and intuitively healing. The vision and the feel of water is a quintessential mirror of our body's essence; its sound soothing. In Wellesley, Massachusetts, there is a magnificent Therapeutic Garden at the Institute for Child and Adolescent Development which incorporates a "rill"—a graphic of running water—which meanders throughout, leading its followers to adventurous natural discoveries.

Staten Island is embraced by the seashore with its tides —endlessly echoing the rhythms of life itself. Our horizons, seen from the SIUH campus, alternating between an urban, manufactured skyline and the infinity marked by sky and ocean, are a means of reaching outside ourselves to be calmed, and to rise above our immediate problems.



... Healing Design

Imagine air: soft, moving, fresh, invisible, warmed and sterilized by sunlight, scented not by exhaust fumes and waste, but by growing green things, carrying the promise of fruitful earth, gently massaging our skin—that amazing envelope of sensibility—and filling our minds with associations as it fills our lungs with life-giving oxygen. How immensely exhilarating and refreshing it is to smell the sea air instead of only the innocuous, deadened, recirculated air of a sealed environment.

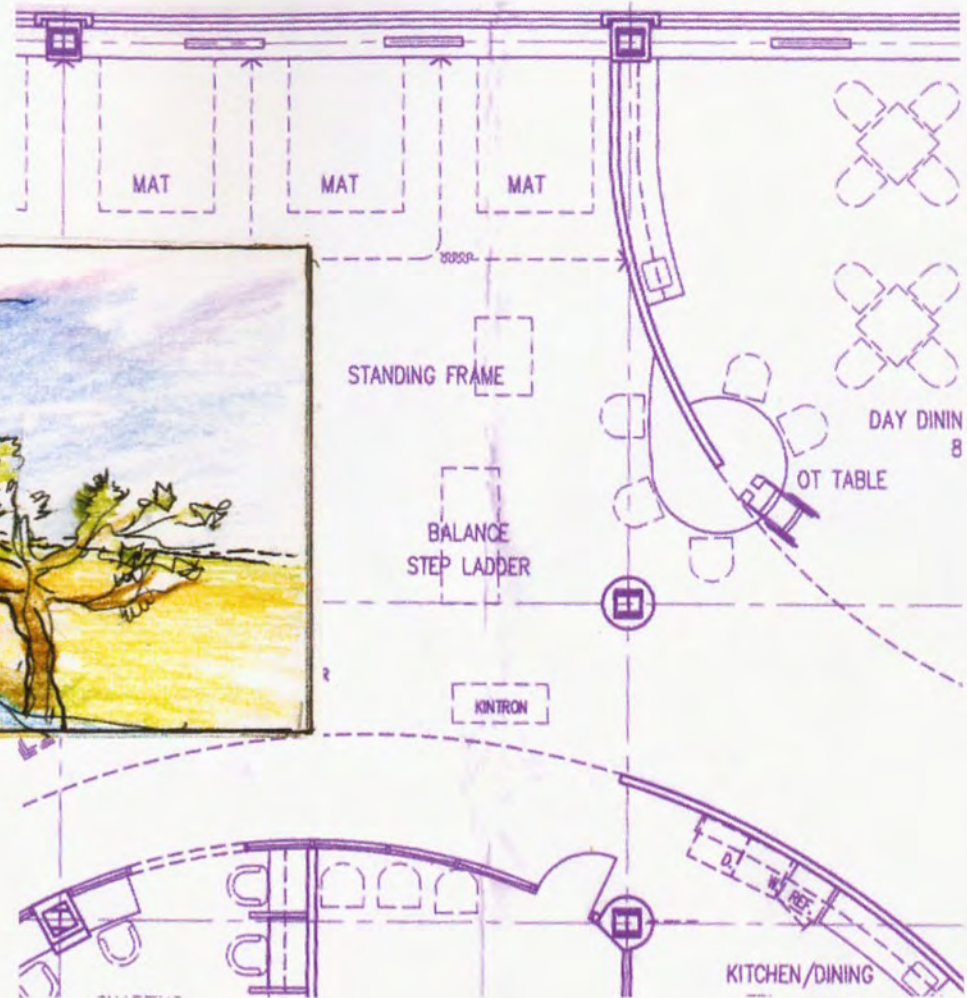
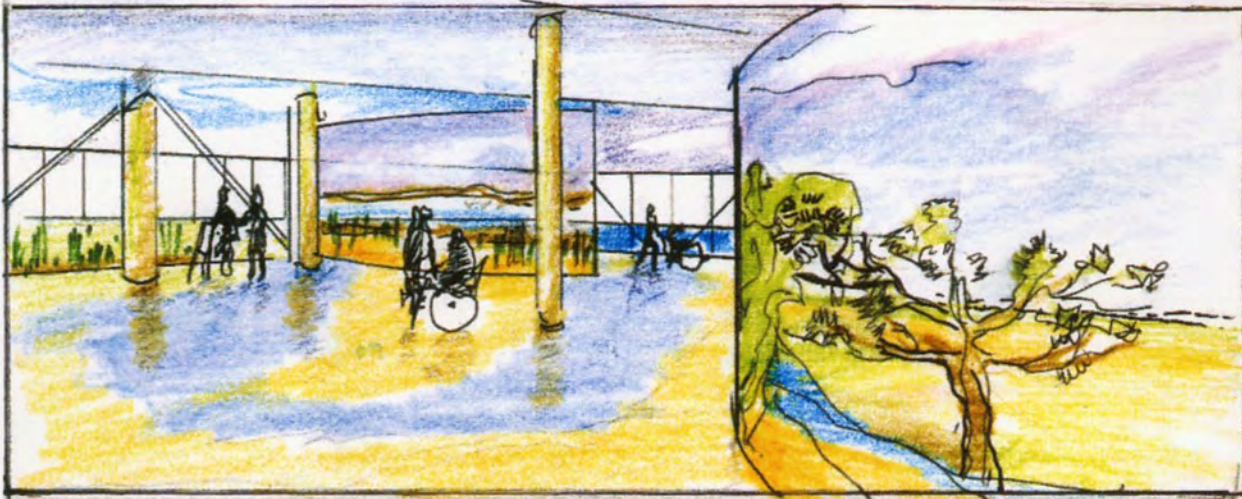
Envision art instead of machinery and clutter, resting places for the eyes which are not mysterious and frightening, but familiar and engaging. Positive distraction. The process of creativity, employed and enjoyed, heals the mind and the spirit; and if we are in its midst, we will be able to draw upon its life-affirming, constructive properties.

Anticipate touch and the sense of caring it conveys. Just knowing that care-givers are near at hand, perhaps a family member, can instantly restore a feeling of safety, and allay fear and anxiety. The more humane the treatment, and the setting, the more we feel comforted. It is basically human to yearn for connection.

One of the pioneering concepts for planning healing environments guided by basic, sensory experiences and needs is called Planetree, named after the tree under whose protective branches Hippocrates taught medicine and counseled doctors to treat people with integrity and kindness. The first Planetree unit was established in San Francisco at Pacific Presbyterian Medical Center in 1978 as a 13-bed medical/surgical unit. The Planetree Model recognizes the importance of architectural and interior design in the healing process. A growing body of scientific data points to improved patient outcomes and satisfaction as a result of design factors which are home-like, barrier free, support patient dignity and encourage family participation in care. Choosing to spend capital funds to create a healthcare facility as a “healing environment” is also cost effective. According to futurist Russell C. Coile, Jr., author of *New Century Healthcare* and a member of the Board of Directors of The Center for Health Design, “Those who combine innovative ideas for cost efficiency with healing design will make their own future” economically.



Offices and Therapy area



"Centralized clusters of offices are conceived as "City", surrounded by "water and seashore" (floor). The ceiling at its greatest height (14 feet slab-to-slab) is "sky". There is no "decorator art" in frames on the walls; the entire interior structure is created as an art installation."



THE CATALYTIC CONVERTER OF IDEAS: University Hospice

The spirit of change and “can do!” is alive and well in the empathic magic of Hospice, that part of SIUH which is relocated with every call for its services.

Energized by Director Maureen Skelton, Hospice Headquarters in the Nalitt Building has been the vortex of planning for environmental change. Suddenly, it needed some help, itself, when all its side windows disappeared in adjoining construction beginning in the summer of 2001. Almost every area became dark, lit only by old, blue-green fluorescent overhead lights or by small desk lamps, hastily brought in. Here, now, was a curative opportunity: to restore nature, air and light where nothing remained of the magnificent view of the Verrazano Bridge and the intervening marshland and hills surrounding Lower New York Bay. It also gave a psychic lift to clerical workers and professional staff who met and ate lunch every day in the Conference Room. University Hospice had been turned into a blood bank on September 11th and remained in a state of tension and upset for weeks afterwards. All work on the Healing Environments Planning Committee was suspended. To launch the new year and a new start, a mural was created on 40 feet of wall space, painted mostly on weekends by volunteer labor (Director Skelton and Designer Carol Crawford) and using mostly wall paints left over from a recent office repainting job. Cost was minimal; spirits were high; but better than that, it was all accomplished in less than two months by two determined people.





CLOSING STATEMENT

[to come]

Credits

Text and Artwork: Carol Crawford, Environmental Design Consultant
Layout and Design: Eveline Feldmann Allred

With special Thanks to all the members of the
Healing Environments Planning Committee;

Maureen Skelton, Director, University Hospice and Chairperson
Paul Rhodes, Supervisor, Special Facilities Projects
Diane Hopkins, Director, Center for Complementary Medicine
Josephine Grieco, Community Support Services
Pat Codoner, Kathleen Mooney, Cam O'Reilly, Joan Russo,
Linda Spadafina, Connie Vitale

Fereydoon Zohdi, Architect Wilmot/Sanz
Ann Marie Mc Donough, Associate Vice President, Department of Physical Medicine

Funded and Produced by Staten Island University Hospital
Andrew J. Passeri, Ph.D., President & Chief Executive Officer

June, 2002