

'Purpose-built' Art in Hospitals

Art with Intent



Judy Rollins

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Dedication

To Mike, my amazing husband, for his endless patience, love, and support.

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Biography

Dr Judy Rollins, President of Rollins & Associates Research and Consulting, brings nearly 40-years-experience in arts in healthcare. She is a Registered Nurse with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in the Visual Arts, a Master of Science in Child Development and Family Studies, and a PhD in Health and Community Studies. She is an adjunct Assistant Professor in the Department of Family Medicine with a secondary appointment in the Department of Pediatrics at Georgetown University School of Medicine, Washington, DC. She is also an adjunct Lecturer at the Center for Arts in Medicine at the University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, where she teaches research and evaluation in the Center's graduate program.

She has developed arts in health care programming in hospitals, hospice care, military settings, and the community. In 2011, she was among the first group of recipients of the Society for the Arts in Healthcare's Distinguished Fellow designation. She serves as an Ambassador for the National Organization for Arts in Health.

Author of over 100 publications, she is an Editor for *Pediatric Nursing* and North America Regional Editor for the *Arts & Health: An International Journal for Research, Policy and Practice*. A two-time winner of the American Journal of Nursing book of the year award, she also is the recipient of the International Society of Nurses in Cancer Care Research Award, Johnson & Johnson/Society for the Arts in Healthcare Partnership to Promote Arts and Healing Award, National Science Foundation Scholarship, The Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership Travel Award, and Georgetown University's Mary M. Hooler Distinguished Service Award.

In 2016, she was appointed a Scholar at The Institute for Integrative Health, Baltimore, MD, which supported her international research on artwork in hospitals. She consults, writes, and researches on health care issues nationally and internationally, with a special interest in arts-informed research.

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Preface

Over the past three decades, guidance for the selection of hospital art has suggested realistic art that depicts soothing and comforting images such as tranquil waters, green vegetation, flowers, open spaces, and compassionate faces (Ulrich, 2009). Based on these findings, those who select or commission art for hospitals have been cautioned to avoid art with uncertain meaning or risk upsetting viewers already in a stressful state. However, some hospitals exhibit ambiguous or abstract art and cite anecdotal evidence of its appropriateness for health care settings (Lankston, Cusack, Fremantle, & Isles, 2010; Rollins, 2011; Stenslund, 2017).

Visiting hospitals nationally and internationally, I saw contemporary art that didn't conform to the concept of soothing and comforting. I viewed huge abstract paintings filled with color and excitement, and soaring abstract sculptures from well-known artists. According to the principles of evidenced-based art, ambiguous images were to be avoided, yet none of this art seemed out of place. I was left with some questions. If this art that I see in hospitals doesn't soothe and comfort, why is it there? What other purposes might it serve?

About this time, Dr Upali Nanda, now Associate Professor of Practice in Architecture, University of Michigan, and Director of Research, HKS, a global architectural firm in Houston, TX, was Guest Editor for a special issue of *HERD: Health Environments Research & Design Journal*. In the past, we had discussed my interest in the use of abstract and other challenging types of art in hospitals, and she invited me to submit a manuscript on the topic. The writing of the article "Arousing Curiosity: When Hospital Art Transcends" was a wonderful thinking experience for me, which led to a yearning to learn more.

Eager to find some answers, I began an informal search in the United Kingdom in 2012. With the kind networking assistance of Anne Avidon, Head of Global Health Innovation at UK Trade & Investment Life Sciences Organisation, I went to London and interviewed eight individuals who select or commission art for hospitals in England, and toured five hospitals in London. Additionally, I attended Quinton Blake's "Larger than Life" exhibition at The Foundling Museum, a collection of giclée prints created for specific hospital situations in England and France. British art historian Richard Cork, whose book *The Healing Presence of Art: A History of Western Art in Hospitals* was about to be released, graciously granted me an interview in which he shared his insights about the purpose of art in hospitals. This 10-day experience highlighted for me the variety of opinions on the topic, and that the study of art in hospitals required an international lens.

In 2016, Dr Brian Berman and Susan Berman of The Institute for Integrative Health in Baltimore, MD, invited me to become a Scholar. As a Scholar, I had the amazing opportunity to conduct this international qualitative study that explored artwork in hospitals throughout the world through the dual lens of an artist and a health care professional. Through this research I discovered many purposes of artwork in hospital settings – ways individuals in hospitals can and actually do use artwork – beyond to sooth and comfort. Although some artwork selected to fulfill a purpose may already exist, much of the art is commissioned, thus the term ‘purpose-built’ art.

Recent research has gone beyond anecdotal evidence in support of abstract and more challenging art in hospitals. Findings from a study by Danish researchers indicated that the ambiguity of meaning in abstract compositions can have positive effects, facilitating patients’ memories, thoughts, and feelings, addressed as experiential domains of well-being (Nielsen & Mullins, 2017).

An abundance of theories and research support the use of soothing and comforting images, especially nature (beginning with Ulrich in 1984). There is an emergent need to find and develop rationales and theories to support the use of artwork with other purposes as well. It is hoped that ‘*Purpose-built Art in Hospitals: Art with Intent*’ can begin to fill this evidence gap, generate additional research, and encourage more variety in art offerings to better serve the many diverse needs of patients, families, visitors, and staff within the hospital environment.

Judy Rollins
May, 2021

Acknowledgments

There are so many people who made this book possible. I begin by thanking Brian and Sue Berman of The Institute for Integrative Health who believed in the importance of taking a closer look at how art is used in hospitals and supported my work.

Research assistants Jacob Brown and Christine Rollins did a deep dive into the literature and presented a comprehensive review that guided my work, for which I am most grateful.

To all of the people throughout the world who so generously gave of their time to speak with me, answer my many questions, provide tours of art collections, and assist with tracking down photographs and permissions. I am very grateful. Thanks to all of you, I learned so much.

And a thank you to Ben Doyle, formerly with Emerald Publishing, who contacted me, decided that my book could fill a gap in the area of arts in health, and offered me a contract.

Thank you also to everyone on the Emerald Publishing team, especially Paula Kennedy, Publisher, whose understanding of the impact of the world's troublesome events occurring at the time of this writing was so important and much appreciated.

And finally, I offer my deep appreciation to my husband Mike for tirelessly providing hours of technical support and looking out for my well-being. Thank you for always being there for me.