

SSM HEALTH'S HEALING ART

A hospital stay ranks way up there on the list of stressful situations. While a patient's focus should be on wellness - anxiety and uncertainty can take their toll. That's why SSM Health St. Clare Hospital in Fenton is taking extra steps to soothe and comfort patients.

Aseptic walls may be the norm, but now art adorns some of the recovery rooms in St. Clare Hospital - and not just any art. Beautiful, tranquil scenes help transport patients to a happier place, even for a while. Muralist Leslie Faust painted peaceful scenes to help calm and relax recovering patients. In four different rooms, Faust put windows where there were none. Instead of seeing bare walls, St. Clare patients have a portal to a place where nature abounds.

"I love mural work," says Faust. "...especially for a hospital setting, a place of healing. I believe art is powerful, and if it helps brighten patients' days or can play a small role in someone's recovery, then I'm both humbled and thrilled."

Research has shown that there is something to this notion of the healing power of art. One such study in Sweden focused on heart surgery patients. The findings? Hospitalized patients in ICUs who viewed a landscape scene with trees and water reported less anxiety/stress and needed fewer substantial doses of pain drugs than a control group assigned no pictures (Ulrich, 1991)*. Similar studies concur with these general findings.

However you explain it, art feels good. We've known it feeds the mind and soul - now we're learning that our bodies also benefit.

* The Role of the Physical Environment in the Hospital of the 21st Century: A Once-in-a-Lifetime - healthdesign.org
https://www.healthdesign.org/sites/default/files/Role%20Physical%20Environ%20in%20the%2021st%20Century%20Hospital_0.pdf