Art and Wellbeing

The Healing Environment
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In February 2010 Grampian Hospitals Art Trust (GHAT) hosted The Healing Environment, a seminar which focussed on the important role of art and the environment in healthcare settings and looked at a variety of art projects which have recently been completed in NHS Grampian.

This publication documents the presentations which formed part of this seminar along with reports from other clinical departments which have recently engaged with art.

We would like to thank all of the contributors along with the many artists whose creativity and enthusiasm helped to make these projects a reality. We would also like to thank Creative Scotland for their support with the seminar and the publication of ‘The Healing Environment’.
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Amazony
backlit lightbox
RACH Ward Entrance, 2009
Since 1985 Grampian Hospitals Art Trust has been successful in improving the visual environment in healthcare spaces in Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Moray. During this time, the demand on our traditional core services has increased greatly, yet in recent years we've succeeded in expanding our activities into some challenging new areas. These include bringing creativity into the lives of ‘long-stay’ patients, for example the very successful Artroom project at Roxburghe House, and participating in planning major new capital projects such as the University of Aberdeen Dental School and Hospital, the Emergency Care Centre at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary and the Foresterhill Health Campus.

Despite today’s economic constraints, in many quarters the realisation is dawning that the visual environment in general, and art in particular, provides a wide-bandwidth channel of communication which we ought to be using to reduce stress and to optimise the state of mind of people who use public buildings.

What matters is not only what health-care workers do, it’s also the manner in which care is delivered. The state of mind of everyone involved, whether NHS staff-member, patient or visitor, helps to determine how the quality of care and the outcome of each episode is perceived, and this is to quite a large extent conditioned by the environment in which healthcare takes place. A well-designed and visually beautiful building says to people directly: “We care about you”.

While it is a fact that a properly designed visual environment diminishes stress, improves recruitment and retention of the workforce and promotes more rapid healing, the most important thing is that art in hospitals makes people feel valued. Shouldn’t that be the first and most important piece of information our healthcare spaces impart to anyone?

Dr Donnie Ross  
Chairman  
Grampian Hospitals Art Trust
Susan T Grant

*Arboreal* (above and cover detail)

Vinyl, animation and lightboxes

Woodend Hospital Radiology Department, 2010
Introduction

Perception is everything. Whatever the real nature and purpose of the environment that we work in and that serves to treat our patients, the experience of that environment depends on our background and dependency on that environment.

A friend of mine had taken her son to the hospital to have an intervention that needed an inpatient stay. Although she had no complaints about the treatment received and the professionals providing the care, she urged that we as an organisation put emphasis on the atmosphere within the hospital working environment. “It’s alright for you Roelf; you walk through these hospital wards and you’re very used to the environment. You’re used to the busy atmosphere. You know what the equipment on the medical ward is for and you are familiar with most of the faces of the people that provide the care. But for a patient, the experience of a busy medical ward with the sounds of infusion pumps, patient traffic and voices discussing clinical management, can be very daunting and sometimes frightening.”

This document by the Grampian Hospitals Art Trust provides some very impressive examples on how the environment can be designed to be functional but also reassuring and caring. This is important to us all but in particular to vulnerable patients as outlined in the chapters on Roxburghe House, the Royal Aberdeen Children’s Hospital, Rosehill House and Old Age Psychiatry. Not only do these environments show care about the patient groups they are for, they also provide a point of reference for these patients and their visitors to stay in touch with the outside world.

The notion of art and wellbeing in a healing environment is neither frivolous nor supernumerary. It has a critical role to play in health and healthcare.

Dr Roelf Dijkhuizen
Medical Director
NHS Grampian
Patients die.
The reality is that we will all die.
Five thousand people die in Grampian each year, with 1300 dying in Aberdeen Royal Infirmary. At any one time it is estimated that 20% of all hospital inpatients are in the terminal phase of their illness. In other words many of the patients in hospital have advanced and advancing disease, and despite medicine’s best efforts they will not get better.

Does steadily deteriorating function necessarily result in poor quality of life? Is it possible to have a good quality of life even as death approaches? When we consider the factors that impact on the individual quality of life of patients with advanced disease (see table) we see that quality of life depends on the ability to have meaningful relationships with one’s environment: the physical environment, the interpersonal environment or the internal (intrapersonal) environment. It is striking how unimportant medical/disease related factors are.

### Quality of life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enhanced by:</th>
<th>Diminished by:</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Caring attitude of staff</td>
<td>- Lost independance</td>
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<td>- Family visits</td>
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<td>- Physical environment</td>
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<td>- Maintaining control</td>
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<td>- Feeling safe/not alone</td>
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<td>- Art sessions</td>
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*Brian Glassar*

*Ariel Wall*
copper, glass and water
Roxburghe House, 2004
In Roxburghe House, a palliative care unit, where the median time between referral and death for patients referred to me is 2 months, we see the positive, healing effects of the environment and art every day.

The physical environment is bright - large windows and light wells allow natural illumination and importantly add to the sense of pulling the ‘outside’ in. The windows in the patients’ rooms extend down to ground level - allowing bedbound patients to see outside, helping them remain ‘grounded’ and to benefit from the view of our garden, where trees in the foreground, middle ground, and farground give the illusion of being in the middle of the country, rather than in the middle of a city. Scattered throughout the building and garden are several commissioned artworks that provide distraction and inspiration. They also show that care has been taken in considering the environment, and this subtly reassures that ‘care’ will be taken of the patients.
**Artroom Project at Roxburghe House**

Participatory art sessions, facilitated by two wonderfully empathic trained artists, and using high quality art materials, have also had a dramatic effect in benefitting the inter-, and intra- personal environment for patients at Roxburghe House.

The art sessions allow patients to interact in a creative and meaningful, purposeful and enjoyable way with their environment, promoting a sense of control and self worth. It also allows them to participate in an activity/interaction that is not illness dependent.

This transformation of patients into artists also dramatically alters how staff interact with the patients. It demands a much more person-centred approach, and inhibits the task driven approach that staff often fall back on. The display of framed patients’ artworks enhances this transformation, as well as positively influencing the physical environment for all patients and staff.

**Dr Gordon Linklater**
Consultant in Palliative Care
Roxburghe House

**Alexander Simpson** (top right) *Untitled*, acrylic on canvas
**George McArthur** (middle right) *Untitled*, acrylic on canvas
**Alistair Crabb** (bottom right) *Untitled*, acrylic on canvas

Roxburghe House Artroom, 2010
Ally Wallace, *Coloured Window Panes* (above and opposite) vinyl film, 2004
Allan Watson, *Sculptural Seating* (above and opposite) marine plywood, 2004
Dan Savage, *Look Round* (opposite) screen printed glass, 2009, front entrance of RACH
Art has been an integral part of the Royal Aberdeen Children’s Hospital since the new building opened in January 2004. NHS Grampian had the foresight to include art in the planning of the new build, which led to the creation of the RACH Art Group and the publication of the RACH Arts Strategy in 2002. The main aim of the project was to build a children’s hospital that was welcoming, light and airy as well as child and family friendly.

The art strategy which was put in place was visionary at the time and proved to be a very useful tool in completing the project. The art project at RACH was completed in two phases, with phases 1 and 2 both having slightly different aims and outcomes.

The Project Manager for Phase 1, Jackie Bremner, ensured that art was included in the fabric of the building and not just as an afterthought. The main focus of this first phase was the public spaces of RACH: entrances, outdoor areas, courtyards, corridor spaces etc. Close relationships with the architect, art group and clinical staff were key to getting the project off the ground, along with visits to other hospitals in the UK and abroad. This allowed the art project team to gain a better understanding of what had already been done and what we wanted to achieve in RACH. Phase 1 was coordinated by PACE and won the Saltire Award for Art and Craft in Architecture.
A Young Advisers’ Group was set up to determine what children might want from the project and what they thought should be in their new children’s hospital. These children grew up with the project and provided inspiration through a series of workshops. One of the key elements on their list was water and this was achieved through the inclusion of Syd Burnett’s *Spiral Water Sculpture*. During the first phase, a total of thirteen artists completed sixteen new commissions.

Phase 2 focused on the internal and clinical spaces such as treatment rooms and X-ray rooms. Consultation with clinical staff, children and families was vital as we moved into the heart of the hospital. It was important that we found artists who had experience of working in this type of hospital environment and we were delighted with the outcome of the ten projects which were completed during the Phase 2 ARTworks programme.

GHAT played an important role during both phases of the project, as did the other members of the Art Group, including play, clinical and estates staff. In particular, I would like to thank Sally Thomson, our Phase 2 Art Co-ordinator, whose extensive project management experience led us through this complicated project. Sally had the enthusiasm and expertise to work with all our artists and stakeholders to achieve a highly professional result. Phase 2 was shortlisted for a 2009 Building Better Healthcare Award.

The funding for both phases of the art project came mainly following applications to the Scottish Arts Council, the Big Lottery Fund, The ARCHIE Foundation, Aberdeen City Council and many other smaller trusts and funds. No core NHS funding was used in the art project. We are, as always, indebted to those funders who helped to make the Royal Aberdeen Children’s Hospital a more child-friendly and welcoming environment.

**Syd Burnett**  
*Spiral Water Sculpture* (above)  
granite, stainless steel and aluminium  
RACH, 2004

**Dalziel + Scullion**  
*Ontological Garden* (opposite)  
steel and fibreglass, RACH, 2004
The input of children, families and staff to the high quality final pieces was vital in ensuring we achieved the desired outcome. The evaluation of the project has demonstrated the healing impact of the art pieces, with service users detailing the calming effect of the artwork in the hospital and the specific elements of distraction and interest that aid clinical staff in carrying out treatments on young children and adolescents.

I am very proud of what has been achieved in the RACH Art Project and am confident we have created a child and family friendly building which incorporates high quality, contemporary art of interest and intrigue.

Gail Thomson
Service Manager
Royal Aberdeen Children’s Hospital
(Chair, RACH Art Group, 2005-2009)
Susan Grant, the artist who was commissioned to work with the X-ray Dept in the Royal Aberdeen Children’s Hospital, was given the task to delight and distract patients who were undergoing procedures in the X-ray and ultrasound rooms.

It was important to make sure that the art worked for all age groups and that everyone could appreciate it – no Disney characters, which we had been guilty of using in the past! This meant the work would not become dated and have to be constantly changed.

We wanted to be proactive in asking what children wanted and what they would like to see in the X-ray dept. We created a video box where children could come and record their thoughts and ideas – even if it was something that we might not want to hear. Everyone enjoyed being involved with the art project and the commissioning process was made easier by the support and engagement of staff, who were enthusiastic about the project from the beginning. We even enjoyed the strange requests from Susan, such as ‘can we X-ray a pineapple?’

The themes that emerged were Sea; Sky; Jungle and Animals of the World and Susan took these to create six distinctly themed rooms.

Susan also set up workshops to include children’s ideas in the final artworks. She showed the children how to create photograms of objects which they had brought in, using a temporary darkroom which had

Susan T Grant

Elements (opposite, above and overleaf)
v vinyl artwork and projections in six X-ray treatment rooms, RACH, 2009
been set up in an old toilet cubicle in the department, where Susan helped them to develop the photograms.

Before the artwork was installed the rooms were full of grey, dull equipment and the walls could not be decorated. This was a frightening environment for children and parents to walk into. Each room has been transformed using vinyl imagery alongside animated projections of the children’s photograms. Videos are projected onto the ceiling using mirrors and are timed to last the duration of a procedure in the X-ray room.

Patients now have something to focus on in the room, aside from the equipment which now looks small and insignificant. Even babies are amazed and distracted by the colour and the shapes, allowing them to stay still long enough for the clinician to perform the procedure. The staff also play games with the children to take their mind off the procedure ahead, such as identifying the countries and animals in the ‘world map’ room.

Susan also extended the artwork out to the staff areas and corridors, allowing everyone to enjoy the bright colours. The whole department is now a brighter and more enjoyable place to work.

**Benefits:**

- Calming effects of the colours and images make a vast difference to the environment
- It has given an enhanced patient experience when coming in for a procedure
- The artwork encourages conversation with parents, staff and children
- The department is a delight to work in

**Sheila Cameron**
Superintendent Paediatric Radiographer
Royal Aberdeen Children’s Hospital
Kiran Chahal

The Journey (above, opposite and overleaf)
vinyl artwork, seating and interior design elements in waiting rooms, consulting rooms and corridors, Rosehill House, 2009
Dr Dee Rasalam discusses the creation of a more healing environment in the Child and Family Mental Health Department at Rosehill House.

Rosehill House was formerly a nurses’ home situated next to the Aberdeen Maternity Hospital in Foresterhill. When the new Royal Aberdeen Children’s Hospital (RACH) was built in 2004, there was a shortage of space and some members of the Department of Child and Family Mental Health opted to stay behind in Rosehill House. We occupied the ground floor and half of the first floor of this building, which at that point was also home to a number of hospital staff. Over the years the residents moved out and the rest of the building converted to office space. The Department is the only area of the building that is accessed by patients and all clinical activities of the department undertaken in Rosehill House are conducted on an outpatient basis.

At the Department of Child and Family Mental Health we see children and their families with mental health needs and difficulties for assessment and treatment. The children range in age from 0 to 13 or up to school leaving age if they have a learning disability. Children are referred to the department with various difficulties and may be suffering from anxiety or depression or may have conditions such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or Autism. A lot of the children are aware that they have been asked to come along to an appointment as they have various difficulties in coping with their day-to-day life at home and at school. Families coming to an appointment are often experiencing high levels of stress prior to their attendance at the department, which makes it extremely important for the environment to be as child and family friendly as possible, to put families at ease and to enhance communication between the family and the clinicians.
Prior to the Art Project, the clinical space within the department consisted of rooms with the bare essentials of tables and chairs for us to use and to see families in. We had some toys provided for the children but the walls were essentially bare and waiting rooms had rows of chairs in them with just a few magazines for families. Staff working in the building were aware that our clinical space was woefully inadequate and probably added to the distress felt by the patients when they came to the Department. We approached Grampian Hospitals Art Trust and Sally Thomson, RACH Arts Coordinator, for help in improving the clinical areas of the building and the Art Project was the result.

Under the coordination of Sally Thomson and our newly appointed artist, Kiran Chahal, the project got under way. A youth group from Inverurie and some of our patients and families contributed immensely to the project and made aspects of the project a lot of fun to be involved in. The model of consultation workshops leading to the development of the final design as used by Kiran has led to the project being taken to heart and gave ownership of the process to all those involved.

Being such a mammoth project, involving refurbishment of the building along with putting in the design elements, there was a lot of sweat and some tears along the way, but the final product came through. The effort and dedication of particular members of staff and their families helped to make the project a success and we now have a beautiful space to work in.

Kiran Chahal has worked to ensure that the patient journey through the department feels seamless and has put in features to make the space feel more welcoming and appealing to the children. The interconnected artworks along the corridors and throughout the building are a useful talking point and serve as distractions while families walk through the
corridors towards their appointments. The artwork appears to remove the anxiety of walking along a long corridor by giving children something to focus on and it has also been helpful in generating rapport with families by creating a non-controversial talking point.

Kiran has also created activities for the children to do while in an appointment or in the waiting area, with features such as memory foam seats to provide more comfortable seating. This has removed the need for children to sit formally in chairs while discussing extremely difficult issues and has resulted in children becoming a lot more comfortable. Our experience of using the space is that the children feel a lot more at ease in the surroundings and are able to participate more in their own health care by talking freely about issues in non-threatening surroundings.

By their very nature, hospitals are environments that create apprehension and anxiety in families who come into contact with them. As members of the health care profession, we work hard at trying to put patients at ease and to offer the best possible treatments that we can offer. As members of a department that caters to the mental health needs of very young and vulnerable children and their families, the therapeutic process starts from the moment they first come into contact with us. Enhancing the space in which this contact occurs to become one that is much more appealing and puts the children and their families at ease has helped to improve our relationships with our patients. Being part of this Art Project and seeing it through to completion has also give us a sense of pride in what we have achieved and given us a much better environment to work in.

**Kiran Chahal**
*The Journey (above)*
perspex wall panels and signs for entrance of Rosehill House, 2009

**Dr A D Rasalam**
Consultant Learning Disability Team
Rosehill House
Donna Briggs, *Reminiscence Boxes* (above and opposite) digital photographs on acetate, Davan Ward, 2010
Iona Parkinson writes about the positive effects of specially commissioned artworks in Davan Ward, Royal Cornhill Hospital.

In January 2009 GHAT was asked if it could help with dementia friendly improvements that were being made in Davan Ward. Over the next year we met regularly with the clinical team in the Department of Old Age Psychiatry to discuss how art could be used to enhance the ward and to complement the work that was being done by staff. Two artists were commissioned, Donna Briggs and Mike McPherson, to produce site specific artworks which would not only brighten the ward but would also assist patients with such things as wayfinding, identifying their rooms, enjoying their meals in the refurbished dining room and feeling at home in the reminiscence room.

Mike McPherson created individual door plates featuring intricately painted scenes of local landmarks: Duthie Park; The Beach Ballroom; Union Terrace Gardens and Stonehaven Harbour. He also painted appetising images of food which were hung in the dining room to create a café atmosphere, encouraging patients to enjoy meal times. Donna Briggs worked with the Occupational Therapist and used the everyday objects which were part of the therapist’s work to create evocative photographic ‘memory boxes’, each themed into groups of familiar objects which can be used by staff and relatives in their work and conversations with patients. The twenty-eight specially designed artworks were installed in March 2010 and Iona Parkinson, Clinical Lead Occupational Psychologist, writes about the positive effects of the artwork:
All the artwork in Davan has been much commented on and admired. The time the artists spent with patients and staff, finding out what was of interest and what would help to stimulate conversation and aid orientation/wayfinding, was invaluable. It seems that the art has achieved all of these aims.

Patients have commented particularly on the pictures in the dining room – saying things like “ooh, I’d like to take a bite out of that chocolate cake”. They have been fascinated with the reminiscence images, and will sit there with their relatives discussing the pictures. Relatives have commented on all the art and are delighted that their relatives are benefiting from it.

Nursing staff have found that the images of Aberdeen really do help patients identify their bedrooms and if reminded, they will remember that they are in the ‘Duthie Park’ room. Other staff, including the Occupational Therapists and Psychologist, have told me how they have used the art as a talking point to calm an agitated person or to build relationships and find out more about who the person is.

The Mental Welfare Commission visited other wards on the site but came through to see the environmental improvements in Davan. They were particularly impressed with the dining area, saying you could almost forget you were in a hospital ward and think you were in a nice cosy café.

Benefits:
- Stimulates conversation among patients
- Aids orientation and wayfinding
- Provides areas of interest
- Creates a talking point
- Builds relationships
- Helps communication with patient

Mike McPherson
*Beach Ballroom, His Majesty’s Theatre (above)*
oil on canvas, Davan Ward, 2010

Mike McPherson
*Cafe Paintings* (opposite)
digital reproductions of oils on canvas
Davan Ward, 2010

Iona Parkinson
Clinical Lead Occupational Therapist
Old Age Psychiatry
Royal Cornhill Hospital
Woodend Radiology Department provides a diagnostic imaging service for in-patients from the Department of Medicine for the Elderly, for young disabled patients from the Neuro Rehabilitation Unit, and also for pre and post operative patients from elective Orthopaedics. In addition we image clinic outpatients and patients referred by their GPs. The Department contains Ultrasound and X-ray imaging facilities.

With such a mixed caseload our Team discussed the possibility of improving the patient ultrasound experience. It takes 10 to 15 minutes to complete an ultrasound examination with the patient lying on an examination couch. Our thoughts were that if we had pictures on the ceiling or on the wall facing the patient these would become a welcome distraction. Anne Moore from Grampian Hospitals Art Trust met with a few of the staff to discuss our ideas and everything developed from there. The Ultrasound rooms have now been transformed by artist Susan Grant whose work we were already familiar with from the RACH Radiology Department.

Now with trees, blossoms and birds as the main themes, patients can lie on the Ultrasound couches in either room and be treated to a moving display of gently falling blossoms, or birds that appear to slowly fly across the ceiling and through branches of a tree that decorates one of the walls.
This has proved a great success and patients’ comments have been very positive. Generally they find the experience to be relaxing. It certainly takes their minds off the examination.

The transformation did not stop with the Ultrasound Rooms as any visitor to our Department can clearly see. The same trees extend into the Department corridors and waiting areas with birds in various stages of flight. Susan has also used a couple of redundant x-ray viewing boxes as an integral part of her design. Digital images have been created to resemble the sky and we now have birds flying across the blue, backlit screens. They work extremely well in the waiting areas and have proved to be a popular conversation piece for patients.

With regular comments on how lovely the Department looks I would like to say a big thank you to Anne and Susan on behalf of the Woodend Radiology staff and patients.

**Cathy Russell**  
Superintendent Radiographer  
Radiology Department  
Woodend Hospital

**Susan T Grant**  
with animations by **Monica Dutta**  
*Arboreal* (this page and previous)  
Vinyl, animation and lightboxes  
Woodend Hospital Radiology Department, 2010
Acknowledgements
The achievements of GHAT over the past twenty-five years would not have been possible without the consistent support and enthusiasm of a wide range of dedicated individuals and organisations and thanks must go to all those who have helped to make these projects a reality.

Special thanks must also go to the hospital staff and patients who have been involved with these and other projects, either as members of Art Steering Groups or as willing participants of consultation groups, and finally to the artists whose creativity and enthusiasm has helped to transform our healthcare spaces.

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Aberdeen College
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Art in Hospital
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GHAT Art Advisors
Gray’s Graduates Society
Hugh Fraser Foundation
Lily Charlton Trust
The MacRobert Trust
The Morningfield Association
Peacock Visual Arts
Robert Gordon University
The Rotary Club of Aberdeen
Shell UK Limited
Talisman Energy (UK) Limited
The University of Aberdeen
WRVS

Dalziel + Scullion
*Ontological Garden* (opposite)
steel and fibreglass, RACH, 2004
Anne Finlay, *Spiritual Connections* (detail) acrylic, aluminium, nylon and gold leaf, Roxburghe House, 2005