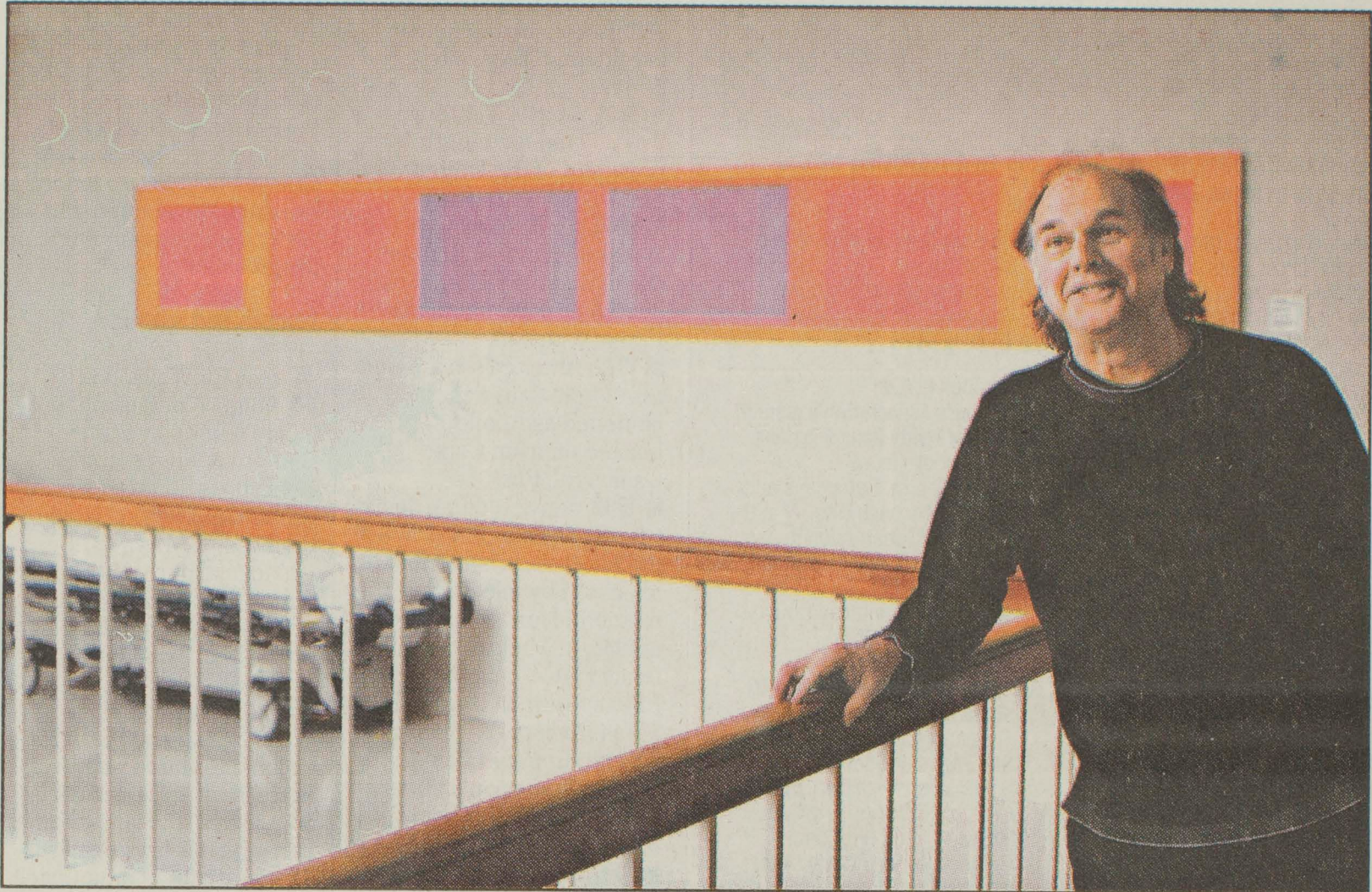


ARTWORKS LIFT BODIES, SPIRITS

HOSPITAL'S COLLECTION ON DISPLAY TO ENHANCE HEALING



DAVID ROYAL/Special to The Herald

Monterey-based artist Lucas Blok stands in front of his "Untitled, 4-11-07" painting that is displayed in a hall at the Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula in Monterey on Wednesday.

By EMMANUEL ROMERO
Herald Staff Writer

Across from the Terrace West Unit nurse's desk at Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula, there hangs a watercolor painting by California artist Rollin Pickford. The painting, "Pico and Asilomar," portrays a coniferous tree overhanging the base of a sand dune, bound on both sides by fences of wooden sticks.

Pickford's painting has significance for psychiatric clinical nurse specialist Ann Bispo, who recalled a dying matriarch surrounded by her family in the hospital.

Doctors admitted the woman, mother to two friends of Bispo, to the oncology floor despite her wishes to remain at home. When Bispo checked in on her friends, they gushed to Bispo about this painting, which hung outside their mother's door. They said the sand dune was the same one down the street from their house in Pacific Grove.

"They said, 'She's home and it's OK,'" Bispo said. Their mother died two days later.

The story Bispo shared is just one of many inspired by the artwork on the walls of Community Hospital. The media that beautify the hospital's rooms and corridors range from digital photography to textiles. Each work is meant to promote the healing process by evoking feelings of hope in patients and their loved ones.

"The creative process is a



A painting titled "Pico and Asilomar" by Rollin Pickford on display at CHOMP.

symbol of opportunity," said Amy Essick, the Community Hospital art curator since 2001. "That can be a great inspiration to somebody going through the health care process."

"It's important, in hospitals, to surround the patients with serenity and beautiful things," said outpatient Virginia Fry.

Environment for healing

Any trip to the hospital can stress out visitors, whether they are patients undergoing a routine checkup or family members pacing in the waiting room. The art that furnishes a room can create a more soothing environment.

"It's nice — as a family member or a patient — to take a break from the clinical experience and enjoy something beautiful," said Essick, who is in charge of

every aspect of the art in each of Community Hospital's 13 facilities.

Lucas Blok, an artist in Carmel, began contributing his work about six years ago to Community Hospital's Ryan Ranch facility. He has continuously collaborated with Essick on various projects since then.

"Celebration of health and optimism create an environment for healing," Blok said. "That's being discovered more and more with doctors."

"I think from a healing point of view, it's a fabulous addition," surgeon Lane Verlenden said. "You notice people from all walks of life stopping to look at this art."

Sense of community

Essick takes special care in tailoring the art collections to each department. One important

Arts in health care through the years

- Art has graced hospital walls for centuries, including Renaissance paintings and portraits of saints. After the discovery of germs, art disappeared from hospitals to promote a sterile environment. Art started returning to hospitals during the 1950s.
- In 2004, a survey conducted by the Society for the Arts in Health Care, the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organizations, and Americans for the Arts revealed art is used in more than 2,500 hospitals around the country. The top three reasons given for investing in art were to benefit patients, to create a healing environment, and to aid patients with mental and emotional recovery.

Source: Anita Boles, executive director of Society for the Arts in Health Care

consideration is what type of patients a department treats. For example, the main facility's Terrace West Unit treats a lot of cancer patients.

"I wanted to create a very calming environment for them," Essick said. This unit includes artistic depictions of nature.

The Monterey Bay area has a rich history of painters and photographers who were inspired by the beauty of the area's natural landscapes, Essick said. This

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LOCAL

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affinity carries over into the hospital's paintings and photographs of native plants and animals.

Essick emphasizes the use of local artists in order to foster a sense of community within the hospital walls. This includes photographs of surfers by Monterey's Miles McBreen, and drawings of the beach by students from All Saints Episcopal Day School in Carmel, which they worked on during their lunch breaks, Essick said.

Some contributing artists also tailor their work to fit a specific room's needs. Near the main facility's catheterization lab, there is a wall next to a staircase winding down below the ceiling's skylight. Blok's abstract painting, "Untitled, 4-11-07," enlivens the once bare space with its melon, pink, and purple rectangles.

"It's beautiful light coming in, but there was nothing



Amy Essick, art curator for the Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula, stands in front of black and white photographs by Morley Baer, left, and Ryuijie, center and right, inside the surgery area in the Garden West Unit of the hospital.

DAVID ROYAL/Special to The Herald

going on in this space," Blok said. The painting's radiating colors create a sense of movement and delight for patients, he said.

Funding for collection

Community Hospital has

included art in its interiors since 1962, Essick said. Maurine Church Coburn, wife of a donor of the 22 acres Community Hospital sits on, introduced art from her home into the hospital.

"She has been a supporter of creating a calming, uplifting, inspiring environment,"

Essick said. "When she passed away, she left an endowment to (Community Hospital) for art, gardens and music."

The ongoing art collections are funded through the Maurine Church Coburn Endowment and private donations from the

community. No patient fees go toward the art collection, Essick said.

Upcoming additions to the hospital include a poet-in-residence, Patrice Vecchione, whose work is funded by the Robinson Jeffers Tor House Foundation

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Amy Essick
CHOMP art curator

in conjunction with The Big Read: The Poetry of Robinson Jeffers, an initiative created by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation.

Current renovations to Community Hospital's main facility have left several hallways with bare white walls, which may disorient lost visitors.

"People find their way around here through the artwork," Essick said. "Turn left at the painting with the poppies."

As busy as Essick is, the walls won't stay bare for very long.