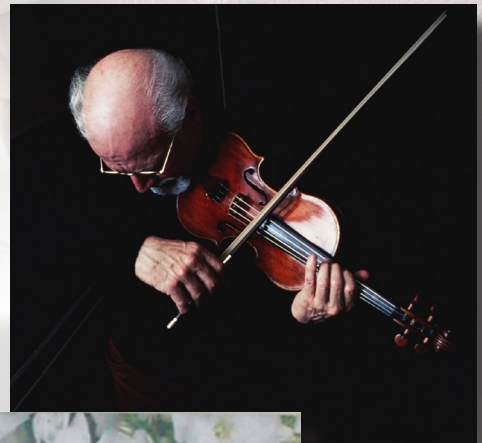


*Just what  
the (art  
and music)  
doctors  
ordered*

by Annette Ridenour

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Left:  
Original  
photographic  
art by  
Rhonda  
Grimberg  
Douglas



*This unique project at Exempla Good Samaritan Medical Center (EGSMC) in LaFayette, Colorado began with signage to help with wayfinding and developed into a major art program and much more, the result of collaboration between visionary facilities administrators, environmental designers, visual artists and music specialists.*

**A**esthetics, Inc. provided comprehensive environmental design services for a newly built medical center that opened in December 2004. The project included a community art program with over 400 pieces of original art, a hospital-wide custom prescriptive music program for public spaces, exterior and interior wayfinding and signage, main entryway banners, and a donor recognition system. It was unique in its coordination of visual and auditory elements of the environment, based on careful assessment and planning of patient, visitor and staff needs.

Practitioners of the arts in healthcare know that the arts have always played a role in the healing process. Recent studies demonstrate that the arts can help relieve the stress involved with waiting, reduce patient anxiety, improve the working environment for employees, and positively affect patient and visitor experiences. Exempla Good Samaritan Medical Center's ambitious program, focusing on new ideas and approaches to the use of arts in their venue, is an inspiring success story.

Situated on 77 acres, with buildings totaling 511,000 square feet, Exempla Good Samaritan Medical Center administrators were enthusiastic about using wayfinding to clarify public circulation on a large and complex campus. As a sprawling new development in a former rural community, EGSMC wanted to find ways to build friendly ties to the surrounding community, honoring its local heritage. They were excited about the design team's concept of using art, music and environmental graphics to express their mission of patient-focused care, reinforce ties to the community and build teamwork among staff.

They developed an art committee with the goal of establishing an art program to enhance the healing environment. A mission was created by this multidisciplinary group: *to create a place where arts coexist with people, process and the physical environment to create an experience with such compelling value that our patients and their families, physicians, and employees, each experience the benefits.*

The art program was established to select over 400 original works of art by local Colorado artists, commission 10 original pieces of art, and create an art tour brochure. A call went out to over 80 local art councils, agencies and guilds. Artists were requested to submit proposals for art specifically related to the Colorado natural environment. 72 artists submitted proposals to be considered and 39 were chosen. Art

mediums included ceramic tile, metal sculptures, blown glass, ceramics, photography, quilts, watercolor, multi-media assemblage and giclée prints.

To reinforce wayfinding zones and help the cognitive and emotional experience of patients, visitors and staff, visual art pieces were carefully chosen to reflect each of several themes relating to the area's natural geography. The art also served as landmarks for wayfinding (for example, "Flowers" by Rhonda Grimberg near the elevators in the Women's Center and "Clouds" by Carol Schneider Fennell in the Sky Pavilion).

The art tour brochure provided a numbered map, a list of areas to view specific groupings of art, name, medium and locale of each artist, as well as photographs of several of the art pieces. Biographical information about each artist was mounted on plaques to be viewed upon arrival at the art areas. This inspired process lifted up the artists and built ties by demonstrating Exemplar Good Samaritan Medical Center's commitment to the community.

The music and sound program was the result of collaboration between Aesthetics, Inc. president, Annette Ridenour, and her partners, Don Campbell and David Corbin, in a joint venture called Aesthetic Audio Systems, Inc. Based on an extensive assessment, they prescribed custom auditory experiences for different zones of the hospital based on the acoustics of each space, the desired emotional responses and time of day.

A variety of harmonic atmospheres contributed to the energized relaxation of the healing environment with a blended design of light classical, smooth jazz, ambient and world music. Someone at the front entrance of the hospital will hear birds chirping in the morning, or wind blowing through the trees in the afternoon. Direction giving might include instructions to "go to the elevators with the guitar music," and one might pause to rejoice at the sound of a brief lullaby played throughout the facility each time a baby is born. These describe only a few of the 9,000 pieces piped in via an elaborate, computer-programmed system.

Inside, the five-story hospital was divided into wayfinding zones, each themed with imagery and icons from regional natural geography and landmarks (Longs Peak Pavilion, Clear Creek Pavilion, Sky Pavilion, and The Commons). A unique signature quality of the signs designed by Aesthetics, Inc. is the integration of artwork as part of the signs. Duane Fisher, Director of Wayfinding at Aesthetics, tells several stories of the challenges the design team faced in producing custom icons that were finally approved by members of a Wayfinding Team comprised of hospital administrators and staff. For instance, when shown an icon to represent Clear Creek, hospital team members asked to have it revised to represent "a lot more water crashing over



boulders.” Ultimately, the refinements helped create icons from EGSMC’s vantage point that were uniquely their own.

Main entryway banners integrated pictures of employees with inspirational words describing the core values and reinforcing the company’s mission and commitment to providing friendly customer service. The donor recognition system integrated the interior color palette and provided endearing and inspirational quotes reinforcing the Exempla Good Samaritan Medical Center values.

Exterior wayfinding began by clarifying visitor destinations off a road with seven driveways encircling the campus. Driveways for patients and visitors were numbered, with a special sign listing the numbers at each entrance. Corresponding numbered parking lots included silhouettes of local wild animals in the graphics, yet another way of reinforcing ties to the community’s rural heritage.

Care in placement and utilization of colors, materials and shapes in the exterior and interior sign systems, as well as the art, complemented the beautiful, contemporary architecture and interior design of the campus while honoring the local community and region. Exempla Good Samaritan Medical Center demonstrates how the arts and design contribute cohesively to create a unique healing environment.

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Learn more about Exempla Good Samaritan Medical Center’s custom audio program. Read the article from the March/April 2005 issue of *Spirituality & Health* magazine. Contact us at [www.aesthetics.net](http://www.aesthetics.net) (Aesthetics, Inc.) or [www.aestheticas.net](http://www.aestheticas.net) (Aesthetic Audio Systems, Inc.) to obtain a CD of the Hallmark Channel video segment featuring the audio programming at Exempla Good Samaritan Medical Center.

Contact Aesthetics, Inc. for literature and a portfolio CD of our work in Wayfinding, Healthcare Interior Design, Arts Programs, Donor Recognition and Architecture.