

THE ROLE OF ART AS A MEDICINE FOR HEALING

– FRANCOIS CLAY-TOR, Director and Curator of GalerieFrancois II

In the past, art was viewed as a way to express feelings and perceptions through a creative process that conveyed to others a form of enrichment to embellish and challenge the human conscience. Moreover, this creative process was presented to others as a form of enrichment to challenge the human conscience with the hope that one would recognize some parallel with life.

At this juncture, with many studies done by many people in the medical profession, a new role of art has emerged as, perhaps, a “cure for what ails you”, or a new concept of art healing. Medicine is the science and the art of healing. It embraces and uses a variety of methods to health and healing. The word “medicine” is a Latin derivative meaning the art of healing. This applies to any art form that can be utilized in the healing process.

Although it is still evolving, the concept and idea examines the studies done by doctors and therapists who have given more insight into the benefits art can have on the mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing of an individual. It is an integral component in all of us and allows the release of stress through our own feelings. In addition, its therapeutic values allows emotional healing through jump starting the immune system, Thereby, allowing the body and mind to fight off illnesses.

In a recent article in “Business Lexington” focus was given to Health Care and was explored in an article by Celeste Lewis, contributing writer for the arts. At the University of Kentucky Albert B. Chandler Hospital, it was noted that the “art healing” idea has been very carefully examined and is being implemented in a variety of ways at this hospital. Art abounds in the decorative settings throughout, hence, removing that typical institutional appearance found in many medical facilities. More care and attention has been given to color and furnishings that transcends the waiting and reception areas into very inviting and mind altering setting. This transformation has been widely praised by patients and medical staff alike for its beneficial value in emotional care.

Such a space has been highlighted with the commissioned work entitled, “Shimmer At The Edge” a 6’x9’ painting by local artist, Helene Steene which hangs in the lobby of the Markey Cancer Center underscoring the championing role of art in healing. Ms. Steene’s mixed media piece is composed of marble dust, sand, oil, enhanced by a captivating palette of color creating stunning shapes and textures.....an abstract landscape of the sea and the sun.

Helene Steene says of her work, “ This piece is about rejuvenation and the power of nature to help us heal. If my work



can slow someone down to contemplate something within themselves, I hope I have reached them with my work.” Patients and staff alike have praised the presence of this commanding

piece of art. Its title, “Shimmer at the Edge” refers to when the edge of color, line, and form converge, thereby forming a nexus and connective support for each other..... akin to what happens in the healing environment daily.

There were two projects that Helene Steene participated in using art as a tool for healing. One was called “Witness” which was a pilot program with artists working together with women who had been abused, to help them share their story through art. It was a very emotional and humbling experience and an amazing eye opener to see the hurdles crossed and the healing that took place,

The second program was called “Side by Side”, a pilot program working with children who had different mental challenges. It was a very revealing to see how, through chan-

neling their thoughts into art, they could alter their perception and focus and re-channel their impediments in a very new and healing way. This form of art therapy has been used to help people manage physical and emotional programs through creative activities to express emotions. It has helped the process of coming to terms with emotional conflicts, increased self-awareness, and the ability to express unspoken, and perhaps, unconscious thoughts about their lives and illness. Art therapy has played a very integral role in the healing process as well as many other healing methods.

Ms. Steene’s work “Abstract Impression” was presented at the Taubman Museum in July and August of this year through the courtesy of GalerieFrancois II. Her work is currently being exhibited 133 Campbell Avenue West, in Downtown Roanoke, allowing an rare opportunity to view her stunning work at GalerieFrancois II... which inspires and delights... thought provoking And food for the soul!

