

# Healing Arts



There's no doubt a connection exists between our senses and the stimulus of artwork. Based on this ideal, Gary Blair and Earl Pinchuk established the Art for Healing Foundation in 2001. The foundation is "dedicated to bringing the healing power of art and art education to hospitals, hospices and shelters and to improving the welfare of those participating in the healing process as healthcare givers and as patients".

After spending time with an ill friend within the bland confines of a hospital room, they were both struck by how the surroundings negatively affected their friend, and all the other patients and caregivers at the hospital. At that time, Earl was involved in organizing art shows in the area. He noted that when artwork was not sold, it often returned to studios and galleries with minimum visibility. This discussion continued with Gary, and together they realized that there was a place for these

works of art, and the Art for Healing Foundation was born.

Recently, Gary and Earl answered some questions about their unique endeavour.

What's the latest project you're working on?

We're working with Villa Medica-Entraides Grands Brules. Earlier this year, we read an article in the Globe and Mail about a Montreal woman, Sophie Sureau, who was in Bali with her fiancé when terrorists bombed a nightclub in November 2002. She spent three months in the hospital in Bali and then returned home to more surgery. After her surgery she was sent to Villa Medica Rehabilitation hospital here in Montreal for more physical therapy.

Upon release she returned to her job in finance, but found it very unsatisfying. She felt that burn survivors had nowhere to turn for psychological and emotional needs once their physical therapy was over. She started ENTRAIDES GRANDS BRULES at the hospital specifically to offer this very kind of support to other burn survivors. The article mentioned that they would soon be moving into their own offices across the street from the hospital so we felt it was the opportune time to approach them and offer to assist with regards to art for their centre. We wrote Sophie an email and she was thrilled and excited by the possibility. We then had a friend who wanted to underwrite the project. Her generous donation will now afford us the luxury of installing prints in not only the offices, but on the burn survivor floor in the hospital as well.

We also have several other gallery projects slated for the next few months including one by Keith Haring (non-original prints) to be installed in the Montreal Children's

Hospital. Also we are working on an installation of work by the late artist Claude Bibeau (original works), which is a donation, in progress, which we hope to have up in the early fall also at the Montreal Children's Hospital. In addition, work by artist Evelyn Gold (original works) is going to be installed in the Oncology department at the Montreal Children's Hospital once the current renovations in the department are finished. Finally, we have a project by artist Rita Cohen (original works) to be installed later this fall at the Montreal General Hospital.

How can others be involved?

As a relatively new foundation with limited funds, what we're principally looking for is donations of either money or art. Monetary donations contribute towards purchasing prints, framing, installation, etc. Donations of art are also very much welcome, however, the art must fall within the criteria of the mission of the Foundation and offer a visual impact that will help to relax, inspire and motivate patients and staff, otherwise contributing towards uplifting an environment dedicated to physical and emotion healing. We've also recently taken on our first volunteer, a writer, who is assisting in creating the biographical texts for the biographical plaques we install whenever we install a "gallery" of works by one artist as opposed to single work installations.

Please share a story about how the foundation has helped people.

Dear Gary and Earl,  
What a marvellous difference you have both made in my life and in the lives of my patients. The artwork you provided six months ago has transformed the art

therapy room into a welcoming, creative and nourishing place for the children and adolescents who come here for therapy. I would like you to know that their reaction to the art has been tremendously positive. As their art therapist I use the art to teach and encourage them to create their own art that expresses something about themselves. This personal expression is the vehicle through which we move forward towards understanding and healing. I am so grateful for your initiative to bring art into the hospital. Your work is appreciated everyday. Sincerely, Sally Cooke, M.A. - Art Therapist - Adolescent Medicine, Gynaecology Program, Montreal Children's Hospital.

What do you think it is about art that can make a difference in health and healing?

There are many studies that have concluded that art plays a major contributing factor towards creating a better healing environment. The proper images can evoke feelings of calmness and peacefulness in a recovering patient, not to mention the role it plays in distracting them from their otherwise cold and clinical surroundings. The idea being that basically when people feel better, they heal better. We've discovered that outdoor scenes offer a particular connection to patients given that they are confined to the indoors, sometimes for short stays but all too often for longer ones as well. Art also offers a form of non-verbal human connection that compliments the vital connection they have with staff and visitors.

For additional information on the Art for Healing Foundation.

Visit: [www.artforhealingfoundation.org](http://www.artforhealingfoundation.org)  
Or contact the foundation at: 514-846-3811