



ALLEN MCINNIS THE GAZETTE

Dr. Stephane Schwartz (left) sits with donors Gary Blair and Earl Pinchuk (right) as they chat with Montreal Children's Hospital patient Rebecca Oviedo in the dental clinic. The two men have donated about 100 art works to the hospital to help spruce up the clinics.

Art for the patient's sake

BRIGHTENING UP HOSPITALS

Pair have set up organization to help lift spirits in clinics

LISA FITTERMAN
THE GAZETTE

Rebecca Oviedo sat in the dentist's chair and stared wide-eyed at the floating water in the finely framed poster of Pablo Picasso's "Cote d'Azur" on the wall in front of her.

The 5-year-old had visited a lake before, too, she whispered, and boy, that tree looked really funny with both green and yellow leaves.

She was there for a teeth cleaning. This time, she also had a lesson in the importance of colour and what it can do to lift spirits.

That is the aim of the Art Doc-

tors, Earl Pinchuk and Gary Blair, art lovers and collectors who believe art can improve the quality of life.

"People think that to enjoy art, you have to visit a museum and you must have a degree to understand it," said Blair, who works in his family's paging and telephone answering service. "But art is made by human beings for human beings. It's meant to bring out the best we all have locked in ourselves."

This year, Blair and Pinchuk have hung about 80 pieces in the Montreal Children's Hospital. They have their own storeroom there, and scads of thank-you

notes from hospital staff.

Stephane Schwartz, head of pediatric dentistry at the hospital, noted that children often express fear of the hypodermic needle. "This artwork helps them. How can it not? Look! Look at this." It was a multinational poster of children with the caption: "Children love the world. Children love each other."

Harvey Guyda, the hospital's chief pediatrician, said: "Projects like this are extremely welcome because we're still not family- and patient-friendly enough. It's great stuff."

The project began when Blair and Pinchuk visited a dying friend in a hospital in 2001. They were horrified by the dull and depressing state of the hospital.

The two quickly dismissed the idea of donating one piece of stunning art for a hospital lobby,

deciding instead to begin the Art for Healing Foundation.

And when Pinchuk turned 40, he asked friends for donations instead of gifts. They raised \$6,000.

The results at the Children's are both subtle and charming. A once nondescript hallway has been transformed by a colourful Mark Rothko work; another passage, lined with posters of paintings by Henri Matisse, is unofficially known as the "Matisse Corridor."

Next up: the emergency room. After all, the hospital is a work in progress.

For more information about the foundation, contact the Art Doctors at earlpinchuk@artforhealingfoundation.org

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