Infection Prevention & Control (IPAC) & artwork in healthcare design

Research on evidence-based design has shown many benefits to patients, staff and visitors resulting from the presence of artwork in hospitals. These benefits include reduced stress and anxiety and an improved healing process.

Increased attention has been given not only to the built environments impact on the patient experience in recent years but also to the ability to clean and disinfect the healthcare environment. In order to reduce healthcare associated infections in vulnerable patient populations, environmental cleaning is an important factor that contributes to reducing the spread of infection.

IPAC risk assessment for artwork installation¹

Installation Space	Definition	Risk level	Acceptable art medium characteristics
Point-of-care	Spaces where direct medical services or treatment is being delivered (e.g. inpatient rooms, exam/treatment rooms, procedure rooms, etc.)	Very High	 Easy to clean and disinfect Materials are non-porous, smooth, durable, seamless, not conducive to dust collection, water impermeable Examples include: Embedding or printing artwork into monolithic surfaces like sheet vinyl flooring, ceiling tiles or wall protection, framed /encased art *IPAC should be consulted for any art installation in these areas Wall decals in clinical areas may be considered if there are no point-of-care activities to take place. A sealant or top coat should be added to prevent peeling.
Clinical area	Areas within healthcare settings where patients usually/often spend time, or areas where a broad range of clinical activities occur, some of which may not necessarily be immediate patient-facing (e.g. unit corridors, nourishment areas, waiting rooms, nursing stations, etc.)	High [§]	
Public Space (artwork is placed within reach)	Spaces where patients rarely/occasionally spend time (e.g. elevator foyers, lobbies, cafeterias, etc.). Placed within reach is roughly below head height (7ft).	Medium	 Easy to clean, but may not be disinfected Materials are non-porous, smooth, durable, seamless, not conducive to dust collection, water impermeable Consider additional techniques to enhanced cleanability (sealing/varnishing, framing etc.) Examples include: Framed/encased art or sculptures, sealed wood, wall decals
Public Space (artwork is placed out of reach)	Spaces where patients rarely/sometimes spend time (e.g. elevator foyers, lobbies, cafeterias, etc.).	Low	 Preference is given to similar art medium characteristics as described in medium/high risk categories. However, consideration may be given to materials that may be more difficult to clean and damp dusted only[§] Examples include: canvas, textiles, sealed wood [§]Best practice is to have textiles behind a wipeable surface like plexiglass or glass to maintain integrity of the items. If this is not feasible consideration should be given for placement out of reach for art materials that can be damp dusted only
Administration and non-clinical offices	Staff-only areas where there is no clinical or point-of-care related activities occurring (e.g. meeting rooms, administration offices, conference rooms, etc.)	Low	

Techniques to enhance cleanability

- Sealing and varnishing: Applying a clear, protective varnish or sealant to paintings and other surfaces can make them more resistant to dirt and moisture.
- **Non-porous surfaces**: Using non-porous materials like glass, metal, stainless steel aluminum, copper or glazed ceramic prevents the absorption of moisture and stains, making the artwork easier to clean.
- **Smooth finishes**: Art with smooth, non-textured surfaces is generally easier to wipe clean than art with rough or textured surfaces. This applies to both sculptures and painted surfaces
- Framing: Artwork framed behind glass or acrylic provides an extra layer of protection, making it easier to clean the surface without touching the art itself
- Integration into surfaces: Embedding artwork into monolithic surfaces like sheet vinyl flooring or wall protection can create a seamless and easily cleanable environment.

References

- Canadian Standards Association. CAN/CSA Z8000-18. Canadian health care facilities. Toronto: Canadian Standards Association; 2018.
- Kimich, Shannon, "An investigation of the impact of COVID-19 Infection Control on visual art installations in hospitals with pediatric patients " (2021). Electronic Theses and Dissertations. 403. https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/etds/403
 - Alberta Health Services https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/ipc/hi-ipchcf-design.pdf see appendix E pg.32