



The Healing Presence of Art: A History of Western Art in Hospitals

Richard Cork

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Fascinated by the astonishingly rich history of art in hospitals, the well-known critic and art historian Richard Cork has written a brilliant account of the subject. These works, which include masterpieces of Western art, have been produced from Renaissance Florence and Siena to the 20th century. Piero della Francesca made a painting for a hospital in Sansepolcro, as did Hans Memling in Bruges, Matthias Grünewald in Isenheim, El Greco in Toledo, Rembrandt in Amsterdam, William Hogarth in London, Vincent van Gogh in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, and Marc Chagall in Jerusalem.

The book's sumptuous images offer a rich range of subjects, from Francisco Goya's dramatic confrontations with suffering to Giovanni Battista Tiepolo's sublime, airborne celebrations of resurrection and heavenly ecstasy. Some, like Leonardo da Vinci's incisive drawings, are based on uncompromising firsthand study of hospital patients. Others explore a redemptive world where Christ is born, orphans are rescued, and plague victims are given shelter. In this wide-ranging survey, Cork investigates how such artworks have been used to humanize hospitals, to alleviate their clinical bleakness, and to offer genuine, lasting pleasure to patients, staff, and visitors.

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