

RADIANCE AND RENEWAL: CORRIDOR TRANSFORMS INTO A LIVING WORK OF ART



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As the warmer months settle in, so do the sunshine and brightness they bring every day. The longer days and changing light are especially meaningful on the main medical campus, where the newly installed “Corridor of Colors” changes with every shift of light.

The Gifts of Art (GOA) program introduced the “Corridor of Colors” as a long-term art installation designed to enhance the experience of all who pass through the connector corridor.

“The idea behind this installation came from wanting an artistic solution to the discolored overhead panels caused by exposure to the elements,” said Laura Mettam, communications and performing arts coordinator for GOA. “Our goal was to create an immersive art experience through this installation and leave those who pass through it in awe.”

The installation has quickly become a favorite amount among team members, patients and visitors, offering a moment of beauty and warmth in the unexpected place.

A necessary change

Michigan Medicine staff team members, patients and visitors are familiar with the level 2 connector corridor between University Hospital and the Towsley Center. This space sees constant foot traffic, with people passing through daily to look out its windows to wherever they’re headed.

But for patients being transported on hospital beds, the experience wasn’t always relaxing or as enjoyable. With a view of the ceiling, many patients only saw the stained, rust-colored overhead panels.

In a search for a solution, the GOA collaborated with artist and U-M alum Michelle Inez Hinojosa to transform the space into one of peace and beauty to all those traveling through. The installation, designed with vibrant, colorful panels, offers an ever-changing experience due to natural light changes and weather conditions.

The artist behind the art

Hinojosa is no stranger to U-M, having been awarded a 2023 Creative Careers Residency through the University of Michigan Arts Initiative. After collaboration with the GOA program on several occasions for art workshops held within the hospital, this most recent partnership was seamless.

Hinojosa gained recognition for her art installations made from vinyl-like material, the same durable and versatile material used in this project.

"I hope to transport all who travel through the corridor into a space where the warmth of light is felt," said Hinojosa. "I drew inspiration from a quilt motif to bring feelings of comfort and warmth to the corridor. Medicine is a form of art, and like quilting, there's precision, resilience and tender care that are necessary," said Hinojosa.

The ever-changing installation is not only eye-catching but also serves as a resource by functioning as a wayfinding tool to improve the experience of all hospital goers.

No small feat

Transforming the connector corridor was never going to be easy. But from the initial brainstorming, color swatches and samples, to the final installation, the project was completed in less than a year with the help of many stakeholders.

The planning process began in spring 2024, and by October, the art experience was ready for its first visitors.

"I wanted this project for several reasons, but mainly to show how big the change really was and the effect it was going to have on patients and team members. We have a photo of the first selfie and the first people walking through the corridor after the installation was revealed. It was a special moment that we were lucky enough to capture," said Mettam.

Hinojosa and the GOA program worked closely throughout the process, continually fine tuning the patterns and colors to ensure the light would filter through the installation in the perfect way.

"Figuring out which colors worked best definitely took some trial and error," said Elaine Reed, artist in residence and bedside art program coordinator for Gifts of Art. "It's a community space, so we wanted vibrant colors, but also to bring some Michigan pride in with some blue and maize."

Stitched together

The transformation is impossible to go unnoticed. What was once a stained, forgotten space is now filled with vibrant colors, bringing a renewed energy.

"We were able to fulfill the GOA mission of bringing art to Michigan Medicine with this installation," said Reed.

Founded in 1986, Gifts of Art is one of the first and most comprehensive arts in health programs nationwide, utilizing the arts to help transform the hospital experience in support of wellness and healing for team members, patients, visitors and guests.

"This project was a large team effort and wouldn't have been possible without the support of our funders," said Mettam. "We thank the Michigan Medicine Friends Gift Shops and the Arts Initiative at U-M and are very proud they believed our vision and helped us complete this for everyone to enjoy."

While this art installation is long-term, each visit will bring a new experience. Whether it's the beautiful sunshine one day or a craving for peace during a difficult time, the "Corridor of Colors" shifts your mood as it shifts with the light.

"I hope people stop by when they can and come back often. They'll never see it quite the same way twice," said Hinojosa.