



Photograph: Sarah Wong

Healing sculptures

At Box Hill Hospital in Victoria, Rudi Jass's interactive sculptures are not just about beautiful and clever design.

The healing benefits of nature, fresh air, gardens and sunshine for the sick are well documented. In the most famous study, patients recovering from surgery who had a view of nature from their bed recovered, on average, a day faster, needed less pain medication and had fewer post-surgical complications than patients who only saw a brick wall. But for cancer patients, and other immune-suppressed patients, such as those in intensive care, infectious disease protocol mandates that any outside risk, such as water, gardens, cobbled paths or dirt, should be avoided if possible. This is due to the potential risks associated with legionella and mould and fungal spores from potting mix and water features used in gardens. In the past these patients were mostly restricted to an unchanging

landscape of white walls, white noise and artificial lighting.

Box Hill Hospital in Victoria, however, as part of a multi-million dollar revamp, came up with a creative solution to help high-risk patients to enjoy their stay in hospital. Local sculptor, Rudi Jass, was commissioned to create 17 large-scale interactive sculptures that can be enjoyed by high-risk patients. Jass decided to make trees from steel.

Jass's kinetic sculptures of trees, plants and clouds are based on nature and move in response to nature. Leaves on the trees change with light and shade and provide a canopy from the sun much like a small park. Other sculptures that resemble clouds move with the wind. One sculpture also has a stainless steel shaft in the centre,

which can be used to move the upper part providing there is no wind. This was installed in the area used by maternity ward visitors who often include children, so that children could play with moving the sculpture.

Jass works mainly with stainless steel and corten steel because they are durable and need no maintenance besides cleaning. It is the corten steel that gives the rust-like appearance.

The sculptures are accessible to patients in intensive care, maternity, paediatrics, oncology, cardiology and respiratory care. Each of the newly designed wards face out to the courtyards so that patients too ill to go outside can still see the sculptures change in light, colour and movement throughout the day.

OPPOSITE PAGE:
Rudi Jass's interactive sculpture

FOLLOWING PAGE:
Courtyard outside the cancer ward



