



408 Linn St.
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Polk County Health Department

Artist's Statement

A visit to the doctor's office or to a clinic can invoke fear for a child who is getting a vaccination, or for an adult who is preparing for a medical procedure. For those who must use a free or reduced cost clinic there can be feelings of insecurity and inadequacy and a nagging feeling of judgement.

There are simple questions: "will it hurt?". And more difficult questions. like, "will I be understood and accepted for who I am?" There are also a hosts of uncertainties that may not be framed by a question, but which nevertheless lie at the root of anxiety.

Medical professionals are extraordinarily compassionate, oftentimes under great stress, but cannot completely address any patient's unspoken concerns during a brief visit. However, waiting for an appointment creates an opportunity not only to catch up on the news, or watch the television, but to share important messages in an almost universal language of visualization.

This project is about healthy living and positive messages about the benefits of activity, of moving our bodies. The pleasure of swimming, strolling and walking, jogging, biking and doing all these things individually or with family and friends. I want to connect these messages then, in the context provided by the Polk Health Department conveying respect, caring, compassion, objectivity, and tolerance.

As it happens, the lobby is a perfect gallery environment with tall walls and high windows with are presently empty.

Often what happens in a professional environment to finish out a room is to decorate it with artwork. I think we've all been in places where the artwork is interesting and well executed, but doesn't completely engage our attention or go beyond just filling the wall with something pretty to look at.

So, while the lobby of the Health Department is a perfect gallery environment, I've felt strongly that I wanted to do something here that was meaningful, motivating, inviting, certainly serene, but also engaging and interesting in a way that could also reinforce a sense of unity within the diverse community that is served by the Health Department. ***My concept then isn't just about being active, but about how we might feel about ourselves being active, how it feels to do something joyfully. Not just swimming, for example, but the pleasure of swimming. Not just walking for the need to walk, but also for the interest of discovering the world around us, perhaps while we share our time with those we care about, or as we meet new people.***

While every sport is inherently competitive, there is also something within it, something else, that makes us feel good about ourselves as we develop healthy habits and routines from losing weight to lowering blood pressure and cholesterol to the simple satisfaction of choosing to be more active as an alternative to watching more television.

D I C K S H O O K

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Artist's Statement continued

Waiting fifteen minutes in a lobby then becomes a learning experience, and a cultural experience; a stimulating, appealing, and interesting place to be.

And working with larger scale artwork gives the opportunity for these thematic elements to have greater impact, greater potency, as each piece reinforces the message of the others.



S. Richard (Dick) Shook
Artist