

# KU MEDICAL CENTER COMMISSIONS WORKS FROM FOUR KC ARTISTS

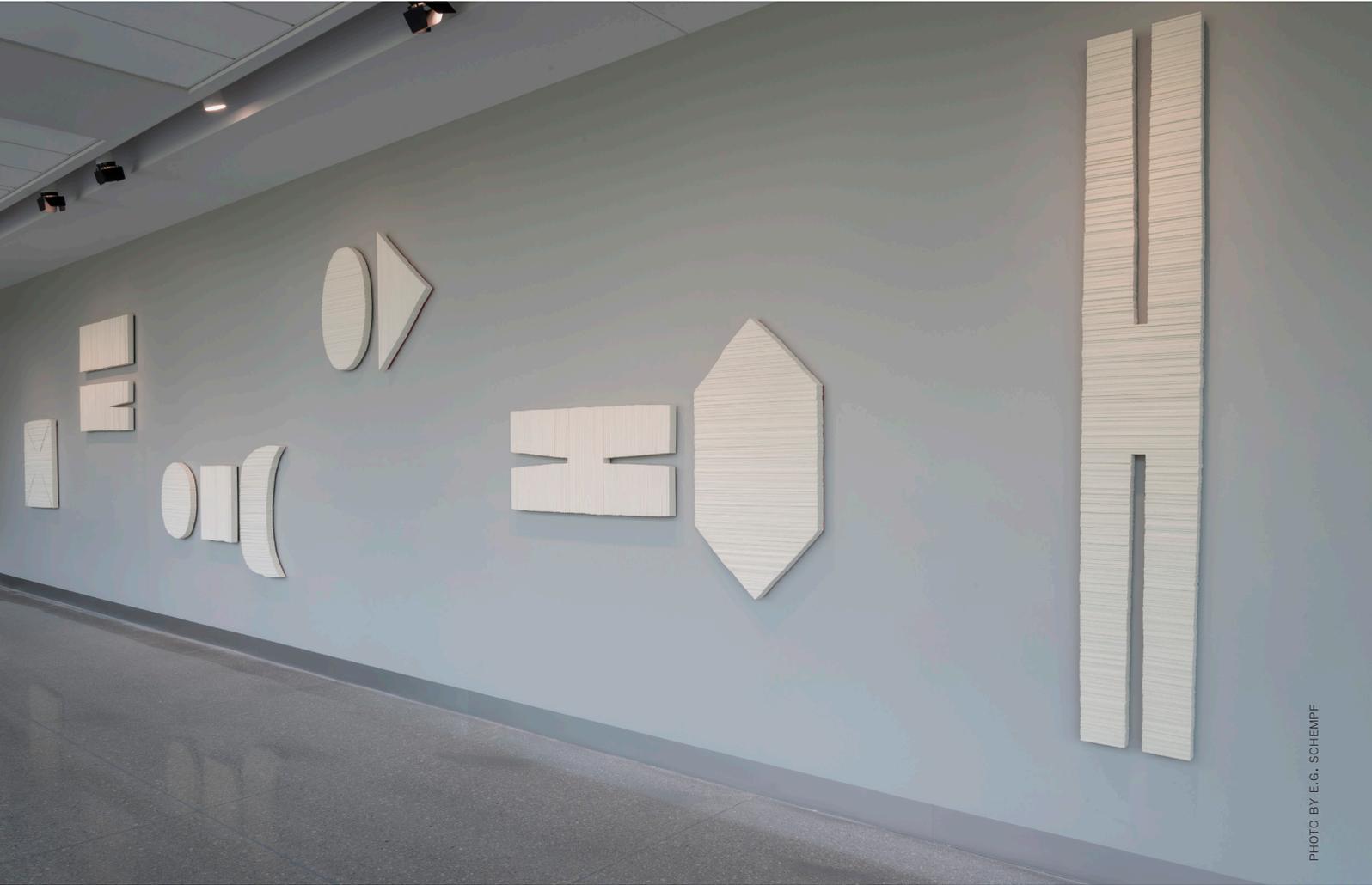


PHOTO BY E.G. SCHEMPF

Kansas City artist Marcie Miller Gross was one of four artists commissioned to create works for the University of Kansas Medical Center's new Health Education Building. Pictured above is her "Des Emplastres et Des Compresses (Of Bandages and Compresses)," a corridor-length work in wool industrial felt inspired by a 1707 French reference book for surgeons.

The University of Kansas Medical Center has recently taken a big step forward as an art patron by commissioning four artists with Kansas City ties to create works for its new Health Education Building. Bandages and microscopy are among the themes and images explored in works by Miki Baird, Marcie Miller Gross and Jesse Small; Phil Shafer contributed a lively mural for the building's dining area.

The \$82 million structure on the northeast corner of 39th Street and Rainbow Boulevard serves as the main teaching facility for the KU Schools of Medicine, Nursing and Health Professions. The building, a partnership between Helix Architecture + Design and CO Architects, features classrooms, teaching laboratories, and equipment for simulating activities such as patient exams, labor and delivery, and emergencies.

Funds for the new Health Education Building were provided by the State of Kansas, the University of Kansas Medical Center, the Hall Family Foundation and other private donors.

When asked how the decision was made to include art in the new building, Becci Blaesing, vice president for medical development, KU Endowment at the University of Kansas Medical Center,

stated, "Through the generosity of several individuals, philanthropic support was committed to explore the potential for commissioned artwork in the building. In addition, as a campus located primarily in Kansas City, we wanted to be in alignment with the (City of Kansas City, Missouri) Municipal Art Commission's One Percent for Art Program."

Art for the Health Education Building was commissioned by the KU Endowment at the University of Kansas Medical Center and is owned by the University of Kansas Medical Center —the teaching arm of the institution. The Endowment established a selection committee made up of KU Med staff members and leadership and area arts professionals.

The KU contingent included Chancellor Doug Girod, Interim EVC Rob Simari and Vice Chancellor of Research Rich Barohn. They were joined by arts professionals Saralyn Reece-Hardy, director of KU's Spencer Museum of Art; Leesa Fanning, curator of contemporary art at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art; John Gaunt, former dean of the KU School of Architecture, and a representative from the Hall Family Foundation.

Artists Miki Baird, Marcie Miller Gross and Jesse Small provided works for corridor and lobby spaces, while Phil Shafer's mural adorns a dining area operated by local restaurateur Paleterias Tropicana.

Baird's "For FN...Words Without Fear" is located on the building's fifth floor, near a lab for practicing medical procedures. The work features small digital images taken from Florence Nightingale's handwritten letters and notes held by KU's Clendenning History of Medicine Library. The artist overlapped the images in small strips that evoke adhesive bandages, while the varied palette and large size of the work suggests a Color Field stripe painting.

"Des Emplastres et Des Compresses (Of Bandages and Compresses)," a corridor-length fiber-based work by Gross, was inspired by a 1707 French reference book

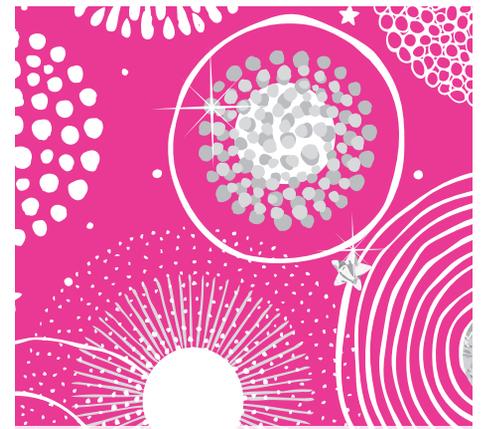
for surgeons. Gross became fascinated by the shapes of bandages and compresses and how specific each form is to the type of surgery being done. The artist's choice of white felt recalls bandages and bones, as well as the cream-colored pages of the surgical book.

Small's "Infinite Evolution" consists of 44 perforated steel panels that resemble inverted white triangles of varying heights. The sculpture hangs from the ceiling and spans 200 feet of a pedestrian walkway over 39th Street. Viewed from the street, the work seems to undulate like the curves of a suspension bridge or spine. Small was inspired by "Micrographia," a 17th-century volume by Robert Hooke that was an important early demonstration of microscopy.

Shafer's untitled work at Paleterias Tropicana on the ground floor adjacent to 39th Street features his punchy palette and dynamic linear compositions that have brightened much of Midtown in recent years. Shafer's mural designs were output as vinyl wallpaper covering the length of the restaurant, and recall his vinyl covers for Google Fiber boxes.

The KU Medical Center Kansas City campus also features art in the part of the institution that serves patients — the hospital and outpatient clinics. They include works purchased and displayed going back to 2003 by Vernon Brejcha, Drew Hine, Arlie and Dave Regier and M.J. Rigby. Much of the material in this area was purchased from Paul Dorrell's Leopold Gallery and is the property of the KU Health System.

More recently, the KU Health System commissioned Lawrence-based painter Karen Matheis to create a 30-foot 9-panel landscape for the new Cambridge North Hospital Tower at 39th Street between Cambridge Street and State Line Road, slated to open in late 2017. — **James Martin**



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