

# THE ARTWORK OF EMMA BASS:

## Amplifying wellness in aged, clinical and therapeutic care environments through photographic representations of flowers

**Emma Bass:** International exhibiting Artist | **Aaron Fry:** Senior Lecturer, Te Waka Tūhura, Elam School of Fine Arts and Design, University of Auckland

Emma Bass is a well-known Auckland-based visual artist working in photographic media. The daughter of a cardiologist, Emma’s formative experience decorating the cardiac recovery wards as a child inspired her, decades later, to donate artworks to hospitals and hospices. Initially trained as a nurse and practicing in Auckland and the UK for ten years, Emma became a successful commercial photographer and then a visual artist. Her lived experience as a nurse gave her insights about the ability of beautiful imagery to improve morale, support healing and bring comfort to hospital settings. With this in mind, she initially gifted works to Auckland City Hospital in 2013 and today the hospital has more than twenty of Bass’ works in various public, staff and patient-facing settings. Because she is readily contactable through her e-commerce site [www.emmabass.co.nz](http://www.emmabass.co.nz), she has received anecdotal feedback from over one hundred patients and staff attesting to the uplifting effect of her work from those experiencing it in hospices, aged care facilities, funeral homes and the offices of doctors and allied health care professionals. In her journey toward better understanding the scientific basis of the connection between her floral artworks, healing and wellbeing, Bass is particularly indebted to the a study entitled, ‘Secondary Effects of Flowers on Senior Retirees: Social and Cognitive Consequences’ (from Haviland-Jones, Rosario et al., 2005). This found that flowers presented to participants of 55+ age elicited positive mood reports and improved episodic memory.



Canopy Cancer Care, reception - Passion

This poster visually surveys a range of Bass’ works in context, including those at Auckland Hospital, Greenlane Hospital, St. Joseph Mercy Hospice, Living Simply Osteopathy, Canopy Cancer Care, Sibuns Funeral Home, Eden Care Centre rest home, Meadowbank Village Aged Care and Endo Central Dentist. It also highlights that, although flowers have been empirically found to elevate mood and enhance memory amongst elderly study participants, there is potential for further empirical research to test the effect of representations of flowers in aged, clinical and therapeutic care settings.



Sibuns Funeral Home, meeting room - Kate/Women's Suffrage



Auckland City Hospital, L9 Ward 97, gynaecology - Hydrangeas



Auckland City Hospital, L9 Maternity, lift area - Primavera



St Josephs Hospice, reception - Peonies



Sibuns Funeral Home, viewing room - Last Twitch



Meadowbank Village Aged Care, reception - Hydrangeas



Eden Care Centre rest home, residents room - Blue Teal



Canopy Cancer Care, reception - Garden of Pitha with Bougainvillea

In working toward a study analysing the effect of representations of flowers in aged/clinical/therapeutic care environments, whether through artificial or photographed flowers, the references below analyse:

- The psychological effects of flowers/floral colour on emotional state, attention and cognition;
- the effect of nature in general on healing in clinical settings;
- the effect of indoor plants on task performance, mood, productivity and attention;
- the practical question of low/no maintenance art in clinical settings.

It is expected that this research will help to provide the theoretical basis for the identified future study.

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