

The *Healing Through Place* project continues with an intervention on the windows of the hospital waiting room, where the artist will create temporary colorful “stained-glass” compositions made from multicolored films. This time, the artist focuses on the window as an interface between the interior and the exterior, as well as a membrane through which sunlight enters the hospital as a fundamental and universal source of warmth, light, and energy.

The use of colored glass in sacred architecture has a tradition spanning more than a thousand years and can be found across various cultures and historical periods (the medieval Arab world, India and Persia, Byzantium, and European Gothic architecture). Stained-glass windows in temples, palaces, and cathedrals did not serve merely as decoration; they also functioned as a form of early neurotechnology that influenced the psychological state of visitors and worshippers and created a particular “mental mode.”

Colored glass panels diffuse the light entering from outside and create soft, low-contrast illumination. As a result, the brain receives fewer visual stimuli, reducing sensory load and shifting into a more relaxed state. Diffused light also affects the autonomic nervous system, cortisol levels, and the brainstem’s level of alertness, leading to slower eye movements, reduced neural activity, and a state resembling meditation. Colored light also affects the brain’s emotional centers — the amygdala and hypothalamus - thereby reducing the body’s stress response, activating the parasympathetic nervous system, and slowing breathing and heart rate.

When sunlight passes through colored glass, the room fills with colors that do not exist in nature at such intensity. The brain interprets such an environment as “another world,” something extraordinary. Since the human brain is evolutionarily conditioned to perceive unusual phenomena as significant, it responds strongly to them. The aesthetic experience of colored light evokes a sense of wonder and creates an atmosphere of the sacred. By limiting direct visual contact with the outside world, colored glass separates this special and sacred space from the ordinary and profane world outside, further intensifying its neurological significance.

Psychological studies* show that even in non-sacred spaces illuminated with colored light, people tend to behave more quietly, calmly, and introspectively. In a room lit with harsh white light, people speak loudly and move quickly; however, when the same room is illuminated with colored light, people begin to speak more softly and move more slowly. Cold, bright light physiologically stimulates the body, and the brain categorizes the environment as a workspace or public space. Colored and subdued lighting activates the parasympathetic nervous system, and the brain interprets the environment as safe or private.

Many patients describe hospital environments as sterile, cold, and stressful. Colored window installations can transform this “hospital feeling” and make the hospital psychologically more welcoming. In healing architecture, colored windows are used in waiting rooms, psychiatric wards, rehabilitation centers, and staff relaxation areas. Research shows that they significantly reduce physiological stress, anxiety, and fear associated with medical procedures, while also improving the overall patient experience. Different glass colors have distinct measurable effects on the human body: for example, warm yellow or amber tones evoke a sense of safety and improve mood; green reduces stress hormones and visual fatigue; and blue regulates pulse and blood pressure, supports calm breathing, and reduces anxiety.

In contemporary healing architecture, hospital lighting itself is regarded as the “third therapeutic tool” (after medicine and professional care) - a non-pharmacological factor that can facilitate treatment and accelerate recovery.

* Experiments conducted by John Flynn (1973–1979) at Cornell University, USA.

