

*“The experience of being human is imbedded
in the sensory events of everyday life”*

HUMAN  **ROOMS**™
people space harmonisation
art and experiential design





Concept

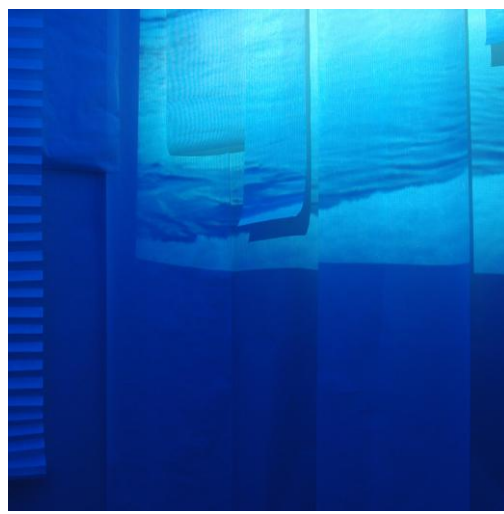
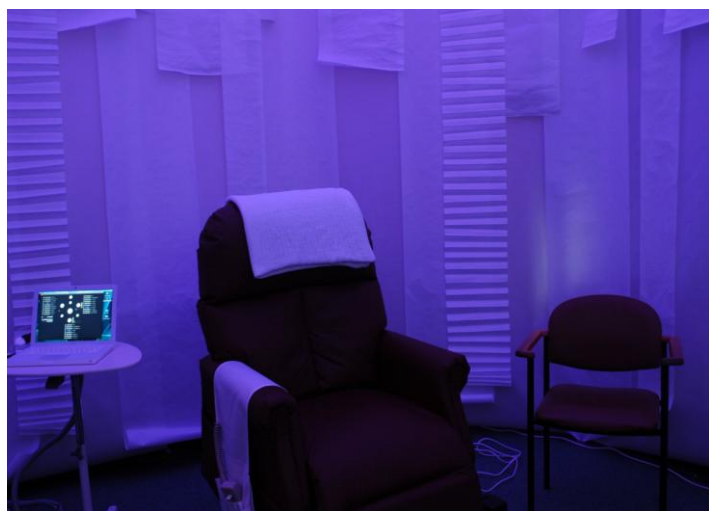
The Human Rooms™ concept is the development and research of immersive multisensory art and design based on the idea of combining the three core elements of projected films, sound and colour changing lighting.

This would involve developing a “system” that could provide the consumer or staff member the ability to choose elements that would transform an ordinary hospital room (patient room, family room, shared day room). The types of film, sound and colour can be researched and developed in consultation with the patient and hospital staff to determine subtle and non-invasive or over stimulating visuals and sounds. The opportunity to choose the combination of the three elements (film, colour and sound) would satisfy the consumer with variety and having a sense of “control” over how their environment was being manipulated for their own comfort and relaxation.

Inevitably, the “system” would allow for the updating or adding of extra sound and films, or re-programming the colours in the future if necessary

Human Rooms™ current initiatives are three multisensory systems: the immersive room that is designed specifically for that purpose, an inpatient system (in a single patient room) and a mobile unit (that can be moved from bed to bed in shared wards). The multisensory systems are immersive environments of film, music and sound, and coloured lighting states that Human Rooms™ has directed and collaborated with a diverse team of computer programmers, sound designers, musicians, cinematographers and editors.





The Room

In 2007, Human Rooms™ developed a family day room at the McCulloch House, Supportive and Palliative Care Unit into an immersive space for patients and families to visit and experience this innovative concept. By creating a rice paper layered hexagon with a false ceiling that absorbs and disguises the programmed colour LED lighting and projection onto a viewing side. Human Rooms™ engaged in researching the effectiveness on the participants. It was known as ‘the disambiguation room’.

Objective

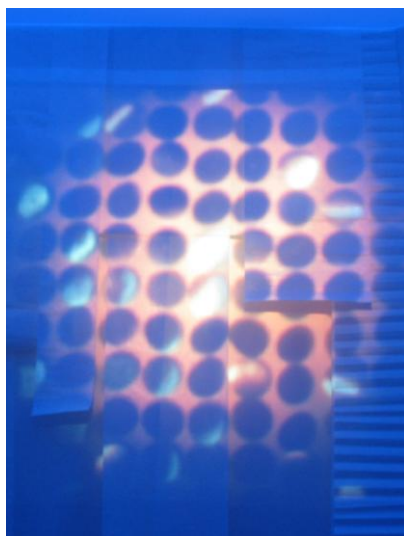
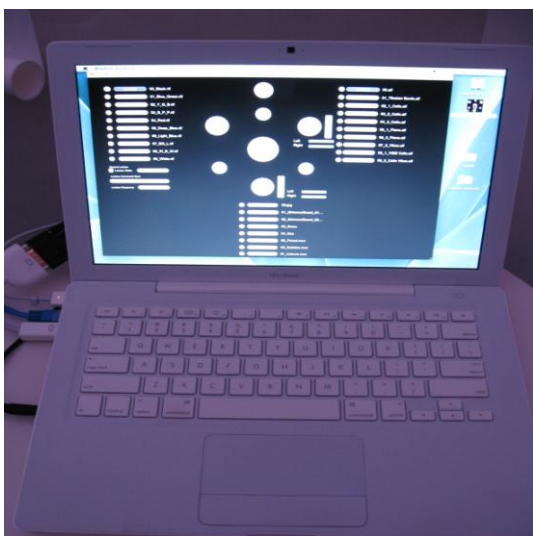
Aimed at discovering how the immediate environment in hospitals at end of life can be transformed to reduce suffering in patients near end of life. The subsequent project proposed to distract participants through image, sound and light put together in a transformative environment (or room) using permeable materials and reconstructing the shape of the room. The result provided an effective way to immerse participants who experienced varying levels of relaxation, meditation and reflection which in turn reduced their pain, anxiety and stress.

A Living Artwork

The ‘disambiguation room’ became an artwork that thrived within the facility’s daily activities. The medical staff discovered how it worked and how the application of it could benefit others.

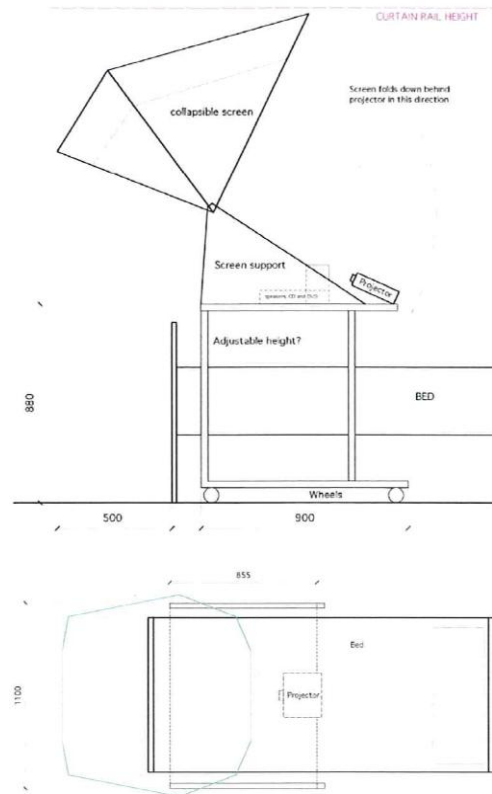
Eventually, medical staff incorporated it into their framework and gave referrals to patients.

“When I went into the room I was dying, and when I came out I was living” (Nan, a patient)



Moving Rooms

There are two things that became an obvious constraint for hospitals, available space and patient mobility. Human Rooms™ is currently addressing this by developing a mobile version of the concept that can easily and effortlessly be set up over a patient bed. This modified but still immersive version of the concept is currently in use at both McCulloch House and Calvary Health Care Bethlehem. Research is being conducted with the medical staff into the efficacy of adding it to their daily routine and measuring levels of pain and anxiety reduction as well as inducing sleep.



Current Development

Human Rooms™ is also developing the concept for Aged Care facilities in particular for high dependency care where residents suffer from dementia and Alzheimer's or are experiencing early life trauma. In this instance culturally specific media is being investigated to cater for the large number of older Australians in care who migrated to Australia.

In addition projects are being further developed for youth mental health inpatient facilities to address as a new approach for seclusion where traditionally residents are in a room that is completely devoid of sensory stimulation and any environmental comfort.





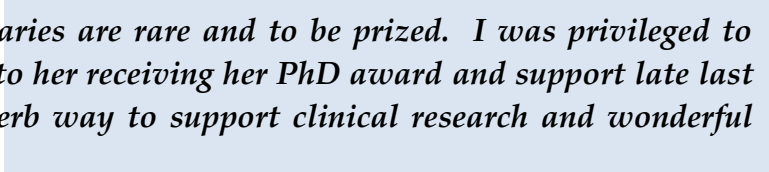
Research Objectives

The inpatient and mobile systems will be designed to reduce pain and stress of people suffering from cancer and experiencing terminal/end of life care in palliative care hospitals and hospices by immersing consumers in a transformative sensory environment while in a hospital or hospice room.

The overarching objective of *Human Rooms* is to create multimedia systems in consultation with patients and staff that are tailored to consumer needs and hospital and hospice environments.

A secondary objective is to encourage consumers to become more aware of their own sensory tendencies, preferences and patterns, and therefore to take more control over managing their symptoms and emotional states. It aims to encourage health care providers to learn from consumers, to actively listen and engage in co-creating treatment environments that offer diverse, meaningful and sensory rich opportunities.

The primary research aim is to discover the validity and therapeutic value of using artistic elements such as image, sound and coloured light as a way of transforming a space both as a whole or partially around a patient or participant to assist with the psychological issues of stress, fear and anxiety and the physical pain of patients in palliative care. The qualitative and quantitative research activity will investigate the effect the immersive multi sensory environments have on the patient. It will investigate these 'systems' from several points of view, including the physiological impact of visual and aural stimulation on the human body; and, the perceptual impact of particular and culturally defined visual and aural information on the human body.



"Effe is a true visionary, and visionaries are rare and to be prized. I was privileged to mentor her in various ways through to her receiving her PhD award and support late last year. I regard this project as a superb way to support clinical research and wonderful treatment at the same time."

Professor John W Funder, Senior Fellow Prince Henry's Institute
(and former Senior Research Fellow of the NHMRC)





Other Projects

Palliative Care Unit, Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital, Austin Health, Heidelberg

Human Rooms™ was commissioned to redesign the colour scheme of the old unit that had not had refurbishment for 25 years.



Stepping Stones, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Monash Medical Centre, Southern Health, Clayton

Human Rooms™ worked with this unit to set up a simplified version of the concept in their “seclusion” room. This room is normally a bare space completely devoid of sensory stimulation for patients who need to be isolated.

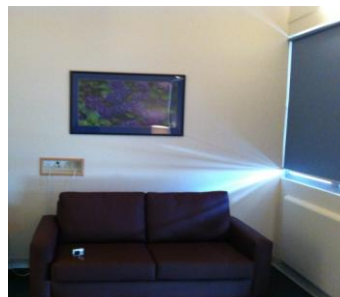
“We have had wonderful feedback from the patients and families and the staff are so much happier!”
(Nurse Unit Manager, Palliative Care, HRH)

“The kids are really enjoying it and the general consensus is that they find it very relaxing and that they would like to stay there forever”
(Nurse Unit Manager, Stepping Stones, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Unit, MMC)

St Lukes Ward, Calvary Health Care Bethlehem, Caulfield

Human Rooms™ was commissioned to create a multifunctional patient and family day space known as the “Ambience Room” that could function as an immersive environment similar to the disambiguation room for patient relaxation but could also be used by allied therapists and pastoral care for their own processes.

“When we take patients into the room they are so much more at ease and forget they are in a hospital”
(Occupational Therapy, St Lukes Ward, CHCB)





Researcher / Artist:

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Efterpi Soropos is a Visual Artist and Designer. A performing arts designer by trade, Efterpi has spent many years fascinated by the way combinations of light, sound and image can affect audiences, guiding them through spectrums of emotion and sensation.

As part of her Masters Research, Efterpi began a creative partnership with Monash Medical Centre as Artist in Residence in 2007, to research the effects of the interior environments of hospitals in palliative care units. Following on from her research Efterpi developed a work in 2008 called the “Disambiguation Room” housed in McCulloch House, the Supportive and Palliative Care Unit at Monash Medical Centre, Clayton, Victoria. The room is a semi-permanent multifunctional art space. Towards this end she founded Human Rooms™ in 2008. Since then Efterpi has continued research and development of the Human Rooms™ concept as an effective intervention for psychological relief of the symptoms of stress, fear and anxiety during mental, chronic or terminal illness for a PhD with Department of Psychology, Melbourne University and to solidify the work of Human Rooms™ as evidence based art and design in hospital and health care environments. This new direction in health care is gaining momentum both nationally and internationally as the medical profession look for alternative methods for controlling pain.

Human Rooms™ is at the forefront of these investigations.

Co-Supervisors:

Associate Professor Kate Jackson, Director Supportive and Palliative Care
&
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McCulloch House, Monash Medical Centre, Southern Health
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