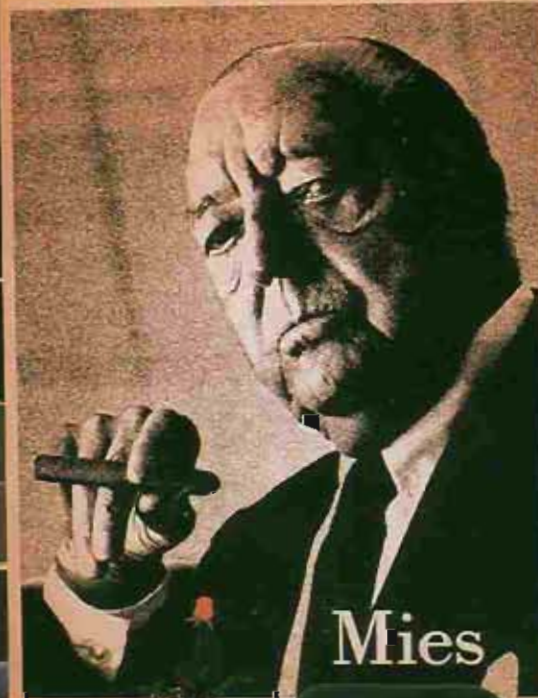


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Winning interiors
The Architectural Alliance
A furniture designer's saga

Comfort for kids

Ellerbe defies hospitalese



Photos: Steve Greenway

In order to make the Children and Young Adults unit of Methodist Hospital inviting, Ellerbe used colorful wallcovering with a familiar motif of clouds and houses. The patients' rooms provide visual splash through geometric shapes on the wall (below). Standard equipment such as television sets and bulletin boards become design elements.



Think of a hospital and images of ceramic walls, fluorescent lighting and linoleum floors come to mind. But Methodist Hospital in St. Louis Park, Minnesota has set out to change that sterile image by creating interiors evocative of the home not the morgue.

The hospital's efforts began last year with the re-design of the Children and Young Adults unit, which was successful enough to win a 1987 MSAIA Interior Award.

Methodist Hospital, a 1957 Ellerbe original, chose Ellerbe's interiors department to revamp the children's unit. Interior project manager Tama Baratt worked within design specifications of a committee consisting of physicians, nurses, parents, hospital administrators and even maintenance workers. All had ideas of what would make a successful children's unit, and what wouldn't.

"I knew from the outset that I didn't want a theme-type design," said Jerry Dokka, vice president for support services. Dokka clearly wanted to avoid the "cutesy," a decision that impressed the Interior Awards jurors.

Visitors enter a corridor enlivened by walls of white clouds and blue skies. Along the wall bases, vinyl bands of green and blue cover the ubiquitous ceramic blocks. Farther into the unit, clouds change over to storybook houses, a sky and house motif carried to the red roofs painted above the doors.

The nurses' station stands at the center of the eighteen-bed unit. A window alongside the door to each room allows nurses to watch over patients without leaving the station.

Rooms, too, provide visual interest without overkill. Standard equipment such as shelving units, bulletin boards and television sets have been integrated into a design of bright geometric forms painted on the wall opposite the beds.

The children's unit accommodates the individual needs of the patients, ranging in age from preschool to high school. The older patients stay in a separate corridor perpendicular to the main one; their rooms are bigger and designed for greater privacy.

The jurors were impressed with the hominess of the project. "If I had a child requiring hospitalization, this is the place I would want him to go," said Patricia Conway. "The environment almost makes a stay pleasant." *E.K.*



Rounded corners soften the nurses' station at the center of the unit (above). Windows cut into the outer wall of each room allow nurses to observe patients without leaving their station. After checking in at the nurses' station (floor plan below), visitors easily reach the younger patients' rooms across the hall or the older patients' rooms along the far corridor.

