



The art of zen: American fashion designer Donna Karan with photographer Russell James in the Bethesda Hospital chapel.

Picture: Sharon Smith

Designer backs cause close to heart

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International fashion designer Donna Karan added some star power to an exclusive fundraiser at Claremont's Bethesda Hospital last night to raise funds for its palliative care services.

It is a cause close to Karan's heart because her husband Stephan Weiss died from lung cancer in 2001.

His death inspired Karan to found the Urban Zen Foundation, which aims to improve the healing and

treatment experience for patients and families, with a focus on integrating Western medicine with Eastern healing techniques.

"When my husband was sick, I realised how many people out there are in the same situation," Karan said.

It was Perth-born internationally renowned photographer Russell James who explained to Karan what Bethesda Hospital was doing in the palliative care field and asked her to get involved.

Last night's event showcased

a selection of art pieces from James' Nomad Two Worlds Collection, a collaborative art project with indigenous artists.

The evening was hosted by Bethesda board chairman Neale Fong and socialite Rhonda Wyllie.

Dr Fong paid special thanks to the generosity of Mrs Wyllie, whose recent \$100,000 donation led to the refurbishment and redesign of the patient day room in the Palliative Care Unit, incorporating Urban Zen components to create a sanctuary for patients.