

## BUSINESS

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# Backbones turns osteopathy into a fine art form

■ By TOM KING

REDUNDANT bank buildings have acquired some unusual functions, but few more curious than the move that has turned Barclays into "Backbones".

Visitors to the former cradle of cash in Thundersley will discover that its now combines osteopathy and art thanks to artistic Osteopath Silke Ukena.

Mrs Ukena, who previously ran her Backbones practice from home in Hart Road, Thundersley, has expanded her business to the old Barclays.

The huge, colourful canvases painted by the registered osteopath occupy just about every wall of the renovated building.

Silke said: "I paint compulsively, and my canvasses were stacked in the corridor and all over the place at home.

"Now I've got somewhere to put them. The ceilings here in the old bank are high enough to be ideal for a picture gallery."

Even before the official opening of the clinic on Saturday, Silke received an offer for one of the Backbones pictures, which tend to have a price tag in the region of £200-£250. A previous exhibition at Hylands house was a sell-out.

However, she insists that



■ Healing the whole person – Silke Ukena

Picture: ANNA LUKALA 8EGTD6

sales are a secondary function. "The main thing is that they help cheer everybody up, particularly in the middle of winter," she said. "They save the clinic from feeling too clinical. If I sell one or two, that's a bonus."

The pictures also help to introduce some patients to the positive power of art. Silke hopes one day to run art classes as an extension of her

remedial work. The presence of the art fits with Silke's view of treating the whole person, not just the body.

She said: "We specialise in complete health formulas. We like to place great emphasis on the cause of the problem and the possible solutions to get maximum lasting benefit."

The osteopathy practice will soon be joined by specialists in homeopathy, allergy

testing, sports massage and counselling.

Silke said: "With all those disciplines on hand, the emphasis will be in getting to the heart of a problem, including eating, posture, exercise and occupational and psychological factors, and looking at many potential solutions."

"Painting can be part of that solution."