

Visual Reflection Essay on Restorative Environments

By Beyza Sen



I have always thought that nature has positive effects on human beings in terms of resting and recovery. The chapter *Restorative Environments* by Kaplan, Kaplan, and Ryan (1998) breaks down the most preferred restorative environments into five categories. They include quiet fascination, wandering in small spaces, being separate from distraction, seeing wood, stone and old items, and the view from the window. R&R

can happen anywhere in nature, even by looking out at a view from a window or while engaging in activities that take place in a natural environment. Sometimes it is a small pocket park that takes the person away from the urban environment (things like street noise, cars, tall buildings, etc.) My experience of starting seeds indoors would be a good example. As a student I am spending most of my time indoors and it makes me feel quite low sometimes. Also, as an international student I do not have lots of friends; and since we are a small group in the graduate landscape architecture program with much work to do, we don't have much free time to spend outdoors. The view from my window is a Magnolia tree which is great one but not something unexpected or changing throughout the year. The shape and foliage are always the same and the orientation of the window is not very fascinating either; it faces to the north, which means the room never gets full sun. Another reason why I think it doesn't help me to recover is that here at Clemson there are so many beautiful views, that this Magnolia view from my small window does not seem significant. Finally on the 5th of February I decided to start some tomato seeds. Thank goodness they have grown quickly and now I have 2-3 inch high tomato plants that have changed my environment. My little indoor space has changed and already I see its impacts. Watching them grow and change makes me feel like I am changing too. After my tomatoes are gone from my home and planted in the ground I will give myself more time to spend outside in different natural settings to relieve the great stress of graduate school.



Tomato Seedlings

Beyza Sen is a graduate landscape architecture student in Dr. Vincent's Landscapes + Health class. Each week students write a visual reflective essay that relates to the topic being discussed.

I Thanks the Plants

By Ellis Taylor



Every one of our class readings is right, nature makes you feel good. Through observation, it has been proven that allowing the tiniest bit of nature into a room can have a massive, positive effect on attitudes and health and I believe that I have experienced this first hand. During the summer of 2010, I participated in a 3 month long Clemson Architecture Studio that took place in New York City. While the city was amazing, the shock

of going from a home that sits on 40 acres of forest to an apartment in the concrete jungle of Tribeca was almost more than I could handle. Sure I was having fun, exploring the city, and participating in shenanigans with friends, but something always felt off. I was not depressed but I became stressed-out easily and found myself missing random things, like a certain pair of shoes, during my first few weeks there. There was this small piece inside of me that didn't feel right and I did not understand what it was until the first day I visited Central Park. I remember it like it was yesterday. Five steps into the park and all of my woes vanished. Everything that had been weighing me down that I could not identify before was gone. I had missed the trees, the grass, the quiet, and the space to frolic! Maybe I channel the spirit of the Lorax but I don't think I can exist without the trees. I felt like a whole new me and I understood that I needed this. I need nature, or some semblance of it, to be happy. Though I loved New York and all it had to offer, I could not have tolerated it without this green haven. After that day, I returned to Central Park every weekend without fail. It was a weekly cleansing from me. It rejuvenated me. It changed my entire experience of New York and I thank it, I thank the plants.

For the NYC Studio is one of my most treasured experiences I have had in my time in Clemson Architecture. I learned more in 3 months there than I did in 6 months study abroad and I wholeheartedly thank the plants for that.



Echinacea in Central Park

Ellis Taylor is an architecture student in Dr. Vincent's Landscape + Health class. Each week students submit a visual reflective essay that connects the class material with a personal experience and includes an image that visually tells their story.

HORT 101 Reflective Essay:

Rain Gardens

By Joshua Mitchell



I love water. In all seriousness, I can't get enough of it. I love it so much my body is practically made of the stuff. Okay, maybe it is made of water. In the past few years, my life has revolved around water. Being a civil engineer, I took an internship with a company which designed storm-water management systems as well as drinking and waste water treatment plants. I learned to appreciate how important it was

to recycle water every chance we got. But my knowledge about how exactly to do that was limited. That is, it was limited until I heard a lecture by Dr. Sarah White in Horticulture 101. She talked about using bio-retention areas and rain gardens to actually filter water back into the ground where it could replenish the water table and underground aquifers instead of just letting water run off a developed site. These are water-recycling tools that are both aesthetically pleasing and useful. Now, that's awesome; the best of both worlds. I especially appreciated learning about these because my specialization within civil engineering is in water services. So, I foresee having numerous projects in my career where we are managing stormwater. Now, I've just gotten my feet 'wet' with these technologies. So, I'll have to do a lot more research, but I plan on implementing some of these rain garden and bio-retention strategies in projects in the future and hopefully saving both our eyes and our water.

Image #1: Maya Lin's Wave Field at Storm King, NY http://www.interiordesign.net/photo/295/295106-DWD20090325_skw_02.jpg



Image #2: Maya Lin's Wave Field at University of Michigan http://chronicle.com/img/photos/biz/photo_5273_carousel.jpg



HORT 101 Scholarly Paragraph:

Landscape Design

By Joshua Mitchell

According to Dr. Ellen Vincent and Dr. Donald Ham of Clemson University, the key aspects in sound landscape design are simplicity, focalization, balance, scale, and rhythm/line (Vincent & Ham, 2009). *Simplicity* is somewhat self-explanatory, however it often is a result of repetition of landscape elements like construction materials, color, size, and many others. Too much complexity, which is the opposite of simplicity, can often lead to an unwanted tension or busy feeling for viewers. *Focalization* refers to drawing a person's eye to some key central feature. *Balance* refers to either making the site symmetrical or asymmetrical. Both can work, as long as there is some semblance of relation that keeps the viewer feeling that the landscape is connected and not disjointed. *Scale* refers the proportion of objects in a person's frame of view. In other words, good scale does not place extremely large objects adjacent to small ones as this throws off the viewer. Finally, *rhythm/line* refers to how a viewer's eye will traverse the landscape. This is created through curves of structures or perhaps the placement of trees.

One modern day example of landscape design which makes use of many of these principles is architect Maya Lin's grassy Wave Field (Olsen & King, 2008). In the *New York Times* video of the landscape, the area can be seen to have the semblance of ocean waves. It is a simple design in that the shape of the waves is repeated throughout the viewer's frame bringing a certain security with it. While there is not a specific focal point, it should be said that the closeness of the shapes allows the eye to focus either on the waves as a group or on one individually without much trouble. In other words, it is not harsh on the eyes. There is definitely balance in the design with the repetition of shape and uniformity of height among the many different wave-like grassy hills. The scale is also quite sound in this design. There are not overly large objects placed next to small ones. Finally, the rhythm of the landscape allows the eyes to almost "roll" as the waves do. This certainly is a sound landscape design according to the principles laid out by Dr. Ellen Vincent and Dr. Donald Ham.

References

Olsen, E. & King, C. (2008, November 10). *Maya Lin's wave field*. NYTimes.com/video. Retrieved from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JW0Cbrlyhcg>

Vincent, E. & Ham, D. (2009). *Landscape design and landscape installation*. In E. Vincent (Ed.) *Certified Nursery Professional Training Manual*. (Available from the South Carolina Nursery and Landscape Association 4661 Crystal Drive, Columbia, SC 29206)

Joshua Mitchell is a civil engineering major at Clemson University and a student in Dr. Vincent's HORT 101 class. Students complete reflective essays and scholarly paragraphs each week on the subject matter currently being discussed.