The Value of View

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Julius Exner, 1900, Girl from Fano, Villum Window Collection
Windows – Everywhere!

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Windows serve many functions:

- Security
- Weather protection
  - Rain, wind, snow
- Heat Flows
  - Solar gains, heat loss
- Ventilation
  - Filtration (insects, dust)
- Communication, egress
- Privacy
- Daylight
  - Modulation
- View
View was the big winner in my “daylighting and productivity” studies. In three populations, 7 outcomes.

More consistent effect than daylight illumination.

- **Call Center**
  - $n = 105$ workers
  - +7% to +12%
  - Worker speed

- **Desktop study**
  - $n = 201$ professionals
  - +10% to +25%
  - Improved working memory
  - Less fatigue, fewer complaints

- **Schools study**
  - $n = 9000$ students
  - +7% to +30%
  - Improved math & improved reading scores

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Poor Workplace Access to Daylight and Views

- Real estate pressures force deep plate buildings

- 67% of existing California office space has no potential for daylight illumination

- 37% of American office workers say they have no access to a window view during their workday
We’d all like to work in a “Healthy Building”

“Biophilic Illusions”
and
“Technologic Nature”

• Is simulated health acceptable?
Simulated Views are big business

- We have the technology
- Should we use it?

Lumina Tower, San Francisco, Imagineering by Obscura
Circadian stimulus comes from what we look at.
Americans spend 47% of their waking hours “Mind Wandering”

Glancing, up and usually to the right….Preferably out a window...

N = 2250
Default Mode Network (DMN) and Mind Wandering

• Identified in 2001 via fMRI brain scans
  • Thought of as the brain’s resting state
  • Active between intentional “tasks”
    • But, equally energetic as tasks!

• Concurrent with Mind Wandering
  • The brain flips back and forth between task networks and DMN about every 2 ½ minutes

• DMN now understood to be central to self-awareness
  • “the Autobiographical Self”
Mind Wandering = “Insight”

• The more people ‘daydreamed’:
  • Larger working memory
  • Better long term ‘memory consolidation’
  • More planning for future actions
  • Better incubation for creative problem solving

“Your brain is working for you even while you are resting...”
EFPL Studies
Gaze Direction

• While working at a desk
  • 3 task types
    • Computer, phone, paper
  • 4 phases
    • Input, thinking, output, interaction

• About 40% of all task time
  • Most often while “thinking”


Looking out the window
Mind wandering while working

• Per Harvard study, people mind-wander most often while at work

• People are often unconscious of glancing out a window
  • Every minute or two...

• Sense of time changes
  • Time passes slowly while bored
  • Time passes quickly while daydreaming
A mental balancing act

• Inward v outward
• Compression v expansion
• Mental focus v sensory input
• Work v day dreaming
• Present tense v time travel
• Fantasy v reality

Images from Matthew Pericoli: “The City Out My Window” and “Windows on the World”
Great architecture celebrates the view

• Creating social focus
• Reinforcing cultural context
• Expressing deeper philosophies

Wayfarer’s Chapel, Lloyd Wright, architect, Palos Verdes, California
Salk Institute, Louis Khan, architect, Laguna, California
Coming Soon:

Visual Delight: Daylight, Vision and View in Architecture
MIT Press 2020

Thank you for your interest!

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Julius Exner, 1900, Girl from Fano, Velux Window Museum