

# A room with a view provides visual relief for a work-weary brain

September 11 2019, by Candy Gibson

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Bridgette Minuzzo in the foreground of one of her acrylic landscapes. Credit: University of South Australia

A computer screen, a blank wall and no window. That's the uninspiring reality for millions of Australian office workers and students every day—and the perfect recipe for mental fatigue.

But what if we injected a bit of nature, blue sky, greenery and a view in the office space?

University of South Australia Ph.D. student Bridgette Minuzzo has done

just that in a series of studies to measure the impact of [landscape](#) paintings on office workers and students in windowless spaces.

Minuzzo, an Adelaide-based visual artist with more than 20 years' public art experience, installed nature-themed artworks at three university campuses and a hospital in Adelaide, measuring the mental wellbeing of participants beforehand.

She then surveyed changes in their [mental fatigue](#) and stress levels over the next month.

The result? Viewing a landscape for brief periods (one to five minutes) cut stress and fatigue levels by up to 40 percent.

"It's all about a connection with nature," Minuzzo says. "More than 70 percent of Australians live in cities and spend around 83 percent of their day indoors. Many offices have clean wall policies and no windows."

"This doesn't allow any chance to connect with nature, denying us views to hills, sky, water or foliage, which is so essential for our wellbeing.

"We know that experiencing nature not only focuses attention but also reduces mental [fatigue](#) which—my study found—affects workers for one to three hours every day," Minuzzo says.

Restful landscapes offer [office workers](#) a chance to be "mentally out in nature, which has a calming and relaxing effect." What's more, viewing the art activates other areas of the brain, stimulating imaginative and creative thinking, Minuzzo's studies showed.

"The participants reported that landscape paintings evoked fond memories of holidays and time spent in nature. Looking at the scenes rejuvenates tired brains and helps workers to refocus on tasks.

"All the evidence shows that art in the office is not a distraction or decorative extra but can improve mental wellbeing and productivity. It is restorative, stimulating and good for our work-weary brains."

Provided by University of South Australia

Citation: A room with a view provides visual relief for a work-weary brain (2019, September 11) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-09-room-view-visual-relief-work-weary.html>

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