

Prompt (General): Describe how this experience fostered your ability to think critically. Use specific examples.

Audience: Health Science Peers

The many aspects of my capstone, that all focus on my central theme of aesthetics, have made me think broadly and critically about the links between my activities, as well as how my knowledge can be put into practice. In my coursework, I have learned about the outdoor environment and how it is used in a healthcare setting, studied the aspects of a healthy environment, and researched the uses of art as a way of healing. Furthermore, through my travel experience, I have seen aesthetics in practice as a way of healing, and through my abroad internship, observed an environment that could benefit from an aesthetic environment. These activities all have a central-commonality that relates back to the environment. More specifically, they all exhibit the positive benefits, or absence of positive benefits, that an aesthetically-pleasing environment (i.e. one that includes art, nature, and an overall sense of openness) can have. Following this line of thought, I began to question whether individuals create an aesthetically-pleasing environment for themselves and then gain the benefits, or if aesthetically-pleasing environments are created for us, and then we subconsciously gain the benefits. I came to the conclusion that the answer is both. Environments, on a large scale, like cities are created, and the aesthetic nature of cities is not under one individual's control. Our larger environment is created for us, so whether it includes accessible outdoor areas and art is out of our hands, but we do gain the benefits of a well-thought out city that does encompass these things. What individuals can dictate for themselves is their individual environments. In our homes and offices, individuals can consciously create an aesthetically-pleasing environment that benefits them the most. I personally, keep house plants and surround myself with things that I appreciate, such as art. These things may seem small, but overall when I see the art and nature in my home, I feel a bit more relaxed. These items are a sort of distraction that can take my thoughts off of the problems-at-hand and focus directly on them for a short period of time. Patients should have the same courtesy of a small distraction like nature or art. When all aspects of patients' lives have been disrupted, they should be able to have plants in their rooms (when allotted), and if they are unable, hospitals should be able to facilitate a view of nature. Furthermore, patients should also be allowed to create art, or in the least, they should have a view of art that they can benefit from. I came to this greater conclusion by thinking of each of my capstone activities individually and critically as building upon each other.