

## WRITING IN DESIGN THINKING – Deconstructing the Question of *Being*

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### Abstract

*Design Thinking has now been widely adopted as an effective way to creatively solve problems in disciplines as diverse as design, engineering, management, and business. What remains uncharted territory is how Design Thinking relates to the discovery of what it means to be. The purpose of this paper is to explore how design faculty can allow room in their classes for students to uncover their place in the world. Using Heidegger's insights on being and thinking, we posit that by exploring the question of being, design students can engage with the design process in a way that adds new dimensions that could otherwise remain unexplored, reaching higher levels of excellence and creativity. And, writing, through its ability to unravel, expose, and communicate thought processes can be the vehicle toward that transformation. Moving across the design curriculum, we share three writing exercises that enable students to delve deeper into understanding themselves: manifestos, short writing pieces through which students can position themselves as designers; reflectionnaires, exercises used in a history class to entice students to search deep inside themselves and be sensitive to their feelings and thoughts through means such as visits in the community and imagining themselves as an inanimate object; and chime-in tallies, an exercise that fuses technology with memoir-writing. The paper closes by calling for the development of more writing exercises that speak to the diversity of the student body and challenges educators to define additional ways by which the question of being is embedded into their teaching.*

**Keywords:** design pedagogy; writing; Being; history; culture.

### INTRODUCTION

Instilling doubt is at the core of university education. How did things come to be the way they are? How do I know what I know? What could I be missing? Which avenues should I use in my explorations? And, where do I go to uncover knowledge? The first step to becoming a designer whose work responds to pressing social and environmental issues is learning to ask questions or, as Martin Heidegger, a German philosopher notes, learning to think (Heidegger, 1977). But, how does a designer learn to think? And, most importantly, how does a design educator help a student transform into a designer who thinks like a designer? This paper's purpose is to explore answers to the question of how design faculty can allow room in their classes for students to uncover their place in the world, or what Socrates called thousands of years ago '*know thyself*' or *gnwthei s'euaton*.

An obscure concept, the question of *Self* or *Being* has puzzled scholars for decades. Who is the Being? What does the Being stand for? And, how does the Being relate to others? In the American society, a society whose language revolves around the ‘I,’ understanding what the ‘I’ means and its’ implications is inextricably linked to thinking processes. Complicating matters is the diversity present in the American landscape. At a time when over 62 million people in the U.S. speak a language other than English at home<sup>1</sup>, unraveling the ‘I’ is intertwined with questions of similarity and difference that are steeped in colonialism, marginalization, inequality, and power discourses (Hall, 2000).

Placing the question of *Being* within the context of design education further sheds light on the concept’s ambiguity. Herbert Simon, in *The Sciences of the Artificial* has defined ‘design’ as the “transformation of existing conditions into preferred ones” (1969:55). As a verb then, design is fascinating by the opportunities it presents for students, faculty, and practitioners to make a difference and improve the lives of those whom they are meant to serve. Inherent in these dialogues is the understanding that designers take a human-centered approach, one in which people come first. To imagine the future, a preferred future, designers must be able to deconstruct the present, which implies an intellectual alertness to life around them—how do people live? What is important to them? And, what role does space and place play in keeping them from fulfilling their dreams? The question that confronts us then, is how can a designer be sensitive to the multiple ways by which a *Being* can *Be* if the designer himself/herself is not engaged in questions of *Being*?

Design Thinking has been hailed by Bruce Nussbaum, one of Design Thinking’s biggest advocates, as:

*“...that collection of behaviors [that] is the heart and soul of creativity. It includes being attuned to the people and culture you are immersed in and having the experience, wisdom, and knowledge to frame the real problem and--most important of all perhaps--the ability to create and enact solutions”* (2011:np).

The creativity embedded within the act of design drove Design Thinking to be adopted as one of the most effective ways to creatively solve problems in disciplines as diverse as design, engineering, management, and business. What remains uncharted territory is how Design Thinking relates to the discovery of what it means to *Be*. Using Heidegger’s insights on *Being* and *thinking* (1977), in this paper we posit that by placing the question of *Being* at the core of design education, faculty allow design students to engage with the design process in a way that adds new dimensions that could otherwise remain unexplored, reaching higher levels of excellence and creativity. And, writing, through its ability to unravel, expose, and communicate thought processes, can be the vehicle toward that transformation, especially if employed throughout the curriculum, in studio, technology, history, and other courses (see Figure 1).

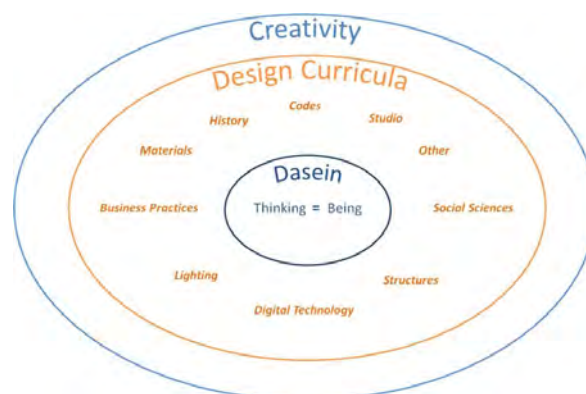


Figure 1. Thinking and Being as the core of design education  
 (Source: Tasoulla Hadjiyanni)

Critical to our inquiry is the *thinking* aspect of Design Thinking. Thinking is integral to interior design education in all its various modes - conceptual, integrative, expressive, analytical, critical, and logical (Carmel-Gilfilen & Portillo, 2010; Meneely, 2010). Unlike critical thinking, which is a process of analysis and is associated with the 'breaking down' of ideas, design thinking is a creative process based around the 'building up' of ideas. As a style of thinking, it is generally considered the ability to combine *empathy* for the context of a problem, *creativity* in the generation of insights and solutions, and *rationality* to analyze and fit solutions to the context (Brown, 2008). How thinking, as part of Design Thinking, can be used to uncover what it means to *Be* needs further refinement.

Heidegger's analysis of both *Being* and *thinking* allows us to set a trajectory to follow in infusing design education with thinking and self-discovery. Heidegger reframed the question of Being into the notion of the *Dasein*, an existence that is focused in an *understanding* of its Being:

*"Dasein always understands itself in terms of its existence, in terms of its possibility to be itself, stumbled upon them, or already grown up in them. Existence is decided only by each Dasein itself in the manner of seizing upon or neglecting such possibilities"* (1977:55).

Design students who think of how they came to be and how their existence as designers and as humans relates to others will be better prepared to face the challenges of today's interconnected world.

To Heidegger, thinking is conflated with *Dasein* and this fusion attains temporal dimensions as time is "that from which *Dasein* tacitly understands and interprets something like Being at all" (1977:61). The notion of the Being as 'historic' opens additional avenues of exploration for the design fields, where the teaching of history is an essential part of the curriculum. In parallel, creativity is inherent in a subject matter where novelty and imagination are used to grasp and explore the past as well as understand the unfamiliar (Jackson, 2005). Given that the teaching of history is not static or stagnant, but instead it is subject to interpretation and critical analysis (Flores, 2003), history courses can serve as the fertile ground on which creativity and originality can flourish as well as the ground on which one's existence will be build. With knowledge of how social, economic, technological, political, religious and environmental forces shape peoples' lives, students can tie the past, to the present, and the future.

What remains fuzzy is the notion of *thinking* itself. In trying to understand what is thinking, Heidegger chose to focus instead on what *calls* for thinking:

*"What calls us to think, and thus commands, that is, brings our essential being into the keeping of thought, needs thinking because what calls us wants itself to be thought about according to its essence. What calls on us to think demands for itself that it be tended, cared for, husbanded in its own essential being, by thought. What calls on us to think gives us food for thought"* (1977:367).

In design, what calls us to think is multiplied by the implications of a lack of thinking – from buildings that collapse to those that do not meet peoples' needs, impacting health and well-being (Fisher, 2012). Much of designers' energy can go into balancing concepts with design solutions, technological innovations with historic preservation, the needs of the planet with economic and social sustainability as well as social justice.

Given the limited time we, as design educators, have to work with students, our passion for teaching must be translated into teaching students to learn to think. In Heidegger's words: "We can learn thinking only if we radically unlearn what thinking has been traditionally. To do that, we must at the same time come to know it" (1977:350). As a teaching pedagogy, thinking can be employed to problematize the dialectic between knowing and unlearning. And, writing can be a medium by which students can unlearn and begin to question what they know and how.

According to The National Commission on Writing “the importance of writing—for critical thinking and communication skills, for success in school and the workplace, for self-realization, and for its central place in school reform—cannot be overemphasized” (2006:29) The challenge to design educators lies in their ability to infuse writing in a field that is predominantly visual. Although writing has long been established as a creative endeavor (Benganolli & Rackham, 1982), little has been explored about the use of writing in design education (Eakins, 2005). In *Writing and Seeing Architecture*, Christian de Portzamparc, an architect wonders:

*“.....when we are doing architecture, an architectural project, we are not thinking with language. I think through schemas and impressions; I draw fragments; I glue a couple of photographs. I don’t know where I am, but I am not in a discourse, I am not in a thought that could be spoken, that needs to be spoken and then translated into a form”* (2008:22).

This is not to say that writing is not fundamental to interior design education and CIDA (Council for Interior Design Accreditation) accreditation requirements. In fact, in interior design, writing takes many forms, ranging from the mundane to the imaginary, from programmatic requirements and specifications to evocative conceptual statements. Furthermore, the field includes diverse sets of vocabularies that tackle issues from social and cultural needs to historical precedents and technological innovations. The diversity in the targeted audiences is another factor that must be accounted for—varying backgrounds, educational levels, and knowledge/understanding of the design process. Lastly, the variability in courses, topics, and emphasis areas that includes studios, history, and technology courses complicate the teaching of writing even more (Eakins, 2005).

In this paper, we share exercises, techniques, and ideas that afford writing a larger role in the design curriculum and in expanding interior design students’ ability to think and discover who they are and how they belong to the world. Although we focus on non-studio courses, the same ideas can be applied to all areas of the curriculum. Our aim is to create a forum for engagement, one through which the interactions between writing and creativity can begin to unravel and direct translations to interior design curricula can begin to happen. Designers who can move fluidly between and within modes of communication and can think both visually and verbally are more prone to succeed in a demanding world. Although content and writing style as well as grammar, punctuation, and spelling count, in this paper we focus on writing as a medium for self-discovery, how it can be used to excite the imagination and reveal possibilities not visible before.

## **WRITING AND THE SELF ACROSS THE CURRICULUM**

Our interior design program couples writing with design throughout the four years of the curriculum. Below, we share three types of exercises from non-studio courses: manifestos, reflectionnaires, and the six-word memoir. Each varies in length and purpose but all aim toward the same goal, that of helping students think and learn more about themselves.

### **Exercise #1: Manifestos**

As a program director, one of the authors was searching for a way to connect with the students. The idea of manifestos was perceived as a suitable means to build those connections. Manifestos are defined as “a written statement declaring publicly the intentions, motives, or views of its issuer” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/manifesto>). Through their ability to convey a stance, manifestos have been employed in fields as diverse as design and technology. Nudging creativity, a manifesto could help students position their work as well as explain it to others (Butler, 2011). Furthermore, the writing of a manifesto was an exercise that students could do on their own, with limited supervision by course instructors; it cut across the whole curriculum and was not course-specific; sophomores, juniors, and seniors, students who have been in the program longer could engage with it; it would not require a lot of time on the part of the program



director to review and critique the short paragraphs; and it could be revised and resubmitted in the following year. Via an email announcement, students were given this prompt:

*“As designers, you are creating spaces in which people will live their lives and create meaning for their lives—from homes to offices to shops and healing environments. Ask yourself: Who am I to tell people where and how to live? What do I have to offer? Why should someone want to listen to my opinion and views? And, why would someone want to be in my buildings? In a paragraph, try to capture your own ‘Interior Design Manifesto.’ You will use this to guide your work throughout the year as well as position your work as you explain it to others in looking for a job or an internship.”*

Manifestos were collected by the instructors and visits to each student cohort by the program director were arranged. During that visit, the manifestos were discussed and the marked copies, with feedback from the program director, were returned to the students. The process was repeated in the following year as program directors are appointed on a two-year term in our program.

In some cases, manifestos were built around conventionally understood notions of what interior design is and what the role of an interior designer could be<sup>11</sup>. The notion of well-being for example, was referred to over and over again. In the words of Dana Leis: “Interior design is about creating a space that has functionality and is aesthetically pleasing to its user, which therefore improves the wellbeing of humans in the environment.” Current concerns of the discipline such as sustainability, affordability, and social justice were also mentioned extensively. Other students were able to use this exercise to craft a more personal narrative, one that spoke to who they are and how they see themselves fitting in the profession. Here is an example by Kylie Edgren:

*“Design can piece together moments, memories, secrets and dreams, all to tell the story of a building and the people inside. Every building has had, at one point, a purpose. Maybe to shelter, store, provide strength and inspiration, or comfort and warmth. Each building was thoughtfully built and designed with a goal. Maybe with large aspirations or simple necessity, but nonetheless, with meaning. Today, we design with knowledge, experience, wisdom and soul. We act as guides and as storytellers, of a building’s past, present and future. We discover unknown potential in simplicity and resolve complexity. As guides, there is a responsibility to be cautious and thoughtful, yet rebellious and daring. To walk the fine line between careful planning and reckless abandon. With tremendous care, we scrutinize and detail, but subtly, so that the building acts as a whole rather than a million different pieces. It’s our duty to resist personal preference and taste. To design for a building, rather than around it, and tell a story not yet told.”*

Kylie’s writing piece sheds light on her view of herself as a storyteller, a guide of the design process who tremendously cares. Care for places or *therapeia* as Walter calls it (1988) is another way by which the self is constructed through both individual and collective experiences.

### **Exercise #2: Reflectionnaires**

Reflection, according to the Learning Center at the University of South Wales (2008), is a form of personal response to experiences, situations, events or new information. It is a ‘processing’ phase where thinking and learning take place. There is neither a right nor a wrong way of reflective thinking, there are just questions to explore.

The act of writing is extremely important in reflective thinking. In writing, one ‘puts into words’ the unstructured thoughts and ideas that form the material for reflection. Once the

reflections have been written down, they are available for review by the reflector and wider community. The Learning Center at the University of South Wales (2008) describes reflective writing as:

- response to experiences, events, or new information
- response to thoughts and feelings
- a way of thinking to explore learning
- opportunity to gain self-knowledge
- a way to achieve clarity and better understanding of what one is learning
- chance to develop and reinforce writing skills
- a way of making meaning out of what one is studying

Reflection and reflective writing are often not among the course objectives/outcomes one would typically associate with large enrollment classes that heavily rely on lectures and powerpoint presentations, such as interior design history. The authors believe that reflection and reflective writing provides students with the skills to mentally process learning experiences, identify what they have learned, modify their understanding based on new information and experiences, and transfer their learning to other situations. Drawing from over 20 years of combined experience in teaching history, the authors have identified multiple ways by which reflection and reflective writing can be incorporated into a design history class.

During the course of the semester, Pat Francis's technique of Reflectionnaires is used in a design history course and delivered in various ways. Francis (2009) defines *Reflectionnaires* as a word combining reflection and questionnaire. Reflectionnaires use the "I." The use of 'I' and the act of writing also demand ownership of learning, which can ultimately act as a form of self-empowerment. This ownership of learning will lead to a stance and the articulation and expression of personal values (Francis, 2009). As Moon (1999) claims, practice in reflective writing develops personal power and a 'voice' through which this power is communicated. Reflectionnaires can take many forms: they can be graded or not graded, draw from different experiences during a course, and be employed at different phases. Below, we share three types of reflectionnaires: ones that are based on class lectures and are not graded; ones that draw from field trips and are graded; and ones that can be integrated in exams.

### **Reflectionnaire A: Based on class lectures**

When teaching reflective skills, the first step is to raise people's awareness of themselves as learners and thinkers—that is, to encourage them to become aware of their own thinking and learning processes. This is because meta-cognition has been identified as a key aspect of 'deep' learning, as successful learners become conscious of their own learning (Marton & Säljö, 1984). Deep learning is important in order to make material meaningful and so facilitate the transfer of learning into long-term memory.

Reflectionnaires are used and woven with content covered in course lectures. The results facilitate discussion and are not graded nor collected. Below are some examples of such reflectionnaires.

- Michelangelo was passionate about his work. What am I most passionate about in my life? What is my dream for the future?
- Inigo Jones was an unlikely candidate to change the landscape of British style and design. He had none of the advantages of birth, influence, and education possessed by his successors, yet this man rose to the post of Surveyor-General of the King's Work on the basis of his enormous talent, and in the process changed history. What am I most committed to in my life? How can I continue to learn and grow?

### **Reflectionnaire B: Based on field trips**

During the course of the semester, design history students are required to go on two field trips. The authors believe that providing rich experiences and taking advantage of what the community has to offer are essential components of a transformative education. According to Caine & Caine, educators must "orchestrate the experiences from which learners extract understanding" (1994:26). They should arrange the experiences to fit into what the students already know, and they should link the disciplines (subjects) to highlight the interconnectedness and contribute to the students' ability to make connections. An additional goal of the required field trips is to deepen reflective thinking skills. This is accomplished by having students understand, for example, the important role our senses and emotions play in guiding conceptions of events and reflection (Boud, Keog, & Walker, 1985).

Here are three examples of how Reflectionnaires are used in conjunction with field trips to the Cathedral of St. Paul and the Minneapolis Institute of Arts:

- Today we have viewed artwork and vignettes that have only been seen in books or on the Internet. Ask yourself: What do I see, feel, and perceive that I cannot experience from a reproduction in a book?
- Find one exhibit in the Minneapolis Institute of Arts that interests you. Describe what you see. Ask yourself: What have I learned from the exhibition?
- Consider the space in the Cathedral of St. Paul. Ask yourself: How do I feel in terms of what I see, hear, feel, and smell? What architectural elements have contributed to my sensations?

Here is an example from interior design student Amelia Concradi:

*"The St. Paul Cathedral is visually stunning! I feel small, humble, and in awe. The large scale of the columns, stone and dome contribute to this. It is almost silent with a mystical light coming in from the stain glass windows, giving me a spiritual experience that allows me to contemplate how great God is. The paintings, mosaics, and sculptures enhance this experience delighting my eyes and soul. I smell the burning wax from the votive candles. The massive structure of the dome, gives me the feeling of being humble, with all the Angels looking down at me. It was a very beautiful experience."*

Amelia was able to convey, in writing, her impressions of the space based on the sensory experiences of seeing, smelling, and feeling the space around her. She also begins to generate a record or impression of the mood, aura, and range of meaning of the sacred space. In parallel, she ties her own Being in the world to spirituality or as Heidegger called it the fourfold of earth, sky, mortals, and divinities (Heidegger, 1977).

### **Reflectionnaire C: Exam questions**

Through carefully crafted questions, the goal on each of the design history exams is to provide at least one Reflectionnaire that aids in deep learning and promotes independent thought. This means that students have to focus their thinking and articulate in writing the results of their reflection. Expressing reflection means finding a 'voice' by which to express thoughts and inevitably this increases confidence and self-awareness in ability (Moon, 1999). Another goal is to expand creativity and reinforce writing skills. The following is a Reflectionnaire used on an exam plus Andrea Uecker's response.

- There were a variety of chairs produced during the Renaissance. If I were to be described as a chair during the Italian, French, or English Renaissance, which would I be? Describe the chair and discuss how it reflects my personality, traits, etc.

*"If I were a chair from the Renaissance, I would be the English Farthingale Chair. The chair was popular for its ability to accommodate the exceptionally wide-hooped skirts known as Farthingales. I like to be accommodating to people and if I was a chair I would like to be functional for everyone. The Farthingale Chair can be described as armless, with a wide seat covered in a high-quality fabric and fitted with a cushion; the backrest is an upholstered panel, and the legs are straight and rectangular in section. A perimeter stretcher is used to join the legs. The above chair reflects my personality and traits in the following ways. The chair had upholstery to add comfort. I like to make people comfortable around me and I prefer chairs with more comfortable aspects. The chair is more simple in design than others, I'm a pretty laid back and simple person. The exposed wood is oak and being from Minnesota, this species is well-known to me since it's fairly abundant around the state. Some of the upholstery on the chair has turkey work on it to imitate oriental patterns. This represents me because I love learning about different cultures and I love to travel. Finally, the bottom of the chair has a perimeter stretcher. This to me represents support, stability, and structure which represents my love of architecture."*

Andrea generated an accurate description of the Farthingale chair and reflected on her personality and traits. Chairs have long been known for revealing a person's status or style. Now, building on Cranz's body-mind perspective (Cranz, 1998), inanimate objects such as chairs can also help students deconstruct the conundrum of what they like and why.

### **Exercise #3: Chime-in and the Six-Word-Memoir**

Sometimes the power of words is not found in their oneness; it is found instead in their conglomerate. *DES 4165-5165 Design and Globalization* is a seminar course that has been developed as part of the University of Minnesota's internationalizing the curriculum efforts<sup>iii</sup>. Capped at 20 students, it brings together students from design and non-design fields as well as graduate and undergraduate students from across the university. The course unravels what it means to be human in this global era by focusing on ways by which culture manifests itself and how those relate to the production of space and place.

On the first day of class, as a way to get students thinking and contemplating about the transformative journey ahead, we use a chime-in exercise. This is an example where technology can come in handy. Students log in and respond to a question posed by the instructor. The responses are then posted on the screen for all to see. The power of chime-in comes from the system's ability to tally the responses and show which single words were used the most. The visual that is created can be an ice-breaker and a way to 'see' into the minds of the students.

In this case, the prompt that students had to respond to was: "In a six-word memoir, complete the sentence: As a global citizen, I....." Let us deconstruct the meaning behind the prompt. First, the six-word memoir is a technique that draws from the idea that often, a story only takes a few words to be told<sup>iv</sup>. Enticed to choose only six words to convey their answer, students are more likely to focus on what is key to their beliefs and values. Second, under the lens of globalization, migration, displacement, transnationalism, and multiculturalism the notion of global citizen attains a dynamic quality, one that warrants a rethinking of how that construct relates to the designed environment. The normative view of citizenship as a legally recognized membership to a nation-state that bears both rights and responsibilities has long been interrogated and deconstructed by scholars from multiple disciplines (Appadurai 1996; Desforges, Jones & Woods, 2005; Leitner & Ehrkamp, 2006). Challenging students to think of their role in the world and what being a citizen entails sets in motion an inward-looking process that can disentangle the tensions and contradictions inherent in discourses around what it means to belong and to be, what Iyer called, a global soul (Iyer, 2000).



Responses included: hope to respect, understand the community; use personal advantages to advance others; hope to learn, understand and help others; wish to destroy the conception of naïve; seek to model what is excellent; hope to be empathetic and unbiased; respect others cultures, identities, and beliefs; strive to be open and accepting. Although a few of the responses went over the six-word limit, restricting answers to six words enables us to get a snapshot of what is truly important to the students at the time of answering this question.

The transformative power of this exercise is its real-time experience; it is an immersion into the words and what they mean. Responses are shown on the screen as they come in and the tally changes as new words become part of the whole. Witnessing the energy in the classroom manifest into a conglomerate of words on the screen makes everyone pause in anticipation of what is to come and the implications of that finding in understanding. In the Spring 2012, the chime-in tally showed that *understand*, *cultures*, and *others* were the words used most often. The debate that unfolded centered on the messages associated with those three words (Figure 2).

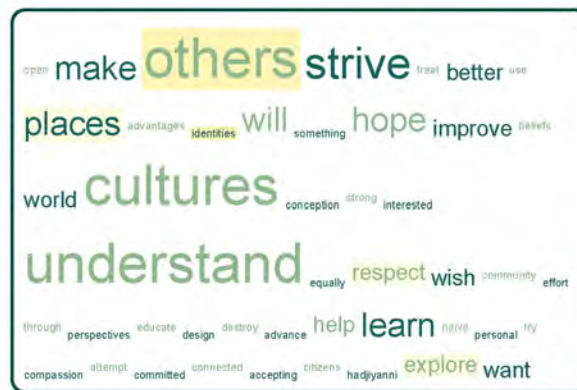


Figure 2. Chime-In tally  
(Source: Tasoulla Hadjiyanni)

*Understand* brought forward questions such as: How does understanding come about? And, what about the power differentials in who defines what is knowledge? *Cultures* is an equally ambiguous term, a problematic category that should be enclosed in quotation marks (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992). Used in the plural, aligns dialogues with essentialist discourses that view “culture” as separate and distinct elements to be studied and explored (see Fischer, 1999). Such an undertaking ignores more recent discourses that point to such conceptions of “culture” as static and monolithic, ones that do not capture the complex, multi-dimensional, hybrid, dynamic, intertwining, and ever-changing facets of “culture” that characterize border crossings and modernization processes (Rosaldo, 1989). Lastly, who are the *others*? Scholars have called for moving beyond the “us” versus “them” paradigm, “exploring the processes of *production* of difference in a world of culturally, socially, and economically interconnected and independent spaces” (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992:14). Through a vocabulary that does not stigmatize and isolate, we can search for what makes us similar and different from each other (Hall, 2000), building global bridges.

### CLOSING COMMENTS

The written word is an evocative and powerful medium through which design students can better learn about who they are and who they hope to become. When it comes to design courses however, faculty have little direction as to how to entice students to employ writing to push their creativity and find their passion. In this paper, we shared writing exercises from supporting courses that can play a role in this self-discovery process. In embarking in this effort, faculty can

keep in mind that not all assignments have to be graded or even turned-in. The premise here is providing a forum that allows students the space to explore who they are in a safe and private manner.

The opportunities are multiple: unlocking their passion for what they bring to the world; understanding how the past is tied to the present and the future; being attuned to one's senses and feelings; learning and growing; recognizing their personality and its characteristics; and figuring out how they relate to others, be those colleagues, friends, family, or strangers. As many as the avenues of exploration are so are the means through which to reach these goals: from exposing students to buildings in the community to employing technology. The challenge comes from finding the courage and energy to adopt these exercises in the curriculum.

Intriguing would also be the development of pedagogies that stimulate the interest of students from diverse backgrounds – ethnic, racial, and age differences are some of the variables that come into play (Akkach, 2002; Hillenbrand, 2003). Assignments that allow students to experience writing from other parts of the world and perceive design in a holistic sense and within varying contexts can be inspiring in different ways. Coupled with the need to engender students' global and multicultural perspectives (Salama, O'Reilly, & Nochis, 2002), a rethinking of writing's breadth and focus becomes adamant. Similarly, expanding inquiry into how studio courses can also employ similar pedagogies is as critical.

Challenging is the task of devising assessment strategies to evaluate writing on the individual and programmatic level. Questions to be explored include the development of guidelines that writing must meet to make it; vocabulary used; and how writing fits within the larger scope of a student's education. Although a lot has changed in how writing relates to the design fields, much remains to be done. This sharing of ideas aims to continue earlier dialogues; revitalize energies devoted to re-thinking the role of writing in design education; and foster collaborations among interested faculty.

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<sup>i</sup> The number 62 million is drawn from 20.1% of 311,591,917 as noted in <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html>.

<sup>ii</sup> For a definition of interior design, see

<http://www.ncidq.org/aboutus/aboutinteriordesign/definitionofinteriordesign.aspx>. The notions of bridging “creative and technical solutions” as well as interior design’s role to “to protect and enhance the health, life safety and welfare of the public” are described.

<sup>iii</sup> To learn more about this program please see [http://global.umn.edu/icc/itl\\_cohort.html](http://global.umn.edu/icc/itl_cohort.html).

<sup>iv</sup> See examples at <http://www.npr.org/programs/totn/features/2008/02/memoir/gallery/index.html>.