

spatial design: notes on writing

some tips:

1) **Remember that academic essays are not necessarily about your personal opinion – often you are really just making a case for something, or discussing the case that someone else is making** [ie Semper, that “the essence of architecture [is] its covering layer”]. If you do introduce personal opinion it may be in relation to your own work that you are using as a case study – and you still need to back up and support your opinion with quotes or references to others.

2) think about the **'voice'** you use to write in: is it first person editorial/biographical; is it third person passive?

If you do employ the first person tense do you use it only occasionally or constantly – and do you theorise or conceptualise the use of this technique relative to your concepts and design research practices.

If employing the third person are you attempting to achieve a more critical analytical distance?

Consider the nature of your text - if it is **poetic, allusive, strongly tied to ideas of being** or experience then it is perhaps more appropriate to write using the **first person constantly**.

If your **work is more theory based, more critical or analytical** then you could be **more sparing in your use of the first person pronoun**.

3) **Avoid generalized or broad statements – rather keep your statements focused and ‘prove’ them.**

Make sure that you have a 'subject' in your sentence and that you always 'prove' your assertions (ie why the body should be considered 1st in architecture).

Make sure also that you always introduce your people - ie architectural theorist Mark Wigley - and the text that the quote is taken from - in his text White Walls....

Be careful with the word 'THIS' or 'IT' - define what 'this' is

4) Proof-read and assess your writing for the clarity of the discussion and structure; spell check and check for grammar

Make sure that your writing is composed of paragraphs, rather than having loose, free-floating sentences in note form...

the process:

1) **idea: clearly establish a main idea[s], support this with a quote [or several quotes]; identify some design work, art work, other texts which also explore this idea – reference these; then outline how you intend to discuss this main idea[s].**

2) **diagram** the structure of your essay: as you develop your work do a diagram of the structure of your work. That is, do a text-based [or visual] summary of the material in the introduction; and the outline of the various paragraphs or chapters as you see them at the moment, with content and texts or models/work that you refer to. **This can be very useful in helping you to structure your work. A clear structure is essential for an academic essay – this is the primary concern along with a clearly defined and supported/referenced main idea. A short abstract can also be a very useful way of developing and clarifying your thinking. Eg**

Introduction

Section 1: theory [derrida, Heidegger]

Section 2: precedents [eisenmann]

Section 3: my makings [pop-up project]

conclusion

3) **text structure: introduction; the body of text; then conclusion**

_first paragraph of introduction: make sure that the introduction clearly establishes your key points in the first paragraph, and outlines the way the text operates

_remaining paragraphs of introduction [if writing a longer essay]: then introduce all of your major texts/artist-designer models or ideas - ideally in the order that you outlined them in the first paragraph.

_body of text: discuss the key points sequentially in order as introduced in introduction, and bring in supporting material, quotes etc. Ensure that you have defined the terms or ideas you are using. Discuss your spatial gestures or experiments in depth and with specific detail, and in relation to. Use your theory texts, and artist-designer examples to structure your writing also, discuss them with specific detail.

_chapters in body of text: consider whether you can use your main ideas to structure the sequence of your writing, introducing the ‘field’, describing the concepts in more detail, and then perhaps discussing your own makings.

_conclusion: this sums up the material covered [without excessive repetition], and suggests an overriding idea or set of ideas that arises from the material covered in the essay.
 _start building your bibliography now; refer to the written assignment guidelines for info on APA referencing conventions. When copying quotes keep good records of page number and book title etc.
 _constantly refer to good examples of writing while you are writing
 _don't hesitate to seek help when you need it

for **content** consider the following:

- content of the text, quote sections of the text in your essay to support your argument
- discussions of the text by other writers, use this to support or help direct your argument
- other relevant or connected texts, use this to help establish the discourse field of the argument
- designers who have drawn on the ideas in the text (think about buildings, spaces, films, theatre – give examples)
- the context in which it was produced (social, cultural, political etc)
- its effect on/ relevance for spatial or interior design theory and practice (both when it was written and now)

how can **theory serve design practice?**

- It can provide a set of creative protocols for design that is grounded in ethics and an historical awareness of the various cultural roles of design.
- It provides theoretical models of space and spatial experience that can be tested and explored in design experiments.
- It describes the various disciplinary lenses that can be used to formulate questions and supplies procedures that can be followed (and adapted) to answer them.
- It provides a coherent framework to evaluate experimentation in design and assess the quality of the knowledge produced.
- Apart from providing the tools required for critical reflection on your practice it also provides important information on the social history that designs are woven into.

critical reflection on design practices:

Use the information and questions below, to assist you in establishing a critical relationship to your practice as a designer. Select a small number of questions to form a filter through which you can reflect upon your own design work.

- What processes do you use to formulate questions? What disciplinary zone do you site your work in? (Refer to: H. Carlson, *Performance: A critical Introduction* located on the theory blog).
- Have you studied the systems developed by other designers to generate forms?
- Do you utilize any general creative principles to guide the development of your designs that you have derived from either texts or another designer's work?
- To what extent have you considered the way you represent your design work? To what extent are you conscious of the way your representations guide the way that your design work is read?
- How do you establish the criteria to evaluate your design decisions? Do you make creative choices in relation to key ideas?

abstracts:

The guides describe the conventions governing the format and type of language utilized, by various disciplines, when writing abstracts. You should follow the format used in the humanities. The guide produced by Indiana University provides examples of several types of abstract. You should refer to the instructions relating to an indicative abstract, as opposed to those relating to an informative abstract.
http://www.rilm.org/submissions/pdf/Guidelines_AbstractStyle.pdf
<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/abstracts.shtml>

most of all **enjoy** this process of critical reflection.....