Notes compiled from a discussion regarding the Core application essay questions for 2015. Discussion held 11 December, 2014 in DSN S 183.

--General information about the Essay Questions
More Information about the Core application available at: www.design.iastate.edu/core/applicationinfo.php

Completing the essay: Between April 17 and May 1, 2015. You’ll go to one of the ELO testing centers.

You will be randomly assigned one of three essay prompts
At least 500 words (no notes or devices allowed)
You’ll be given one hour
If you have a SAAR form (for accommodations approved by Disability Resources Center) you will need to submit it before hand

Some general advice:
Read the questions ahead of time
Prepare yourself for each. Think about writing an outline for how you’d answer each question. Definitely come prepared with specific examples (works of art, places, ideas, people) that you’d use for each question if you were given it.

These questions were all created based on the 183 curriculums.

Question: Are the essays supposed to be persuasive? Argumentative? Summative?
- Whether you feel more comfortable in persuading and arguing or summative you may choose one of these. Just answer the prompt fully and to the best of your ability.

Question: Can you draw on outside examples or information, beyond what was given in this class?
- Absolutely. The people reading the essays will not have been in the class with you. Feel free to incorporate examples, give information from outside class.

Question: Who will be reading this essay?
That depends on what program(s) you’re applying to. In general, it’s always safe to assume that your reader is a college graduate with a broad general knowledge of the world but no specialized knowledge of any particular field.

Discussion re Question 1:
“In your own words, discuss the myth of the “tortured artist.” In responding, you may wish to address the origins of the myth or to discuss why it is a myth. You may also wish to address the real-world concerns, beyond personal expression, that might motivate a designer, such as the needs of patrons or clients, or the pressures and
influences of the broader culture or society. Think broadly and be creative in your response.”

What are the origins of the myth?
- Giorgio Vasari and the biographies of artists (first biographer focusing on artists)
- Also just our general fascination with sensational stories. We like to imagine an exciting life story, and we like to speculate about how the events of that life story affect the artist’s work. The sensational aspects of life seem to stand out.
- These are conventions that Vasari established. He didn’t necessarily lie about stuff, but he exaggerated in a specific manner repeated and similarly for artists in the biography. Artists are said, for example, to have been drawing by the time they could crawl. Or to have been able to paint/draw so realistically that they fooled people into thinking something was real.

Vasari contributed to our desire to believe art comes from the artist’s “genius.”

- Jackson Pollock, example. He was influenced by Navajo sandpainting and by Surrealism, among other things; but when we talk about him we have a tendency to focus on his life story, his alcoholism, and to see his paintings as products of his tortured soul.

- There’s just a general preoccupation of only thinking of an artist’s bias or upbringing in what makes a certain piece the way it is. We get caught up in the issues and miss the things that actually are motivating the artist.

There are other important aspects to consider: demands of the broader culture, subject matter, societal problems, the patron or client. Most designers want to, and have to, consider these things. For example, architects take their clients’ needs into account when designing. If they didn’t, they’d be terrible architects. Industrial designers take into account the needs of end users. Interior designers think about who’s going to use a space, and what it’s going to be used for. The designs they create do not come only out of their own heads.

Question: Would talking about the artist’s influences be an important topic?
- Absolutely. Pollock was influenced by stuff outside his own head: Navaho sand painting, for instance.

Discussion re Question 2:
“In your own words, discuss cities as holistic design environments. In your response you may wish to consider how design shapes cities and is also shaped by the wide range of activities that take place in cities. You may focus on New York in your response, but this is not required. Think broadly and be creative in your response.”

Cities are environments where many forms of design come together.
They are shaped by the needs of the people who live inside them. For example:
- The importance of green space. Parks as designed spaces, which also contribute to the overall livability of the city.
- Consider housing for a wide range of incomes (poor, working class, tenements, families. Also consider failures and successes in housing. It may be well-designed or poorly designed, and that will certainly affect the lives of its inhabitants.)
- City planning
  -- Washington, DC plan as a combination of ceremonial and democratic (grid) plan
  -- NYC as functional grid
  -- Forbidden City (in Beijing) as representation of the ideal universe in diagrammatic form

- We tend to think of the urban environment as the opposite of the natural environment. But cities are part of nature. They are affected by nature (think about how NYC dealt with Hurricane Sandy, for instance). How do cities use design to deal with nature, to incorporate it?
- Cities aren’t a place for just individuals. They include public spaces, interactions with other people: design for an interactive environment
- Infrastructure: Aqueducts, interstates, roads, it has to be designed but if it’s designed well then it should almost be invisible
- People introduce randomness and use places in a way that wasn’t thought about. This is unintentional design but it’s still design. Cities are designed and changed by people’s needs.

Question: Can we use examples not NY or even of smaller cities? Can I use my hometown as an example?
- Absolutely. Just remember, no matter what, to be very clear and straightforward. Explain the specific layouts and designs of your example town or city. Maybe your reader has never been there. Really explain why it is a good example of good design or holistic design.

What is holistic?
- Related to the word “whole.” It is not just parts of an environment but the entire system.

Discussion re Question 3:
“In your own words, discuss the idea of monumentality as expressed on or by the Iowa State University campus. You may discuss the campus as a whole, or you may focus on a particular structure/landscape/artwork/area within the campus. Consider what monumentality means, how it is perceived, and toward what ends it is used. Think broadly and be creative in your response.”
Monumentality

- Noun form of the adjective monumental
- Might be physically Big, large and imposing. Or it might be something that really affects something else. “monumental event in your life”
- It’s monumental because it’s a big deal. Or it’s actually a monument.
- Iowa state is a monument to education.
- Usually takes a lot of work to create and envision. It may take a long time. Iowa State was built and grew over many years and by lots of people and actors.
- The idea of memory is important. Space can be monumental to you personally. Art can be monumental. VEISHEA as a monument—a series of events that had a symbolic meaning. A monument doesn’t have to be an object.
- Monumentality may be relative. Beardshear is probably more “monumental” to most ISU students than the College of Design building, because Beardshear is a symbol of the university, even though most ISU Design students spend far more time in the Design building. The Design building would probably be more monumental to most students than their dorm room because the Design building is more important to their education, even though most students spend more time in their dorm rooms.
- Convey that you understand what monumentality is and why it is important.

Some examples?

- The Campanile. It’s a physical monument but it also makes a specific sound, reaching every student at some point. The sound becomes part of its monumentality.
- The campus as a whole and how it embodies the pride of being an ISU student. Pride as a part of the monumentality. Maybe for someone who didn’t go to ISU, the campus wouldn’t feel as monumental because they didn’t have the same sense of pride.
- Traditions as monumental because they continue from class to class and generation to generation. Not stepping on the Zodiac, for instance.