A FORCE FOR CREATIVITY, DISCOVERY, AND LEARNING

The Broad Art Museum hosted a celebration for retiring College of Arts and Letters graphic design professor Joe Kuszai in April. Those in attendance said repeatedly that Joe had a huge impact on the university and on them. "Alumni came back to campus for Joe's retirement from across the country. There were students from 50 years ago, and students in the program right now," says Chris Corneal, chair, Department of Art, Art History and Design. "I think that says a lot about Joe's teaching, his mentorship, his caring."

Joe smiled and reminisced with former students at the Broad and, later, during the "afterglow" at the East Lansing Marriott. Many had vivid memories of Joe's wife stirring a big pot of hot soup, chili or spaghetti sauce on the stove, and the couple readily welcoming them into their home. Even those unable to attend wanted to praise Kuszai. Art Sims, a graphic designer and founder of a successful L.A. design firm, credits Joe for both his training and his career direction. Sims, who has created numerous iconic movie posters for Spike Lee and other major projects, was quick to praise Kuszai. "If it weren't for Joe, I don't know where I'd be or what I'd be doing," Sims says. "Without his teaching and direction, I doubt I'd have been as successful."

Joe Kuszai joined the faculty at Michigan State University in 1965, and headed the graphic design program for more than 25 years. His proposal to Apple in 1984 acquired the first Mac lab in a major university. Kuszai's graduates hold numerous influential positions in the field of graphic design, teaching and chairing design programs in some of the most significant universities in the country. Many hold senior design and management positions in industry, while others have established their own highly successful graphic design firms in the U.S. and abroad.

Joe Kuszai studied at the Rhode Island School of Design and at Yale University, with many of the pioneers of graphic design: Paul Rand, Bradbury Thompson, Norman Ives, Alvin Eisenman, and Herbert Matter. At Columbia Records, Kuszai was an associate art director and was mentored by Bob Cato, perhaps the most successful creative director in the record cover industry. Joe was the art director at Clarke and Way printers, Harcourt Publishing and other major New York City studios. Visual literacy and design curricula were Kuszai's main teaching interests, and documenting WPA murals was his primary research area.

Another golden moment for Joe Kuszai's career was when MSU hosted the international HASTAC Conference, which brought together educators, artists, and scientists to explore the future of learning and knowledge. Left photo: Joe Kuszai celebrates his 50-year career at MSU with family, friends, and former students. Right photo: Well-wishers leave Joe special messages on panels at the Broad Art Museum.