

Kaleidoscope

Kerstin Stuerzbecher

As I write this, it has been close to a year since Jerry Zaslove's death and I continue to miss hearing his active voice in my life. The below was written in November 2021 for a memorial event at SFU:

The educator and political philosopher Paulo Freire wrote, "The teacher is of course an artist, but being an artist does not mean that he or she can make the profile, can shape the students. What the educator does in teaching is make it possible for the students to become themselves."

It is my sincere honour to write a few words for this memorial event for Professor Jerry Zaslove and outline why Paulo Freire's words put me in mind of him.

What I remember most keenly about Jerry are the moments in his office when he, half hidden by the stacks of books and papers on his desk, with a cup of tea in hand, kaleidoscoped my mind through his vast knowledge of literature, art, and ideas. The tapestry of thoughts and images he wove at those times would leave me inspired, bewildered, questioning, and always encouraged to take risks in my own thoughts and ideas.

While I first met Jerry as a GLS master's student in one of his courses on "The City," it is as a GLS PhD student that I had the privilege over these last years to get to know him better. With generosity, spirit, critique, and care, Jerry helped guide my path to formulating my thesis, and supported the continuous honing of my ideas. Jerry was intent on rigorous thinking informed by unorthodox positions, as well as on the unceasing refinement of the unique perspective each one of us brings to a dialogue. His discourse demanded a certain agility of the mind when he would generate a firework of ideas to elicit excitement and original responses from his students. Once

something novel crystallized in the course of a conversation, he would start smiling and exclaim, “That’s it, that’s you. You are the only one who can say that,” which would inevitably bolster a student’s at times fragile belief in their capacity to uniquely contribute to scholarship and the academic world.

I am presently in Berlin and think of Jerry often. When Jerry stayed in Berlin, he lived only two streets away from where my mother lives, and I can so easily see him here, walking down the cobbled sidewalk, beret on his head, newspaper under his arm, stopping to take careful notice of the renovation of a 19th century residential building on his way to the café at the corner.

Jerry championed the students he worked with and freely shared his bounty of iridescent connections between thought and text. I shall also never forget the great kindness he extended to me when I was experiencing a particularly dark time. I miss him and will always remain profoundly grateful for his mentorship and presence in my life.

Kerstin Stuerzbecher is a PhD candidate with Graduate Liberal Studies at SFU and continues to take courage from Jerry's smile as she writes her dissertation.