

# Retirement from the Skidmore College Faculty

Spring 2017



Faculty Meeting  
April the Twenty-Eighth  
Two Thousand and Seventeen



ne of the first things you will notice about John Cunningham is the fierce enthusiasm in his voice when he talks about sculpture. The second is his

teven Lewis Millhauser, whose tragic retirement at 3:30 p.m. on April 28, 2017, deprived Skidmore College of her most gifted writer, was born at an

That's when you can stop for a moment, midway along the path, and turn your head in both directions...It's just for a little while, before I move on" ("The Other Town").

Like his American dreamer Martin Dressler, Steven finds that in "the other world, here in the world beyond the world, anything was possible." His magician Eisenheim insists that "stories are invented because history is inadequate to our dreams." Readers of Millhauser will recognize that his fiction takes us to impossible worlds that are nevertheless bound to the real world—one colleague calls it "a truer sense of flotation between dream and reality"; another claims that Millhauser changes "the standard coordinates on the map of consciousness." He summons the dark places, the hidden corners—especially those tucked in one of his favorite geographies, "our town." This is a dark enough place for us reared on Thornton Wilder; it grows inkier for those who have grown up in small towns yet

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native Turkey and continuing through his most recent work on the second edition of the encyclopedia, Mehmet's work has always given voice to the fortunes of those who lack the power to advocate for themselves. His collected work secures his status as a leading scholar in this vitally important field. Closer to home, though no less significant, the recent *Classless Society* exhibit at the Tang Museum, which he co-curated with Janet Casey and Rachel Seligman, serves as an excellent and highly visible testament to his dedication to our need to see the world through the eyes of the powerless.

Mehmet is the true embodiment of the teacher-scholar model. In an age of increasing specialization, the breadth of his teaching portfolio is difficult to imagine, spanning 17 different courses on topics ranging from Islam and economics to microeconomic theory. His courses "Economics of Development" and "Economics of Income Distribution and Poverty" were among the most popular electives in the department. Students at every level are drawn to his passion for the subject matter, his expertise, and his ability to get students to see beyond simple models, guiding them to develop a genuine understanding of the influence of powerful economic actors and institutions on individuals. His students were well aware of the fact that their professor is a true expert in his field, with knowledge that is both wide and deep. One of his prior students, currently in graduate school, remarked, "I feel lucky to have been a student of such a legendary professor...I still go back to his class notes when I study." Or another, who rated his class as "efficient, effective, enlightening, engaging, anc(s)-2h22.9(, Tw -1.3913.554 0 T5411 Tc 0.011 Tw 0.xt.6(he)9.6)-4.7(du

enter the passageway into the very wide-open spaces of the western desert. But don't get comfortable with the easy associations. If you linger, the paintings will expand beneath your gaze. Once you recognize the plumb line, there will always be polarities that require nimble consideration. Perhaps you will catch a fleeting glimpse of truth. Ultimately, you are drawn to the edge of mystery. Pete has shown work in numerous individual and group exhibitions regionally and across the country, most extensively on the west coast, and internationally at the Center for Art and Design, University of Wales Institute, Cardiff Wales.

A strong teacher, Pete is clear, thorough, and demanding. His critiques are honest. Pete's "Advanced Painting" courses transformed students' lives. He would count the interaction a success if the student considered the transformation her own accomplishment rather than the result of his guidance. Yet his guidance was clear and strong. He moved students away from the "cult of the new" and the intense urge to simply mimic what currently "looked like art." His goal was to train students to be independent thinkers, to consider philosophical ideas of timeless relevance. He patiently insisted that students stand their ground and use the creative process to develop a body of work that had substance.

In addition to his teaching, Pete provided exceptional leadership for six years as chair of the Art Department.

department. ilding and worked to begin the process of wiring and equipping the studios in preparation for the digital revolution.

In addition, Pete redesigned the studio spaces in the drawing