



**Above:** 1977 self-portrait by John Kaufman, BS '81

**Right:** Kent State architecture students in Florence in 1979



## A Portrait Prompts Philanthropy

In 1977, Kent State architecture students in a second-year studio design class were assigned a challenging project: Draw a self-portrait while looking in a mirror without looking down at the paper.

John Kaufman, BS '81, was probably the only one who followed the instructions to the letter. And his simple drawing sparked what became known among his classmates as the “Kaufmania mystique”—which included, it was said, that he often scrimped on food to buy books and record albums.

Although many members of his class had the opportunity to study at Kent State Florence in Italy during their college years, Kaufman was unable to join them due to the cost of the program. However, his self-portrait became synonymous with the Class of 1980, and many of his classmates adopted his iconic image for the rest of their days at Kent State.

At the class's 25th reunion, several alumni—including Larry Armstrong, BS '79, BArc '80; Rick Hawksley, BS '79, MArc '86; and Geoff Lester, BS '79, BArc '80—talked about creating a scholarship for architecture students with financial need to help them study in Florence. Kaufman and his self-portrait inspired the title of this new endowment, “Kaufmania Goes to Europe.” The scholarship is given annually to a third-year architecture student who hopes to enroll in the Florence program. In addition to writing an essay, students applying for the scholarship have to draw a self-portrait under the same conditions as Kaufman's original.

“Larry and I had an amazing experience together in Italy and thought that a scholarship directed toward students considering the Florence program abroad was

appropriate,” Lester says. “We immediately thought of our legendary buddy John Kaufman and decided to name the scholarship in his honor.”

For the past 15 years, the scholarship has awarded study abroad opportunities to more than 20 students. Members of the Class of 1980 are still active in this philanthropic effort and have maintained strong ties to each other, the College of Architecture and Environmental Design and its students.

“We continue to be inspired by the Class of 1980's generosity,” Armstrong says. “We share student testimonials with our group to inspire future philanthropy and enable us to continue enhancing student experiences.”

Hawksley highlights the benefits the scholarships offer. “I think it is great that our scholarship has helped enrich the lives of young architects,” he says. “Study abroad benefits students and opens their eyes to other cultures.”

John Kaufman has had a successful architectural career in Southern California and is still in contact with his former classmates. “John is impressed with this whole thing and enjoys seeing all the scholarship applicants' self-portraits each year,” Lester says. “His 15 seconds of self-portrait fame have lived on for decades.”

And the scholarship program continues to be meaningful for those who have contributed. “It's so great to see the impact of our scholarship on students who may have never been out of the country before,” Armstrong says. “The opportunity to study in a different country—especially Italy and especially in Florence—changes your life. The scholarship has continued to inspire camaraderie in our class, and we are proud of the impact we collectively are able to make on so many students.”

—Julie Miller, BS '87

*A new endowed scholarship has been created as part of the university's Forever Brighter comprehensive fundraising campaign to celebrate 50 years of study abroad in Florence, Italy. The Kent State Global Education Endowment will open doors for more Kent State students to study abroad than ever before. Once fully funded, every incoming undergraduate student will have access to a study abroad scholarship.*

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