



Grafton Trout watches intently as Josephine Decker and Russell Sheaffer create an experimental film live in front of the audience Oct. 3, 2014, at IU Cinema. Photo by Eric Rudd.

Farewell to a fan: Grafton Trout was a true connoisseur of art, cinema and the humanities

This tribute to Grafton Trout is an unabridged version of the remembrances and poignant stories submitted to IU Communications by members of the university community. Several selections appeared in a [BTOWN Banter](#) blog post by Karen Land.

Even if you didn't know Grafton Trout, you might know his face.

He was one of Indiana University's greatest fans.

Instead of Assembly Hall or Memorial Stadium, you might have found him at a lecture hall, the Lilly Library, IU Cinema or what is now the Eskenazi Museum of Art. He was everywhere.

Grafton kept a particularly vigorous schedule attending arts and cultural events on the IU campus, together with his wife, Laura, and often alone.

IU Cinema director Jon Vickers described him as "the most intellectually curious man that I have ever met."

Grafton Trout passed away July 30, 2016, at the age of 87.

A former sociology professor and later director of the IU Bloomington honors program in foreign languages, he earned master's degrees in sociology then economics at IU in the 1960s before earning his sociology Ph.D. in 1971.

In recent years, Grafton was an art museum docent ("He was our patriarch") and a staunch supporter of fine film. He had been scheduled to speak at the Eskenazi Museum earlier this month. Instead, Tom Rhea led his "Must Art Be Beautiful?" tour, dedicating it to his good friend.

At many cultural events this fall, one seat looks particularly empty. When I glance around IU Cinema, I still expect to see Grafton there, taking it all in.

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Remembrances

I've known Grafton ever since I arrived at IU in 1998, and even then he was a legend, as he attended everything, and was everywhere. His knowledge of the field of art history was encyclopedic, and complemented his knowledge of history, music and many other fields. I don't think I've ever met someone who made such a good use of his retirement. He was a model.

-- Diane Reilly, associate professor and chair of art history

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Grafton was, without a doubt, IU Cinema's most dedicated patron and the most intellectually curious man that I have ever met. He was a model for anyone who has an appetite for culture. He will be greatly missed by everyone at the cinema -- staff, students, other guests and visiting filmmakers.

There are few people in Bloomington, if any, who have seen as many international films as Grafton. As a programmer, he kept you on your toes.

We were able to bring some of his cinematic idols to him, which he loved, and he almost always asked our guest filmmakers questions during the audience Q&As.

-- Jon Vickers, Indiana University Cinema director

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Long before there was an IU Cinema, Grafton was an ardent supporter of cinema at IU. In 1993, when I first began teaching, we rented 16mm films for our film history, theory and criticism classes. This made for expensive classes, as you can imagine (each print cost \$125 to \$200 to rent) and there wasn't yet the tremendous video culture that rose through the '90s.

We used to print our screen lists, giving the full screening schedule for our classes, so that interested faculty and students could come see the films.

Dear Grafton went by the film studies office in Ballantine Hall at the beginning of every term to pick up schedules. And he came to practically every film I screened for "French Cinema," "Women Directors," "Film Theory and Aesthetics," "Experimental Cinema" and "History of Cinema."

Even when I screened in BH 330, a classroom with hard wooden chairs and the 16mm projector loudly whirring in the room's center, Grafton came.

One screening in particular was memorable. We had a widescreen print of Truffaut's "Jules et Jim," and the anamorphic lens was stripped -- so the projectionist and I took turns physically holding it in place. It was an exhausting screening for the students and for me. Dear Grafton stayed through the entire screening and the following day went to my department chair and said 1) I deserved a raise and 2) couldn't someone just buy a proper lens for the projector. He even offered to contribute.

The only time I didn't see him was when I showed graphic horror films.

He told me about films that he had seen in New York, and when my beloved husband (also a fixture at those screenings) passed away, Grafton came to the memorial services.

Matt Starr got to know Grafton while working at IU Cinema. And when Matt did his final art senior thesis, a wonderful installation that required people to clamber up a little ladder and go through a sensory deprivation-style tube, Grafton -- who was none too steady on his feet -- came and did the whole installation.

When I arrived, Matt was still shaking his head. Matt told me Grafton came. "Did he like it?" I asked.

"I think so," Matt said.

I will miss seeing him at the cinema.

-- Joan Hawkins, associate professor in The Media School

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I spent more time talking to Grafton before and after the films than I did my girlfriend. He was (IU Cinema's) fifth Beatle.

-- Matt Starr, IU Bloomington graduate, class of 2013

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Grafton was such a loyal and committed museum and arts supporter. It was very rare indeed if he missed an event, and he always asked such engaging questions. Over the years my admiration for his continual quest to learn just grew. He will be greatly missed.

-- Heidi Gealt, Eskenazi Museum of Art director emerita

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Grafton was one of the most memorable people I've had in my classes. He always arrived eager not only to discuss the assigned reading and/or images, but also to explore connections he'd made with other objects or topics. He was tireless, willing to ask the students as many questions as he might ask me. They did not always know how to feel about this, but I found it very useful. For one thing, it meant that he modeled an ideal sort of academic engagement for the other students. For another thing, it required that I always be on my toes -- a real boon to the class and to me, I have to say. Reverting to more typical form, my classroom dynamic will be the poorer for his departure."

-- Bret Rothstein, associate professor of art history

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I can't recall exactly when I met Grafton, but it was around the time I starting teaching Brazilian and Latin American cinema in the early 1980s. Whenever I programmed a special film series, generally about Brazilian cinema, Grafton was there for every film showing. As the years passed, we would talk about movies that he had seen or read about. He was a big fan of Latin American film and it was a joy to see him at our special showings.

When the IU Cinema was opened, of course there was Grafton. You knew where to look for him because he liked that seat in the last row on the far right side. That is, unless it was a Jorgensen Lecture, then he would sit close to the front row to hear better. He always asked good questions of visiting filmmakers.

The last time we talked he raved about the Turkish film "Mustang" and asked if Jim and I had seen it. We missed it when it was at the cinema, but saw it just a few days ago. When the film was over -- and we thought it was terrific -- Jim and I remembered that Grafton had spoken highly of it. We didn't know that he had died until two days after seeing the movie. It was during a dinner that one of our guests told us the sad news. We were stunned. Everyone around the dinner table talked about Grafton that night -- about his dedication to the university and his lifelong passion for movies. I think he would have liked that.

-- Darlene J. Sadlier, professor emerita of Spanish and Portuguese

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Grafton was an active member of the Eskenazi Museum of Art's (formerly the Indiana University Art Museum) docent program since 1994. He was a steady spring of knowledge regarding the art of world cultures, always prepared with an impressive bibliography and a list of museum collections.

Grafton became the docent program's resident expert on all things ceramic, not only providing ceramic tours to visitors all ages, but also generously donating boxes of his own ceramics to our mock auctions to raise money for the docent's memorial fund. Over the decades, Grafton gave numerous gallery talks on a wide range of rich and varied topics, always thoroughly prepared and always fascinating. He will remain ever-present at our museum events, docent classes and get-togethers.

-- Ed Maxedon, Eskenazi Museum Lucienne M. Glaubinger Curator of Education

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Grafton impressed me as being such a knowledgeable person and graciously shared his expertise with all of us.

-- Linda Heath, Eskenazi Museum of Art docent

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While I was the executive director of the Friends of Art, an organization that supports IU fine arts students, Grafton Trout was in my office every week, sometimes every day.

He loved to haunt the bookstore across the hall from my office. He knew my name from my years of writing art reviews for the Bloomington Independent. He was supportive of all our initiatives, with a near-perfect attendance record for lectures, auctions, openings, studio visits and trips.

It was on our travel program that he had the greatest impact, as he somehow kept up on every major museum show in the country. Nearly every trip I organized had some counsel and input from Grafton. In addition, we roomed together on every trip he took since we were often the only men traveling alone. He "packed" light for these trips, everything in one narrow briefcase.

On the train from the airport to the hotel in Washington D. C., he pushed the case into my arms as we came to the stop for the (National) Mall and told me to stow it in our room. He jumped out at an earlier stop because he couldn't bear to waste time on checking in that could be spent at the museum! On the return, his limited luggage required him to parcel out to other travelers the dozen or so art books he had purchased on the trip.

Even after he slowed down with the years, and gave the impression of being more frail, he could amaze you with his acuity. He lectured without notes in the gallery that featured some of the marvelous Japanese woodblock prints from his collection, with a precision for places, names and 50-year-old publications that was astonishing.

He loved the new cinema at IU and attended every event he was able. He betrayed no prejudice of age, open to all types of new and experimental film. He was the only other person I ever met who had seen and thrilled to "Kontroll," the Hungarian existential horror movie about the metro workers in the Budapest subway. In time past, he borrowed films and a projector from the comparative literature department to view at home.

Grafton's widow Laura told me that when he retired from teaching, he regarded his pursuit of art to be his new profession.

He was a great mind, a great man and a great friend.

-- Tom Rhea, artist, illustrator and Eskenazi Museum docent

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Grafton could be counted on to attend every event offered by the art history department, including brown bag lectures, Burke lectures and job talks. His interest in art history was broad-ranging and omnivorous. He told me once that since he retired he had taken or sat in on around 70 courses in studio and art history. I do not believe that he was exaggerating! I know for certain that he sat in on pretty much every one of the undergraduate courses I ever taught, and I'm sure this is also true for the rest of the faculty.

-- Giles Knox, associate professor of art history

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Grafton Trout was a loyal supporter and an enthusiastic cheerleader for The Ryder Film Series from day one. In the early '80s, he helped pave the way for us to host screenings on campus. I can say unequivocally that Grafton holds the record for "Most Ryder Films Attended." And it's a record, I'm certain, that will never be broken. Grafton was the Cal

Ripken of moviegoers. I'm sure that other arts and campus organizations would say something similar, although they might avoid the baseball analogy.

He always had something of interest to say -- a quip or an observation or a story to tell -- not only to me but to our ticket takers and projectionists, some of whom were aspiring filmmakers. Grafton always took a sincere interest in their film projects and, more significantly, in their lives, and offered words of encouragement about the work they were doing.

Grafton usually attended Ryder films on campus but occasionally he came to Bear's Place. I recall one such visit in the 1990s. At that time, we screened our movies on 16mm film, with two projectors side by side, each loaded with a film reel. Our projectionist that night had failed to lock the second reel into place, and so when we made the switch from Reel 1 to 2, it soon slipped off of the projector and landed on the head of one of our patrons -- Grafton.

Those reels were heavy, and I was concerned that Grafton might be seriously hurt. Someone went to get a glass of water. Meanwhile, I could see a prominent bright red welt emerging through his scalp -- his hair was thin, even then. I asked if he was OK and he didn't answer -- he just stared straight ahead and downward with a look of distress in his eyes. I followed his gaze and there, several feet away, on the floor, under a table, was the reel of film.

After landing on Grafton's head it had rolled between several chairs, under a table, and was now beginning to unravel at an alarming rate. We both just stared for several seconds as foot upon foot of film spun away the reel and formed a spaghetti-like pile on the floor. Suddenly Grafton leaped from his seat and was on his hands and knees, reaching under the table to rescue the reel of film -- I hadn't realized he could move that fast. And rescue it he did. We reassembled the reel and resumed the screening; one of the servers bought Grafton a drink on the house. (This was probably *not* proper concussion protocol.)

This is what made Grafton special: He had little concern for his own well-being that night; his only concern was in the value and integrity of the performance. The show must go on. He was much more than someone who bought a ticket and attended an event -- he was an active participant, he was invested, emotionally and intellectually. ... Grafton had all of the wit and enthusiasm and intellectual curiosity and optimism of a much younger man. He had a kind word for everyone. He will be missed.

-- Peter LoPilato, *The Ryder magazine and film series founder, publisher and curator*

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I was so saddened to hear about Grafton Trout's passing. His was a very valuable and valued presence in my classes. Every now and then, he would ask a question that was prefaced by the most sensitive visual description one could imagine. I was very happy that my students had the opportunity to hear someone speak of the objects we were studying in such a loving and precise manner.

-- Phillip Bloom, *assistant professor of art history*

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When I told him I was going to Barcelona, the next day his copy of Robert Hughes' book arrived in my box to borrow. Like everyone else, I always liked hearing about his travel plans and impressions of exhibitions.

-- Michelle Facos, professor of art history

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Grafton Trout was a gentleman and a true cinephile. I first encountered him around 30 years ago, when he began coming to the 16mm films I showed to my classes. He would sit quietly in the back of the auditorium and we would nod to one another. I didn't know who he was, but it was clear that he had deep familiarity with film history because he invariably attended whenever a rare, especially interesting feature was on the menu.

Over the years I got to know him a bit more, especially after the opening of IU Cinema. He was a staunch and passionate supporter of the film theater, and when visiting directors were in town he could usually be seen near the front row, armed with interesting questions to ask. I know few people who took as much advantage of the artistic resources on this campus, particularly the resources of film. A year or two ago I was talking to him and he told me he was re-reading "Moby Dick." I suggested he take a look at Melville's "Pierre," because maybe he could make better sense of it than I had. There was always more to Grafton than I realized, and I'll miss him.

-- James Naremore, Chancellors' Professor Emeritus of English, literature and film

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Here's hoping that Grafton's love of film and his commitment to the experience of moviegoing enlivens and inspires everyone who enters the IU Cinema.

-- Gregory A. Waller, Provost Professor and chair of cinema and media studies in The Media School



Grafton Trout attended Beth B's excellent anti-violence talk "Psychotic to Erotic," which was presented as part of the Jorgensen Guest Filmmaker Lecture Series on Feb. 6, 2015.