



MILFORD CUSHMAN WAS once a wilderness instructor and still loves the outdoors.

DISTINGUISHED MENTOR

MILFORD CUSHMAN

founder and president, Cushman Design Group

Milford Cushman likes to think of his architectural design firm, Cushman Design Group, as a jazz band. “Everyone has to play his or her own instrument, and they need to be able to play with each other,” he says. “We take all that energy and make something unique from it.” Cushman inspires the other players — designers, builders, and clients — by his example, then gives each one the opportunity to contribute his or her own ideas. “I like to help people have beauty and meaning in their lives,” Cushman says. “That’s all I’m doing.”

Cushman, who founded his Stowe, Vermont, firm in 1989, started out as an educator — a YMCA counselor, a high school manual arts teacher, and an Outward Bound wilderness instructor. Having developed unusual powers of observation as a child, he found he could recognize and empathize with students who had a thirst for knowledge. It still brings him joy to help curious people realize their potential.

“He’s very busy, but he takes the time to explain in detail his thinking behind a design decision,” says Chad Forcier, who’s been with Cushman since 2000. “It’s hard to work for someone who’s that passionate about his work and not be inspired.” Says Cushman, “I’m not going out of my way to mentor or teach. It is my way.” Kelley Osgood, another employee who says Cushman has taken him under his wing, adds, “He has always evoked a collaborative spirit in us.”

Recently, Cushman led the staff of the Vermont Studio Center in Johnson, Vermont, an international artists’ and writers’ residency program, in a 50-week planning marathon. President Gary Clark says Cushman orchestrated magic. “He drew out of each one of us a much deeper engagement and caring for our campus than we thought we had,” he says. It was beautiful music. — *Nancy Humphrey Case*

DISTINGUISHED MENTOR

JAMES M. READ

professor, industrial design, Massachusetts College of Art and Design; principal, JMRead LLC

James M. Read is one of those visually literate people who are unable to rest their analytical eye. Every object is designed, and Read is one of the very lucky (or cursed, depending upon your viewpoint) who looks at anything and everything and wonders if it could have fit the hand more comfortably or been more efficient or just been made more attractive. “I love design — I don’t know any other way to be,” Read says. “It has given me the opportunity to be myself.”

Such enthusiasm is infectious. As an industrial designer and professor at Massachusetts College of Art and Design, Read is an inspiration to students. As a practitioner — his design firm, JMRead LLC in Marshfield, Massachusetts, creates products as diverse as athletic equipment, eyewear for the military, and church furniture — he is a model to aspiring designers. But his role as a mentor means shepherding his students in a more holistic way.

Former student Derek Cascio, a designer now and adjunct professor at Wentworth Institute of Technology, recalls Read telling him that design was not “simply about the technical aspects of the trade but about understanding people.” Cascio took Read’s lessons to heart.



INDUSTRIAL DESIGNER JAMES M. Read (RIGHT) works with student Joshua Hernandez at MassArt.

PHOTOS: TOP, SUSAN TEARE; BOTTOM, KELLY DAVIDSON