**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**JENNIFER GILBERT**

**SAMPLE**

Thank you, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for that generous introduction. To family and friends, Academy and Museum administration and staff, artists in residence, governors, guests, and most essentially, graduates, on behalf of the Cranbrook Academy of Art and Art Museum Board Of Governors, I am proud to welcome all of you to the Commencement ceremony for this year’s graduates. There are many special and distinctive details about this wonderful school and its campus and all have had a sustained effect on the contemporary art and design landscape. Cranbrook has hosted and encouraged the best of the best regardless of whether it was administrators, students or artists in residence. We are so fortunate to have the history we have and as we recognize this year’s graduates, we can also appreciate that the experience we all have is that of creating in, studying in, and being inspired by this incredible, organic, functioning work of art... our wonderful buildings and campus. I cannot think of a better context in which to continue to honor the processes of art and design (**If you want, you can add)** Mr. Saarinen... if you’re listening, I know it was a big move to relocate from Finland... especially back then... to set up this campus and lead Cranbrook’s mission, but it was worth it!! (**And wait for the laugh**).

**(I see that the school of art was sanctioned in 1932. If this calculation is incorrect, please revise**). We celebrate **eighty six years** of encouraging and sharing creativity, searching for solutions to design conundra, advancing and changing the way we view life and envision objects, and applying thought and elegance to age old puzzles.... it’s an honor to be a part of this community. As I’m getting used to eagerly anticipating these ceremonies, I get increasingly excited to plan my message. Since everything about Cranbrook is thoughtful, considered, and designed organically, I know that my message must be authentic and come from the heart. This commencement ceremony is as much a part of the completion process as any research you have done to fulfill the requirements needed to reach this “finish line.”. Graduates, throughout your tenure here at Cranbrook, you’ve stretched your minds... and your canvases... you’ve broken your pencils and you’ve rebooted your tech... all in quest of advancing the conversation and tackling the questions we face every day on what art and design mean individually, as a collective, and to the world in which we will serve. It’s an honor to observe your process and to learn from all of you.

Please keep in mind my quest for wisdom to share with you was not quite as intense as, say, Madame Curie discovering radium... but it was **UP THERE**...and while artists and designers have historically offered some pithy and thought provoking statements, I’d like to share this with you. Our environment poses questions and the designer responds with solutions.... at this point I think you already know that if there’s one thing that is in embarrassing abundance, it is opinion. And while Oscar Wilde and James Abbot McNeil Whistler got into a famous row about this, with Whistler declaring that no one really has the right to say whether art is good or bad.... “You can say that you either like or dislike something and be within your rights.” the same holds true for design. **EVERYONE** will have something to say and some comments will be justified. Part of maturing as a creative person is to respect one’s own gut and instinct while “thanking people for sharing...” In other words, “You can’t make everyone happy... you’re **NOT** an avocado...” (**Wait for the laugh**). And while we are all proponents of refining our work, it’s a “slippery slope to “dying of improvement.” As you gain experience, you will discover how to find the balance and when to let the work rest... after all, is true art **EVER** completed?

Abraham Lincoln said, “The best way to predict the future is to create it.” For the past two years, you’ve had the opportunity to be mentored and guided by Cranbrook’s incredible group of Artists in Residence. They lead by example and their own personal creative process continues to bring fuel and energy to both their own impressive and provocative work and that of the students. The artists have taught us all by doing and by following their path.  Thanks to these titans, we learn that great design and compelling art are timeless while being indispensable and organic to the functioning of our lives. It was thrilling to see your work at the Graduate Degree Show. As a culmination of your process and as a testimony to your creativity, the exhibition showed us that this year’s class is prepared to join the ranks of the art and design worlds’ greats. What is so gratifying is knowing that in front of us, we have a group of collective talent poised to claim their place in the global design conversation, and who knows? Some of you may even find your way back to Cranbrook as an Artist in Residence. Alfred Lord Tennyson famously wrote, “I am part of all that I have met.” The symbiotic relationships and mentorships created here have the potential to regenerate, and that’s so promising.

Graduates, as you leave here and walk toward your destinies. I have a bit more to share.  It was Pablo Picasso that said, “Some painters transform the sun into a yellow spot, others transform a yellow spot into the sun.” Every ounce of creativity we have and express has to do with looking, searching, and envisioning **possibility**... especially from a blank space. You have been taught the language of vision and it is now your turn to use your skills and talents to reimagine and enhance the world in which we all live. That will take patience, perseverance, the elegance of refusal, and an open mind. I believe that each one of you possess these qualities in abundance and you’re all good to go.

I want to wish all of you our most sincere congratulations for your accomplishments here at Cranbrook and for the mark you are about to make out in the world. Thank you all!!

(**HS 4/28 NOTE... this, as it is, without individual mention of the artists in residence will take around 5 minutes. Adding the AIR’s will make the speech go over... as a thought, do you need to mention them? This is about the graduates... just a thought. Thanks).**