**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**JENNIFER GILBERT**

Thank you, Dom, for the 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 our **SEVENTY FOURTH** Commencement ceremony.

**SEVENTY FOUR** 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 this is my first Commencement Address, I, too, applied considerable thought to my particular self expression today in order to do justice to the accomplishments of this year’s graduating class. This commencement ceremony really is a rite of passage. Graduates, throughout your tenure here at Cranbrook, you’ve done your research, 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 authenticity means individually, as a collective, and to the world in which we will serve.

It’s a fairly hallowed and lofty atmosphere that we have inherited, and in order to express clarity of thought, I did my research and turned to the “undisputed leaders” in this field... that would be **Google** and **Wikipedia**... (**Wait for the laugh**)... (**Do you want to add**)... and while we still have net neutrality, I’m taking copious notes!!! (**And wait for the laugh**).... please keep in mind my quest was not quite as intense as Madame Curie discovering radium... but it was **UP THERE**... I discovered that technically there **IS** a difference between Graduation and Commencement. While graduation signifies the physical completion of the projects, tests and coursework required to attain a degree, Commencement Is the actual ceremony in which we acknowledge and pay tribute to the outstanding efforts you have shown in the process of earning your degree.... and beyond. You also might be interested to know that the tradition of delivering a commencement address dates back to 1774. I want all of you to rest easy on two points... while I am fairly certain that my words of wisdom, as sincere and as well researched as they are, probably won’t be remembered in two hundred years, I **AM** confident that the world will remember **YOU** and your bold and wonderful work.

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 fuel impressive and provocative work. (**HS - Please note I left the blurbs of the AIR’s as you wrote them but this will make the speech quite long.** .... **in the format that I write, which is 12 pt double spaced, I usually estimate each page is approx 1 1/2 minutes, so this speech will approach approx 10 minutes.** **If you are restricted to 5 minutes, the following section will have to be condensed/edited.... Let me know your thoughts and I can cut down on each section. Also advise if all need to be mentioned ... I assume so... also, if this is about the graduates, is it important to go into such detail re: the AIR’s?**).

Elliot Earles our Designer-in-Residence in 2D Design, gave us two meaningful projects at the Cranbrook Museum this year.  Elliott designed the Lou Reed catalog for our major winter exhibition - *Lou Reed’s Metal Machine Trio: The Creation of the Universe.*  He also designed the catalog for the Pewabic Pottery exhibition. Inspired, in part, by William Morris’ wall paper samples from the Museum’s collection, Elliott’s bold and innovative design shows how relevant and contemporary the central issues of the Arts and Crafts movement still are in 2016.

Scott Klinker, our Designer-in-Residence in 3D Design has just launched a new chair, the *Low Rider Lounge*.  An evolution of Scott’s *Sprout Lounge* from 2004, the new chair is made by Offi and debuted at ICFF in New York just last week.  And what a successful week it was for Scott and the 3D department.

They presented a collection of work entitled “Fine Design at the End of the World.”  The exhibition aims to respond to glogal concerns such as economic inequality and environmental degradation.

Heather McGill, Sculpture Artist-in-Residence, exhibited at PULSE Miami Beach with the Miller Yezerski Gallery and also showed her work in the exhibition, *Unnamed Need: Pattern and Beauty in Contemporary Art*, at the Wriston Art Galleries at Lawrence University.

Artist-in-Residence in Painting, Beverly Fishman, exhibited her most recent project, *Big Pharma* at the C[olumbus College of Art & Design](http://www.ccad.edu/events-2015/big-pharma) this past fall. This body of work features polychrome reliefs, ranging in size from 25 inches to more than seven feet  – and continues Beverly’s interest in the reach and implications of the pharmaceutical industry.

Liz Cohen, our Artist-in-Residence in Photography, produced her solo exhibition, *Him* which opened at Cranbrook Art Museum in November. This exhibition launched a striking new body of work that draws from her continued interest in exhibitionism, subcultures, and acts of belonging – and took the form of both photographs and weavings.

While on sabbatical, Iris Eichenberg, Artist-in-Residence in Metalsmithing, opened a solo exhibition of new work, *Real*, at the FOG Art Fair in San Francisco. Presenting objects, drawings, embroidery and sculptures, the work flips between domestic space, gallery exhibition, private rooms and public displays.

This year, Anders Ruhwald, our Artist-in-Residence in Ceramics, received a Knight Art Challenge Grant to support his project “Unit 1:3583 DuBois”, which is a new site specific art work by Ruhwald - a permanent art installation in a Detroit apartment where the interior is made of charred wood, molten glass and black ceramics. As the second part of the project Ruhwald will develop a community space that will function as a gathering spot for lectures, workshop and events.

Fiber Artist-in-Residence, Mark Newport, recently returned from a sabbatical during the fall semester where he spent his time studying textiles, focusing on the subject of “Repair and Memory.” His research trips focused on collections of mending samplers at museums in the U.S., the UK, and the Netherlands.  We look forward to the new work that will result from this research.

Architect-in-Residence, Bill Massie, continues to make news at his Wessen Lawn and Tennis Club in Pontiac, which hosted its first national tournament this past fall – drawing hundreds of players to two United States Tennis Association seniors tournaments.

Last, but not least, Our Artist-in-Residence in Print Media, Randy Bolton, presented the solo exhibition, *Flicker and Fade* at the Lawndale Art Center in Houston, and showcased his large-scale, wall and floor-based sculptural print installations.  On behalf of the Board of Governors, I’d like to congratulate Randy on his retirement this year. We recognize and truly appreciate his 14 years of leadership in the Print Media department.  Thank you, Randy, we all wish you the best in your Texas studio.

Within the context of Cranbrook’s legacy and leadership, each of you has had the opportunity to explore and evolve while creating inspiring works of art, design and architecture. Each question asked serves to enable you to forge your own path.  We often speak of past alums who are the basis of the great Cranbrook legacy.  Names such as **Eames**, **Bertoia**, **Cave**, Adler-Schnee, Clark, Devore, Fernandez, Glick, Fredericks, **Knoll, Larsen,** Udagawa, Takaezu, **Rashid**, Rapson, Matelli, Lipski and so many more, (**HS - I would suggest shortening this list to maybe five or six outstanding selections- see bolded names... also, would you mention either/both Saarinens?** ) 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 now excites me most is looking into the future as we add **your** names to the list of Alums who continue to change the world and how we see it and live in it.... 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.

As you leave here and walk toward your destiny. I have two bits of advice. The first comes from a recent interview of an entrepreneurial CEO who said that she got the greatest inspiration and energy from being told “no - it can’t be done.”   The second comes from when my older son was about five.  Almost every conversation included his standard question - **WHY**?... to which there is only one true answer for those who make an impact in our world - **WHY NOT!**

In conclusion I’ll paraphrase the wisdom of my predecessor.  While today is the culmination of your Cranbrook experience, this is not the end nor is it a detour, but an opportunity to charge your battery, refuel and energize.    Our hope is that each of you has developed a trajectory for your work and life.  Treasure your Cranbrook experience because as you look back you will see it as an amazing time—a real opportunity to begin to find your voice.  Don’t forget that with this experience, you’ve learned to think differently. **YOU** are the changemakers of tomorrow .  You are now part of the fabric and the history of the Academy.  Leave here with confidence and come back - **often** - so we might celebrate your future accomplishments.  Congratulations and Thank you all!!