Thank you Dom,

Graduates of the Academy, families and friends, Chris, Salvador, Academy and Museum Administration and Staff, Artists in Residence, Governors and Guests.  On behalf of the Cranbrook Academy of Art and Art Museum Board of Governors I welcome you to our 74 Commencement Ceremony.

As this is my first Commencement Address, in preparation I considered the meaning of today’s event. It is truly a rite of passage AND a time to relax from the trials, tribulations and excitement of the degree show opening.

For research, I consulted with a number of sources including the two greatest treasure troves of knowledge known to modern man - Google and Wikipedia.

I discovered that technically, there is a difference between Commencement and Graduation.

Graduation recognizes that each of you have dealt with those messy requirements which are now in your past - like submitting your thesis and completion of your Degree Project. Commencement, on the other hand, is the ceremony where we pay tribute to the outstanding efforts you have shown in earning your degree and to hopefully provide you with the inspiration to find and address your next challenge.

So what can I say to inspire you - who have given me so much inspiration through your art, architecture and design?

Some of the suggestions I received were to look at commencement addresses given in the past.  I was amazed by the number of websites offering advice on how to compose the best speech or what are the best topics.  The NPR website has excerpts of Commencement Addresses which go back to 1774.

While no one may remember me in 200 plus years, as with many Cranbrook grads, I think that the world will remember you!

Helping put you on that path, has been your relationship with the Cranbrook Artists in Residence.  Not only do they mentor you, providing guidance and direction regarding your work, they lead by example with their own practices in the world of art, architecture and design.  Here are some highlights of our A-I-R’s professional practices and studies this past year.

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, exhibited the solo exhibition, *Flicker and Fade* at the Lawndale Art Center in Houston.  The exhibition showcased his large-scale, wall and floor-based sculptural print installations.

At this time, The Board of Governors congratulates Randy on his retirement this year and recognizes his 14 years of leading the Print Media department.  Thank you, Randy, we all wish you the best in your Texas studio.

With this leadership, each of you has had the opportunity to explore and evolve, create inspiring works of art, design and architecture, and 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.  What now excites me most is looking out into the future as we add your names to this list of Alums who change the world, how we see it and live in it.

To achieve this result I offer two thoughts.  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 of our world - WHY NOT!

In conclusion I will 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.  It is an experience to be preserved for those who follow.  You are now part of the fabric and the history of the Academy.  Come back - often - so we might celebrate your future accomplishments.  Congratulations.