Thank you Dom,

Graduates of the Academy, families and friends, Chris, Victoria, 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 75 Commencement Ceremony.

It seems like yesterday when I faced the Class of 2017 at Academy Day as the new Chair of the Academy Board of Governors, welcoming you to Cranbrook and asking to be considered an unofficial member of the class. At that time, I suggested that you were about to embark upon a unique journey – one which would help you evolve and shape your practices and your lives. Speaking to many of you over the past two years, I am certain it has.

So here we are to pay tribute to the outstanding efforts you have shown in earning your degree, completing your thesis and presenting your culminating work at the Graduate Degree Show. After last evening’s Academy Awards, do we need more celebrating?

I also hope to provide some inspiration as you identify and address your next challenge.

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

One source is the meaningful and hopefully lifelong relationships which you have developed with the Cranbrook Artists in Residence.  As mentors, providing guidance and direction, they lead by example with their own practices in the world of art, architecture and design.  Here are some very brief highlights of our A-I-R’s professional practices and studies this past year.

Elliot Earles our Designer-in-Residence in 2D Design, launched his YouTube series on studio practice which should serve as a great resource as you continue to develop and grow yours. He also launched an exhibition at the Good Weather gallery in Little Rock entitled “Death of a Salesman.”

Scott Klinker, our Designer-in-Residence in 3D Design explored the connection between lighting and painting with his “Lightforms” collection.

Heather McGill, Sculpture Artist-in-Residence, opened her latest solo exhibition, Heather McGill: Familiar to Millions, at Miller Yezerski Gallery in Boston.

Artist-in-Residence in Painting, Beverly Fishman, presented her solo exhibition, DOSE, which was curated by Fiber ’89 alum Nick Cave at at CUE Art Foundation in New York City.

Architect-in-Residence, Bill Massie, was the keynote speaker at the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture while he continues to develop other projects including his Wessen Lawn and Tennis Club in Pontiac.

Anders Ruhwald, our Artist-in-Residence in Ceramics, has continued to balance an amazing international practice with providing exceptional support and encouragement to our students. His project “Unit 1:3583 DuBois” debuted at MOCA Cleveland and his work was included in Milan Design Week.

After completing her solo exhibition, *Him* which opened at Cranbrook Art Museum, Liz Cohen, our Artist-in-Residence in Photography spent the fall 2016 semester on sabbatical working on a new project. We are anxious to hear about it.

After opening her a solo exhibition of new work, *Real*, at the FOG Art Fair in San Francisco, Iris Eichenberg, Artist-in-Residence in Metalsmithing returned from her sabbatical to be selected as a juror for the Susan Beech Mid-Career Artist Grant which awards a $20,000 prize

In addition to his solo exhibition Mark Newport: Mending at “[form & concept](http://www.formandconcept.center/exhibitions/mark-newport-mending/)” in Santa Fe, New Mexico, Fiber Artist-in-Residence, Mark Newport’s work was included in the travelling exhibition *My Hero* which originated in Walnut Creek CA and continued on to stops in Montana, Michigan, South Dakota and West Virginia.

Our Artist-in-Residence in Print Media, Susan Campbell opened an exhibition Chasing Venus: 180 Degrees, at the [David Klein Gallery](https://t.e2ma.net/click/hss0q/56bwjn/td1qtf) in Detroit. In addition she opened shows in Tom Blaess Gallery in Bern, Switzerland and the Penland School of Crafts.

At this time, The Board of Governors celebrate the most meaningful accomplishments of those Artists in Residence who are leaving us this year – our students! Bill, Heather, Anders and Liz have contributed to the careers of many Cranbrook artists, designers and architects with their combined 55 plus years at the Academy. Thank you and we wish you the best in your ongoing endeavors.

With the AIRs and your fellow students, each of you has had the opportunity to explore and evolve, creating inspiring works of art, design and architecture, and forging 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, Binion, and so many more.  But they are the past – YOU are the future and we look to add your names to this list of Alums who change the world, how we see it and live in it.

At commencement last year, I offered two thoughts for our graduates.  I think they bear repeating.

The first came from an 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 came 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!

To these I now add the practical words of MacArthur Binion who said, among other things, when presented with Cranbrook’s Distinguished Alumni Award –

* Being smart isn’t good enough anymore. There are too many smart people around,
* When you’re stuck, you need to just plow through it, and most importantly,
* As an artist you need to be prepared to spend the next 40 years doing what you love – creating art – even if it just for yourself.

In conclusion I offer the following:

Today may be the culmination of your Cranbrook experience, but it is just a step forward in a never ending evolution. Treasure your Cranbrook experience because as you look back you will see it as an amazing time.  You are now part of the fabric and the history of the Academy. It becomes part of who you are - as it has for me – but also, Cranbrook is forever changed by your being here.  Come back - often - so we might celebrate your future accomplishments.  Congratulations.