

Commencement Speech

Given by
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New School of Architecture & Design
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The Poet Arthur O'Shaughnessy wrote: "Each age is a dream that is dying, or one that is coming to birth." As graduates, you are leaving your academic career to be born into an environment full of unimagined challenges and opportunities.

Jonas Salk, upon meeting architect Louis Kahn, said "we have just begun to play." Can there be any doubt as to the timeliness of the partnership created by Jonas Salk's vision to create a unique environment that would serve as a "crucible for creativity" to pursue questions about the basic principles of life. It is indeed fitting that your commencement, the beginning of your life as architects, should be in this hallowed place where play and creativity have produced not only a spectacular and inspiring setting, but a place where scientific creativity of the highest order can be nurtured into applied science. For so too, is your calling to wed science and art with creativity in the field of architecture.

Mexican Architect Luis Barragan, asked by Salk and Kahn to collaborate in the landscaping of this great plaza, said: "Do not put one leaf, nor plant, nor one flower, nor dirt. Absolutely nothing! A plaza will unite the two buildings and at the end, you will see the line of the sea." As graduates, there will be a time when you will see the "line of the sea."

Like Salk and Kahn, Dick Welsh and I "played in the 1970s" as we discussed our vision for a new school of architecture. The vision was simple: prepare graduates to be socially responsible in an ever-changing culturally diverse community. Dick brought his passion for learning from other cultures and I my Cal Poly "learn by doing" philosophy. Only the New School of Architecture had that commitment to communicative design. Today, Dick and I are proud of you.

You have been trained in the architectural passion of your peers to develop your own personal design philosophy. As new graduates, you are being ushered into a new paradigm of environmentally-driven sustainable design values on a global scale. Your vision is needed to allow nature to exist and survive, to slow pollution and depletion of

the earth's resources, and to yield a new set of values about the human right to celebrate life.

Growing up along the beaches of the Southern California coast of the Pacific Ocean, I envisioned an architecture of water, a playful environment constantly in motion and synergy. As graduates, the future you face is one of unprecedented diversity, of biology, of culture, of genetic engineering and synergetics. The same playgrounds Salk and Kahn created 50 years ago. You will be the visionaries who find new solutions to the challenges faced by all but only dimly perceived by most. You will not only rise to the challenges, but seize opportunities for innovation, reshaping the world according to your fresh and unique visions.

A fortune cookie broken open in 1978 by my life partner Nancy carried a message I believe was intended for both of us, so I have kept it ever since. It has moved with me from place to place over the last 30 years and I tape it down in front of me so it is always visible. It reads "commit to your dreams and your passions." The New School of Architecture has prepared you to not bow at the altar of any particular style but to evolve your own theory of human need and willful self-determination through design.

Growing up in the many cultures that make up the American mosaic, you must consider yourselves explorers of the constantly-evolving civilization of the world, beckoned by a frontier spirit of survival that will lead you, not just nationally, but globally, towards the collective enrichment of human happiness.

So, go forward to create environments of unimpeachable integrity that provide safe havens for body, mind and soul. Be playful, be confident, be global, protect your integrity and share your knowledge freely. We who have walked this path before you welcome your energy, your ideas, and your vision of the changing worldwide society that is to be.