

Ronald J. Bitticks
MIAD Emeritus Acceptance
May 9, 2009

Thank you for those kind words, David.

Hello graduating seniors, parents, relatives and friends. Hello, again, to MIAD staff whose hard work this past week has made all this possible. Also, a very special hello to the full-time faculty – colleagues whose dedication, diligence and determination have made MIAD the exemplary institution that it is.

It is a pleasure to be with you all today.

Let me start by saying that I miss the classroom. It was in the classroom that I was able to evidence my passion for painting and infuse the students with that kind of passion as well – those were the moments that were intensely gratifying.

While there are so many examples and memories that I would share with you from my 34 years of teaching, I would like to turn to one memory from my early years that exemplifies how I was also inspired by my students and working in the classroom.

In my first year teaching, I had a student who was struggling; after much work and many studio discussions, she was finally able to master oil glazes. For her final painting, she did a convincing piece in which she captured the color and the light necessary to complete the mood of warmth and mystery she was seeking in an image of a balloon floating down a hallway—she was one of my major successes as she was challenged by having only one eye. Through my encouragement, she overcame her hesitations and challenges to become a successful artist and she continues to be so today. Those are important moments for a professor. That is when I understood that to be a good teacher, I had to be a good listener and a good learner as well.

As the years went on, it was my goal to inspire each student I taught to find his/her vision and to develop the skills necessary to succeed (even excel) as a painter. As I look back, those moments with students stand out as some of the richest moments of my life.

The life of a professor also includes one's colleagues. In the early years here at MIAD, there were very few of us who were members of the faculty. We were a very fierce, dedicated group of educators who provided a superior education to students even as we were developing a fully accredited, independent four-year college of art and design. Those were not easy years, but they were full of creativity, devotion to purpose, and deep friendship. From that blend, the

student body continued to grow and flourish and many of them have formed the art community here in Milwaukee and throughout the country. The graduating seniors today are a part of that tradition and lineage.

I wish to commend my colleague, Professor Ellen Vincent who also is being honored today. Upon arrival, Ellen fit right into the still-developing curriculum and made her mark on the MIAD education and on her fellow educators. She is sadly missed by students, faculty and staff.

So, in closing, it with wholehearted appreciation and pride that I accept this award – it means so very much to me. Professor Vincent and I are the first to be so honored and, as such, this is a very important step in the continuing development of MIAD.

I am sorry that my health prevents me from attending the festivities that follow this ceremony but I will be with you all in spirit.

I look forward to the Fall alumni Exhibition and the opportunity to meet with alumni, faculty and staff once again as an ongoing member of the MIAD family.

Thank you, and my very best wishes to the graduating seniors.