This list was compiled from the Institute’s commencement programs. Some speeches were recorded; please see the archives sound recording index.

1950  Dr. John S. Millis (President of Western Reserve University) “Art and Intellect”

1951  Dr. Wolfgang Stechow (Oberlin College) “Contemporary Challenges and Opportunities”


1953  Professor Raymond T. English (Kenyon College) “Technique and Freedom”

1954  Rev. Laurence H Hall (Senior Canon, Trinity Cathedral, Cleveland)

1955  Harold T. Clark (Trustee, Cleveland Institute of Art; President, Cleveland Museum on Art)

1956  [No Program available to check]

1957  George W. Walker (Vice President and Director of Styling Ford Motor Company) “Designing for Selling”

1958  Sherman E. Lee (Director, The Cleveland Museum of Art)”The Responsibility of the Artist as an Individual”

1959  Nathaniel R. Howard (Editor, The Cleveland News) “The Artist in the Atomic Age”

1960  G. Brooks Earnest (President, Fenn College) “Art and Innovation”

1961  Alfred B. Bonds, Jr. (President, Baldwin Wallace College) “Leprosy and Lollipops”

1962  Frank H. Hurley (Dean, Faculty of Arts And Sciences, Western Reserve University) “The Ordinary and the Extraordinary”

1963  Alfred B. Bonds, Jr. (President Baldwin Wallace College) “Art and The Crisis and Ethics”
1964 Ralph M. Besse (President, The Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company) “A Balanced Culture”

1965 Rowland P. McKinley, Jr. (Headmaster, University School) ‘Some Thoughts For The Creative – By One Who Is Not”

1966 George H. Baird (Executive Director and President, Education Research Council of Greater Cleveland) “Pioneers of Beauty”

1967 Norman L. Rice (Dean, College of Fine Arts, Carnegie Institute of Technology) “First Person, Singular”

1968 Dr. Paul W. Briggs (Superintendent, Cleveland Public Schools) “Creativity”

1969 Dr. Robert Bertolli (President, Massachusetts College of Art and State Director of Art Education) “This Is Our Day”

1970 Hale Chatfield (Assistant Professor of English, Hiram College – Poet and Author) “Art as a Way of Life”

1971 Dr. Sherman Lee (Director, Cleveland Museum of Art) “Eye Object”

1972 Professor Paul B. Arnold (Chairman, Department of Art, Oberlin College) “Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?”

1973 Dr. Roman Vishniac (Photo-Micrographer) “The final goal of our efforts should be the harmonious society and the creative individuum – or else”

1974 Joseph Blotner (Professor of English, University of Michigan) “You are welcome to it”

1975 Walter Darby Bannard (Painter, Art Critic)

1976 Gene Baro (Critic, Writer, Corcoran Gallery of Art Director)

1977 Andrew Forge (Dean, School of Art, Yale University)

1978 James King (Chief Executive Kilkenny Design Workshops Limited)

1979 Gideon Chagy (Vice President The Business Committee for the Arts, New York)
1980  Arnold Herstand (Director, U.S. Office Galerie Maeght Paris, Zurich, Barcelona)
1981  Winfred Lutz (Institute Class of 1965, Gund Traveling Scholar, Director of Studies in Sculpture, Yale School of Art)
1982  William Collins (1982 Visiting Artist)
1983  Benny Andrews (Director, Visual Arts Program National Endowment for the Arts, Washington D.C.)
1984  George V. Baylis (Dean of the School of Art University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, President of the National Association of Schools of Art and Design)
1985  Robert A Mayer (Director International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House, Rochester, New York)
1986  Patterson Sims (Associate Curator, Permanent Collection, Whitney Museum of American Art)
1987  Dr. Theodore E. Klitzke (Dean Emeritus, The Maryland Institute College of Art)
1988  Grace Hartigan (Distinguished Painter, Director, Hoffberger Graduate School of Painting, The Maryland Institute College of Art)
1989  Moe Brooker (International Artist and Educator)
1990  Susan Wyatt (Executive Director Artists Space, New York)
1991  Dennis E. Moore (Producer-Director, Dennis Earl Moore Productions Inc., Distinguished Alumnus, Class of 1966)
1992  Gerald P. Hirshberg (Vice President Nissan Design International, Inc., Distinguished Alumnus)
1993  Dr. Mary Schmidt Campbell (Dean Tish School of the Arts, New York University)
1994  Willis H. (Bing) Davis (Chairman Art Department, Central State University, Wilberforce, Ohio)
1995  Peter B. Lewis (Chairman, President, & CEO Progressive Corporation)
1996    Phillip C. Johnson (Noted Architect)
1997    Elizabeth Murray (Painter)
1998    Dennis Barrie (President, Barrie Consulting)
1999    Garner Tullis (Artist and Collaborator)
2000    Marc Brown (Class of 1969)
2001    John Marshall (Diploma 1964, BFA 1965)
2002    Dave Hickey (Professor of Art and Theory, University of Nevada, Las Vegas)
2003    Anne Wilkes Tucker (Gus and Lyndall Wortham, Curator of Photography, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston)
2004    Gerald P Hirshberg (Class of 1963, 1971, Distinguished Alumnus)
2005    David A. Ross (President Artists' Pension Trust, New York; Principal 5ive [sic]; Curator)
2006    Tucker Viemeister (VP Creative, Studio Red at Rockwell)
2007    Timothy Rub, Director (Cleveland Museum of Art)
2008    John R. Nottingham, John W. Spirk (Class of 1972, Designers)
2009    Bennett Peji (Principal, Bennett Peji Design and Commissioner of Arts and Culture for San Diego)
2010    Catherine Gund (Founder Aubin Pictures)
2011    Lowery Stokes Sims (Charles Bronfman Curator at the Museum of Arts & Design in Manhattan)
2012    Toby Devan Lewis (Curator, Philanthropist, Art Collector, Author)
2013    David Lee Csicsko (Class of 1980, Designer)