

## NEWS RELEASE

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND LETTERS  
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### THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND LETTERS ELECTS NINE NEW MEMBERS

**One artist, one architect, six writers, and one composer honored**

New York, March 27, 2007 – Artist Robert Irwin; architect Billie Tsien; writers Deborah Eisenberg, Mary Gordon, Allan Gurganus, Jim Harrison, Harper Lee, and Annie Proulx; and composer Steven Stucky have been elected to membership in the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Secretary of the Academy, Richard Howard, will induct the nine new members at the Academy's annual Ceremonial in May.

An annual election is held to fill vacancies in the Academy's membership of 250 American artists, architects, writers, and composers. Nominations are first voted on by discipline: art (including architecture), literature, and music. The names of those candidates receiving the highest number of votes are then submitted to the entire membership. The honor of election is considered the highest formal recognition of artistic merit in this country.

The Academy was founded in 1898 to "foster, assist, and sustain an interest in literature, music, and the fine arts." Each year, the Academy honors over 50 artists, architects, writers, and composers (who are not members) with cash awards. The amounts of these prizes range from \$5,000 to \$75,000. Other activities of the Academy are exhibitions of painting, sculpture, architecture, and manuscripts; publications about the Academy's history and events; and, through the Richard Rodgers Awards, readings and performances of new musicals. The American Academy of Arts and Letters is located in two landmark buildings, designed by McKim, Mead & White and by Cass Gilbert, on Audubon Terrace at 155<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway.

## Newly Elected Members of the Academy



Artist ROBERT IRWIN was born in 1928 in Long Beach, California. He was educated in Los Angeles at Otis Art Institute, Jepson Art Institute, and Chouinard's Art Institute. Mr. Irwin is an influential teacher and lecturer with an international reputation for his site-generated works in public spaces. Among his projects are the Central Gardens of the J. Paul Getty Center in Los Angeles, a collaboration with landscape architect Andrew Spurlock; and, in collaboration with the architecture firm OpenOffice, the master plan for Dia Art Foundation's museum in Beacon, New York.



© Anne Stenstad

Architect BILLIE TSIEN was born in Ithaca, New York, in 1949, and educated at Brown University, Yale University, and the University of California. In partnership with her husband, Tod Williams, Ms. Tsien's work includes the Cranbrook Natatorium in Michigan; the American Folk Art Museum in New York City; and the Neurosciences Institute in La Jolla, California.



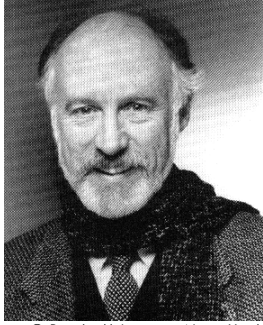
© Diana Michener

Writer DEBORAH EISENBERG was born in Winnetka, Illinois, in 1945, and educated at the New School for Social Research in New York City. She is a professor of creative writing at the University of Virginia. Ms. Eisenberg is the author of five collections of short stories: *Transactions in a Foreign Currency*, *Under the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne*, *The Stories (So Far) of Deborah Eisenberg*, *All Around Atlantis*, and *Twilight of the Superheroes*.



© Emma Dodge Hanson

Writer MARY GORDON was born in Far Rockaway, New York, in 1949. She was educated at Barnard College and Syracuse University. Ms. Gordon is the McIntosh Professor of English at Barnard College. Her works of fiction include *Final Payments*, *The Company of Women, Men and Angels*, *The Other Side*, *Spending: A Utopian Divertimento*, and *Pearl*.



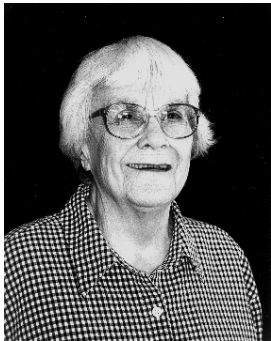
© Beckett Logan, New York

Writer ALLAN GURGANUS was born in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, in 1947, and studied writing at Sarah Lawrence College and the Iowa Writers' Workshop. His works of fiction include *Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All*, *White People*, *The Practical Heart*, and *Plays Well With Others*. Mr. Gurganus is currently working on *The Erotic History of a Southern Baptist Church*, the second part of a trilogy that commenced with *Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All*.



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Writer JIM HARRISON, born in Grayling, Michigan, in 1937, was educated at Michigan State University. A writer of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, his recent works include *The Road Home*, *The Beast God Forgot to Invent: Novellas*, *The Raw and the Cooked: Adventures of a Roving Gourmand*, *Off to the Side: A Memoir*, *The Summer He Didn't Die*, and *Saving Daylight*.



© Gail Fokal

Writer HARPER LEE was born in 1926 in Monroeville, Alabama. She studied at Huntingdon College, University of Alabama, and Oxford University. Ms. Lee was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1961 for *To Kill a Mockingbird*.



© Karen Cipolla

Writer ANNIE PROULX was born in Norwich, Connecticut, in 1935, and educated at Colby College, University of Vermont, and Sir George Williams University in Montreal. Her works of fiction include *Postcards*, *The Shipping News*, *Accordion Crimes*, *Close Range: Wyoming Stories*, *That Old Ace in the Hole*, and *Wyoming Stories 2*.



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Composer STEVEN STUCKY was born in 1949 in Hutchinson, Kansas. He studied at Baylor University and Cornell University. Mr. Stucky serves as the Given Foundation Professor of Composition at Cornell University, and, for more than fifteen years, has been associated with the Los Angeles Philharmonic where he is the Consulting Composer for New Music. He was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 2005 for his *Second Concerto for Orchestra*.