

P O E T R Y



F O U N D A T I O N

Kay Ryan Wins 2004 Ruth Lilly Prize

AWARD OF \$100,000 IS ONE OF THE LARGEST TO POETS

CHICAGO — Kay Ryan, the author of five collections of poetry and recipient of several awards, has won the 2004 Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize. Established in 1986, the Prize is one of the most prestigious given to American poets, and at \$100,000 it is one of the largest literary honors for work in the English language. Christian Wiman, Editor of *Poetry* magazine and chair of the selection committee, made the announcement today. The Prize will be presented at an evening ceremony at The Arts Club in Chicago on May 13th.

Kay Ryan was born in San Jose, California in 1945 and grew up in the small towns of the San Joaquin Valley and the Mojave Desert. She earned her Bachelor's and Master's degrees at the University of California in Los Angeles.

The first of Kay Ryan's five collections of poetry, *Dragon Acts to Dragon Ends*, appeared in 1983 from Taylor Street Press. Subsequent collections include *Strangely Marked Metal* (1985) and *Flamingo Watching* (1994), both from Copper Beech Press, and *Elephant Rocks* (1996) and *Say Uncle* (2000) from Grove Press. She has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ingram Merrill Foundation, and the Guggenheim Foundation. *Flamingo Watching* was a finalist for the Academy of American Poets' Lamont Poetry Selection and the Lenore Marshall Prize in 1995. She has received the Maurice English Poetry Award (2001) and two Pushcart Prizes. Twice selected for the annual Best American Poetry anthology, she has contributed to *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *The American Scholar*, and many other magazines. She has read her poems at the 92nd Street Y in New York and at the Library of Congress in Washington.

Kay Ryan's first appearance in *Poetry* was exactly twenty years ago. There have been many subsequent appearances, including large selections in the November 2003 and April 2004 issues. In 2000 she was awarded the magazine's Union League Civic and Arts Poetry Prize.

Judges for the 2004 Lilly Prize were Eleanor Wilner, Donald Hall, and Christian Wiman. In announcing the award, Christian Wiman noted: "Kay Ryan can take any subject and make it her own. Her poems—which combine extreme concision and formal expertise with broad subjects and deep feeling—could never be mistaken for anyone else's. Her work has the kind of singularity and sustained integrity that are very, very rare, and she is a worthy recipient of the Ruth Lilly Prize."

ABOUT RUTH LILLY AND THE RUTH LILLY PRIZE

American poetry has no greater friend than Ruth Lilly. Over many years and in many ways, it has been blessed by her personal generosity. In 1985 she endowed the Ruth Lilly Professorship in Poetry at Indiana University. In 1989 she created two Ruth Lilly Fellowships, for \$15,000 each, given annually by the Poetry Foundation to undergraduate or graduate students selected through a national competition. In 2001 her lifetime engagement with poetry culminated in a magnificent bequest which will enable the Poetry Foundation to promote, in perpetuity, a vigorous presence for poetry in our culture.

The Lilly prize was established in 1986 by Ruth Lilly to honor a U.S. Poet whose accomplishments warrant extraordinary recognition. The \$100,000 prize is sponsored by the Poetry Foundation, publisher of *Poetry* magazine. This is the nineteenth of the Ruth Lilly prizes, totaling \$1,700,000, since 1986. The judges for the 2004 prize were Donald Hall (a Lilly prize winner (1994) with numerous awards and poetry volumes); Eleanor Wilner (Smith College Writer-in-Residence, recipient of several awards and four volumes of poetry); and Christian Wiman (Editor of *Poetry*, author of numerous articles and a book of poetry with two more books scheduled for 2005 publication). Previous recipients of the Ruth Lilly Prize are Adrienne Rich, Philip Levine, Anthony Hecht, Mona Van Duyn, Hayden Carruth, David Wagoner, John Ashbery, Charles Wright, Donald Hall, A.R. Ammons, Gerald Stern, William Matthews, W. S. Merwin, Maxine Kumin, Carl Dennis, Yusef Komunyakaa, Lisel Mueller, and Linda Pastan.

ABOUT POETRY AND THE POETRY FOUNDATION

Founded in Chicago by Harriet Monroe in 1912, *Poetry* is the oldest monthly devoted to verse in the English-speaking world. The magazine established its reputation early by publishing the first important poems of T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, and other Modernists and in succeeding decades has presented—often for the first time—works by virtually every significant poet of the twentieth century. *Poetry* now has the largest circulation of the little magazines, and is distributed throughout the United States and in forty-five countries.

The Poetry Foundation publishes *Poetry* magazine and administers the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize. Enabled by Ruth Lilly's bequest, the Foundation in coming years will greatly expand its programs in support of poetry.