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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FOUNDATION FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS
ANNOUNCES THE CREATION OF
THE C.D. WRIGHT AWARD FOR POETRY
AND INAUGURAL RECIPIENT

New York, NY, December 20, 2017 – Foundation for Contemporary Arts (FCA) is pleased to announce a \$1 million endowment gift from artists Ellsworth Kelly (1923–2015) and Jack Shear to establish an annual \$40,000 C.D. WRIGHT AWARD FOR POETRY. The award will be made each year to a poet over the age of 50 whose work exemplifies Wright’s vibrant lyricism, seriousness, and striking originality. It will be one of the few, significant unrestricted poetry awards in the country. The inaugural C.D. Wright Award will be made to poet LISA ROBERTSON.

The C.D. Wright Award for Poetry will be administered through FCA’s distinguished Grants to Artists program, which was established in 1993 to provide unrestricted cash awards to individual artists in all disciplines. Confidential nominations are accepted from invited artists and arts professionals once a year. In the field of poetry, two established poets, poetry editors, or poetry professors are asked to review nomination materials for each poetry nominee, confer, and make a joint recommendation to the Selection Committee, which is comprised of artists, arts professionals, and FCA’s Board of Directors. Thus, grantees receive the inestimable encouragement that comes with recognition by their peers.

The C.D. Wright Award for Poetry is created in memory of the beloved poet, who was herself a recipient of a Grants to Artists award in 1999 and who passed away in 2016 at the age of 67. Wright was a selfless champion of the poetry community. She was a tireless teacher and supporter of young poets as the I.J. Kapstein Professor of Literary Arts at Brown University from 1983 until her death. With her husband, the poet Forrest Gander, she founded and ran Lost Roads Publishers, a book press of some 45 titles. In addition to celebrating the spirit of her own work, The C.D. Wright Award for Poetry will also continue Wright’s deep commitment to supporting her peers.

“I’ve known that she was of signal importance to poets around the world—the first tribute/memorial organized for C.D. was in Stockholm—but the fact of this award coming from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, an advocate for all arts, that means the most to me,” said Gander.

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The C.D. Wright Award for Poetry is the first award named for a poet and restricted to support poets at FCA. The Grants to Artists program supports artists working in dance, music/sound, performance art/theater, poetry, and the visual arts. While one or more poets are usually selected as Grants to Artists recipients, the number of selections made in any of the five fields is determined by the strength of the candidates and FCA's resources in any given year. This extraordinary gift guarantees that at least one, unrestricted \$40,000 Grants to Artists award will be made in poetry every year.

"Ellsworth was an avid reader—poetry, fiction, art books and exhibition catalogs were stacked on every table," said Jack Shear. "I know the poetry of C.D. Wright and Forrest Gander could be found in those piles. The C.D. Wright Award for Poetry will support the poets whose books will cover a future reader's table, while honoring C.D.'s life's work and her support of other poets."

"The C.D. Wright Award for Poetry marks Ellsworth Kelly's and Jack Shear's second major contribution to FCA," said Stacy Tenenbaum Stark, Executive Director of the Foundation for Contemporary Arts. "Their deep understanding of the artist community has once again produced a visionary opportunity for artists. It is doubly meaningful that this award is named for C.D. Wright, a past grantee of the Foundation, and that it will support poetry, a vital and under-resourced artistic discipline. We are thrilled that the first C.D. Wright Award will be made to Lisa Robertson."

Born in Canada, Lisa Robertson is an experimental poet now based in France. The 2018 poetry advisors to FCA's selection process, poets Tonya Foster and Peter Gizzi, noted, "Lisa has found a form, a force, a method, and a voice distinctly and brilliantly her own. She does this by massing language that is at once percussive and rhythmic, archaic in its feel but deploying an utterly contemporary diction and mood. Her poems are compelling reads and never stint on intellection. They please as they muse and weave various affective philosophical speech acts."

ABOUT C.D. WRIGHT



C.D. Wright with her dog, Jackie, 2002.

C.D. Wright (1949-2016) was a poet whose work has a deep connection to the Ozarks, although she spent significant periods in New York and San Francisco before moving to Rhode Island in 1983.

Wright authored several book-length poems, including *Just Whistle* (1993) and *Deepstep Come Shining* (1998). Her 1999 Grants to Artists award supported *One Big Self: An Investigation* (2007), a project that she undertook with photographer Deborah Luster to document Louisiana prisons. Subsequent to her FCA grant, Wright published *Steal Away* (2002), a volume of selected poems, and the books *Like Something Flying Backwards: New and Selected Poems* (2003) and *Rising, Falling, Hovering* (2008). Her poems and essays have appeared in *American Letters & Commentary*, *Arschile*,

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Brick, *Conjunctions*, and *Sulfur*, among other publications. Wright composed and published two State literary maps, one for Arkansas, her native state, and one for Rhode Island, her adopted state.

After receiving her 1999 Grants to Artists award, Wright went on to be named a MacArthur Fellow in 2004; she was given the Robert Creeley Award and elected to membership in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2005; and her volume of poetry *Rising, Falling, Hovering* (2008) won the International Griffin Poetry Prize in 2009. Wright's *One With Others: [a little book of her days]* was a finalist for the 2010 National Book Award in Poetry; in 2011 it was awarded a National Book Critics Circle Award for Poetry and the Lenore Marshall Prize from the Academy of American Poets. In 2013, she was elected a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets. Before her 1999 FCA grant, Wright was named State Poet of Rhode Island from 1994 to 1999. Among her honors then were two National Endowment for the Arts Grants, in 1982 and 1989; a 1987 John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship; and a 1999 Lannan Literary Award.

Wright received a B.A. in French from the University of Memphis in 1971 and an M.F.A. from the University of Arkansas in 1976. At the time of her death she was the I.J. Kapstein Professor of Literary Arts at Brown University. With her husband, poet Forrest Gander, Wright founded and ran Lost Roads Press for over twenty years. Her son with Gander is the artist-designer Brecht Wright Gander.

ABOUT LISA ROBERTSON

Lisa Robertson's work developed among a community of poets and artists in Vancouver, Canada, where she began to publish in the early 1990s. Her first book of poetry, *XEclogue* (New Star Books, 1993), launched her study of the historical dynamics of gender in classical poetry forms. As a long time member of the experimental collective Kootenay School of Writing, an independent bookseller, the editor of little magazines, and a frequent collaborator with visual artists, from the beginning Robertson's work in poetry has been informed by her engagement in art communities as an organizer, essayist, and teacher. A group of these early texts for the arts was published as *Occasional Works and Seven Walks for the Office for Soft Architecture* (Clear Cut Press, 2003).

Much of Robertson's life in poetry outside institutions has been made possible by a series of arts awards from the Canada Council of the Arts, beginning in 1995, when she wrote her second book *Debbie: An Epic* (New Star Books, 1997), which was shortlisted for the 1998 Governor General's Award for Poetry in Canada. In 1998, she was the Judith E. Wilson Visiting Fellow in Poetry at the University of Cambridge. The book that emerged from this residency, *The Weather* (New Star Books, 2001), an experimental study of the language of meteorology in daily life, history, and politics, has also been published in translation in French and Swedish.

In 2014, Robertson was the Bain-Swiggett Visiting Professor of Poetry at Princeton University, and the Allen Ginsberg Visiting Fellow at Naropa University. In 2015, she was the Pearl Andelson Sherry Poet-In-Residence at the University of Chicago. Her eighth book of poetry, *3 Summers* (Coach House Books, 2016), received extended reviews in *Artforum* and *Los Angeles Review of Books*. Robertson is the recipient of an Honorary Doctorate in Letters from Emily Carr University of Art and Design (2017).

Since 2004, Robertson has lived in rural France. She frequently travels to art colleges and universities across Europe, the United States, and Canada as a freelance teacher and lecturer, translates poetry and

linguistics from French to English, and writes essays for gallery and museum publications while continuing her independent work in poetry.

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS

Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts was established in 1963 by the artists John Cage (1912-1992) and Jasper Johns. At that time, some emerging visual artists were beginning to experience modest financial success, while many of their peers working in dance, music, and theater struggled to find funding to present their work. Cage and Johns decided to organize a benefit exhibition at the Allan Stone Gallery to support their colleagues in the performance arts. Lee Bontecou, Elaine de Kooning, Willem de Kooning, Marcel Duchamp, Alex Katz, Ellsworth Kelly, Roy Lichtenstein, Marisol, Barnett Newman, Claes Oldenburg, Robert Rauschenberg, James Rosenquist, Frank Stella, Elaine Sturtevant, and Andy Warhol were among the 67 artists who contributed to this landmark show. With proceeds from the exhibition, the Foundation began making grants to individual artists.

Now known as the Foundation for Contemporary Arts (FCA), its mission is to encourage, sponsor, and promote innovative work in the arts created and presented by individuals, groups, and organizations. FCA's unrestricted, by-nomination grants support pioneering work across the fields of dance, music/sound, performance art/theater, poetry, and the visual arts. Established in 1993, the Grants to Artists program provides recipients with the financial means to engage in whatever artistic endeavors they wish to pursue. Each year, a group of artists and arts professionals are invited by FCA to propose one artist, collective, or performing group whom they believe would benefit from an award. The confidential submissions are then reviewed by an advisory panel comprised of artists, arts professionals, and FCA's Board of Directors and the recipients are selected. FCA also assists artists and collectives who are in need of urgent work-related funding through the Emergency Grants program; requests are reviewed monthly by a volunteer panel of established artists that typically awards grants of between \$500 and \$2,500. More than 2,800 grants awarded to artists and arts organizations—totaling over \$12 million—have provided opportunities for creative exploration and development. To date, nearly 1,000 artists have made these grants possible by contributing paintings, sculptures, drawings, prints, and photographs to the fifteen benefit exhibitions held over the years.

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