



PRESS RELEASE: Wednesday 30 June 2010

Philip Gross wins Wales Book of the Year 2010

£10,000 Welsh award goes to poet who won this year's
T S Eliot poetry prize

Poet Philip Gross has won the Wales Book of the Year 2010 for *I Spy Pinhole Eye* - a collection of poems written to accompany Simon Denison's pinhole photography - published by Cinnamon Press. Gross's poetry collection *The Water Table* won the 2010 T S Eliot Prize earlier this year.

The announcement was made tonight, Wednesday 30 June, at a Gala Dinner at St David's Hotel in Cardiff, introduced by BBC Wales Political Editor, Betsan Powys.

Gross was presented with the £10,000 prize by Minister for Heritage, Alun Ffred Jones.

I Spy Pinhole Eye is a collaborative work between poet and photographer. Simon Denison uses a pinhole camera to transform that most mundane of objects – the footings of electricity pylons - while Philip Gross's poems explore the act of seeing and interpretation.

Poet and critic George Szirtes wrote in his introduction to the book: 'What Denison presents – the dark rootings of steel and concrete; the feeling of something slamming into the earth, establishing its narrow vocabulary of grass, stone, mould, leaf, strut... moves through the clarity, steadiness and humaneness of Philip Gross's verbal imagination to create something new.'

The judges for the 2010 English-language Award are poet and lecturer at the University of Wales, **Ian Gregson (Chair)**; fiction writer, **James Hawes** and broadcaster **Sara Edwards**.

The winner of the Welsh-language award, who also received a £10,000 prize, was **John Davies** for his book *Cymru: Y 100 lle i'w gweld cyn marw* published by Y Lolfa.

The Welsh-language judges were **John Gwilym Jones**, **Aled Lewis Evans** and **Branwen Gwyn**.

Judge of the English-language prize **James Hawes** commented:

‘Anyone who thinks literary prizes are stitch-ups should have been in the room with us this afternoon. It was a close-fought battle with no unanimous agreement in the end so the winner is on a 2-1 majority verdict. We hope that Philip will relish the fact that this was a real five-set tussle not a straight sets walkover. I am personally delighted that we are making this award to a writer who his other recent collection confirms at the very top of his game.’

Peter Finch, Academi Chief Executive commented:

‘The most difficult task in the world is to decide between poetry and prose, compounded in the case of this year’s Book of the Year award by one of those prose works being a critical study. However after long debate the judges have chosen what is clearly one of the best books of poetry to come out of Wales this year.’

Nick Capaldi, Chief Executive, Arts Council of Wales said:

‘The quality and diversity of this year’s entries has not only demonstrated the strength and vibrancy of Welsh writing, it has also set a remarkably high standard. The books which have featured in this prestigious competition are excellent examples of the growing confidence in what the arts can deliver in and for Wales and shows that literature in Wales is vibrant and thriving.’

The **Media Wales People’s Choice Prize**, which was chosen by the public via an online poll for the second year running, was awarded to poet **Richard Marggraf Turley** for *Wan Hu’s Flying Chair* published by Salt. Karen Price, Chief Arts Correspondent of the *Western Mail*, presented the trophy. The Welsh language Readers’ prize sponsored by Golwg went to **Manon Steffan Ros** for *Fel Aderyn* published by Y Lolfa, presented by Gwynfryn Evans.

Actor Steffan Rhodri, best known for his role in the hit TV series *Gavin & Stacey*, was the guest speaker.

The Wales Book of the Year is administered by Academi and funded by the Arts Council of Wales through its income from the Welsh Assembly Government.

Philip Gross is the author of poetry, fiction and drama for children and adults and Professor of Creative Writing at Glamorgan University. He was born in 1952 in Delabole, Cornwall, the only son of a wartime refugee from Estonia, and grew up in Plymouth. He has written twelve poetry collections, including *The Water Table* which won the T S Eliot Prize 2010. He lives in Penarth. **Simon Denison** is a lecturer in the history and interpretation of photography at Birmingham City University’s Institute of Art and Design and the author of two photographic books, *The Human Landscape* (2002) and *Quarry Land* (2005). He lives in Shropshire.

Notes to Editors:

Wales Book of the Year Award

- The Wales Book of the Year prizes are awarded annually to the best Welsh language and English language works in the fields of creative writing and literary criticism. They are administered by the Academi with funding from the Arts Council of Wales.

- Prizes are awarded for the best books published in the previous calendar year, with £10,000 each awarded to the two winning titles. The two runners up in each category also receive £1,000.
- The shortlist for this year's award was *I Spy Pinhole Eye* by Philip Gross (Cinnamon Press); *The Oldest Prose Literature: The Compilation of the Four Branches of the Mabinogi* by Nikolai Tolstoy (Edwin Mellen Press) and *Carry Me Home* by Terri Wiltshire (Macmillan New Writing).
- Academi would like to point out that Wales Book of the Year is a literature prize, and judges award the author's work only. The judges did not consider any images or introductions that happened to be included in the books whilst judging.
- The award began in 1992. Previous English-language award winners include **Dannie Abse** (*The Presence*, 2008), **Lloyd Jones** (*Mr Cassini*, 2007), **Robert Minhinnick** (*To Babel and Back*, 2006), **Owen Sheers** (*The Dust Diaries*, 2005) and **Niall Griffiths** (*Stump*, 2004).
- The 2009 winners were **Deborah Kay Davies** for *Grace, Tamar and Laszlo the Beautiful* (Parthian) and **William Owen Roberts** for *Petrograd* (Barddas).

Academi

- Yr Academi Gymreig is the Welsh National Literature Development Agency and Society for Authors. It was established in 1959, following discussions between Bobi Jones and Waldo Williams.
- In 1998 the Society's role increased greatly when it won the Arts Council of Wales franchise to become Wales' National Literature Promotion Agency.
- The Academi works in partnership with Tŷ Newydd Writing Centre in Llanystumdwy. The Academi works with the support of the Arts Council of Wales.
- The Academi is responsible for organising the Wales Book of the Year award, literary events (conferences, dinners, poetry tours, lectures), writers' bursaries, Writing Squads and various support schemes.
- Chief Executive is the writer and literary entrepreneur Peter Finch.
- The Academi has joined the Urdd, Diversions, Welsh National Opera and other organisations at the Wales Millennium Centre where it runs the Glyn Jones Centre.

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Copies of the books, images and author photos are available on request.