

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AMERICAN ACADEMY IN ROME APPOINTS JOHN OCHSENDORF AS 23rd DIRECTOR



John Ochsendorf (Photo: Alan Silfen)

ROME and NEW YORK, 23 January 2017 — The American Academy in Rome announced today that John Ochsendorf, a preservation engineer, historian, and educator, has been selected as the 23rd Director of the Academy. The appointment, which is based in Rome, was announced by AAR President and CEO Mark Robbins, with a term beginning July 1, 2017. Ochsendorf succeeds Kimberly Bowes, who will return to her faculty position as Associate Professor in the Department of Classical Studies at the University of Pennsylvania after her three-year term.

“The breadth of John’s experience makes him an ideal choice,” said Robbins. “His rigorous intellect and administrative abilities will further the support of our Fellows, engaging them fully in the AAR community, the city of Rome, and throughout the Mediterranean basin. He will also be a great partner for the staff and Board in reinforcing awareness of AAR’s global impact.”

Dr. Ochsendorf is the Class of 1942 Professor of Architecture and Civil and Environmental Engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He received a B.Sc. from Cornell University in 1996, a M.Sc. from Princeton University in 1998, and Ph.D. from Cambridge University in 2002. Known for his research on the mechanics and behavior of historical structures, with a primary focus on the collapse of masonry structures, Ochsendorf is a 2008 Rome Prize Fellow in Historic Preservation with a project on the study of masonry vaulting. In 2008 he was named a MacArthur Fellow for his pioneering work using comparative cultural and historical studies to explore pre-industrial engineering traditions.

“Selecting from a large and competitive pool of candidates, the Search Committee was compelled by John’s outstanding research activity and academic experience, as well as his deep enthusiasm for the Academy,” said Mary Margaret Jones, chair of the AAR Board of Trustees. “We are delighted to welcome John and look forward to the energy and expertise

that he will bring to this role. We also thank members of the Search Committee for their very thoughtful feedback during this process.”

Author of the monograph *Guastavino Vaulting: The Art of Structural Tile* (Princeton Architectural Press, 2010), Ochsendorf served as lead curator for the National Endowment for the Humanities-sponsored exhibition *Palaces for the People: Guastavino and America’s Great Public Spaces*. As a designer, he contributed to the masonry vaulting of the Mapungubwe Interpretative Centre in South Africa, which was named “World Building of the Year” at the World Architecture Festival in 2009, as well as two major installations at the Venice Biennale of Architecture in 2016. He is a founding partner of the consultancy firm Ochsendorf, DeJong and Block, and in 2011 was named a Senior Fellow of the Design Futures Council.

“The Academy is one of the most vibrant scholarly and creative communities anywhere in the world. I am extremely grateful for my time there as a Fellow and I am looking forward to giving back to the Academy,” said Ochsendorf. “This is an exciting time for AAR and I am humbled to be entrusted with the stewardship of the next chapter in its distinguished history.”

AMERICAN ACADEMY IN ROME / THE ROME PRIZE

Founded in 1894, the American Academy in Rome is a leading international center for independent study and advanced research in the arts and humanities. A not-for-profit, privately funded institution, AAR annually offers the Rome Prize Fellowship and Italian Fellowships to a select group of artists and scholars, after an application process that begins each fall. The winners, selected by independent juries through a national competition process, are invited to Rome the following year to pursue their work in an atmosphere conducive to intellectual and artistic experimentation and interdisciplinary exchange. Fellowships are offered in the following categories: Literature, Music Composition, Visual Arts, Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Design, and Historic Preservation and Conservation, as well as Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance and Early Modern, and Modern Italian Studies. To date, AAR has fueled critical thinking, research, and work for over 1,700 artists and scholars who are leaders in their fields and whose rich and significant output continues to fill museums, concert halls, libraries, and universities across the U.S., and around the world.

In addition to the Rome Prize winners and Italian Fellows, AAR also invites a select group of Residents, Affiliated Fellows, and Visiting Artists and Scholars to work within this exceptional community in Rome.

To learn more about the Rome Prize, Italian Fellowship or programs at the American Academy in Rome, please visit: www.aarome.org.

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