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Contact: Jaime Marland
401.427.6954
jmarland@risd.edu

**Gore Vidal, Renowned Essayist and Novelist, to Give
2007 Commencement Address at Rhode Island School of Design**

Gore Vidal will receive an honorary degree,
along with pioneer film director/cinematographer **Richard Leacock** and
animator/*Family Guy* creator and RISD alumnus **Seth MacFarlane**

PROVIDENCE, RI – On Saturday, June 2, at 10am, graduating students from Rhode Island School of Design will receive their hard-earned diplomas. The 426 undergraduates and 168 graduate students will gather at the First Baptist Church at 75 North Main Street, where the processional will work its way down to the Providence riverwalk.

The annual RISD Commencement ceremony is held outdoors on South Water Street, at the southern rim of RISD's urban campus. The elements experienced at last year's event proved that, be it rain or shine, nothing can put a damper on the jubilant celebration. RISD Commencement is a true representation of the students' time spent at RISD, where their spirits of individuality and creative minds come to life via both playful and innovative costumes created specially for the occasion and the thoughtful decoration of otherwise traditional caps and gowns.

As part of the outdoor ceremony, RISD also confers honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degrees on exceptional individuals who have made groundbreaking contributions to the world of art and design. This year three people from entirely different disciplines will join in the festivities and accept honorary degrees: **Richard Leacock**, **Seth MacFarlane [RISD BFA '95, Film/Animation/Video]** and **Gore Vidal**, who will also deliver the keynote address.

A series of exhibitions by graduating students will lead up to Commencement this spring, including the *Senior Invitational Exhibition* at Woods-Gerry Gallery, the *RISD Graduate Student Exhibition* at the Rhode Island Convention Center (Hall C), another graduate student show at Sol Koffler Graduate Student Gallery and the Senior Film/Animation/Video Festival at the RISD Auditorium. For more on RISD's 2007 Commencement, go to www.risd.edu/risd_commencement.cfm.

Richard Leacock

Committed to conveying the sense of “being there,” documentary filmmaker Richard Leacock was a pioneer in the *cinéma vérité* (or “direct cinema”) movement of the 1960s. After tinkering with filmmaking as a teenager, graduating from Harvard University and serving as a combat cameraman during World War II, he got his professional start working for Robert and Frances Flaherty on the dramatized documentary classic *Louisiana Story* (1946). Leacock continued to collaborate with like-minded filmmakers and in 1960 joined Robert Drew in Drew Associates to focus on “making experiments in journalism.” With their innovative *Living Camera* series (1961–62), they refined the art of using hand-held cameras and synch sound. In 1963 he formed Leacock Pennebaker Inc. with D.A. Pennebaker and continued to produce compelling films such as *A Stravinsky Portrait* (1965), *Ku Klux Klan—Invisible Empire* (1965) and *Old Age, The Wasted Years* (1966). For almost 20 years Leacock taught filmmaking at Massachusetts Institute of Technology; after retiring in 1988, he moved to France, where he began making films on Video-8 with his partner and colleague Valerie Lalonde. A brilliant essayist and film theoretician, Leacock has influenced generations of younger filmmakers and continues to advocate for low-budget, director-distributed films.

Seth MacFarlane

A young force in the entertainment industry, Seth MacFarlane [RISD BFA '95, Film/Animation/Video] is the creative genius behind the popular animated sitcom *Family Guy* and the newer Fox favorites *American Dad* and *The Winner*. He is also one of the most versatile talents in television, working as a producer, writer, animator, voice actor and lyricist. Just three years after graduation, MacFarlane became the youngest executive producer on TV when he struck a multimillion-dollar deal with the Fox Network to adapt his RISD senior thesis film into the irreverent series *Family Guy*. The series has since earned an ardent fan base for pushing the envelope in animated comedy and became the fourth largest-selling TV series ever on DVD. In addition to writing and directing the show, MacFarlane provides voices for three of the main characters and in 2000 won an Emmy for one of these — the diabolical baby, Stewie Griffin.

Gore Vidal

Writer Gore Vidal is something of a giant in post-World War II-era American literature. Best known for substantial novels produced “with massive authority,” he has also written dozens of television plays, film scripts, three mystery novels under a pseudonym and more than 100 essays, which earned him the National Book Award in 1993. His satirical novels — *Myra Breckinridge* (1968), *Duluth* (1983), *Live from Golgotha* (1992) — have appealed to readers worldwide for their progressive themes and ferociously bitter and subversive prose. But critics predict that Vidal’s major sequence of seven novels about American history — including *Washington, D.C.* (1967), *1876* (1976), *Lincoln* (1984), *The Golden Age* (2000) — will be remembered as the pinnacle of his achievement in fiction. The *American Masters* series on PBS summed up the author’s career by noting: “Taken as a whole, this seemingly varied work has an uncanny unity, exhibiting a tone of easy familiarity with the world of politics and letters, an urbane wit, and a supreme self-confidence on the part of the writer.”

About RISD

Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) has earned a worldwide reputation as the preeminent art and design college in the country. Today, with more than 17,000 alumni, the college enrolls roughly 1,900 undergraduates and 375 graduate students from the United States and almost 50 countries, offering degree programs in the fine arts, architecture, and design disciplines, and art education. Academic programs include research and design initiatives, the exploration of art criticism and contemporary cultural concerns, as well as international exchange programs. Each year, RISD hosts prominent and accomplished artists, critics, and authors to its campus. Included within the college is The RISD Museum of Art, which houses a world-class collection of art objects from Ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome and art of all periods from Asia, Europe and the Americas, as well as the latest in contemporary art. For more information go to www.risd.edu.

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