Renowned Architect and Designer Michael Graves to Speak at Philadelphia University Commencement on May 20


PHILADELPHIA, May 20, 2007 – Michael Graves, an internationally renowned architect who also is lauded for his line of highly styled home products, will speak at Philadelphia University’s 123rd Commencement May 20 at the Mann Center for the Performing Arts.

The architect is the founding principal for two design firms, Michael Graves & Associates, the architecture and interior design practices, and Michael Graves Design Group, the product design and graphic design practices. He was awarded the 2001 American Institute of Architects Gold Medal and the 1999 National Medal of Arts.

Graves is perhaps as well known for such buildings as the Swan and Dolphin Hotels in Disney World and the World Bank Group’s International Finance Corporation headquarters in Washington, D.C., as he is for his iconic Alessi whistling bird teapot. His firms have received more than 180 awards for design excellence. At Commencement, Graves will be awarded the honorary degree Doctor of Humane Letters.

“We are pleased that Michael Graves – a respected and talented architect who has made great design available to people everywhere – will speak at Commencement,” said Philadelphia University President James P. Gallagher, Ph.D. “I am quite sure his insights will resonate with our graduates as they prepare to transition from college life to the working world.”

Graves’ firms, with offices in Princeton, N.J., and New York, have undertaken a wide variety of architectural projects worldwide, including corporate headquarters, museums, sports facilities, libraries, campus buildings, hotels, restaurants, retail stores and housing.

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In addition, his firms have designed more than 1,800 consumer products, including building components such as lighting, hardware, bath and kitchen products, and a wide variety of products for home and office use that are sold at stores such as Target.

From early projects such as the award-winning Humana Building in Louisville, Ky., which was completed in the 1980s, to more recent work such as the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport in The Hague, MGA has directly influenced the transformation of urban architecture’s abstract modernism toward more contextual responses. Other notable projects include the Philadelphia Eagles/NovaCare Training Center, the NCAA Hall of Champions in Indianapolis and the Three on the Bund Arts Center in Shanghai.

Graves received his architectural training at the University of Cincinnati and Harvard University. In 1960, he won the Rome Prize and studied at the American Academy in Rome, for which he now serves as Trustee. In 1962, Graves began a nearly 40-year teaching career at Princeton University, where he is now the Robert Schirmer Professor of Architecture, Emeritus. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects.

At Commencement, Elliot L. Shelkrot, president and director of the Free Library of Philadelphia, and RoseAnn B. Rosenthal, president and chief executive officer of Ben Franklin Technology Partners of Southeastern Pennsylvania, also will receive the honorary degree, Doctor of Humane Letters.

Since 1987, Shelkrot has initiated a wide range of innovative programs to increase library services. Under his leadership, all of the library’s community branches have been renovated, millions of dollars have been raised for the Library’s Foundation and the library system has become the largest provider of free internet access in the city. In addition, Shelkrot recently launched the process to build a 160,000-square-foot addition to the Central Library designed by renowned architect Moshe Safdie.

Rosenthal leads a group dedicated to the growth of Pennsylvania’s technology-based economy, working to ensure that emerging technology firms have access to the resources they need to be efficient, competitive and successful in the global marketplace. Rosenthal, who has expertise in science- and technology-based economic development, has held positions on state and national task forces, including the National Science Foundation’s Advisory Committee for Small Business Innovation Research, and is a board member of the World Trade Center of Greater Philadelphia.

Philadelphia University’s commencement will be held at the Mann Center for the Performing Arts in Philadelphia’s Fairmount Park at 11 a.m. on Sunday, May 20.

Philadelphia University, founded in 1884, is a private university with 3,200 full- and part-time students enrolled in more than 40 undergraduate and graduate programs. The University includes Schools of Architecture, Business Administration, Design and Media, Engineering and Textiles, Liberal Arts and Science and Health.