

## **Frank Gehry** **1989 Laureate** **Ceremony Acceptance Speech**

Colleagues and friends, I am very happy ... I am unbelievably happy ... I love being here in Japan ... especially today at Todai-ji Temple. Today is a special honor for me, to receive this important prize.

I am obsessed with architecture. It is true, I am restless, trying to find myself as an architect, and how best to contribute in this world filled with contradiction, disparity, and inequality, even passion and opportunity. It is a world in which our values and priorities are constantly being challenged. It is simplistic to expect a single right answer. Architecture is a small piece of this human equation, but for those of us who practice it, we believe in its potential to make a difference, to enlighten and to enrich the human experience, to penetrate the barriers of misunderstanding and provide a beautiful context for life's drama.

I was trained early in my career by a Viennese master to make perfection, but in my first projects, I was not able to find the craft to achieve that perfection. My artist friends, people like Jasper Johns, Bob Rauschenberg, Ed Kienholz, Claes Oldenburg, were working with very inexpensive materials—broken wood and paper, and they were making beauty. These were not superficial details, they were direct; it raised the question of what was beautiful. I chose to use the craft available, and to work with the craftsmen and make a virtue out of their limitations.

Painting had an immediacy that I craved for architecture. I explored the processes of raw construction materials to try giving feeling and spirit to form. In trying to find the essence of my own expression, I fantasized the artist standing before the white canvas deciding what was the first move. I called it the moment of truth.

Architecture must solve complex problems. We must understand and use technology, we must create buildings that are safe and dry, respectful of context and neighbors, and face all the myriad of issues of social responsibility, and even please the client.

But then what? The moment of truth, the composition of elements, the selection of forms, scale, materials, color, finally, all the same issues facing the painter and the sculptor. Architecture is surely an art, and those who practice the art of architecture are surely architects.

Our problems as architects increase in complexity as time goes on. We have difficulty with the art of city building. We are finding ways of working together, artists and architects, architects and architects, clients and architects. The dream is that each brick, each window, each wall, each road, each tree will be placed lovingly by craftsmen, client, architect, and people to create beautiful cities. Adding the extra time and the money at the beginning is essential. This very temple, Todai-ji, is a symbol of a great collaborative effort in its time, bringing together many thousands of people and talents to create incredible and lasting beauty.

It is coincidental but fitting for me to receive the Pritzker Award in Japan. Trained in Southern California in the presence of many works inspired from Japanese architecture—Green and Green, Harwell Hamilton Harris, Gordon Drake, many others. Some of these were my teachers and they trained us to look at Japanese architecture and understand it. I was seduced by the order of Ryoanji long before the Parthenon, and to this day, I believe those early foundations are in my work.

Today, American architects are working in Japan, Japanese architects are working in America, and all of us are working everywhere around the world. We are understanding and respecting each other and our values and cultures.

**Frank Gehry, 1989 Laureate (continued)**

Today, the Pritzker Prize brings me great honor. Acknowledgment by an important jury for the work I have been doing is gratifying, but does not engender complacency. I know these people, the jury that is, they have expectations—don't rest on your laurels, get to work.

Former laureates have gone on to do magnificent projects, and that is the challenge, to do better and finally bring greater honor to this prize, and that is what I intend to do.

I thank the Pritzker family for supporting architecture with this prize. And to all the people who have contributed in my life ... to making this honor possible, the artists and the cultures that inspired me and to my family whose loving attention and support has been extraordinary.

Since the announcement of this award, I have been asked many times by reporters what I intend to do with the money. I have said, that of course I'm going to finish my house and tear down the construction fence.

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