

Jay A. Pritzker 1993 Laureate Fumihiko Maki Ceremony Speech

President Havel, Ambassador Asomura, Ambassador Basora, and other honored guests, we have gathered here tonight to honor a man who has been praised for combining the best of both eastern and western cultures—in a field that has been variously described through history as a science, a craft, a technology, an art—indeed, as the mother of all the arts—architecture.

That was how newsman Edwin Newman defined it when we celebrated the tenth anniversary of the prize with a television symposium in 1990 titled Architecture and the City, Friends or Foes?

Mother of all the arts or not, at the very least everyone will agree that architecture serves the primary human need for shelter, in fact it was one of man's first expressions of creativity.

Perhaps Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, who designed Tugendhat House in Brno, said it best: "Architecture starts when you carefully put two bricks together. There it begins." And where has it led? Most of us take for granted the places where we work and live every day—making architecture both the least and most conspicuous of art forms.

That architecture is far more than mere shelter is made plainly evident right here where we are tonight, in Prague Castle, with roots that go back to the tenth century. The entire city of Prague has been called a living museum of architecture because so much beautiful work has been preserved over the centuries.

Walter Gropius said, "Architecture begins where engineering ends." And in the same vein, Luis Barragán, who was the second Pritzker Laureate in 1980, said, "Any work of architecture that does not express serenity is a mistake."

Yet another great architect, Eero Saarinen, defined the purpose of architecture "to shelter and enhance man's life on earth and to fulfill his belief in the nobility of his existence." The Saarinens, father and son, profoundly influenced Cranbrook Academy where Mr. Maki studied following his undergraduate degree at Tokyo University and prior to his Masters degree at Harvard.

All of these views closely parallel the aims of the Pritzker Architecture Prize—to honor a living architect whose work demonstrates a combination of talent, vision and commitment to produce significant contributions to humanity through the art of architecture.

By its very nature, the art of architecture is most obvious in the city, although the city is not architecture's only concern.

German architect Gottfried Boehm said when he became a Pritzker Laureate in 1986, "I think the future of architecture does not lie so much in continuing to fill up the landscape, as in bringing back life and order to our cities and towns."

And that was the consensus of our symposium, that "architects are certainly not the foes of the city, but perhaps they have not been friendly enough."

Fumihiko Maki, our honoree this year has certainly been friendly to the city. One of his projects, Hillside Terrace apartments in Tokyo, has been likened to a living history of modern architecture because it was begun some 25 years ago and proceeded in stages until finished just last year.

Jay A. Pritzker, 1993 Laureate Fumihiko Maki (continued)

Maki likens the city to standing on a beach where waves ceaselessly advance and recede, a new context in which architecture must be thought of as a link between people and the constantly changing environment.

In the 1930s, when Maki was just a youngster, he recalls being profoundly influenced when he saw houses by modern pioneers—one a student of Frank Lloyd Wright, and another by Antonin Raymond—who incidentally was born in Bohemia and educated at Prague Polytechnic Institute.

And so we come full circle—east being influenced by the west, the west being influenced by the east. Who was it that said the twain shall never meet?

One editor commented in the story about Maki winning the prize that most people who know him around the world will be saying “it couldn’t happen to a nicer guy,” and speaking from my own experience, I heartily agree.

Mr. Maki, if you will join me on the podium, on behalf of The Hyatt Foundation and the Pritzker Family, I would like to present you with the 1993 Pritzker Architecture Prize.

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