

Jay A. Pritzker 1996 Laureate Rafael Moneo Ceremony Speech

Governor Wilson, Cardinal Mahoney, Mr. Moneo, distinguished guests. You've probably heard enough thanks to The Getty Foundation for being kind enough to permit us to hold this ceremony here. We also have to thank the Dinwiddie Construction Company because they've done an absolutely incredible job of preparing this for our meeting in such short order. Having some first-hand knowledge of building projects, I know what kind of sacrifices are involved and the costs thereof.

Each year we've attempted to honor architecture of the past and the present, by choosing architecturally significant sites around the world for the ceremony. We held the ceremony at Todai-ji Buddhist Temple in Japan, which is the largest wooden structure in the world. Last year it was at the palace of Versailles, which was an incredible venue, needless to say; Palazzo Grassi in Venice; Prague Castle in the Czech Republic and a number of museums in this country.

Tonight our being here not only honors architecture, but underscores the significance of this complex as a cultural resource for Los Angeles, the west coast and the world. Our gratitude to Richard for having designed and built this incredible structure. It was only twelve years ago that he was a Laureate, and at that time, the jury lauded his accomplishments, but called them "mere prologue to the compelling new experiences anticipated from his drawing board." Almost within days of receiving the prize, the commission for this new Getty Center was bestowed on him. And in that tradition, it was announced just yesterday by Cardinal Mahoney that Rafael Moneo has been selected to design the new cathedral for Los Angeles, which of course, will have considerable impact on Southern California.

In spite of all the jokes about Los Angeles being a region of hot dog stands and car washes, it is becoming architecturally significant. The skyline we saw earlier this evening, that unfortunately disappeared in the fog, is ample evidence. You have works by Frank Lloyd Wright, Schindler, Eames, Saarinen, Frank Gehry, Isozaki, Neutra, Pei, and Richard Meier. We can't begin to name them all. But in addition, there are many other talented architects who design and build well. Many of them are here this evening. Ricardo Legorreta is here from Mexico City. He did a home for us in Rancho Santa Fe that we think is wonderful.

There seems to be so much architecture that we tend to take it for granted. That anonymous aspect of this profession, which we are attempting to do something about, goes back to the days of the Acropolis and the pyramids.

People today are becoming more aware of the buildings that surround them. This mother of all the arts was one of man's first expressions of creativity serving the need for shelter, but it's no longer an orphan. I would like not only to mention the laureates, but also the men and women who have selected each year's honorees.

Carter Brown presides over an ever-changing international panel whose integrity and dedication to excellence has resulted in a worldwide acceptance of this prize. Another founding juror, J. Irwin Miller, and Xenia Miller are here this evening. They made Columbus, Indiana a living architectural museum. They helped guide us in creating this award through the years.

Although the members of the jury have changed over the years, the quality of their selections really haven't wavered, nor have they ever been predictable. I keep trying to guess who the next year's winner will be and so far I'm batting zero. One of the things for which the media has praised the jury is the fact that they never go for the obvious, or fashion or fad, nor have they been provincial. The prize has honored almost equally architects from this country and abroad. I think it's now, nine to ten; ten from outside the U.S.; nine Americans.

Jay A. Pritzker, 1996 Laureate Rafael Moneo (continued)

It's not surprising that architecture inspired writers throughout the ages. John Ruskin wrote that: "Architecture is the printing press of all ages and gives the history of the state of society in which it was erected. When we build, let us think that we build forever."

These words are echoed today providing architects with encouragement through this prize. Rafael Moneo considers himself "a maker of buildings," and he encourages his students to be the same. He influences a large audience, not only through his works, but at Harvard's Graduate School of Design where he served as chairman, and still is a visiting professor, as well as at Madrid and Barcelona Universities.

The jury in praising his work said: "Each of his buildings is unique, but at the same time uniquely recognizable as being from his palette. Each of his designs has a confident and timeless quality indicative of a master architect whose talent is obvious from the first concept to the last detail of the completed building."

The Pritzker Architecture Prize honors Rafael Moneo for his parallel efforts in theory, practice and teaching, not only for the past and present, but the future as well.

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