

## **Kevin Roche** **1982 Laureate** **Ceremony Acceptance Speech**

First is the act of thanksgiving:

To the Pritzker family for its extraordinary foresight and generosity in establishing this prize, and for its intention to “stimulate creativity and contribute to a deeper sensitivity” to the environment.

To Carleton Smith whose energy and imagination brought this prize into being and who sustains it with an extraordinary intensity of commitment.

To those who have the need to build, who select the services of architects and make architecture possible in the first place. To be a good client requires a great deal of patience, courage and stamina.

To those who write about architecture, both those who have been supportive and those who have been critical. Your voice is always heard.

To those fine architects who have constituted our office over the years and who are responsible for much of what is being honored here tonight.

To John Dinkeloo, dear friend for thirty years, without whose strength and skill and many talents this work would never have happened.

To Eero Saarinen whose short life described for many of us the full dimension and the true role of an architect and whose memory will be honored by the generous gift that accompanies this prize.

And finally, to this great free community, the United States, and those other free communities which make it possible for us all to live and work in freedom in a world where the concept of individual freedom is given much lip service but where it exists as a reality only in a few fortunate places.

Now, notoriety brings with it a certain amount of fan mail and there has been much attending this event. It is stimulating, uplifting and rewarding to receive such approbation. Let me read you a random sample so that you may share my pleasure.

This letter comes from a lady in Las Vegas, New Mexico. She is one of those people who likes to get to the heart of the matter in her opening paragraph:

“I think the members of the Pritzker Committee must be out of their minds—to honor, in the year 1982, an architect who is designing in glass and masonry/steel. Such energy wasters are dated, old, dull and boring. Yes, I read all that hot air about ‘sensual public space’ and ‘exploring elegant works’—etc., etc. And what is still more maddening to one who loves her country and art—is that this prize will affect the teaching at architectural schools and so promote more such moribund designs.”

All this came in a large envelope across which was boldly hand-lettered the question—“What have you done today to prevent a nuclear war?”

Well, I was a little taken back by that. I didn’t feel I had done anything to prevent a nuclear war that day. But such is our human nature that I immediately began to justify my actions. Is not the act of building an act of faith in the future and an act of hope? Hope that the testimony of our civilization will be passed on to others? Hope that what we are doing is not only sane and useful and beautiful, but a clear and true reflection of our own aspirations. And hope that it is an art which will communicate with the future and touch those generations as we ourselves have been touched and moved by the past.

**Kevin Roche, 1982 Laureate (continued)**

That Architecture is an art we have the evidence of history; that it is an art in our time we cannot yet judge. We can only desire to make it so. It is presumptuous of us to will Architecture into being an art without fully understanding its nature, and dangerous to speak so much about art lest we confuse it with fashion. Art comes hard. It is the conclusion of profound thought on the nature of things rather than on acceptability and acclaim. It is so easy to forget that we build buildings for people—people who must see them and people who must use them. It is so easy to forget that those people are individuals with a variety of needs and tastes and it is hard to remember that they are not just numbers.

We should accept the responsibility to create our environment and use the opportunity we have to lead and educate society into improving its habitat, and let other times judge what was art and what was fancy. Let other times measure our civilization. We should, all of us, bend our will to create a civilization in which we can live at peace with nature and each other. To build well is an act of peace. Let us hope that it will not be in vain.

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