

## **Martha Thorne 2007 Laureate Richard Rogers Ceremony Speech**

Madame Secretary of State, Your Excellencies, Mr. Mayor, My Lords and Ladies, good evening.

As executive of the Pritzker Prize it is my distinct pleasure to open this evening's event and welcome you to the 29th ceremony of the awarding of the Pritzker Architecture Prize.

It is truly a joy to be in London for the prize ceremony. The last time the festivities were held in London was in 1986. It is also special because when the venue was decided, it was not known that the laureate would be from the same city. Thus, we have a very happy coincidence.

As you probably know, the prize is conferred annually to a living architect whose built work embodies a combination of those qualities talent, vision, and commitment, which has produced consistent and significant contributions to humanity and the built environment through the art of architecture.

Often spoken of as the Nobel Prize of architecture, not only because of its importance in the field, but also because of the independent nature of the prize, supported by the Hyatt Foundation, but not controlled or influenced by any institution or organization. The gathering of the nominations comes from around the world: from architects, past laureates, opinion-makers, academics, historians, business people and even politicians. The role of the outstanding jury in the prize is that it alone analyses works, visits buildings, and passionately debates about architecture until a laureate is selected each year.

Of course those are the parameters of the prize. Yet it would not or could not exist had it not been for the vision and continued support of the Pritzker family. Tonight it is wonderful to have so many members of the Pritzker family here. And in particular Mrs. Cindy Pritzker, who, with her late husband, Jay, founded the prize in 1979.

This evening is a celebration of Richard Rogers: his building, writings, influence, and continuing commitment to architecture in the broadest spirit of the word. It is also an opportunity to recall the contributions of past laureates. The community of Pritzker laureates is represented by some previous winners who are here tonight. I would like to call the names of past laureates who are present here tonight and kindly ask them to stand. Please hold you applause until I say the last name: Kevin Roche, 1982; Hans Hollein, 1985; Renzo Piano, 1998; Norman Foster, 1999; Jacques Herzog and Pierre De Meuron, 2001; Zaha Hadid, 2004; and Thom Mayne, 2005.

Once again, welcome and thank you for joining in this celebration of the art of architecture, a constant striving for excellence and a commitment to the built environment and embodied in the work and inspiring career of Richard Rogers. Thank you.

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**For more information, please contact:**

Eunice Kim  
Director of Communications  
The Pritzker Architecture Prize  
Tel: +1 240 401 5649  
Email: [eunicekim@pritzkerprize.com](mailto:eunicekim@pritzkerprize.com)