

Paolo Mendes da Rocha 2006 Laureate Ceremony Acceptance Speech

Distinguished Governor, Prime Minister, Mr. Mayor, distinguished Mrs. Cindy Pritzker, Mr. Thomas Pritzker, their family, the Pritzker Foundation, and dear friends who are enjoying with me this magnificent event. I would like to first of all say that it is wonderful that we are in this place. The fact that the Pritzker Foundation should have chosen this setting for the ceremony is magnificent, because this place has a rich history of so many years. I think it evokes the greatest emotion in all of us, especially in us Americans. What do we want? We want to build America, and places such as these are examples. Clearly, it is impossible to compete with history. It's really impossible. It is also impossible not to take advantage of this experience with the freedom we want to defend in order to build our America. We're talking about three or four hundred years of history in Brazil and Latin America, but that is nothing when compared to human experience. So, the issue in architecture is how to continually absorb this human experience. When we say how, it means what policies do we use and that is really a political issue. A ceremony such as this, a prize such as this is a stimulus. It is the basis for us to make sure that we can develop independent politics and policies about urban space. We cannot imagine so much history, so much experience, so much knowledge that we have in our hands, and in turn imagine the idea that the city could be a disaster or that the city would not be a refuge for all. Therefore, when we are able to realize mankind's dreams together of designing an America that has not yet made the bridge from the Atlantic to the Pacific, we are asking for peace as the cornerstone of architecture. It moves us. It is important for us to work in the spirit of solidarity that was expressed by the Pritzker Foundation. I hope that this flame will be always lit so that architecture can be seen as a unique and indispensable path of knowledge for mankind to develop in the future.

I believe that as we build contemporary cities we are realizing human beings' highest desires. Architecture has a new impetus. It has a vision to transform the space. It has to work with nature as it establishes designs and takes advantage of the virtues of this, our planet. We must have an awareness of our human dimension, the dimension of human beings who are part of nature and architecture, and who are linked to the establishment of space vis a vis nature. This is what I wanted to share with you tonight.

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