

Richard Meier **1984 Laureate** **Ceremony Acceptance Speech**

I am extremely pleased and deeply honored to receive the 1984 Pritzker Architecture Prize. It never occurred to me that I would be in the running this year. I would like to thank The Hyatt Foundation for this prize for the art of architecture; it is profoundly significant in influencing the quality of architecture throughout the world.

I would like to share with you, tonight, the ongoing conversation that I have with my children, Joseph and Ana. It revolves around the question "What is your favorite color?" Joseph, who is four and three-quarters, always replies green, and states when asked why, that "green is the color of grass, the trees are green, green is all around us, it's the color of spring and dollar bills."

Ana, who is three and doesn't like to be outdone by Joseph, replies that her favorite color is blue, and that, "the sky is blue, the pools and ponds and lakes are blue."

And then they turn to me and ask, "Daddy, what is your favorite color?" And every time we play this game, my response is the same: "White is my favorite color."

"But Daddy," Joseph says, "You can't have white. White is not a color; white isn't in the rainbow; you have to take a color that is in the rainbow, like red or green, or blue or yellow."

And I have to explain that for me, white is the most wonderful color because within it you can see all the colors of the rainbow. For me, in fact, it is the color which in natural light, reflects and intensifies the perception of all of the shades of the rainbow, the colors which are constantly changing in nature, for the whiteness of white is never just white; it is almost always transformed by light and that which is changing; the sky, the clouds, the sun and the moon.

White conventionally has always been seen as a symbol of perfection, of purity and clarity. If we ask why this is the case, we realize that where other colors have relative values dependent upon their context, white retains its absoluteness. At the same time, it may function as a color itself. It is against a white surface that one best appreciates the play of light and shadow, solids and voids. Goethe said "color is the pain of light." Whiteness is perhaps the memory and the anticipation of color. For me, the contrast becomes the definition—that which is natural, organic, changing, contains at different times, all of the colors of the rainbow. And that which is man-made should help to focus and intensify one's perception of all that is around us.

As I have said many times in describing my own aesthetic, mine is a preoccupation with light and space; not abstract space, not scale-less space, but space whose order and definition are related to light, to human scale and to the culture of architecture. Architecture is vital and enduring because it contains us; it describes space, space we move through, exit in and use. I work with volume and surface, manipulating forms in light, changes of scale and view, movement and stasis.

In this way whiteness has been one means of sharpening perception and heightening the power of visual form. This is one of many ways of achieving this and I hope to be able to explore a range of choices in the future. My sources include many from the history of architecture, but my quotes and allusions are never literal; my meanings are always internalized, my metaphors purely architectural.

For me, part of the significance of an awareness of architectural history is that we again value permanence, continuity and, therefore quality. I am deeply concerned with the making of a building and prefer to think of myself more as a master builder than as an artist, for the art of architecture ultimately demands this.

Richard Meier, 1984 Laureate (continued)

Mine is an attempt to find and redefine a sense of order, to understand, then, a relationship between what has been and what can be—to extract from our culture both the timeless and the topical. This, to me, is the basis of style, the decision to include or exclude, choice, the final exercise of the individual will and intellect. In this way, one might say that my style is something that is born out of culture, and yet is profoundly connected with personal experience. But to gain any sense of my involvement, it is necessary to consult the work.

Fundamentally, my meditations are on space, form, light and how to make them. My goal is presence, not illusion. I pursue it with unrelenting vigor and believe that is the heart and soul of architecture.

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