

## Thomas J. Pritzker 2013 Laureate Toyo Ito Ceremony Speech

Honored Guests, Ladies and Gentleman, let me add my welcome to you tonight as we celebrate the 35th Pritzker Architecture Prize and its Laureate, Toyo Ito.

Hestia, the Greek goddess of architecture is watching over this year's ceremony of the Pritzker Architecture Prize as she does every year. Tonight, I imagine, she is deeply satisfied by the unique alignment of place, person, time, and space, that grace our award ceremony.

Here in the JFK library, built by our 5th Laureate, I.M. Pei, we celebrate our most recent Laureate, Toyo Ito. As today is President Kennedy's birthday, I cannot help but think of the changes we have seen since that snowy inauguration day in 1961. At that time, President Kennedy faced a bipolar world dominated by two superpowers. 50 years later the Soviet Union is no more and China has come forth as an important economic power. The world is truly globalized: politically and economically. Communications across the world are now free and access to unlimited knowledge is almost universally accessible.

In the 5th century BCE, Heraclitus postulated that change is the organizing feature of the universe. Today we know that as, "the only thing that is constant is change." But during our lifetime, that change has been profound. That change has brought with it the ability of the few to challenge the very institutions which are the foundation of our stability. Humanity is truly at a moment of unprecedented change. We euphemistically call this 'disruptive change'.

Art and politics, culture and government are shaped by these same events and forces. Much of our response to this change will be shaped by the culture of our cities. Cities whose very nature will be deeply influenced by architects and their ideas and the values expressed in their buildings.

Toyo Ito's eclecticism and flexibility evoke and express the temper of our times.

As we overlook the ocean that President Kennedy so loved, we feel its summons to human courage. As we look at Kennedy's life, it was a life of courage that led him first to the Navy and then to the Senate and then to the White House. Courage, of course, is built on the foundation of hope. It is hope for renewal that gives us the courage to make a better civilization.

It is courage, artistic and political, that we celebrate here tonight in this building. It is artistic courage that we celebrate in the works of our newest laureate, Toyo Ito. Architecture is the most popular of all art forms. No other art form has as much consequence, and touches, and embraces human beings as does architecture. It is the courage to aspire to affect people, physically and emotionally, which is at the basis of Toyo Ito's work. Ito gave insight into what inspires him in a lecture he gave at Princeton University in 2009. He said, "The natural world is extremely complicated and variable, and its systems are fluid. In contrast to this, architecture has always tried to establish a more stable system." In this comment, Ito reveals to us something remarkable. He turns to the very essence of the natural world. He has observed what humans have observed since the 5th century BCE. The natural world is fluid, the natural world is complex and variegated. Its systems are dynamic and ever-changing. Change is reliable and constant. Yet as humans, we seek to impose order on this natural variety and dynamism. Ito, on the other hand, says: patience. No single approach is suited to every natural or social situation. The concept of 'one size fits all' is doomed to fail. For that reason, Ito's work is polyglot. His architecture is mixed. He is an archivist of the past, drawing on many traditions. But even as he turns to history, he also looks to the future. He seeks a synthesis between the received past and the imminent new.

**Thomas J. Pritzker, 2013 Laureate Toyo Ito (continued)**

He is an enthusiast of the possible. His work can be called knowledgeable, in that it is the product of his mastery of materials, social settings, construction, and engineering. His is an exuberant architecture. He knows building systems and revels in them. His is the way of the eclectic and the experimental; his architecture tolerates no orthodoxy, save the orthodoxy of creativity. He is ever new and ever surprising. He is a man who is comfortable with change.

Ito uses three terms when he describes his architecture: lightness, dynamism, and impermanence. Are these three concepts not a fine prescription for what is needed in our times as we seek to harness profound change for the betterment of humanity? In the jury's view, Toyo Ito is a man for our times.

Toyo Ito, can I ask you to please come forward.

It is with great pleasure that I present you with the Pritzker Architecture Prize for the year 2013.

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