

Thomas J. Pritzker 2003 Laureate Jørn Utzon Ceremony Speech

Your Majesties, ladies and gentlemen, our family is very honored to be here this evening and to present this year's Pritzker Prize in the presence of Your Royal Majesties. We've come here to award the prize and to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of our Prize. As you know, our ceremonies move around from year to year. We've had them in a number of museums. We've had them at the White House. We've had them at a number of distinguished architectural buildings. It's a great pleasure for all of us to enjoy this grand hall and wonderful museum. For that we express our gratitude to Señor Ramón González de Amezua y Noriega director of The Royal Academy of Fine Arts San Fernando, for allowing this ceremony to take place here this evening. In all of our travels this is our first with royal participation. Throughout history royal patronage has allowed the arts and architecture to flourish. In more recent times with the growth of a merchant class and industrialization, individuals and corporations have become dominant forces that underwrite the arts and architecture.

When we founded the Pritzker Architecture Prize in 1979 it was with the hope that by recognizing excellence in architecture the standards of both the architects and the clients would be raised, thus encouraging even greater architecture as the years go by.

Architecture is pervasive. We live in it, we work in it, we play in it. We walk around in it, it's everywhere. For the past 25 years we have been giving the prize in an effort to raise the public's awareness of the value of great architecture and great architects. There's been remarkable progress over these past 25 years. Over the past few decades we've seen a proliferation of great architecture around the world. It's inspiration came from some of the marquee works with which we're all familiar. These are works that grab the headlines. But our real success has been seen in more recent years as the application of creative architecture has moved closer to our daily lives. Homes, churches, stores and office buildings have embraced the value of great architecture and enhanced our built environment. New materials and technologies have opened new horizons in architecture and what's so exciting is that we're seeing these new horizons explored across many types of buildings and across all of the continents of the world. Jørn Utzon was a progenitor of these new horizons. In many respects his Sydney Opera House broke down barriers. It explained and expanded on what was possible. Frank Gehry, one of our jurors and Pritzker laureate, has said of Utzon, "He made a building well ahead of its time, far ahead of available technology, and he persevered through extraordinary malicious publicity and negative criticism to build a building that changed the image of an entire country. It's the first time in our lifetime that an epic piece of architecture gained such universal presence." Frank has also acknowledged that it was Utzon's ground breaking effort that made it possible for him to build his Guggenheim in Bilbao.

Collectively the entire jury has made it clear that they are honoring Utzon not only for his Sydney masterpiece but also for his handsome humane housing. A church that is a masterwork with its remarkably lyrical ceilings as well as monumental public buildings for government and commerce. Another of the jurors, Jorge Silvetti, mentioned specifically that while the Prize may be perceived as long overdue, it comes at such a particular moment in the development of architecture to be timely and exemplary. His explorations remind us that both expression and technique are servants and secondary to more profound and foundational architectural ideas. His work shows us that marvelous and seemingly impossible architecture depends on genial minds and able hands.

Thomas J. Pritzker, 2003 Laureate Jørn Utzon (continued)

Some 2,000 years ago in his ten books of architecture Marcus Vitruvius wrote, "The end is to build well. Well building hath three conditions. Commodity, firmness and delight. These are the words that are inscribed on the bronze medallion that symbolizes the Pritzker Architecture Prize that we are going to present here tonight. And Jørn Utzon's body of work certainly fulfills those conditions and more. Utzon is an architect who has built two homes on the island of Mallorca and by living there has become not only a resident of Spain but has become a neighbor of Their Majesties.

Because Mr. Utzon is 85 and in frail health his son Jan Utzon who has practiced architecture with his father for many years, is here to accept the award on behalf of his father. Thank you.

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