

Thomas J. Pritzker **2011 Laureate Eduardo Souto de Moura** **Ceremony Speech**

The Pritzker Prize was inaugurated in Washington, D.C., at Dumbarton Oaks, back in 1979. While the Prize ceremony has been in dozens of cities around the world, we seem to keep gravitating back to Washington so I have asked myself why. Why Washington?

Great architecture serves the people and presents great ideas in a built form. In Washington what we experience is the great idea of democracy, which is embodied in the simplest of phrases: "We the People."

Architecture is the most public of art forms. No other art form serves as many people as architecture. There is hardly a human being on the planet untouched by the designs and the dreams of our architects. Sadly, architecture can also be the handmaiden of less pleasant ideas, as we have seen in the 20th century. In some cases, governments built towering, imposing and often menacing public and governmental structures to overwhelm their citizens. Even these bad ideas leave commentary about the times and the life of the people who lived in those places and in those times.

This city demonstrates that there is architecture of the people, an architecture that pulses with democracy. They are about We the People. Here, we see buildings that are welcoming, that nurture the human potential, and that celebrate the human spirit. Indeed, when Washington and Jefferson first laid the plans for our nation's capitol they went to great lengths to ensure that its designers and architects understood that the capitol had to be imbued with our values.

This conviction is expressed here tonight in the Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium. While serving the third longest term of any Secretary of Treasury, Andrew W. Mellon was responsible for the design of the Federal Triangle, of which this building is the centerpiece, and for whom this auditorium is named. Andrew W. Mellon was a great civil servant, a great capitalist, a great philanthropist and a great patron of the arts. This variety of activities—centered in one person—is possible only in a democracy.

Architecture is properly not about buildings—it is about people. It is an art that is meant to reflect and reinforce the spirit of the people it serves and the times in which it is executed. We are witness to an era where the political concept of democracy and the economic concept of free markets are emerging as a reflection of the will of people everywhere. They are emerging in different forms, but the core concepts are the same—free will and the ability to express that in both political and economic terms. It is also clear that architecture is following that same conviction. When history looks back at the great buildings of our times, it will see that they reflect that same pattern and do so in hopes of improving the lives of the people it serves.

Tonight we celebrate Eduardo Souto de Moura. To celebrate is to appreciate and to study. How shall we begin our appreciation of this year's Pritzker Laureate? I want to refer us to another son of Portugal, the great Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa. Pessoa once wrote, "The Portuguese language is my nation." In writing this, Pessoa affirms that he has no real sense of himself outside the reality of Portugal and the Portuguese language. Much of Souto de Moura's work has been dreamt, drawn, designed and constructed in Portugal. An appreciation of him must begin with celebrating the fact that like Pessoa, the artist Eduardo Souto de Moura is first and foremost a man of Portugal; an architect and an artist of the place in which he was born and lives. Souto de Moura's commitment to Portugal reflects the architect's commitment to authenticity. He has a special reverence for the tradition, the history and the culture of the Portugal in which he lives. He is loyal to it. This national Portuguese setting is his landscape. He knows it well. He celebrates it. Because of that he is deeply attached to the families and communities of Portugal.

Thomas J. Pritzker, 2011 Laureate Eduardo Souto de Moura (continued)

It is inspiring to note that his earliest commissions were for single-family houses. In Portugal he received a commission to rehabilitate the Diegues House, a small house in the historic center of Porto. It was in a dilapidated state. Early on he made a decision to conserve much of the traditional historic façade. As he did this, he looked at the family that would live in this house and imagined a great surprise for them—a design that is at once contemporary, warm and embracing. His loyalty to Portugal translates into a respect for the site that will bear his design and built work.

For Souto de Moura a symbiosis takes place between the place and the dream. His work is at once in the place, and at the very same time, of the place. His work stands on site and emerges out of the site. This reverence for location never eludes him, no matter what size the project. His faithfulness to the streets of a historic district is as powerful as his faithfulness to the granite cliff face, out of which he imagined and built the Braga Stadium. Despite its muscularity, there is a deep sense of intimacy when one experiences the sound and sightlines that he has built into this large structure. His grandest, most monumental projects never lose sight of the persons who are part of them.

Souto de Moura has an abiding commitment to the variety of persons who will inhabit, live in and use his design. He recognizes the multiplicity of individuals and peoples. He testifies to this by the way in which he melds and harmonizes various materials—materials that have a tactile quality, materials that ask to be touched, materials like stone, wood and metal woven together to invite the human caress. This very heterogeneity personalizes his work. He is always drawing upon a variety of architectural styles and traditions. Out of them he creates something new. It is in Portugal that he found his voice and made his statement. The architecture of his country is the architecture of our values. Thus this man of Portugal became, through his work, a man of this world.

Thank you. Eduardo please come forward. It is with great pleasure that I present you with the Pritzker Architecture Prize for the year 2011.

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