

March 10, 2015

Media Release

Frei Otto Receives the 2015 Pritzker Architecture Prize

Visionary architect, 89, dies in his native Germany on March 9, 2015

Otto was an architect, visionary, utopian, ecologist, pioneer of lightweight materials, protector of natural resources and a generous collaborator with architects, engineers, and biologists, among others.

Chicago, IL (March 23, 2015) — Frei Otto has received the 2015 Pritzker Architecture Prize, Tom Pritzker announced today. Mr. Pritzker is Chairman and President of The Hyatt Foundation, which sponsors the prize. Mr. Pritzker said: "Our jury was clear that, in their view, Frei Otto's career is a model for generations of architects and his influence will continue to be felt. The news of his passing is very sad, unprecedented in the history of the prize. We are grateful that the jury awarded him the prize while he was alive. Fortunately, after the jury decision, representatives of the prize traveled to Mr. Otto's home and were able to meet with Mr. Otto to share the news with him. At this year's Pritzker Prize award ceremony in Miami on May 15 we will celebrate his life and timeless work."

Mr. Otto becomes the 40th laureate of the Pritzker Prize and the second laureate from Germany.

The Jury of the Pritzker Architecture Prize selected Mr. Otto as the laureate earlier this year, and shortly thereafter the Executive Director of the prize traveled to Otto's home and studio in Warmbronn, Germany, near Stuttgart, to deliver the news in person. Learning that he had received the Pritzker Prize, Mr. Otto said: "I am now so happy to receive this Pritzker Prize and I thank the jury and the Pritzker family very much. I have never done anything to gain this prize. My architectural drive was to design new types of buildings to help poor people especially following natural disasters and catastrophes. So what shall be better for me than to win this prize? I will use whatever time is left to me to keep doing what I have been doing, which is to help humanity. You have here a happy man."

Mr. Otto practiced a holistic and collaborative approach to architecture, working with environmentalists, biologists, engineers, philosophers, historians, naturalists, artists, and other architects. A distinguished teacher and author, Otto pioneered the use of modern lightweight tent-like structures for many uses. He was attracted to them partly for their economical and ecological values. He believed in making efficient, responsible use of materials, and that architecture should make a minimal impact on the environment. Frei Otto was a utopian who never stopped believing that architecture can make a better world for all.

In contrast to the heavy, columned, stone and masonry architecture preferred by the National Socialists in the Germany in which he grew up — Otto's work was lightweight, open to nature and natural light, non-hierarchical, democratic, low-cost, energy-efficient, and sometimes designed to be temporary.

He is best known for the roofing for the main sports facilities in the Munich Olympic Park for the 1972 Summer Olympics (with Behnisch + Partner and others), for the German pavilion at the 1967 International and Universal Exposition (Expo 67), the Japan Pavilion at Expo 2000 in Hannover, Germany (in 2000, with Shigeru Ban (2014 laureate of the Pritzker Architecture Prize)), a series of tent structures for German Federal Exhibitions in the 1950s, and for his work in the Middle East.

The Chair of the jury of the Pritzker Architecture Prize, Lord Peter Palumbo, said today: "Time waits for no man. If anyone doubts this aphorism, the death yesterday of Frei Otto, a titan of modern architecture, a few weeks short of his 90th birthday, and a few short weeks before his receipt of the Pritzker Architecture Prize in Miami in May, represents a sad and striking example of this truism. His loss will be felt wherever the art of architecture is practiced the world over, for he was a universal

The Pritzker Architecture Prize welcomes Benedetta Tagliabue to the Jury (continued)

citizen; whilst his influence will continue to gather momentum by those who are aware of it, and equally, by those who are not.

“Frei stands for Freedom, as free and as liberating as a bird in flight, swooping and soaring in elegant and joyful arcs, unrestrained by the dogma of the past, and as compelling in its economy of line and in the improbability of its engineering as it is possible to imagine, giving the marriage of form and function the invisibility of the air we breathe, and the beauty we see in Nature.”

The distinguished jury that selected the 2015 Pritzker Laureate consists of its chairman, Lord Palumbo, architectural patron, Chairman Emeritus of the Trustees, Serpentine Galleries, former Chairman of the Arts Council of Great Britain, and former Chairman of the Tate Gallery Foundation; Alejandro Aravena, architect and Executive Director of Elemental in Santiago, Chile; Stephen Breyer, U.S. Supreme Court Justice, Washington, D.C.; Yung Ho Chang, architect and educator, Beijing, The People's Republic of China; Kristin Feireiss, architecture curator, writer, and editor, Berlin, Germany; Glenn Murcutt, architect and 2002 Pritzker Laureate, Sydney, Australia; Richard Rogers, architect and 2007 Pritzker Laureate, London, United Kingdom; Benedetta Tagliabue, architect and director of EMBT Miralles Tagliabue, Barcelona, Spain; and Ratan N. Tata, Chairman Emeritus of Tata Sons, the holding company of the Tata Group, Mumbai, India. Martha Thorne, Associate Dean for External Relations, IE School of Architecture & Design, Madrid, Spain, is the Executive Director of the Prize.

The 2015 award ceremony will be held in Miami Beach at the New World Center, designed by 1989 Pritzker Prize Laureate Frank Gehry, on May 15, 2015. This marks the first time the ceremony will be in Miami, joining the culturally and historically significant venues around the world. The ceremony will be streamed live on PritzkerPrize.com, the website of the Pritzker Architecture Prize.

About the Pritzker Architecture Prize

The Pritzker Architecture Prize was founded in 1979 by the late Jay A. Pritzker and his wife, Cindy. Its purpose is to honor annually a living architect whose built work demonstrates a combination of those qualities of talent, vision and excellence, which has produced consistent and significant contributions to humanity and the built environment through the art of architecture. The laureates receive a \$100,000 grant and a bronze medallion.

###

© The Hyatt Foundation / The Pritzker Architecture Prize

Media Contact:

Edward Lifson
Director of Communications
The Pritzker Architecture Prize
Tel: +1 312 919 1312
Email: edwardlifson@pritzkerprize.com