

# The Pritzker Architecture Prize

## Hans Hollein 1985 Laureate Acceptance Speech

I am deeply honored to have been elected by a distinguished jury to be the seventh recipient of the Pritzker Prize. I feel both proud and moved that my endeavors and intentions in art and architecture have been understood and appreciated in such a wonderful way at this point in my life and career.

This is a great moment and I am particularly happy that it happens here, in Los Angeles, in the United States, this great country with which I have had close ties since the late fifties—witnessed also today by the many friends who are here to join in the celebration.

I want to thank the Pritzker family, not only for instituting this prize—a prize which in its short run has come to be considered the world's major architecture award, but also for the detailed care they have taken to make the formal presentation a real celebration and an event that will be imbued in our memories. Years of intensive work receive joyful recognition in a setting that could not be more appropriate.

I—naturally—want to thank the jury for their choice and also the officers of the award for selecting such a prominent and diversified panel. That architects, eminent art-historians, as well as international business leaders make the judgment together, makes their verdict so valuable and impressive vis-à-vis a wider public.

Thanks and praise also goes to the persons who administer the award, in particular to Brendan Gill, whose impeccable prose and demeanor embellishes this event, and Arthur Drexler, who since my early beginnings has shown interest in my work and given encouragement.

I also want to thank all those people who have been instrumental in my development, above all the teachers—both formal and informal ones, both abroad and in this country, some of whom are here today. And, also very importantly, I want to thank the clients who have given me the opportunity to carry out the work that is now lauded. I am particularly moved that some of those clients came over the Atlantic especially to be here today for this event, an event which is also their day.

I am happy and proud that so many friends are here today who have gone a long way beside me. The recognition I receive today is proving them right, proving them right in giving me support, encouragement and opportunity.

The work I have done could not have been realized without the help of my close collaborators and staff members. To them, I offer my sincere thanks on this occasion.

Even though the Pritzker Prize is an award of the world, and I accept it as an Austrian, and a Viennese, it is also an American prize, and I want to make use of this occasion to acknowledge the profound effect the encounter with this country has had on me and my work. Not only have I studied in this country, but more important to me were the people and the spirit of this country, its wide expanses and its persuasive landscape that have played a major role in the formulation of my thoughts and attitudes about architecture.

It is a fitting coincidence that my first two stations in this country, after deciding not to disappear in the ivory towers of Ivy League universities, but to confront myself with another—maybe the real—America, have been Chicago and California. Chicago has taught me lessons about the city the people and great architecture. To California, I came out of a longing for its lifestyle and its architectural and urban formulation, which to me was unlike Europe and very much of the second half of our century. Los Angeles, to me, was a fascinating phenomenon, a realization of a new approach, of a new spirit. Of course it also has close invisible ties to Vienna, and one of the reasons to come here in the first place had to do with these ties, when I first advanced my research on Rudolph M. Schindler here.

Equally important to me has been the impact of the American landscape. The vast expanses of this country have given me the impetus and the idea of what it means to make man-made structures in

## **Hans Hollein Acceptance Speech** (continued)

space, a man-made environment that not only is a continuation and a transformation of something already existing, but the creation of something new, the artificial in a dialectic with nature.

I have always considered architecture as an art. To me architecture is not primarily the solution of a problem, but the making of a statement. Within the two poles of architectural activity, architecture as ritual and architecture as a means of preservation of body-temperature, my search is for the absolute, as well as for the needs and constraints, which also generate form.

Similarly, I have tried to expand the scope and the range of artistic and architectural intervention. Therefore my interests dwell not only on the sizeable building proper, but on the utterances you can make on a small scale as well, especially in relation to the needs daily life carries with it; the room, the object you feel and touch. Not only do I deal with eternity, with the permanent, but also with the ephemeral and the temporary.

As an artist, I am only responsible to myself and can make highly individualistic manifestations. As an architect, I am responsible to the needs of man and society. Man continuously designs for survival, for immediate survival and for survival after death. The life and work of an artist and architect mirrors this fundamental human situation.

Maybe this is a very European, very Viennese way of looking at things. This dualistic approach, this Manichaeian view has its correspondence in the position of standing with one leg in the old world, in tradition, and with the other in the new world, in the future.

In this spirit, I want to accept the Pritzker Prize, as a reward for the past, and an incentive for the future. I have always considered architecture as an art. To me architecture is not primarily the solution to a problem, but the making of a statement. Within the two poles of architectural activity, architecture as ritual, and architecture as a means of preservation of body-temperature, my search is for the absolute, as well as for the needs and constraints, which also generate form.

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