

## **Antonio Ardanza Garro 1996 Laureate Sverre Fehn Ceremony Speech**

President of the Basque Country

Ladies and gentlemen, my most cordial welcome to the Basque Country, Bilbao and to this building which will soon house the Guggenheim Museum. Your selection of this site for the presentation of the prestigious Pritzker Prize of Architecture constitutes a great honor for us as well as a motive of profound satisfaction.

Many of you today visit this country for the first time. Let me present it to you in great mass and brief words. The town in which you now find yourselves, the Basque town, is known throughout the world, among other things, because of two attributes that characterize it in a very special manner: its antiquity and its closeness to its identity.

In truth, we are, the Basques, an ancient people, perhaps the people in Europe which have remained identical to themselves for the longest time, conserving alive their unique tongue and preserving their ancestral costumes and institutions.

Therefore we are, as we are recognized, a people consisting only of themselves and not exempt from a dash of pride and even a certain dose of self-compliance. But this said, whoever would think that our conscience, our pride and our self-compliance would be enough reasons to explain, by themselves, our permanence as a people throughout the length of history would be mistaken.

Because if history has taught us anything with its inexorable pace, it is precisely that it has been able to slumber consciences just as much or more rooted as ours, humiliate pride more indomitable and ridicule other self-compliances, engulfing in the zenith of its oblivion identities of many, and many peoples that barely have even left us a trace of their existence.

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