



SERVICE DE PRESSE

Emmanuel MACRON

Address at the reception honoring the Pritzker Prize Laureates, Friday, May 24, 2019

Mr. Minister,

Chairman of the Pritzker Organization, Thomas Pritzker,

Jury Chair, Stephen Breyer,

2019 Pritzker Laureate, Arata Isozaki,

Architects,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I'm aware of the risk we've taken in inviting an assembly such as yours to the Élysée, because we know that the location will immediately be examined from an architectural and symbolic point of view. Moreover, those who are accustomed to attending Pritzker Prize ceremonies know that the locations are always expected to be exceptional and are unmercifully inspected and appraised by experts and artists. So we've taken a considerable risk in showing you this restored reception hall.

But on a broader note, I'd like to welcome you all here, and welcome French and international architecture in general, as well as share several ideas with you on this day that is also somewhat special for French democracy. I'm extremely honored that the organizers of the Pritzker Prize chose France for this year's ceremony.

Thank you, Thomas Pritzker, for your masterful continuation of your parents' work and your unfailing commitment to architecture, to our residences, neighborhoods, monuments, and cities – in short, to the world in which we live. I don't think you could have chosen a better location for this year's event than Versailles, which is also why I'd like to welcome you to the Élysée for this brief interlude in order to congratulate

this year's Laureate and say a few words about architecture.

Some of the world's best architects are here, a number of whom are Pritzker Laureates. I especially want to acknowledge two French recipients who are present today, Christian de Portzamparc and Jean Nouvel. I'd also like to pay tribute to Ieoh Ming Pei, who passed away only a few days ago and received the Pritzker Prize in 1983. He, too, left his distinctive mark on many cities, but especially on the city of Paris, on a building that is particularly important to me. Back then, and sometimes in the face of tremendous criticism, he had the courage to introduce modernity and innovation into a location that it was thought should remain untouched.

All of you here are among the people who design and shape our world, who give it its contemporary face and invent the lifestyles of today and tomorrow, our ways of occupying space, inhabiting it, and living together, which is to say, our ways of being in the world. You create works that have a certain quality that makes them not just creations to contemplate, but works that are experienced and sometimes also transformed by their utilization, works that we frequent and inhabit. Works in which we learn, work, meet, and that can lead us to rediscover places that we've grown accustomed to, places that we visit and that stir us emotionally. As engineers, artists, and citizens, you design living spaces at the intersection between geographic, economic, and technological constraints. You create spaces that inspire us and help us to work, think, and come together. I believe that there are few art forms that are more political than yours, in the strictest sense of the term. To be an architect is to be one who organizes urban life, who practices politics in the purest sense of the word, and attempts to define the rules. Problems arise when the rules don't correspond to the locations or the locations no longer correspond to the rules or their own uses. That's why your art form is undoubtedly the most fundamental and political of all. It responds to a necessity or utility and fulfills a function. But at the same time, it needs to contribute its own vision of social organization, of living in community, of this other world that I've mentioned. It's the most visible, concrete, and accessible manifestation of our art and culture. It's art that we live in and that remains immovable, because architecture is human history written in stone and wood, marble and iron, steel and glass, and soon perhaps, earth and straw. It's the dialog of the ages that's written in space, and not just our manner of occupying space but also the way in which we relate to our times. A nation's architecture is the palimpsest of its

history. For nations like ours, it involves using space that is with few exceptions already occupied by existing architecture and uses, locations that fortunately or unfortunately already exist. So to a certain extent, it always involves the most extreme modernity as well as centuries of sedimentation. It's an open book to our past and our identity, and also inspires a certain humility, reminding us that we're part of a great chain of humanity that is trying from generation to generation to make the world a better place to live.

Arata Isozaki, this year you're being honored by your peers for having exemplified this art form with rare talent. You're joining the illustrious ranks of Pritzker Prize Laureates and of a nation that has given birth to some of the world's greatest architects. As the eighth Japanese architect to receive this prize, you place your country on a level with the United States in terms of producing the most prize winners. Essentially, your vocation began as a sort of paradox. Many of the people in this room came to architecture through the discovery of a monument, an experience, a place, an emotion, but I think you'll agree that your seminal relationship with architecture began with the awareness of a desolation. You were an adolescent when war devastated your country, Hiroshima and Nagasaki were bombed, your hometown was burned, and you were surrounded by ruins. There was nothing left but rubble and remains, which served as your first experience of architecture and, paradoxically, was in fact the absence of architecture – a void and a necessity. It was this confrontation with a *tabula rasa* that led you to ask yourself how your country could be reconstructed, how you could rebuild its homes and cities, and was no doubt the passionate and vital source of your vocation. You began your career under the favorable auspices of Kenzo Tange, the first Japanese Pritzker Laureate, who communicated to you his love of clean lines and his sense of breadth and harmony. You established your firm in 1963, when Japan had regained its sovereignty and was attempting to make a comeback. There was no shortage of work. You began with buildings in your hometown and then expanded to several other Japanese cities.

You quickly became one of the first Japanese architects to work outside your own country's borders, in the United States, Spain, Australia, China, Italy, and Vietnam. During your 60-year career, you've designed more than 100 buildings with a variety of functions, including libraries, museums, office towers, cultural and conference centers, and hotels, and you've never repeated yourself. You've always been able to

conceive of different shapes and styles and break down the materials, lines, and colors. As a sort of chameleon architect, you've adapted yourself to the shades, hues, and energies of your locations. Thus you went from the red brick of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles that responds to the city's sun, to the glowing titanium of the superb Art Tower Mito with its slender, gleaming, spiraling metal. You're responsible for the playful and colorful gaiety of the Team Disney Building at the Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, Florida, the gravity of the Allianz Tower in Milan, and the linear geometry of the Palasport in Turin. You gave us the imposing National Convention Center in Doha, Qatar, whose spectacular entrance represents the Sidras trees that grow in the Qatari desert and, in this case, support a roof canopy, as well as so many others. You're not limited to a single approach. You're an architect who invents a new look for each new project, guided by your own unique style. Consequently, your work has constantly evolved over the course of your career, directed by the locations, projects, and different currents that have inspired you. From the very start, you've sought to establish an unprecedented and fertile architectural dialog between East and West, with projects both in Japan and abroad, while also calling upon the profound philosophies of the different geographies. This has undoubtedly made you one of the first truly international architects. Your works have also sought to bridge cultures and peoples. Your sacred trust as Arata Isozaki is also shared by Japan, which has produced an exceptional line of architects and is currently one of the most creative nations in this domain.

France is very well aware of these facts, and although we've never had the good fortune of serving as your medium of expression, we've always been especially receptive to the talents of your contemporaries and compatriots for reshaping our cities and buildings: the Centre Pompidou-Metz and La Scène Musicale in Boulogne-Billancourt by 2014 Pritzker Prize Laureate Shigeru Ban and Jean de Gastines; the Louvre-Lens and the new Samaritaine by Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa, both 2010 Pritzker Prize Laureates; the old Paris Bourse de Commerce, which will soon house a contemporary art collection, by Tadao Ando, 1995 Pritzker Prize Laureate; the UNESCO Japanese Garden by Isamu Noguchi; the "Mille arbres" project, a forest building that reconciles urban architecture and nature, by Sou Fujimoto and France's Manal Rachdi, as well as many other examples of our receptiveness to your architecture.

This long list is far from an exhaustive testimony to France's enduring openness to outside talent for designing its spaces, shaping its cities, and building its monuments. What's true today was also true in the past: during the Renaissance, when Boccador was invited to design the Hôtel de Ville in Paris and Leonardo da Vinci participated in the construction of the Château de Chambord, which he never saw himself but whose plans he inspired; in the Neoclassical era, when we looked to Greek and Roman antiquity for new sources of inspiration. The Church of La Madeleine, which is near here, and the Palais Bourbon, the seat of our National Assembly, owe a great deal to Greek artistry and to the Parthenon in particular. There are so many locations that have been inspired by architects from around the world, so many locations that have been implemented by architects from around the world. France is truly a land of architects, not only because we're a nation that has trained generations of builders, not only because we have one of the world's richest architectural heritages that we as a people are deeply proud of and passionate about, but also because we've always welcomed outside influences and talent. While relying on our own genius, history, and traditions, we've also known how to open ourselves up to the world and to the genius of other countries. It's the dual course of French architectural history, a little of that French way of being that I spoke of earlier and that is embodied in our architecture more than in any other of our nation's art forms.

It's also why I want to take advantage of this formal reception and the grand progression that I've just described to say a few words about our architecture today, and about a major project that will be the focus of debate and attention in France over the next five years. I am of course referring to Notre Dame.

I believe that what has happened in France over the past few weeks expresses a great deal of what I've just been saying on a deep and emotional level.

Since the moment the fire broke out, the emotions aroused in our country – in our fellow citizens but in others as well – have been felt around the world. Once a building comes to life, once a monument becomes a part of everyone's life, a part of their history, a representation of their emotions, and is no longer simply a collection of dead stones, it fulfills an extremely important cultural function.

It also becomes a repository of civilization and emotion, a way of relating to others, to a city, to a continent. The emotion expressed by so many people abroad

demonstrates what architecture can convey and mean. Many people have told me that when they saw Notre Dame burning and feared that they might never see it again, they experienced an unprecedented emotion and felt deeply European – the emotion and experience inspired by a particular part, a particular reflection or angle of the cathedral. On that day, all of humanity felt the awful sensation of losing a part of itself – primarily the French and Europeans. Fortunately, this jewel was saved and its structure preserved, thanks to the tremendous courage of the Paris firefighters and the actions of the architects of historic monuments and all the professionals involved in conserving our heritage. They intervened with the government within minutes of the fire’s outbreak and ran every possible risk to remove the treasures and protect the premises, allowing one part to burn in order to save the rest.

This enabled us to quickly establish a vision for the future. I wanted to begin that very evening, because when people make the difficult decisions that our firefighters made, running a terrific risk by letting one part of the building burn in order to save the rest, I don’t believe we have the right to give in to suffering. The international architectural community instantly began sharing its ideas and proposals and the shock and despair soon gave way to hope, the ferment of ideas, the fervor of projects, and passionate discussions of what should be done. I know many people were disturbed by my initial decision to implement the project within a tight, proactive schedule. And I take full responsibility. The decision wasn’t based on any detailed analysis or on any type of expertise and I take full responsibility. It was primarily about willingness, because I sincerely believe that all decisions to take action and the ability to take action require the willingness to do so. This willingness has to be reasonable and achievable, but as we’ve experienced on a daily basis, when willingness is subordinated to expertise, the rapid conclusion is that nothing can be done. This willingness to take action wasn’t intended to negate expertise. It was a heartfelt decision not to give way to sadness or despair, a way of assuring ourselves that we will be able to rebuild within a perceivable, achievable horizon while keeping in mind what the location has been in the past. This five-year timeline is possible. It’s possible without compromising the quality of materials or methods, because this ambitious project can’t be accomplished without the excellence, expertise, and all that the proper professionals have to contribute to this enterprise.

This battle is emblematic of what we need to accomplish in our own country and

emblematic for contemporary architecture. I'm firmly convinced that we should trust today's builders and trust ourselves. We often hide behind documents and regulations to cover up our lack of trust. But when good people with the proper expertise are available, we need to employ the very best. We're activating the power to act rather than being impeded by a series of impossibilities. I believe that our citizens today need to see this and that we need to prove to ourselves that we know how to do it. So, yes, within five years, Notre Dame will be restored, its framework and roof will be rebuilt, because we have the knowledge, technologies, and know-how to do so.

The evening of the fire, I said that we would rebuild Notre Dame more beautifully than ever and redesign its immediate surroundings – the forecourt, the John XXIII square, the promenade along the south side of Ile de la Cité – in constant dialog, first of all, with the clergy of the city of Paris, and drawing on the work that was done over two years ago by some of you here, and would replace the spire. The project will be overseen by my special representative for the cathedral, General Georgelin, and the Ministry of Culture, which I thank for its unflagging commitment to this project since April 15th. This is the spirit in which we'll carry out this venture and expand the project. To accomplish this major feat of restoration and reconstruction, we need to proceed step by step using all the techniques offered by your profession, starting with a thorough assessment of the cathedral's condition by experts, architects of historic monuments, design consultants, engineers, art historians, researchers, conservators, and restorers. This has already been initiated with unprecedented enthusiasm. We then have to mobilize all designers within and beyond our borders in order to perpetuate and intensify the fantastic outburst of project ideas that I've mentioned.

This cathedral, which belongs to everyone, should not become the building of an individual. Within the framework of an international competition, I also want to bring together groups of talented experts that include contemporary architects and architects of historic monuments, artists and researchers, historians and sociologists, people with vast experience as well as young people bursting with promise – because in the act of trusting ourselves and others, we shouldn't forget that the monuments we admire today were frequently the work of very young architects. Renzo Piano was 27 years old when he designed the Centre Pompidou. Louis Le Vau was barely 30 when he conceived of his first large private mansions. And we

also need to rediscover a trust in the future, in imagination, and in innovation. I believe that this is what Viollet-le-Duc did in his day – restoring the cathedral by giving it the luster and beauty it might have had in the Middle Ages while at the same time infusing it with the innovations permitted by the technologies and culture of his time. For Viollet-le-Duc, there was no conflict between ancient and modern. No. An alliance existed between tradition and modernity, a respectful audacity, an imaginative restoration and reconstruction.

I firmly believe that this alliance between tradition and modernity – which is simply the way in which history is written, the way in which the genius of humanity is inscribed in time and space – is what we owe ourselves.

Ladies and gentlemen, there are many more projects that I'd like to mention, but I know you're expected at Versailles and I'm running out of time. Apart from this project, I firmly believe that many of the problems we experience in our democracies and that we've often tried to control on an organizational and institutional level can be solved through the organization of space, meaning through the work of architects, urban planners, and designers. I won't talk about it this evening due to the lack of time, but in a few weeks I'll return to what has long been called "Grand Paris," a vital project that I firmly believe in. For quite a while, this project has been bogged down by administrative and political disputes and the will of each individual to preserve their own space or power. A few months ago one of your colleagues, Roland Castro, submitted a report to help us reformulate it. And in light of the inspiration that has come from the experience of Notre Dame, I want to propose to the nation that we rethink our major projects for organizing our living space, not just in greater Paris but also in the greater Marseille and Lyon areas – projects in many of France's cities and spaces that will enable us to repair the urban organization by means of large, contemporary architectural projects, in those places that are broken down or where conditions have not been reassessed. Let's move beyond pointless institutional debates and thoroughly reassess how we can repair areas that have deteriorated. Let's invent new perspectives that have never before existed and new ways of being urban, as I mentioned earlier. I'll conclude by saying that today's architecture should permit us to respond to several contemporary challenges that we're facing – which is what we and the Ministry want to do. When I look at what has happened in France over the past few months, what will continue to happen for years and decades to

come, and what is happening in many democracies, it basically comes down to the uninhabitability of our planet. We've often built up our space without thinking it through, building blindly through deliberate or accidental choices. The past twenty years have seen more and more people migrating to metropolises and the depopulated areas becoming less safe. In keeping with the times, we built urban spaces that were fairly dense, though less so than in other countries, followed by housing developments. We sprawled. The next trend was toward general consumption and we scarred the outskirts of our cities with commercial and logistical structures. We abandoned our city centers. We progressively dismantled the habitable space and too often introduced "ugliness" into our country, or at least isolation. We created an everyday reality for which we neither defined the terms nor foresaw all the consequences. What we've been experiencing is the consequences of a world that's become uninhabitable. It's the everyday life of those that we've progressively forced to live 40 kilometers from their place of work, without public transportation and with no other option than to drive progressively more expensive vehicles, pay for progressively more expensive fuel, etc. And so, in light of what has been called the social and territorial divide, we need to reimagine the way in which we inhabit and design our space.

But the second contemporary challenge, which certain people have occasionally tried to resist, is this fear that our youth once again expressed this morning when they took to the streets of Europe: fear of climate change. If the world is less and less habitable for them, they believe it's because our behaviors and organizations are no longer adequate for facing the climate challenge but, on the contrary, tend to maintain and aggravate it. It's because no one is offering them solutions for living their everyday lives and the city as it's built and the habitat as it's designed are less and less adapted to a world that is heating up and to changing uses. And it's obviously true. The two main challenges that we have to confront and handle, that we're trying to respond to with regulations, new standards, and behavioral changes, are to make our world habitable again and to treat the future with respect. The heart of our political challenge is architectural. It is to rebuild and reorganize our common life and redesign our spaces in order to reestablish cohesiveness, by remaking them in a way that benefits everyone and allows mobility and a different way of life within these redesigned spaces.

As I said in my introduction, the challenge isn't just aesthetic. Today more than ever, it is remarkably political. The two major contemporary battles that I mentioned require an architectural mindset, an architectural organization based on urban planning, research, and creativity fundamentally different from what we've sometimes implemented so blindly. Sufficiently complex bodies also have to be established that can think more broadly about the problems that we encounter, groups that know how to recreate a habitable world where our fellow citizens are increasingly confronted by global issues and think globally but also want to be rooted locally, to live in one place that offers them a sensory, aesthetic, and political experience, situated in this tension between what we perceive in our immediate surroundings and the global concerns that we contemplate and experience.

So my decision wasn't based solely on my pride at being asked to host the Pritzker Prize, but I also wanted to celebrate you and welcome you all to this venue as a way of letting you know that in this new phase of the project – which is both national and European and which I want us to be able to discuss – I've chosen to assign architecture a very special role. Maybe not the role it has usually been assigned, not simply a disciplinary or traditional role, but on the level I was just talking about. We're a few days away from an important choice for Europe, and in order to build an authentic Europe, we'll also have to talk about architecture.

A few days ago, I met with a group of about thirty intellectuals from around the world. We discussed values and concrete subjects but ultimately, Europe has always been composed of places as well. The agora is a place. The café is a place that is a unique component of European social life. The university is a place, a way of coming together that has also contributed to the making of Europe. We will also have to invent places for the European democratic consciousness of tomorrow.

Your task in meeting each of these challenges is no longer yours alone, but you will be invited to express yourselves as participants in a movement that I hope will galvanize our nation, a movement toward making this world habitable and profoundly universal – a world that is rooted and conscious of what's at stake in the 21st century, a world where people are more and more mobile and thus reinvent our civilization, where they know how to rebuild with a great deal of humility as well as a healthy dose of audacity. I thank you and congratulate you.