

J. Carter Brown 1992 Laureate Alvaro Siza Ceremony Speech

On behalf of our itinerant jury, we find ourselves on location in Chicago, and I think it is very appropriate for an architecture prize. We are in this setting of Burnham, Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Mies van der Rohe, and of such contemporaries as Jahn—that fantastic airport—and of course, Tom Beebe and this wonderful building. Thank you for having us here at your library, the Chicago Public Library, CPL. I should translate for those out-of-towners—everyone in Chicago knows that CPL really stands for Cindy Pritzker’s Library.

It is fortuitous that we dine here in the year 1992, a Quincentennial year. Some of you may not realize that Tom Beebe was born on Columbus day; and Chicago has been associated with Columbus celebrations with an enormous influence on American architecture. The great Columbian commemoration held here—perhaps a year late in 1893—but in honor of the Quadricentennial affected the design of American cities all over the country, and particularly the city that I happen to live in, our capital, Washington, which captures the flavor of the “City Beautiful” movement, as it was called as a result of the great Chicago Fair. It is therefore doubly fitting that we celebrate this crossing of the Atlantic and commemorate someone who learned his navigation in Portugal. Portugal was the pioneer under Prince Henry the Navigator, and the advances that were made in navigation were not lost on a man called Christopher Columbus.

Pioneering is what the Pritzkers have done with this extraordinary prize. All of us owe a debt of gratitude to Jay and Cindy Pritzker, and to The Hyatt Foundation, for making possible a prize that has truly become the Nobel Prize of architecture. It has exerted an enormous influence, and we hope motivation, for the world of architecture and architectural patronage.

And so the loop is completed; we reach this year across the Atlantic to the great port of Porto, and welcome Alvaro Siza as our Laureate, and realize that discoveries in architecture as well as everything else still happen.

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