

James Stirling **1981 Laureate** **Ceremony Acceptance Speech**

One of the continuities in the history of Architecture is that every now and again a new patron and benefactor appears, and on behalf of my profession, here and abroad, I would salute Jay Pritzker—a most generous friend to Architects.

Somehow I think it might have been easier for Philip Johnson who, on the first occasion of the Prize giving, talked about the importance of the new Prize to the Profession, and maybe easier for Luis Barragán, reviewing a lifetime's work. Perhaps it's more difficult for me—at any rate I feel it that way. I can't talk about the Prize as a new event and I hope I'm not at the end of my work, though I guess I'm somewhere past the midway.

It's always been difficult for me to see myself. I work very intuitively. I'm not even sure whether I'm an English Architect, a European or an International Architect. It is embarrassing to talk about myself and therefore I will quote from a recent article written by Robert Maxwell especially about this third Pritzker award. Maxwell was a fellow student at Liverpool School of Architecture in the 1940s and is now Professor of Architecture at London University:

"In England in particular there is a peculiar breath of scandal attaching to the pursuit of architecture as Art. Criticism of architecture in the public mind is broadly associated with sociological or material failure, and these specters haunt the practice of architecture. Yet when such faults occur they are not thought to be really scandalous except when associated with high architectural aspirations."

The 'high architectural aspirations' achieved in some of our earlier projects were in a sense accidents—the clients were not necessarily expecting a work of art in addition to a well functioning building—but they got buildings which have ever since been overrun with hordes of architectural students pounding through, something the users didn't anticipate or now appreciate.

However, for me, right from the beginning the 'art' of architecture has always been the priority. That's what I trained to do (and incidentally it's what students are still trained to do), so it's particularly gratifying to feel that the Pritzker Prize is being awarded annually to Architects who value the art as highest and who have at the same time achieved a consistent sequence of buildings.

I agree with Maxwell that by and large the UK situation is to rate artistic content as coming rather far down the line of priorities (or as something which, with a bit of luck, might just happen). So how do fine buildings get built in the UK? Often subversively, I suspect. Certainly in my earlier days it was never discussed that the buildings should also be beautiful. However, I'm pleased to say that this situation has changed and our Patrons in Germany and America and our single client in the UK have commissioned us because they particularly value high quality architecture.

Historically, the quality of the art in the architecture, both at time of building and in retrospect, is remembered as the significant element, however, with the advent of modern architecture in this century, sociological, functional and real estate values.

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