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Spirit of Nature: "Nobel Prize for Wooden Architecture"

**Spirit of Nature: „Nobelpreis der Holz-
architektur“**

**Spirit of Nature: „Premio Nobel
dell'architettura in legno“**

Document in English

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1 An international wood architecture prize

A new international architectural award - the Spirit of Nature Wood Architecture Award - was established in Finland in 1999. The Award is granted for architectural excellence to a person or group of persons whose work exemplifies a progressive and creative use of timber. The founder of the international Spirit of Nature Wood Architecture Award, the Wood in Culture Association, was set up to promote and foster a cultural tradition which breathes the presence of nature. It is the wish of the Association that the award will promote and foster enduring values connected with this tradition. In planning the award, the Wood in Culture Association has consulted the representatives of the Finnish Association of Architects (SAFA), the Building Information Institute, the Museum of Finnish Architecture, the Alvar Aalto Foundation and the Alvar Aalto Medal Commission.

It is characteristic of modern construction that architects are particularly interested in traditional materials, such as timber. The association wishes to use the new Spirit of Nature Wood Architecture Award to support and internationally highlight a form of architecture in which timber has the central position. The organiser hopes that the award will both increase the respect for timber buildings and building components, and improve their quality.

The award will be granted every second year. The first recipient was architect Renzo Piano (b. 1937) from Italy. The award ceremony has always been performed in a building which may be described as the flagship of Finnish timber construction in the new millennium - the new Sibelius Hall congress and concert centre in the City of Lahti.

The first Spirit of Nature Wood Architecture Award jury consisted of three Finnish architects and two architects from other countries. Rainer Mahlamäki was the chairman of the Jury and the other members were Gunnel Adlercreutz, Unto Siikanen, Glenn Murcutt from Australia and myself.

The recipient of the international Spirit of Nature Wood Architecture Award in 2002 was architect Kengo Kuma (b. 1954) from Japan. A jury consisted of architects from three countries selected the winner of the award. Its chairman was Gunnel Adlercreutz from Finland, and other members were Unto Siikanen and Jan Söderlund from Finland, Olga Quintanilha from Portugal and Roland Schweitzer from France.

Both award ceremonies have been televised by a Finnish television station, MTV3, and transmitted to other countries by the EBU.

The third recipient of the award in 2004 was architect Richard Leplastrier (b. 1939) from Australia. The award ceremony was organised as part of the World Conference on Timber Engineering. A jury consisted of architects from three countries selected the winner. Its chairman was Gunnel Adlercreutz from Finland, and other members were Unto Siikanen and Mikko Heikkinen from Finland, Anne Lacaton from France and Johan Celsing from Sweden.

The fourth award was given to architect Peter Zumthor from Switzerland in 2006. The award jury consisted of the architects Mikko Heikkinen as chairman, Saralotta Narjus and Unto Siikanen from Finland, Carl-Viggo Hoelmekjakk from Norway and Jüri Okas from Estonia.

The Award sum EUR 50,000 has been made possible by the support of the Finnish Forest Foundation.

Renzo Piano



Born on 14 September 1937 in Genoa, Italy and graduated in 1964 from the School of Architecture in Milan Polytechnic. During studies worked under design guidance of Franco Albini in 1965-70, worked with Louis Kahn in Philadelphia and with Z S Makowsky in London. Collaboration with Richard Rogers began in 1971 and with Peter Rice in 1977. Offices in Genoa and Paris under the name Renzo Piano Building Workshops.

Renzo Piano's architecture is always very easy to understand, yet very surprising. It often consists of layers upon layers in a very tectonic and technically solid manner. This opens for a fragile moment, a softness that invites the user to sense the building. The use of wood comes therefore very natural for Renzo Piano, offering both solidity and sensibility. As a part of an architecture park in Lahti, I have designed a pavilion as an homage to Piano. It is to be built next to the concert hall.

Kengo Kuma



Kengo Kuma is an architect who understands the significance and possibilities of a skilful use of materials in his work. Many of Mr Kuma's works are characterised by a refined use of wood and a profound understanding of the nature of wood as a building material. He has successfully combined new and traditional elements to produce architecture that is completely modern whilst still being sensitively and carefully adjusted to its existing surroundings.

The international Spirit of Nature Wood Architecture Award that was presented to Mr. Kengo Kuma was at the same time also a tribute to the centuries-long tradition of Japanese wood architecture and handicraft skills.

Richard Leplastrier



In giving the award to Richard Leplastrier the jury wishes to stress the honesty and humility of his approach to life - which is reflected in his architecture. He believes in simplified spaces that give room for things to happen and nature to enter. Leplastrier's architecture produces spaces at ease and at rest with themselves and within themselves. He relates to people, the landscape, materials and nature in the same way, always with a wish to understand, respect and preserve.

Continuity, peace, transparency, completeness at all stages, serenity, respect but also self-esteem and peace at a profound level: these are qualities you find in Leplastrier's buildings, qualities which make them great architecture.

Peter Zumthor



He made his breakthrough in the architectural media at the end of the 1980s with the protective structure he designed for the Roman ruins in Chur, his own atelier, and the small chapel situated amidst an impressive alpine landscape in Sumvitg. In all these buildings wood has been used in a traditionally wise but at the same time new and innovative way. For the general public Peter Zumthor's best known wooden structure is probably the Swiss pavilion for the Hannover World Expo in 2000. In his latest wood works, Zumthor has studied the application of the traditional log frame to contemporary architecture.

Mikko Heikkinen, the chairman of the jury, claimed that "even in Finland we talk about Wow-architecture. The buildings are expected to astonish the viewer. I'm convinced that this is exactly the type of work that Peter Zumthor creates, with a whole spectrum of emotional range. However the impression left by his works is a long lasting one. In his works, Mr Zumthor constantly re-invents the building and it is done without the sole purpose of wanting to create something new and dazzling. Paradoxically enough, the result always returns to the tradition, to the archetypes of building. Each building by Mr Zumthor is like the one metre Iridium Model, with which the architects of the world have to measure their own creations".