

**ROYAL INCORPORATION OF ARCHITECTS IN SCOTLAND
FELLOWS' DINNER SPEECH
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What does it mean to me to be elected an Honorary Fellow?

My first response was - to be recognised back home. That old adage of never being recognised in your own country came to mind. Why?

My design engineering practice Rice Francis Ritchie set up in Paris in 1981 and Ian Ritchie Architects in London worked on most of the French Socialist Government's Grand Projets in the 1980s helping, and sometimes more than just helping, the architects who won or were commissioned - Pei at The Louvre, Fainsilber at La Villette, Tschumi at the Parc de La Villette, Ott at the Bastille Opera, Spreckleson at The Grand Arche and CNIT at La Défense, Andreu at Roissy Airport terminal 2F, RER/TGV Station. Some of the work was seminal in that it redefined the potential of architecture.

The structural glazing technique we invented for La Villette exemplified this. RFR has the world patent, and the French Académie awarded me in 2000 their grand medal for research and construction innovation. The ability of architects to embrace innovation has had a profound impact upon architecture.

I am particularly pleased that I was the first UK professional - engineer or architect to receive the award of the Academie and flattered to join a roll call of some of the great engineers and designers of the late twentieth century: Jean Prouvé (1972), Félix Candela (1980), Frei Otto (1982), Richard B Fuller, Peter Rice (1989), Santiago Calatrava (1990), Michel Virlogeux (1997).

My wife is French, and she is here this evening, as she has been, by my side, critical and complimentary, during my entire architectural career. She was touched that the French honoured me. She is even more delighted that, following the spirit of the auld alliance, the Scots have deemed me a suitable Fellow.

She knows, though few architects do, that I am a Celt, my father was born in a flat in Rodney Street Edinburgh, and how proud I was that our son was an undergraduate architectural student at Edinburgh University. Like so many who claim the proud epithet "Scots" I have never lived in Scotland, so I can hardly ask that I be recognised back home - but this is why it feels so good right now.

Yet, I have had the opportunity to build in this fantastic country - some social housing in this city's east end. I have planned and competed for other schemes but they have not materialised. I would love to do more here. But perhaps, like so many talented architects in the room, we do not advertise our wares, nor resort to hyperbole and architectural stuntmaking to be noticed while the decision makers of our cities are seduced by the image of architectures that perhaps ultimately serve their authors more than the clients.

So this Fellowship means much - it makes me proud to be Scottish, to be accepted as a good architect in a country rich in talent which I recognised first hand last year when judging the Doolan Awards. As I said on that occasion, I saw work that was as good as any recent European architecture. It is a credit to the education, training and culture of this country that the standards are rising, as I watch, with pain, as elsewhere standards fall. Why is this?

So this honour gives me an opportunity, a wee bit cheekily perhaps, to say something about what I feel is happening in architecture today.

I know that architecture is the domain of the polymath and artist. But so much time seems to be spent on the art image that knowledge, indispensable knowledge, of how to plan, design, understand materials and construct with aesthetically pleasing end results, and meet the social and economic demands is being denied to most students. The education of the architect risks, like most of aspects of contemporary society, becoming thin.

What is needed, and what I believe is strongly represented in this room tonight, is for people who have knowledge to INSPIRE, SUPPORT and ENABLE the next generation of designers to understand more deeply the heritage of their profession, the architectural lineage of which they are part and the knowledge that is embedded in the architecture that forms our cities. Not to encourage yet more rather shallow architectural gymnastics that fade as fast as the magazines in which they are portrayed, and which for too many architects IS the end game. Forget publishing, remember why we are here, and what we have been trained to help deliver for society, while we enjoy sharing the creative adventures with other professionals.

I would like to feel that the letters of the RIAS could have meaning perhaps:

R - to *respect* society,

I - to *inspire* the public and the next generation

A - to *advocate* - quality at every level of architecture

And

S - to *support* architects to create a humane, exciting and ultimately sensible man-made environment.

What this means is the potential of the RIAS Fellowship to become a significant force for social progress.

United through a set of shared values and a commitment to improve the prospects of our communities and build a better society, the RIAS should be able to call upon its Fellows' involvement, activity, interdisciplinary expertise and advocacy to promote these aims and ideals. A commitment - that is not simply the receiving of an honour by an individual or the RIAS' offering of its gift of Fellowship.

As a recipient I know that the more birthdays I celebrate the more the odds increase of receiving awards and medals. But in the end it is about obligations. With this Fellowship I recognise not only the esteem of colleagues, but also obligations, some of which might be:

- to make in the future a genuine contribution to civil society and not rest on my laurels
- to continue challenging current thinking
- to promote, even pioneer, innovation towards a better world
- to make available what expertise and enthusiasm I have to help the RIAS
- to be generous in sharing my ideas

There is a lovely exchange in Brecht's *Life of Galileo*

Andrea : " Unhappy the land that has no heroes"

Galileo : " No, unhappy the land that needs heroes"

I am not interested in the myth of the creative individual as created and nurtured by a bland human curiosity through an exploitative and propagandist media.

Like so many in this room, as an architect, artist, writer, innovator, dreamer, I know that I have a vitality and energy that I can't help but translate into action. Like all of you, I have always felt that my abilities are and will always be unique. Yet the translations of them as opportunities come and go is neither good nor bad, and there is no value in comparing them with others expressions.

This creativity, latent in every one of us must never be stifled - it must out, or it will never ever exist and no one will ever experience it. You will simply be undermining yourself. I genuinely feel that it is the same for each of us. It is to be aware, sensitive, and open to yourself.

Nor is it a question of belief in your work or yourself, but rather of listening to the urges that motivate you. I know I have never met any artist who is ever that pleased with what he has done. There is only a strange mystical satisfaction, maybe a momentary smile, and always an enduring sometimes annoying unrest which emanates perhaps from disequilibrium within - when technique, social condition or ideology are challenged or are out of sync with each other.

As the evening is likely to continue with quotes, and of course we all know that a facility for quotations covers the absence of original thought, I will now quote Margaret Mead:

“Isn't everyone a part of everyone else?

First it is necessary to stand on your own two feet. But the minute a man finds himself in that position, the next thing he should do is reach out his arms.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has. “

Let's not delude ourselves. We live in an age more of quantity than quality, of individualism more than community. We seem unable to recognise that our real treasure is our fellow human beings and our beautiful planet.

Why do we come together today?

Why are we not out there doing our own thing?

Are we here to learn, to share, to sympathise, to create, to show commitment?

In the first chapter of my first book, (well) Connected Architecture (Academy 1994), I wrote:

In western society there is a sense that the private life of the individual is now far more important than public responsibility - which is a reversal of attitudes held only a few decades ago.

This was an observation on our society as a whole, and this same trait was identified and remains today too dominant in the approach to, and the activities surrounding architecture.

Reflecting now upon the wider question of freedom, it is even more evident that the pendulum has swung even further toward the individual and his freedoms at the expense of both our sense of community and perhaps our planet.

We have fought against other nations and other religions to promote and defend our sense of identity. This historic idea of identity has served us well, but for the past three decades it has tended towards the extreme limits of social acceptance and tolerance. It is now a handicap to progress.

Not only has technological progress been part responsible for fractured families and communities, but in part, it has also been our hunger for individual freedom - to act alone. We are now paying the price for allowing it to advance so far. We can see this in the distribution of wealth, and the fragility of ecological and economic systems. This personal freedom is evidently at the expense of others.

Freedom is synonymous with independence, which has ultimately manifested itself in the idea that I can do what I want if I can physically or financially do it. It is the dominant ideology that has produced rogue traders, obscene levels of bonuses and the collapse of the banking system, and outrageous and unsustainable salaries for European premiership footballers and smooth-talking TV chat show hosts.

How can we measure the harm that the freedom of one person does upon another? We know that one thought or one action can affect the lives of thousands, if not millions.

It may be harm to one, or love to another. But if that thought or action is self-centred, it will inevitably harm more than it will nurture. Without a sense of caring, there can be no sense of community, of fellowship.

Self and un-self, freedom and incarceration, independence and interdependence - this is the dialectic of our age.

Freedom(s) need a framework, and that framework is order.

The idea of order, and of rules, gives us continuity with the past and an understanding of how our society evolves. As an architect and artist, I know that I am part of an historic intellectual and creative continuum. This gives me a moral perspective which in turn provides social habits which then allows trust to act as a central bonding agent.

As a result life is made easier than in Bladerunner or any one of Hollywood's films of a post-apocalyptic world. This stability, while allowing discreet and incremental change establishes a social psycho-reality which is both comprehensible and essential.

The *quality of order* is measured by achieving a balance between individual freedom and community, between independence and interdependence. It needs resetting.

It is also the case that the 'individual' behaviour of one company, or one nation towards another, needs to be redefined in the context of our connected world.

Connexity, an old English word, embodies this notion of a worldwide society so deeply interconnected and interrelated between man and man, machine and machine, and man and machine. We need to redefine the meaning and extent of individual freedom in an interdependent society, and reframe our 'orders' to embrace it.

The RIAS Award of Honorary Fellow would mean nothing if it was to be just another pip on the epaulette or stripe on an architectural uniform or parked on a mantelpiece. That would be for those who collect, the individuals who need to be reassured of their place in their profession or society, not for this gathering - of true believers.

For me it is a license and an enthusiastically embraced invitation to participate in the architectural life of Scotland - I am delighted and just a little humbled - to join the august company of the RIAS Fellowship.

And finally, Robert Burns, probably the most loved of all Scots:

And there's a hand, my trusty fiere!

and gie's a hand o' thine!

And we'll tak a right gude-willy waught, for auld lang syne.

Or 'a draught of good fellowship'

Ladies and Gentlemen, may I ask you to be upstanding for the toast - to architecture and fellowship!

Thank you.