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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**SPANISH/SWISS NEO-FUTURISTIC ARCHITECT,  
STRUCTURAL ENGINEER, SCULPTOR AND PAINTER  
SANTIAGO CALATRAVA VALLS NAMED AS THE  
EUROPEAN PRIZE FOR ARCHITECTURE 2015 LAUREATE**

*Europe's Highest Award Presented at an Award Ceremony to be held at  
the World Trade Center in New York on November 17*

One of the world's foremost visionary, utopian, and iconic architects today, Santiago Calatrava Valls, has been named as this year's recipient of the European Prize for Architecture, awarded by The Chicago Athenaeum: Museum of Architecture and Design, together with The European Centre for Architecture Art Design and Urban Studies.

The European Prize for Architecture is Europe's most prestigious prize given annually to architects who have blazoned a new path and direction for an architecture that is deeply humane and committed to forward the principles of European humanism.

Last year, the European Prize for Architecture was given to the Italian architect, Alessandro Mendini.

Born in Spain in 1951, Calatrava earned a degree in architecture and then in civil engineering, intrigued by the mathematics behind historic architecture.

Early in his career, Calatrava worked as an engineer and began to enter architectural competitions, believing this was his most likely way to secure commissions. His first winning competition proposal, in 1983, was for the design and construction of Stadelhofen Railway Station in Zurich.

The next year, Calatrava designed and built a bridge for the Olympic Games in Barcelona; this was the



beginning of a series of bridge projects that established his international reputation.

By the mid-1980s, Calatrava was hired for large-scale public projects, and opened offices for his company in Zurich, Paris, Valencia, and later New York. During this period, he also began to exhibit his abstract sculptures in museums and galleries.

Known for his flowing, curved buildings, he uses steel, concrete, and new computer modeling to create compositions that appear at once natural and structurally impossible. His compositions convey a sense of direction and movement.

"In this sense," states Christian Narkiewicz-Laine, Museum President, The Chicago Athenaeum, "the Spanish-born architect Calatrava is more than just an architect. He is a visionary theorist, philosopher, and utopian and a true artist in the craft of engineering and architectonic expressionism. His buildings are not just 'building.' They are powerful works of art; inspired by a master's gifted hand and sculpted by a superior, critical eye; immensely evocative and fiercely intellectual."


"If 'form follows function' is the rallying cry of modern architecture, Calatrava's postmodern structures turn this maxim on its head. His designs suggest stylized natural objects—waves, wings, or sun-bleached skeletons, with rows of white concrete ribs curved into distorted parabolic arches. The true purpose of these dramatic contours are both aesthetic and structural."

"It is significant that The European Prize for Architecture honors Calatrava as an architect, engineer, sculptor, and painter," Narkiewicz-Laine adds.

"Calatrava has sealed the deal on the long-standing modernist debate as to whether 'architecture is engineering' or 'architecture is an art,' continues Narkiewicz-Laine. "For decades, modern architects sneered at any close association with the practice of architecture as being an 'art form,' but instead based their professional designing pursuits on pure engineering. Even art-inspired architects as Hassan Fathy and a host of South American architects, including Luis Barragán, have held themselves out to be total engineers. For this singular architect practitioner, architecture is engineering and is definitively art. In Calatrava, we see all three disciplines seamlessly merging into the one practice of architecture with no distinctions or any separations whatsoever."

"And truly, this architect is a most celebrated and accomplished and powerful contemporary artist."

"His free-flowing, fluid sketches and ink washes, sometimes of Matisse-like figures dancing in mid-air, are a stark contrast to the rigid and forceful geometry of his buildings. In paintings, Minoan-like bulls stampede across canvasses and pottery that appears as if they were recently unearthed from a 6th –Century AD archaeological



site on a Greek island. 'They keep me thinking about form, shape, density; they keep me sharp. They are all studies for buildings,' he has often stated."

"To Calatrava, painting is the genesis of his creative process; his brush as important as the computer software on which his buildings are eventually drafted, twisted, and manipulated. His initial sketches for buildings are loosely conceived; drawings are largely spontaneous. His drawings are made by an artist seeking forms of artistic expression, but embracing engineering as a way of thinking."

"He regularly traverses the lines between art and architecture; his buildings are frequently called sculptural, while his sculptures and paintings are like sketches of buildings," continues Narkiewicz-Laine

Many of the themes and forms that Calatrava investigates on this level are then transformed into sculptures or provide the basis of inspiration for his buildings.

In 2012, The State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg mounted "Santiago Calatrava: The Quest for Movement"—a fascinating documentation on the architect's theories for kinetic energy in several of his projects.

In the course of the last two decades more than 65,000 drawings have accumulated in the architect's archive—several thousand drawings of the human body based on imagination rather than on any specific models.

Most recently, a new series of Calatrava sculptures—stingers, tails and wings of giant alien insects, or perhaps feathers that have fallen from the dove—are exhibited this fall on New York's Park Avenue medians between 52nd and 55th Streets.

"This should explain," adds Narkiewicz-Laine, "why so many of his neo-Futurist buildings look like their were adapted from a dream, not an architectural rendering or blueprint."

"What is in the architect's mind and imagination and what is on paper or canvass are very much the same. His art might be far less abstract than his buildings, but the two remain very much identical. For Calatrava, architecture is a code. It is a pure code, derived like art from the dimensions of nature."

Art has been central to the architect's life since he was a child. The youngest of four siblings, he was constantly sketching, so much so his eldest brother took him to an art school when he was age eight.

When Calatrava decided to put his skills to practical ends by becoming an architect, he spent 14 years in school, graduating in Architecture from the Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura de Valencia in 1974 and ultimately



earning a Ph.D in structural engineering on top of his architectural degree from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zürich in 1979.

Throughout it all, Calatrava kept making art, sketching the world around him, but increasingly it became the basis for his architectural work as well. After graduation, he started sculpting, using blocks of polished granite, metals rods and wire to create cantilevered structures.

In 1992, MoMA mounted a show of these work that helped solidify his career and reputation, which then rested on a handful of successful, admired, and highly publicized bridges.

Those many bridges quickly launched him into the forefront of contemporary design.

He became internationally known following the completion of the Bach de Roda - Felipe 11 Bridge (1984-1987) in Barcelona along with the Montjuïc Communications Tower (1989-1992). In 1988 he was commissioned to design one of the entrance bridges for EXPO 92 in Seville, namely, the Alamillo Bridge.

The stunning Alamillo Bridge (1987-1992), its 167 meter canted tower almost palpably straining against its cable-stays, opened in 1992 as part of Seville's extensive infrastructure expansion for the 1992 Worlds Fair.


Calatrava's focus when building bridges has been on the use of arch and cables. He has developed the arc, varying in height to optimize its carrying capacity while presenting an aesthetic view to the eye.

In 2009, he completed an opening cable stayed bridge in Dublin, Samuel Beckett Bridge (2003) where the principle of the arch and cables are integrated into the design.

The pedestrian Peace Bridge (2012), which accommodates both pedestrians and cyclists crossing the Bow River in Calgary, Canada, is a departure from Calatrava's previous designs, which were typically asymmetric shapes anchored by high masts. Another atypical element is the color; while most of Calatrava's designs are LeCorbusian white, the Peace Bridge features red and white as used in both the Flag of Canada and the Flag of Calgary.

Likewise, his neo-Futurist buildings are equally seductive where Calatrava has transformed poured concrete into sculpted clay. His theatrical, uplifting designs are immediately recognizable, and often his buildings look poised for lift-off and ready to soar into the breeze.

They are very much a part of the continuity of the highly engineered "organic" modernist tradition established



by Félix Candela, Bertrand Goldberg, Bruce Goff, Buckminster Fuller, Pier Luigi Nervi, and ultimately, Eero Saarinen.

“In the history of contemporary architecture, neo-Futurist Santiago Calatrava has picked up where Eero Saarinen left off,” states Narkiewicz-Laine.

Like Saarinen's T.W.A. Terminal at Kennedy Airport, Calatrava's work, bending and twisting with dramatic contours, is conceived as an element completely integrated in the surrounding landscape and, at the same time, as an autonomous site-specific sculpture.

The Milwaukee Art Museum (1996), which overlooks Lake Michigan and was partially housed in a building designed in 1957 by Eero Saarinen as a war memorial, was Calatrava's first project in the United States.

The extension, as such, is a kind of pavilion, transparent and light, which contrasts with the massive, compact Saarinen building.

Instead of building only an addition, the architect added an important public element to the lakefront. He infused the building with a sensibility to the site and the culture of the lake with its boats, sails, waves, and constantly changing landscape.


The futuristic, Sci-Fi City of Arts and Sciences (1998-2003), in the former port of Calatrava's home town of Valencia, consists of a cluster of structures, including a domed cinema, a landscaped viewing point and car park, a science museum, an aquarium and a multifunctional space called the Agora. These are connected by a public plaza and bridges around a central pool.

The complex's centerpiece is a white poured concrete opera house with a feather-like roof and curving sides covered in ceramic mosaic tiles. A monument that is unusually powerful, startling, yet extremely delicate.

This is Calatrava's most intense masterwork.

The City of Arts and Sciences testifies to the range of this architect's vision. The concrete and glass canopy of the planetarium, symbolic of an eye, heroically emerges out the water; the repetitive arches of the winter garden have the unrestrained sensuality of Keats's poetry. Like the work of his predecessor Antonio Gaudí, the Catalan master of undulating forms, the complex is truly about architectural fantasy.

His designs for a large number of his structures are based on the human or animal form. This is seen in the roof



structure of the TVA Station (1989-1994) in Lyon. It has further evolved with the Twisting Torso Building in Malmö, Sweden (2005) and the proposed Chicago Spire in Chicago (2000).

Another anthropomorphic form, with its signature moveable parts, is the stunning Florida Polytechnic University (2010-2014). The building is a superb, gleaming icon and architectural study of light and shade in their ultimate contrasts.

The exterior of the building is ringed by pergolas, covering and lightly shading an upper terrace and a wide walkway at ground level.

The effect is less skeletal given the building's filigreed screen. The screen detracts, yet captures the delicacy of the structural system underneath that lies at the core of all of Calatrava's best works.

The skylight above the Commons is also shaded by a complex system of aluminum louvers that can be raised or lowered depending on the intensity and position of the sun, casting a series of geometric shadows onto the floor but giving the room plenty of natural light.

The idea evokes a bird that occasionally stretches out its wings.

This addition of motion and movement into an otherwise static work of architecture adds enormous vitality to Calatrava's buildings.

Like most buildings by Calatrava, the outcome is compellingly and sublimely hypnotic.


In 2015, the Florida Polytechnic University won both an International Architecture Award and an American Architecture Award from The Chicago Athenaeum.

His current design, the 800,000-square foot, World Trade Center Transportation Hub (2004-2015), is currently under construction in Lower Manhattan, New York.

The dynamic, colossal, dinosaur-like structure is characterized by its arched-glass and steel-ribbed enclosure sheltering its main hall will allow natural light to wash through the space where 250,000 commuters and visitors are expected to pass daily through two levels of restaurants and shops. The reaches four stories underground, with a five-track New Jersey PATH train terminal, 200,000 square feet of retail, and concourses for 12 subway lines.

Moreover, the skylight along the curved roof's spine, which reaches a height of 161 feet, will open to a width of

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30 feet, allowing fresh air to filter in and offering glimpses of the sky.

“And although swallowed in controversy about ‘arrogance’ and soaring cost overruns and the like (and what important building has never been controversial), the head-turning PATH train station at the World Trade Center site’s ground zero will undoubtedly be one of Calatrava’s most stirring triumphs as it enters the highest mark in the Pantheon of New York’s civic architecture,” states Narkiewicz-Laine.

And, as in most of his public buildings, the general public at large is immediately quick to notice with frequent “oohs and ahhs.”

The absolute majority of works designed by Calatrava are complete and utter show-stoppers.

“That is the most distinguishing legacy of Calatrava’s illustrious career,” continues Narkiewicz-Laine.

“It’s the public reaction. And isn’t that very telling about what the best good architecture and best good design should be?”

““Nothing by this architect goes unnoticed. You are made aware that you are someplace, somewhere special. By building inspiring architecture in public places and for the public, Calatrava has added much to the definition of what is civic realm.”


“No other practicing architect today has a predominate and singular, signature style. Look at any of his buildings and bridges; they are unmistakably ‘Calatrava.’ They cannot be copied or duplicated, but remain freshly distinctive, refreshing, and pure. Very few exceptions can claim the same. Maybe a Gaudí; maybe a Frank Lloyd Wright.”

“Calatrava is blazing his own path to making modern architectural history.”

Previous recent laureates of The European Prize for Architecture include: Danish architect, Bjarke Ingels (2010); German architects, Graft Architekten (2011); the Norwegian firm, TYIN tegnestue Architects (2012); Finnish Architect, Marco Casagrande (2013); and Italian Architect, Alessandro Mendini (2014).

A ceremony for what has become known throughout the world as European architecture’s highest honor will be held at the World Trade Center in New York on November 17.

After the Presentation Ceremony in New New York, an exhibition on the works of Calatrava is scheduled to



opens at The Chicago Athenaeum's Burnham Center and travels to The European Centre's Contemporary Space Athens (74 Mitropoleos Str., Athens, Greece) in 2016.

A catalogue on Santiago Calatrava on the occasion of the European Prize for Architecture is published by Metropolitan Arts Press and is available through The European Centre.

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