

Toyo Ito - Pritzker Prize

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The [Sendai Mediatheque](#), in Sendai, Japan, was designed by [Toyo Ito](#). Photo: © Nacasa and Partners Inc.

[Toyo Ito](#) is the 2013 recipient of the Pritzker Architecture Prize. The outspoken 71-year-old Japanese architect has designed a body of varied work, with each successive building seeming to share little stylistically in common with its predecessors.

Of these many buildings, in an ArchitectureWeek [interview](#), Ito identified the Sendai Mediatheque, in Sendai, Japan, as a favorite:

"It changed the whole way I think about architecture and society. Before that project I didn't think society actually expected much from architects. My idea was that we didn't really have much of a social impact. But after that project, I actually watched what happened at the [Mediatheque](#), and the people who used that space really enjoyed that building and it changed their behavior."



[Toyo Ito](#). Photo: Courtesy Pritzker Foundation

And while Ito's career to date has spanned some 40 years, completion of the Sendai Mediatheque in 2001 also seems to have been a career catalyst. In the years since Sendai, the architect has designed several noteworthy projects, including a Serpentine Gallery; the dramatic [Taichung Metropolitan Opera House](#), in Taichung, Taiwan; a thoughtful [crematorium](#), in Kakamigahara, Japan; and two flashy mid-rise buildings in Tokyo: [Tod's Omotesando](#) and [Mikimoto Ginza 2](#).



[Tod's Omotesando](#), in Tokyo, Japan, 2004.
Photo: © Nacasa & Partners Inc.



[Mikimoto Ginza 2](#), in Toyko, Japan, 2005.
Photo: Toyo Ito

Jury Comments

"Whoever reviews Ito's works notices not only a variety of functional programs, but also a spectrum of architectural languages. He has gradually developed and perfected a personal architectural syntax, which combines structural and technical ingenuity with formal clarity. His forms do not comply with either a minimalist or a parametric approach. Different circumstances lead to different answers."



[Crematorium](#), in Kakamigahara, Japan. Photo: Courtesy Toyo Ito & Associates, Architects

"From the outset, he developed works that were modern, using standard industrial materials and components for his lightweight structures, such as tubes, expanded meshes, perforated aluminum sheeting and permeable fabrics. His later expressive works have been formed using mostly reinforced concrete. In a truly extraordinary way, he is able to keep structure, space, setting, technology, and place on equal footing.

"Although the resulting buildings seem effortlessly in balance, they are the result of his deep knowledge of his craft and his ability to deal with all the aspects of architecture simultaneously. In spite of the complexity of his works, their high degree of synthesis means that his works attain a

level of calmness that ultimately allows the inhabitants to freely develop their activities within them."



Glass-walled corridor of the [crematorium](#). Photo: Courtesy Toyo Ito & Associates, Architects.

Ito will be presented with the Pritzker Prize—a \$100,000 grant and a bronze medallion—in a formal ceremony in Boston, Massachusetts on May 29, 2013. The jury was comprised chairman, the Lord Palumbo, as well as Alejandro Aravena, Justice [Stephen Breyer](#), [Yung Ho Chang](#), [Glenn Murcutt](#), and [Juhani Pallasmaa](#).

Ito also received the Praemium Imperiale prize for architecture in 2010.

Recent recipients of the Pritzker Prize include [Jean Nouvel](#), [Peter Zumthor](#), Kazuyo Sejima and Ruye Nishizawa of [SANAA](#), and [Wang Shu](#). Along with the SANAA team, the other Japanese architects who have received the Pritzker are [Kenzo Tange](#) (1987), [Fumihiko Maki](#) (1993), and [Tadao Ando](#) (1995).



*White U House, in Nakano-ku, Tokyo, Japan,
1975 to 1976.*
Photo: © Koji Taki

Tower of Winds, in Yokohama-shi, Kanagawa, Japan, 1986.
Photo: © Tomio Ohashi



Inside the [Sendai Mediatheque](#), 2001.

Photo: © Tomio Ohashi



Serpentine Gallery, in London, England, 2002.

Photo: © Courtesy Toyo Ito & Associates, Architects



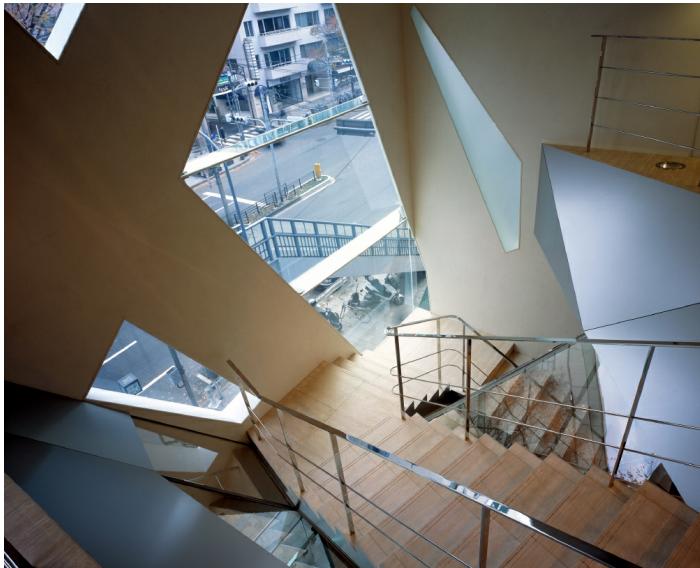
Tama Art University Library, in Tokyo, Japan,
2004 to 2007.

Photo: © Tomio Ohashi



Inside the Tama library book stacks.

Photo: © Ishiguro Photographic Institute



Toyo Ito Museum of Architecture, in Imabari-shi, Ehime, Japan, 2006 to 2011.

Photo: © Daici Ano

Inside a stairwell at [Tod's Omotesando](#).

Photo: © Nacasa & Partners Inc.

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