

Summary of 2020 Praemium Imperiale Special Yearbook
“Power of Arts vs. Coronavirus Pandemic”
- Praemium Imperiale Laureates Speak Out -

***Excerpts from messages:**

Painting

2003 **Bridget Riley (UK)**

We have to learn how to live with it which takes self-discipline, patience, optimism, tolerance and a little humour. (August 2020)

2004 **Georg Baselitz (Germany)**

Being able to just recognize political crises as such, that they are only political and nothing else and that they are on the look-out for those who can gain from such a crisis. (Translated from German, July 2020)

2009 **Hiroshi Sugimoto (Japan)**

When plague broke out in the Middle Ages, people believed that God was punishing man. Now, however, God has lost the power to punish. Instead I see the laws of nature inflicting punishment upon us. Human civilization grows through the exploitation and destruction of the natural environment. As a species humankind has achieved criticality and hit the limits of growth. In a bid to save itself, nature has triggered the automatic correction function, signaling us to rein in our activities. (Source: The Yomiuri Shimbun, April 15, 2020)

2011 **Bill Viola (USA)**

In Madrid, which suffered one of the highest death rates in Spain, Fundación Telefónica in June has now with great care reopened our exhibition to the public, reporting that this has been like a balm to visitors needing healing after the fear and grief of the previous months. This is what we hope for, for the public to have access once again to the comfort and solace that art brings. (Viola's partner and wife, Kira Perov wrote on his behalf, August 31, 2020)

2012 **Cai Guo-Qiang (China)**

The sudden pandemic has disrupted the world's geopolitical balance and challenged existing political systems. We appear even more divided while facing a common threat. The pandemic has strained

Sino-American relations as well as relations all over the world. Globalization has begun to cede to national protectionism... The question is, will this lead people to self-reflection? This includes reflection on nature; can the pandemic improve our relations with each other and with nature? Humanity has been waiting for a new way of thinking and a new vision for a long time now... Everybody is talking about how different the world will be after the pandemic, how humanity will be changed. In the empty galleries that are no longer packed with crowds, perhaps our artistic predecessors will chuckle to themselves, "Didn't we create the paintings on these walls amidst pandemics and World Wars anyway?" For it was indeed under the shadow of the Black Death that Dante wrote *The Divine Comedy*, that Giovanni Boccaccio wrote *The Decameron*, that Shakespeare wrote *King Lear* and *Macbeth*... their unbounded creativity ignited by the bitterness of suffering. (Translated from Chinese, September 2020)

2013 **Michelangelo Pistoletto** (Italy)

As for myself, I have for decades been carrying out an activity as an artist that I have dubbed "Regeneration of Society." I hope that the impact of this crisis is going to stir up human creativity profoundly and lead it to establish a real balance between artifice and nature, so as to make this regeneration feasible. (August 29, 2020)

2014 **Martial Raysse** (France)

I view the majority of what is presented as Art today as totally decadent and I do not think that a renewal may emerge from the effects of this serial killer, other than a commercially-driven demagogic display. (Translated from French, July 2020)

2015 **Tadanori Yokoo** (Japan)

We have no idea when this pandemic will end, but as long as people keep catching the coronavirus, I'd like to keep on creating works for my *WITH CORONA* series. This title literally means to live with the coronavirus and get it on our side, so we can thrive together. By facing life and death in our everyday lives and by looking at ourselves and others, we can upgrade our mindset. I believe we need to think bigger than just thinking about the Earth, and develop a cosmic consciousness. We have to go past the stratosphere and head out further, far into the depth of the cosmos. We human beings need to brace ourselves for dealing with an entirely new experience regarding time and space. I feel that this new experience will be like a new Odyssey for Humanity and I hope my soul will continue to travel with it. (September 1, 2020)

2017 **Shirin Neshat** (Iran/USA)

Today as I write this note, while shaken inside; and struggling with nihilistic thoughts of my own; having witnessed human suffering and political chaos within a short time, strangely I find the urge to regain my faith in art and its transformative power, and the will to search for more glimpses of reflection, strength and most importantly hope for our future. (September 9, 2020)

2019 **William Kentridge** (South Africa)

There are obvious new forms of interaction and communication in the world – webinars, zoom, virtual performances – practices which existed already but are given new prominence. But it has not changed for me the fundamental questions of what it is to be working and making in the studio. There has to be confidence that the slow, long questions one works with are connected to the world as well as to the studio and let the slow steady work in the studio illuminate and give comfort to many of the conditions beyond it. This has been one of the central roles of art over millennia, and it seems as important now as ever before. (July 2020)

Sculpture

1990 **Arnaldo Pomodoro** (Italy)

We must ask ourselves how we can, in the future, ensure that we keep both the right physical distance while maintaining the necessary emotional closeness. I think and fear that it will be a difficult balance to find or create. Either we will be able to rethink the relationship between individual freedom and pandemic, or we will not be able to fight a battle that is not only medical but also political and social. (Translated from Italian, August 2020)

2002 **Giuliano Vangi** (Italy)

As for my own work, I would do away with any of the things that are dictated by fashion, and I would try to add positive feelings; after dealing with the theme of human suffering so often, I believe that what we now need is a greater sense of hope. People will need art and culture more and more. Art makes manifest the noblest efforts of all people, which is our greatest act of resistance when faced with our own mortality. (Translated from Italian, July 2020)

2008 **Ilya & Emilia Kabakov** (Russia/USA)

If we learn to overcome the main problems of our world: discommunication, fear of unknown, fear of the other, learn The Art of Communication, The Tolerance toward other cultures, religions, preferences, learn not to demand freedom only for ourselves, but to RESPECT THE OTHER PEOPLE FREEDOM, then we stand a chance, maybe, even for creating a perfect life for everybody on our planet. And ART and CULTURE plays a pivotal role in this. Always did and always will. (August 2020)

2009 **Richard Long** (UK)

(Omitted due to artwork only)

2011 **Anish Kapoor** (UK)

The arts give us belonging and social connectedness. Participation in the arts is an act of communal

solidarity which is most needed at this time of crisis. (July 2020)

2012 **Cecco Bonanotte (Italy)**

We have to let break out the lights of a new dawn or a sun set, entrust the artist with the duty to re-interpret the images of the world in front of us, those physical and those abstract objects inside us to let reemerge our inner soul and to create a new vision. Artists feel seduced by the conquest of an “artistic dignity” and we do not have to forget that artistic evolution is nothing but the stubborn pursuit and constant rise towards that dignity. (Translated from Italian, August 7, 2020)

2013 **Antony Gormley (UK)**

Art will become central as a catalyst for collective and individual self-awareness: for the expression of feeling and empathy, for self-expression and self-determination, as well as the expression of communal values, materialising and making apparent the things that we love and believe to be valuable. The Arts will be more important than ever. (September 1, 2020)

2014 **Giuseppe Penone (Italy)**

A pandemic crisis can certainly, as a consequence, reduce the democratic freedom we are accustomed to and art can and must counteract and defend the freedom of the individual, because art lives with the sensations and feelings of people. It is based on how it stimulates that part of our mind that governs our capacity for emotion and imagination, and the commotion that we feel when we confront ourselves and nature. These are the characteristics that bring us together and that we share with all human beings, present and past. Art, poetry and dreams are fundamental necessities for human life. (Translated from Italian, August 2020)

2015 **Wolfgang Laib (Germany)**

Every crisis – the bigger the more – brought humanity to a different future, helped to go somewhere else and find something else beyond what we could have imagined. We find new ways to be and to live. (May 2020)

2016 **Annette Messager (France)**

Every work of art is unique and original and is an integral part of the artist’s being. Its power lies in its ability to ask questions and awaken emotions that connect us both collectively and individually. This, it seems to me, is what we are now in need of more than ever. (September 29, 2020)

2019 **Mona Hatoum (UK)**

The crisis has had a tremendous impact on the way visual art is viewed. We have been catapulted into an electronic age where everything has become flat and immaterial. Looking at art exclusively

via electronic media is a very inadequate way of experiencing art's phenomenological qualities which appeal to all our senses and is especially inappropriate for appreciating sculpture or installation works which by nature need to be experienced from multiple viewpoints. My first visit to an exhibition, after months of isolation, brought back the importance of viewing art in person. Every work seemed to transport you into different worlds, enlarge your horizons and feed the imagination. (September 15, 2020)

Architecture

1996 Tadao Ando (Japan)

In the future, even if we slowly but steadily win the fight against Covid-19, I have the feeling that our society won't just return to how things were previously. The systems that have traditionally moved our world so far are getting old and are falling apart, new systems are expected to appear. We still have no idea how our future society will turn out, so what we should be doing now is to cultivate our minds and hearts so we can make accurate judgements and be sensitive to what the world shows us. For that, the arts and culture are indispensable. New values produce new arts and culture. I believe that, from now, artists should open their minds and hearts to these global changes and to treat them as new factors, as they express themselves through their art. The power of the arts and culture can unite the hearts of disconnected people and let them become one. In this sense, I hope that the roles of artists will become more important in the future than they were before the pandemic. (September 12, 2020)

2002 Norman Foster (UK)

Healthier buildings will be in demand. The air quality in buildings where people gather together for work or entertainment must improve. Air conditioning systems that recycle stale air within a 'sealed box' building will disappear. Through shared global and local action, we can not only recover from the pandemic, but prosper. The tools are available, we just have to use them more widely. All of the arts can make a decisive contribution to this process. (September 9, 2020)

2005 Yoshio Taniguchi (Japan)

These architectural challenges for combating infectious diseases are more than just a public health problem to be solved and call for functional reforms and new ways of thinking in architecture as a whole. Architecture doesn't just create a machine for people to live in, nor something to house a small specific number of people. Architecture should provide a space where many people are invited to come together and be able to gather safely. It should also create an artistic entity that moves people's hearts and souls. We can expect to see the emergence of a new architectural culture, full of functions provided by a cutting-edge technology, beautiful designs and rich creativity. (August 28, 2020)

2010 **Toyo Ito (Japan)**

When we think about architecture and urban environment of the future, we must abandon the modernist ideology that encourages a society to prioritize its economy. In other words, instead of believing we can conquer nature through technology, we must create architecture and cities that can coexist with nature. Architecture should no longer rely solely on man-made environments, separated and insulated from the natural environment. A new way of architecture is to create buildings that integrate with nature and to adjust the internal environment using available new technology. We must use the ravages caused by the coronavirus as an opportunity to transform our lives into a new tomorrow and try to see this disaster as a potential blessing in disguise. (August 12, 2020)

2013 **David Chipperfield (UK)**

The lesson to be learnt is that it is possible to do things differently, it is possible to reorder criteria and to question the structure of things. If we are capable of responding forcefully and decisively in the face of this explicit crisis, why not to climate change and social inequality? Must we wait until they threaten us all even more catastrophically? If professionally we can manage to operate our way through this period of pandemic, perhaps we will have the courage and a greater mandate to insist on creating only the buildings, spaces and objects that give solidity to our lives and that serve as a more fitting background to those conditions we now recognise more clearly as fundamental to our quality of life. (September 18, 2020)

2014 **Steven Holl (USA)**

I believe the role of the arts is more important than ever during global crises such as this via active social networks, the arts can inspire and help us define our current lives. As the great poet Kenneth Rexroth wrote, “Against the ruin of the world, there is only one defense – the creative act.” With the creative works produced under any circumstance, we realize the central meanings of culture and the core aims of our existence. (July 8, 2020)

2016 **Paulo Mendes da Rocha (Brazil)**

There is a very positive revelation of this recent phenomenon. Another light on the formation of the consciousness that we are all members of nature, the living at the same time. A timely summons. (Translated from Portuguese, August 2020)

2017 **Rafael Moneo (Spain)**

The pandemic has awakened the consciousness of architects by making them rethink how much housing should be the primary object of their attention. We hope that the cities that we have seen deserted, uninhabited, turned into “other cities”, into premature archaeology, will soon recover their pulse so that the architect's profession can continue to be what it was. (Translated from Spanish. August 31, 2020)

2018 **Christian de Portzamparc** (France)

“*From crisis, from danger, grows salvation*”, wrote Höderlin, and this global agreement of countries to go into lockdowns makes us think it may be possible for mankind to pull through. The fear of a violent death from the virus has somewhat united human beings in a kind of forced solidarity which will have to be, for us, the prelude to a longed-for solidarity. The fear of global disaster will be stronger every day and as it does. And the stronger the wave of salvation by which we will overcome, will have to be. (Translated from French, September 14, 2020)

2019 **Tod Williams & Billie Tsien** (USA)

So to continue on that path of hope - we do feel as architects that we have something to give. We think that architecture will be less about style and more about service. We need to think about space that is at its essence democratic. As we make buildings we must focus on open space, infrastructure, and sustainability. We must try to build for the many and not for the few. Art, literature- all creative work is at its heart the way to connect to other human beings. It is how we remind ourselves that we are not alone. It reminds us that we are able to dream. (July 2020)

Music

2006 **Steve Reich** (USA)

When it is finally stopped, I believe people will enthusiastically return to live concerts of all sorts. We love to see and hear people playing music. It's embedded in our DNA. May this disease end soon so we can resume making live music together. (July 2020)

2008 **Zubin Mehta** (India)

Never in our lifetime has a situation enveloped the entire world as we are going through this crisis. Every individual suffers or escapes this universal curse in his or her own way. Those of us who are fortunate, until now, not to have contacted this dreadful illness must deem ourselves extremely fortunate. We should reach out and help the rest of humanity where ever our artistic blessings are required. (August 2020)

2010 **Maurizio Pollini** (Italy)

There is still a pandemic raging and we do not know when the situation will normalize. We wonder what the outcome will be, what will happen to all the societies affected by these events. For now, we are unable to make any predictions. The doctors and nurses who, through their work and heroic self-sacrifice, have paid for the help given to the sick with their lives – they truly deserve to be rewarded. (Translated from Italian, August 25, 2020)

2014 **Arvo Pärt (Estonia)**

This tiny corona thing has painfully shown us that we, humans, are a uniform, even a single organism and that a human existence is only possible in relation to other living beings. The crisis has created a situation in which all kinds of problems and weaknesses will come to the surface more and more. Whether they are political systems or social systems of any kind. The current crisis spares no one, and in the greatest need they all reveal their true “values”, which can no longer be covered up. Nobody knows how we will get out of this, but we all feel that nothing will remain as it was. (Source: ABC, Spain, April 7, 2020)

2015 **Mitsuko Uchida (UK)**

In the Renaissance there were countless wars, plagues, atrocities, and tragedies. What do we remember? We remember great artists and writers. Long live the arts! (September 22, 2020)

2018 **Riccardo Mutai (Italy)**

During the pandemic in Italy, when the infection was at its height and I was not able to conduct any activities, I had the rare opportunity to have the time to study Beethoven's *Miss Solemn is* score in great detail. This work was supposed to open the 2020/21 Symphony season in Chicago. For three months, I could focus on it every day for hours, hours and hours; the virus gave me the precious chance to have plenty of time to study this sublime musical score. The virus has led to a disastrous economic situation, this autumn the effects will be seen more and more clearly. However, we have to be careful that at some point society has to stop living in fear and we have to make sure that governments in some countries do not take advantage of the situation that has been created by the virus, to become despotism, to impose a form of health dictatorship and thereby subdue people. We always need careful to be free; healthy in body and free in mind. (Translated from Italian, September 2020)

2019 **Anne-Sophie Mutter (Germany)**

I am a musician because I love playing the violin – but ultimately always for the other. And I firmly believe that in the not too distant future this will also be possible in front of a physically present audience. My anticipation of being able to play for you again helps me through these difficult days - and has already grown immeasurably! (Translated from German, June 17, 2020)

Theatre/Film

2009 **Tom Stoppard (UK)**

(After overcoming this crisis) I think there will be less freedom and more collectivisation, but individualism will continue to be wellspring of art. (July 2020)

2010 **Sophia Loren** (Italy)

In order not to become discouraged and to face this new situation, optimism is certainly a very powerful weapon. I am an optimist, I have always been and I have never stopped thinking and sincerely believing that every problem always has a solution. We must never get lost, never become demoralized, never stop believing. We cannot be isolated in our individuality, but we must help everyone for global well-being. Many have lost a lot, we all know, but we must believe, "Courage; a new dawn will always come!" (Translated from Italian, July 2020)

2011 **Judi Dench** (UK)

The Coronavirus has had a devastating effect on my profession with theatres and cinemas closed and the arts in general unable to continue in any way that we recognise as normal. I think we will all have to adjust to a new way of life, at least for the time being, and try to find other ways to communicate and entertain. For most of us, our whole way of life has changed but the human race is nothing if not adaptable. (August 2020)

2012 **Yoko Morishita** (Japan)

The coronavirus has precipitated a huge crisis, but at the same time it has helped us examine many things that we often don't think about in our daily lives; the value of life and how good it is to be able to go and freely meet other people. I also believe this crisis is presenting an opportunity for the relevance of all kinds of culture and art to be better understood; how they reveal the importance of life and happiness, how they widen people's horizons. Art and culture are necessary to make our lives better and are also essential for our everyday lives. (Source: The Sankei Shimbun, June 19, 2020)

2014 **Athol Fugard** (South Africa)

I have watched the financial security of many fellow South Africans begin to fall apart. What has come out of all I have witnessed is an awareness that we have never had anything more than a hollow victory in terms of our great science and our conceit that we had conquered nature and all its forces. Nothing, of course, could be further from the truth. Instead, humanity has suffered a rude awakening to the inadequacy of our intellects and our exploitative relationship with the rest of the natural world. We have been humbled by what we thought we had conquered. It is time, now, for humility. (September 1, 2020)

2015 **Sylvie Guillem** (France)

As a human being, it is infuriating to realise and to admit that WE created this situation, that we made it possible by our greed, not by ignorance! Our outrageous and criminal lack of respect for all forms of life created an unbalanced and dangerous world for all. Why did we let it happen then, and why, still today, are we acting and going on like before when we know that it is the wrong way? (August 28, 2020)

2016 **Martin Scorsese (USA)**

The crisis has inspired me to imagine a lot of new work. I look forward to the time when I can actually get into the act of creating on film again. The most important lesson is: things change. We spend a lot of our lives thinking that things and people and circumstances we know and depend on will stay the same forever, when in fact everything changes or comes to an end. We're all seeing that now, we're all confronting it, whether we know it or want to admit it or not. (September 23, 2020)

2017 **Mikhail Baryshnikov (USA/Latvia)**

As for my personal pursuits, the last few months have been fallow, but now, maybe out of desperation, I'm looking ahead to possible new or unfinished projects. There may even be one in Japan. Over the decades, I've had extraordinary experiences in Japan and it would be a dream to return with a new project and a new perspective post-pandemic. Now we just have to get to when that can happen. I sincerely hope we can enter 2021 with a newfound compassion for all people, and that art will continue to inspire and give solace. (September 7, 2020)

2019 **Bando Tamasaburo (Japan)**

At this point, we're thinking of practicing stage activities with social distancing. But I do think that when we no longer need social distancing, we might be able to go back to how we were before the pandemic. Of course, I do think that new art styles might appear as we conquer the pandemic, but I haven't come to any conclusions about them yet. I don't think we should panic and rush toward making decisions, based on just data. Data on the net moves much faster than people's thought processes. People need to talk to other people, face to face, heart to heart, soul to soul, to really understand things. Otherwise, I am afraid that people will think they understand something just because they read the data. I think the time has come when we have to ask, "what is globalization?" and "what does it mean after all?" I don't mean all globalization is bad, but I feel that information travels much too fast now and people are losing their individuality. I am afraid that many people are starting to think that all things can be understood easily and all problems can be solved quickly, because there is so much data flying around – but that is simply not true. (September 2, 2020)

***Additional message** (Full text / Not included in the special issue)

Architecture

2015 **Dominique Perrault (France)**

Unprecedented global developments compel us to live with uncertainty, which is seriously undermining the health of all cultural endeavors. Yet, art and culture have never been more essential to our quest for meaning at a time when so many of our references are being sorely challenged. Art offers an inspiring refuge that allows us to restore our sense of a shared destiny,

which today has become so fragile. I believe that the ability of artists to build bridges and to imagine the future is needed now more than ever.

In this context of prolonged crisis, we had to act, to adapt our studio to new ways of working. Many tasks related to project management are easily done remotely. Yet current experience is revealing how much the practice our profession requires physical contact with material reality, in the office. Project design in teams working closely together requires research and experimentation that is quite difficult to carry out remotely.

Architecture physically underpins and shelters lifestyles, economic stability and political visions. Complexity, the unequal fortunes of places and constantly changing frameworks are part and parcel of any architectural practice but my profession is nevertheless being severely tested as never before. The current crisis is accelerating the process digitization and forcing us to reinvent our ways of working, communicating and moving.

These transformations will certainly have an impact on the way we organize our living spaces, perhaps in favor of more hybrid, even programmatic architectures. This crisis is probably the harbinger of the end of the much-criticized leitmotiv of modern architecture, i.e., "form follows function." We now see that highly flexible spaces are essential to deployment of temporary testing or vaccination facilities. It will become increasingly important to design architecture that is better able to respond to risks by creating spaces that can accommodate unplanned emergency uses.

I also hope that we can learn from the challenges we are currently facing to develop a positive approach to architecture to accelerate the transition to a more peaceful, inclusive city where people can live sustainably. We must reign in the endless development of metropolises, with their negative effects of sprawl and destruction of nature. Our times require us to grasp the urgency of our situation and respond with determination. We must learn to define spaces that are more resilient, democratic and respectful of the environment. We must invent systems and processes enabling us to develop our world outside of the frameworks of the past. As Director of the 2021 Seoul Biennale of Architecture and Urbanism, I chose to place the theme of resilience at the heart of our reflections, and to bring together designers from around the world to develop a holistic vision of the city of tomorrow.

The Praemium Imperiale has been supporting humanistic values for over thirty years. In my view, it is the highest award dedicated to arts and culture. Continued advocacy of these values is my most heartfelt aim for the future. (Translated from French, January 25, 2021)