

# BRITISH PRECAST

## Press release

6th November 2008

### **Jørn Utzon receives 2008 Creativity in Concrete Award**

This year British Precast is awarding its annual Creativity in Concrete Award to the esteemed architect Jørn Utzon of Denmark for his incredible portfolio that includes the iconic Sydney Opera House.

Chief Executive of British Precast, Martin Clarke, said: "Utzon's remarkable body of work has stretched the design and structural possibilities of precast concrete into new dimensions in inspiring both fellow architects and the general public. We salute his genius."

Utzon's precast design work includes the Bagsværd Church in Denmark (1976), the Kuwait National Assembly (1983) and the Paustian Furniture Store in Copenhagen (1987), each of which repay close study. But, of course, it is the Sydney Opera House for which he is best known.

Jørn, who is now 91 and lives in Denmark, takes a great deal of interest in all his buildings in collaboration with son Jan.

"Rarely do modern buildings become icons, but Utzon's Sydney Opera House has come to symbolise modern Australia and is among the most recognisable structures in the world. And precast concrete plays a major role in the structure," Martin Clarke said.

The vaulted roof shells of the Opera House, designed by Utzon in collaboration with Ove Arups and Partners, derive from the surface of a single imagined sphere. Each shell is composed of precast rib segments radiating from a concrete pedestal and rising to a ridge beam. The roofs are made up of 2,194 precast concrete sections weighing up to 15 tonnes each. Externally, the shells are faced in glazed off-white tiles while the podium is clad in earth-toned, reconstituted granite panels.

In 2007, the Opera House was given World Heritage status by UNESCO, who said: "It stands by itself as one of the indisputable masterpieces of human creativity, not only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century but in the history of humankind."

Utzon received the RIBA Gold Medal in 1978 and the Pritzker Prize in 2003. This latest award from British Precast was presented to Jørn's grandson Jeppe, who flew to London from Denmark to accept it on Jørn's behalf.

Jeppe, himself an architect, was first presented with the award at an informal lunch gathering at the fitting venue [The Concrete Bar and Café](#) at The Hayward Gallery, while an official presentation took place later at the [Concrete Society Awards](#) Dinner at the London Marriott Hotel.

It is well documented that, during the building of the Sydney Opera House, things became less than amicable between Jørn and the Opera House and Australian authorities. But in the late 1990s, the Sydney Opera House Trust began to communicate with Jørn in an attempt to effect a reconciliation, and to secure his involvement in future changes to the building.

In 1999 Jørn was appointed by the Trust as a design consultant for future work, and in 2004 the first interior space rebuilt to match Utzon's original design was opened and renamed The Utzon Room in his honour.

Jeppe said his grandfather will be delighted to receive the award when he hands it over back in Denmark.

"He will be very happy to receive this as recognition for his work," Jeppe said. "Although he doesn't say much about the Opera House problems, I don't think it has been that easy for him over the years and it is good that peace is being made at last."

## Further information

### Web resources

[www.utzoncenter.dk/en/welcome.htm](http://www.utzoncenter.dk/en/welcome.htm)

A celebration of Utzon's work at Aalborg, Denmark.

[www.sydneyoperahouse.com/about/the\\_building.aspx](http://www.sydneyoperahouse.com/about/the_building.aspx)

The Sydney Opera House website with fascinating history and photographic archive.

[www.pritzkerprize.com/full\\_new\\_site/utzon.htm](http://www.pritzkerprize.com/full_new_site/utzon.htm)

In 2003 Utzon received the Pritzker Prize, international architecture's highest honour. The Pritzker website features a downloadable monograph on Utzon's work.

[www.edition-blondal.dk](http://www.edition-blondal.dk)

Edition Blondal have published Richard Weston's definitive book *Utzon* and more recently four sumptuous logbooks each on an Utzon project including the Kuwait Parliament building and Bagværd Church.

[www.utzon-arkitekter.dk](http://www.utzon-arkitekter.dk)

The Kim Utzon practice.

[www.britishprecast.org](http://www.britishprecast.org)

Full feature on Jørn Utzon.

## Architectural works

### Major built projects:

- Water tower in Svaneke, Bornholm, Denmark, 1949-1951
- Architect's own house, Hellebæk, Denmark, 1950-1952
- Middleboe house, Holte, Denmark, 1953-1955
- Kingohusene, courtyard housing in Elsinore, 1956-1960
- Elineberg housing, Helsingborg, Sweden, 1954-1966. Built by Swedish partners Erik and Henry Andersson
- Planetstaden housing project in Lund, Sweden, 1956-1958. Built by Swedish partners Erik and Henry Andersson
- Sydney Opera House, Sydney, Australia, 1956-1973

- Fredensborghusene, courtyard housing, Fredensborg, Denmark, 1959-1965
- Melli Bank, Tehran, Iran, 1959-1960
- Hammershøj Care Centre, Elsinore, Denmark, 1962-1966. Built by Birger Schmidt
- Bagsværd Church, Bagsvaerd, Denmark, 1969
- Espansiva building system, prefabricated single family houses, Denmark, 1969
- Can Lis, architect's own house, Majorca, Spain, 1971-1973
- National Assembly of Kuwait, Kuwait City, Kuwait, 1972-1984
- Paustian Furniture Store, Copenhagen, Denmark, 1985-1987
- Can Feliz, Majorca, Spain, 1991-1994

#### **Major unbuilt projects:**

- High School in Elsinore, Denmark, 1958-1962
- Architect's own house, Bayview, Sydney, Australia, 1963-1965
- Museum dedicate to the work of artist Asger Jørn, Silkeborg, Denmark, 1963
- Theater, Zurich, Switzerland, 1964-1970
- Jeita Theatre, Lebanon, 1968
- Stadium, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, 1969

#### **Hi-res images**

For hi-resolution images of Jørn's work to accompany this press release, please contact Chrissie Walton on 0116 222 9849 or email [chrissie.walton@britishprecast.org](mailto:chrissie.walton@britishprecast.org). Also available are hi-res images of Jørn's grandson Jeppe accepting the award at an informal gathering at The Concrete Bar in London.

#### **About British Precast**

Tracing its roots back to 1918, The [British Precast Concrete Federation](http://www.britishprecast.org) (BPCF) is the trade association of precast concrete manufacturers. The main aims of the federation are to promote precast concrete in the construction market, to disseminate information through a range of industry representation and by shared knowledge, and to add value to its member companies. Members' interests are continually developed through our team of dedicated professionals who have extensive connections with organisations in the UK and worldwide.

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