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## News release

29 September 2005

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### **Toyo Ito wins the Royal Gold Medal**

The Japanese architect, Toyo Ito, is the winner of one of architecture's most prestigious prizes, the Royal Gold Medal. Jack Pringle, President of the RIBA made the announcement at today's meeting of the RIBA Council.

Given in recognition of a lifetime's work, the Royal Gold Medal is approved personally by Her Majesty the Queen and is given annually to a person or group of people whose influence on architecture has had a truly international effect.

Toyo Ito was born in 1941. After graduating from the University of Tokyo in 1965, he worked for the Metabolist architect Kiyonori Kikutake until 1969. In 1971 he opened his own office, Urban Robot (URBOT), which was renamed Toyo Ito & Associates, Architects in 1979.

An influential though far from prolific architect, throughout his career, Ito has been concerned with irrelevant symbolism in architecture. In the '70s, inspired by early modernist movements such as Purism and the straightforward use of easily available industrial materials, he sought to erase conventional meaning from his work through minimalist tactics, illustrated in his early projects such as White U (1976) and Silver Hut (1984). He also developed an aesthetic of lightweight, permeable membranes composed of fabrics, perforated aluminium panels and expanded metal sheets, which he believed is most suited to an increasingly mobile and informal urban lifestyle, resulting in projects such as Tower of Winds (1986), Restaurant Nomad (1986) and Yatsushiro Municipal Museum (1991).

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# RIBA

Speaking today, Jack Pringle, RIBA President commented:

“Toyo Ito has been an inspiration for generations of architects worldwide since his work started to receive international acclaim in the 1970s. For thirty years he has been a leading figure in architecture and I am delighted that he has accepted the Royal Gold Medal.”

Significant recent projects by Toyo Ito include the Sendai Médiathèque, Sendai, Japan (2001), where Ito used a unique structure to compose fluid spaces with hardly any walls. The project has had an impact on young architects worldwide. Designing two temporary pavilions, the Brugge Pavilion (2002) in Belgium and the Serpentine Gallery Pavilion (2002) in London, Ito met the challenge to unify surface and structure.

In going beyond the purity of modernism, Toyo Ito is trying to find an architecture which reflects nature, emerging from autopoietic processes and organic geometries, to create joyful and pleasant spaces filled with life.

Toyo Ito's current work includes public and private projects throughout the world, including the Hôpital Cognacq-Jay in Paris, Relaxation Park in Torre Vieja, Extension at the Fira de Barcelona, Montjuic-2 in Barcelona, and VivoCity in Singapore.

Toyo Ito is an honorary fellow of the American Institute of Architects and the Royal Institute of British Architects. He was awarded the 2000 The Arnold W. Brunner Memorial Prize in Architecture from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2000. In 2002, he received the World Architecture Award 2002 for the Best Building in Asia (Sendai Médiathèque) and the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement from the international jury of the 8<sup>th</sup> International Architecture Exhibition at the Venice Biennale. In 2003, he received an honorary diploma of the Architectural Association School of Architecture, London.

# RIBA

This year's Royal Gold Medal jury was chaired by RIBA President Jack Pringle and made up of: Ian Ritchie, Ian Ritchie Architects; Odile Decq, Architectes Urbanistes; Chris Wilkinson, Wilkinson Eyre; Professor Peter Cook; Amanda Baillieu, RIBA Journal; Brian Clarke, artist and Honorary Fellow.

Toyo Ito will be presented with the Royal Gold Medal at the RIBA on 15 February 2006.

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## **Notes to editors**

1. For images contact Melanie Mayfield in the RIBA Press Office on 020 7307 3662 or [melanie.mayfield@inst.riba.org](mailto:melanie.mayfield@inst.riba.org)
2. The Royal Gold Medal for the promotion of architecture was inaugurated by Queen Victoria in 1848 and is conferred by the Sovereign annually on a distinguished architect or person "whose work has promoted, either directly or indirectly, the advancement of architecture."