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Big Art Money: New \$100,000 Prize Adds to Dallas Institution's Grand Design, Sets a New Standard

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By Patricia Mora 08.27.15



Renzo Piano, Nancy A. Nasher and David J. Haemisegger at the Nasher Sculpture Center in November 2013

It seems as if the splendiddness of the collection at Dallas' [Nasher Sculpture Center](#) can be matched only by its generosity. Our civic life is perpetually enhanced by the magnificent work and educational outreach that the institution offers — an imprint that's unmistakable because its exhibitions are inevitably lovely, honed and utterly irresistible. Not only does Dallas' finest art institution remain the locus of aesthetic thrills on an international scale, but it's moving things forward by establishing the Nasher Prize for Sculpture — a "\$100,000 annual award to recognize outstanding contributions to the field."

Translation: This means the Nasher is offering more funding than the highly coveted [Turner Prize](#) and, moreover, it will be awarded to a living artist with an established trajectory of work. It therefore aligns more closely with the prestigious [Pritzker Prize](#) for architecture than other more traditional arts awards. The allusion is apt — the architect of the Nasher Sculpture Center, [Renzo Piano](#), was himself a recipient of the Pritzker Prize. And, to add still more cachet to an already impressive constellation of style and largesse, Piano has been commissioned by Nancy A. Nasher and her husband, David J. Haemisegger, to design the object that signifies the new award.

The actual piece, scheduled to be unveiled next year, will serve as an emblem of the gift in years to come. Museum director Jeremy Strick explains its significance: “An object designed by the mastermind of our beloved museum is a beautifully fitting gesture ... This is truly an exceptional moment for sculpture, and an international prize recognizing outstanding contributions to the field can bring focus and depth to the conversation, highlighting the achievements of the most important artists of our time.”

This year, the international Nasher Prize for Sculpture will be awarded via a panel of judges from the United States, Britain and Japan, all of whom possess résumés that read like a who’s who of academicians and artists. The outcome regarding the name of the initial recipient, of course, is hotly anticipated. In fact, the assembled panel is doing nothing less than helping us define sculpture as a discipline — it’s an art form that’s taking on startling new dimensions that would have been unthinkable in past decades. It’s a daunting task, but the Nasher Sculpture Center is an ideal place for such a conversation to occur. What Raymond Nasher and his wife, Patsy, started is being admirably continued by the work of their eminently capable predecessors.

The Nasher Sculpture Center is one of the shining jewels on the international arts stage — and this prize is one more example of their laudable taste and generosity.