



# CITYSCAPES

A DAILY CHICAGO JOURNAL ABOUT THE BUILDINGS AND

BY BLAIR KAMIN

[« Meet Daniel Burnham V--you already know his great-great grandfather | Main | The stimulus needs a stimulus; road and bridge projects are in the slow lane »](#)

## July 20, 2009

### **SOM's William Baker is first American to receive Leonhardt Prize in structural engineering**

[Share](#) |



Structural engineer William Baker, a partner at the Chicago office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, recently received the Fritz Leonhardt Prize, a major award in his field. A news release from SOM follows:

In recognition of his engineering accomplishments, which include many of the tallest skyscrapers of our time, William F. Baker received the coveted Fritz Leonhardt Prize in Stuttgart, Germany.

“I’m very honored to receive this award,” Baker said. “Fritz Leonhardt was a giant of structural engineering, and I’m grateful to be included with the previous recipients, who represent the best engineers working today.”

Established in 1999, the Fritz Leonhardt Prize is awarded every three years to an individual whose contributions to the art and science of engineering merit international recognition. Named for the German engineer whose work revolutionized bridge building and high-rise design, the Fritz Leonhardt Prize is awarded by the Baden-Württemberg Chamber of Engineers together with the Association of Consulting Engineers (VBI). Past prize winners include Michel Virlogeux (1999), Jörg Schlaich (2002), and René Walther (2005). Baker is the first American to receive the prize.

The Chamber of Engineers noted in their announcement that "Mr. Baker's numerous pioneering contributions and lectures in the field of building and structural engineering have earned him international recognition and a reputation among experts."

The ceremony took place on July 11th, 2009, the date that would have been Leonhardt's 100th birthday. Former prize winner Jörg Schlaich introduced Baker to an audience of 500 people at the Stirling State Gallery. The mayor of Stuttgart and the Prime Minister of Baden-Württemberg both spoke as well.

As a partner at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill LLP, Baker's innovative approach to structural engineering has led to buildings of unprecedented height and slenderness. Of the four tallest buildings to top out in 2009, Baker engineered three, including the world's tallest building, Burj Dubai. He developed the "buttressed core" structural system to support the tower's record height.

Other notable projects include Chicago's Trump International Hotel Tower, the tallest building erected in the United States since the Sears Tower; Dubai's Infinity Tower, which spirals an amazing 90 degrees; and Nanjing Greenland Financial Center, one of China's tallest buildings.

In 2008, Baker received the Fazlur Rahman Khan Medal for lifetime achievement from the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat. He is a Fellow of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) and the Institution of Structural Engineers (IStructE).

Posted at 09:43:28 AM in [Architecture awards](#)