Twenty-two years after being passed by, the architect Denise Scott Brown, 81, said at an awards ceremony for women in architecture last month that it was time she share in the 1991 Pritzker Prize that was given to her design partner and husband, Robert Venturi, with whom she had worked side by side.

“They owe me not a Pritzker Prize but a Pritzker inclusion ceremony,” Ms. Scott Brown said. “Let’s salute the notion of joint creativity.”

Her remarks prompted two students at Harvard’s Graduate School of Design to start an online petition demanding that the panel that administers architecture’s highest prize revisit that decision.

The petition has now drawn 9,000 signatures, many of them from the world’s most famous architects, including six prior Pritzker winners. And it has reignited long-simmering tensions in the architectural world over whether women have been consistently denied the standing they deserve in a field whose most prestigious award was not given to a woman until 2004, when Zaha Hadid won.

“The progress of recognizing the place and the contribution of women in architecture has been incredibly slow,” said Barry Bergdoll, chief curator of architecture and design at the Museum of Modern Art. “It’s been thought to be boys’ stuff.”
The prize organization has long defended its exclusion of Ms. Scott Brown on the ground that back then it honored only individual architects, a practice that changed in 2001 with the selection of Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron. They are among the architects who have signed the petition, along with fellow Pritzker winners Richard Meier, Ms. Hadid, Wang Shu and Rem Koolhaas, who called the exclusion of Ms. Scott Brown “an embarrassing injustice which it would be great to undo.”

Mr. Venturi, 87, also signed the petition, but Ms. Scott Brown said he was not well and unable to comment. When he won in
1991, she did not attend the award ceremony in protest.

The Pritzker winner is chosen annually by a panel of a half-dozen or so independent jurors. There was one woman on the panel in 1991 and there is one woman on the panel today, Martha Thorne, the Pritzker’s executive director.

“Jurors change over the years, so this presents us with an unusual situation,” Ms. Thorne said of the inclusion request. “The most that I can say at this point is that I will refer this important matter to the current jury at their next meeting.”

The ceremony for this year’s Pritzker winner, Toyo Ito, is to be May 29 at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston. The $100,000 prize, financed by the family that owns the Hyatt hotel chain, has been awarded since 1979.

While about half of architecture students in the United States are women, only a quarter of employees of architecture firms across the country are female, according to 2011 data from the American Institute of Architects. The number is smaller — 17 percent — when counting principals or partners in architecture firms.

Design professionals cite many reasons, including the sense that architecture involves business and construction, which have both been traditionally considered the province of men. And still persistent is the mythology of the architect as a solo male genius — the Howard Roark in Ayn Rand’s “Fountainhead.”

“It’s embedded and the Pritzker Prizes embed it,” said Beverly Willis, an architect who founded the Beverly Willis Architecture Foundation, which supports women in architecture. “They’re totally outdated, they’re totally passé and if they continue trying to isolate the Howard Roark man, they’re totally irrelevant.”

Ms. Scott Brown is one of the rare female architects to have achieved prominence.
“Denise Scott Brown is sort of like architecture’s grandmother,” said Arielle Assouline-Lichten, a Harvard design student who started the petition with Caroline James. “Almost all architecture students have studied her in school. Everyone grew up with her as the female professional who’s always been around and never really gets the recognition.”

Ms. Scott Brown, who was born in Zambia, met Mr. Venturi in 1960 at the University of Pennsylvania, where they were on the faculty and began working together. They married in 1967. She joined his firm that same year.

“Some people said, ‘She married the boss and thought she could get ahead,’” Ms. Scott Brown said in a telephone interview from her home in Philadelphia. “But if anyone was the boss, I was. We really were colleagues and we taught together. It was a very, very wonderful collaboration for both of us.”

Since 1960, she and Mr. Venturi have teamed up on buildings like the Sainsbury Wing of the National Gallery in London and Franklin Court, a museum and memorial to Benjamin Franklin in Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia. They have run a practice together — Venturi, Scott Brown & Associates in Philadelphia, now VSBA — written books together, taught classes together and jointly developed groundbreaking theories about architecture and planning.

“You can’t separate them,” Mr. Bergdoll said. “It’s one of those great partnerships.”

The couple is known in large part for upending Modernism by embracing the vernacular of neon signs and kitsch as legitimate design. Their work with a class of Yale architecture students in Las Vegas in 1968 — examining casinos, parking lots and fast-food restaurants — resulted in their 1972 book, “Learning From Las Vegas” (written with Steven Izenour), which became an influential design treatise and helped usher in the period known as postmodernism.
Ms. Scott Brown said she was moved by the recent outpouring of support. “There needs to be some kind of corrective action,” she said. “Let’s not say corrective — let’s say inclusive.”

Several design school deans have signed, including Mohsen Mostafavi at Harvard, Sarah Whiting at Rice and Jennifer Wolch at the University of California at Berkeley.

“The initiative on the part of the students is something that I really value,” Mr. Mostafavi said. “I hope they will be this proactive when it comes to their own futures.”

Robert A. M. Stern, the dean of Yale’s Architecture School, said he declined to sign the petition because he objected to its use of the word “demand,” but that he backed it in principle. “It would be wonderful for the Pritzker committee to review the situation and to offer her the prize,” Mr. Stern said. “The nature of the collaboration was so intense on every level.”

Architects say the Pritzker is unlikely to reverse its decision, in part because several members of the jury at that time are no longer living, including Ada Louise Huxtable, J. Carter Brown and Giovanni Agnelli.

The Web site ArchDaily on April 1 posited the counterargument that Mr. Venturi was awarded the Pritzker based on projects completed before Ms. Scott Brown joined the firm, like the Vanna Venturi House (1964). Yet the award citation directly acknowledged Ms. Scott Brown’s contributions.

“His understanding of the urban context of architecture, complemented by his talented partner, Denise Scott Brown, with whom he has collaborated on both more writings and built works, has resulted in changing the course of architecture in this century,” the citation said, “allowing architects and consumers the freedom to accept inconsistencies in form and pattern, to enjoy popular taste.”
For Ms. Scott Brown, the sting remains fresh. “When we married I suddenly was being told, “Look, let’s just keep this photograph of architects,” she recalled. “I’d say, ‘I am an architect and they’d say, ‘Would you mind moving out of the picture, please?’”
The formula was finalized by a third scientist who won the Nobel Prize in 2012. Bright Side found out how to find a suitable partner without betraying one's own expectations. © 2014–2020 TheSoul Publishing. All rights reserved. All materials on this site are copyrighted and may not be used unless authorized by the Bright Side. Scientists Won the Nobel Prize for a Formula That Helps Everyone Find Their Perfect Partner. 1. - 17. The Pritzker Architecture Prize is awarded annually "to honor a living architect or architects whose built work demonstrates a combination of those qualities of talent, vision and commitment, which has produced consistent and significant contributions to humanity and the built environment through the art of architecture". Founded in 1979 by Jay A. Pritzker and his wife Cindy, the award is funded by the Pritzker family and sponsored by the Hyatt Foundation. It is considered to be one of the world's