Representation as Quotation
The Verbal And Visual Languages Of Kenneth Frampton In Architectural Design, 1962-1964

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Abstract
Kenneth Frampton migrated from London to the United States in 1965, and by the early-1980s his condemnation of American Populist architecture would reach its apogee as 'the reduction of architecture to pure scenography'. This notion of scenography remained a central category within Frampton’s critical regionalist position of 1983, and tectonic position of 1990, and this investigation explores its full meaning. Within this paper, representations are considered quotations, and defined as the ideological sites of articulation and mediation between architectural practice and theory. Proceeding from this definition, Frampton’s criticism of architecture as 'pure visuality', or architecture as pure representation, opens up a retrospective critique of his own use of representation to further clarify his position on the relation between practice and theory. These sites occur in the form of writing, building, model, and drawing, and I examine these in Frampton’s formative critical language during his time as Technical Editor of Architectural Design (1962-1964), and as a part-time practising architect at Douglas Stephen and Partners (1960-1965). First, I reveal Frampton’s initial exposure to scenography in 1960s London, demonstrating that, within this cultural context his AD represented a counter-position to the picturesque tendencies of Townscape evidenced in Architectural Review. Secondly, I examine project critiques by Frampton, demonstrating the similarity between his theoretical language and his editorial representations through the sites of photography and model. Finally, I conduct a reading of Frampton’s constructed drawings for AD covers which reject the theoretical and visual language of the picturesque and the scenographic. These case studies illuminate general trends in Frampton’s AD, and reveal that Frampton’s editorship displays the first verbal and visual quotations of his later tectonic ideology, and that his aim to represent a critical history of modern architecture, as epitomised in Modern Architecture: A Critical History (1980), can be evidenced in his earliest written and visual output.
In the late 1960s, transatlantic and European architectural discourse formed critical counter-cultures in a shift of production from building to writing. As a result of this post-modern search for meaning through a literal and philosophical return to language, by the 1970s the discipline had firmly established that the page was a site for design and discourse, both verbal and visual, in its own right. These decades witnessed a surge in the number of publications, exhibitions and conferences, and the domination of image culture in the representation of architecture. In this paper, I utilise ‘representation’ as an ideological site of articulation and mediation between architectural practice and theory. This semiotic definition borrowed from Diana Agrest allows both visual and verbal elements to be perceived of as language and explained through language. Agrest further defines four “texts” which represent architecture; drawings, writings, buildings, and models. Emre Altürk’s two definitions of architectural representation further clarifies my approach;

One involves the symbolic relationship between a building and a reference: be that reference internal to architecture (e.g., historical precedents, design process), external (e.g., political agenda, economic interest), or immediate (e.g., programme). The other is the relationship between the building and ‘its’ representations in diverse media, such as images and models.

This paper employs the former definition, and examines the critical visual language of Kenneth Frampton during his time as Technical Editor of *AD* from 1926 to 1964. Frampton’s roles included the cover design, layout, editing and contributing written and visual content for *AD*. While M. Christine Boyer has exposed the rivalry that existed between *AD* and *AR* from 1945 to 1960, and Steve Parnell has linked Frampton’s verbal ideas at *AD* to his later critical regionalist position, there exists a paucity of investigation on Frampton’s ideas as represented through his visual language in the early stages of his illustrious career, or how these ideas were formative to his *Studies in Tectonic Culture* (1995). I will attempt to demonstrate how his “texts” in *AD* encapsulate the external cultural and historical moment in which they were produced in London, and the internal architectural ideologies Frampton promoted and condemned.

From this understanding of representation, it is clear that this boom in architectural publishing and its ubiquitous reproduction of images revealed new questions for representation, and consequences for theory and practice. In 1982, Frampton condemned the work of Robert Venturi and Populist American architecture as ‘reducing architecture to nothing other than scenography’. Frampton elaborates on this definition, noting that Populist architecture in its absence of historic, technical and socio-cultural meaning is "nothing more than a stage set". Thus, Frampton refers to scenography as "the design and painting of theatrical scenery". In this paper, I utilise the term broadly to refer to an architectural praxis devoid of historic, technical and socio-cultural considerations, and informed only by visuality. Scenography remained an important counter-category to Frampton’s well-known critical regionalist and tectonic positions of 1983 and 1990 respectively. I examine how a critique of the scenographic can be found in Frampton’s written work and, more significantly, evidenced by his earliest use of visual language in the 1960s.

**Frampton at *AD*, Banham at *AR*, and Townscape**
In order to examine Frampton’s earliest representations, one must understand the Townscape movement’s picturesque theoretical, practical, and representational ideologies. In the context of theoretical scholarship, John Macarthur notes that Townscape design and critique was devoid of “actual problems, technologies and politics of land and planning”. Practically, design was informed only by the “scenographic consideration of the sequence of visual experience”, and this absence of functional or constructional logic suggests an absence of technique. This scopic regime of Townscape appealed to “common sense”, and like Venturi’s Populism, catered to the public taste. Regarding representation, Adrian Forty states that proponents of the picturesque believed that “reason plays no part in the experience of architecture; and that architecture can be judged and experienced in the...
same way as a painting". This substitution of reason with aesthetic experience “entirely contrary to the tradition of European modernism” was antithetical to Frampton’s developing intellectual, revisionist Modernist stance. One can surmise that the Townscape movement’s concepts of “practice”, “representation” and “theory” were synonymous, and vision was Townscape’s raison d’être and the British apogee of “architecture reduced to pure scenography”.

Townscape’s dearth of technological considerations was of concern to Peter Reyner Banham, and its lack of socio-political considerations to Frampton. In the early 1960s, both Frampton and Banham were united in publishing counter-positions to AR’s Townscape campaign, as evidenced by Frampton’s editorship of AD (1960-1964) and Banham’s of AR (1953-1964), which promoted the neo avant-garde under the guise of Brutalism. Banham’s first contribution in this vein entitled “The New Brutalism” was published in AR in 1955. He aimed to deduce the “visible and identifiable characteristics” of Brutalism through two of Alison and Peter Smithson’s projects. As Laurent Stadler has noted, through Banham’s notion of image he conducts a scenographic-based critique. After Brutalism’s demise in 1964, Banham would develop a “purely technical approach to issues of construction” and diverge from Frampton’s tectonic trajectory. By 1966 Banham ceased his support for the movement, surmising “Brutalism never quite broke out of the aesthetic frame of reference”, and two years later concluded that projects such as James Stirling’s and James Gowan’s Leicester University Engineering Laboratory, and Sir Leslie Martin’s and Colin St John Wilson’s Caius College, “fully deserve the name of Picturesque”. In contrast, Frampton’s tectonic critique supported these two projects, as represented theoretically and visually in AD and analysed in the following section.

Contrary to Banham’s scenographic assessment, Frampton’s assessment of the neo avant-garde employs a linguistic framework in order to analyse form. Frampton’s analogy between form and words reveals how tectonics, which he would later define as “constructional and structural modes’ that reveal ‘expressive potential’, is a necessary framework in which to analyse tectonic ideas. In his assessment of Stirling’s and Gowan’s Engineering Laboratory in AD in 1964, he cites the building’s successful “inbuilt historical context” achieved “without the presence of a single specific quotation”. In contrast to Townscape’s visuality, Frampton’s reading of form deduces the building’s three-fold historical, technical, and socio-cultural meaning. Through the architects’ use of the ‘vocabulary of the Engineers’ Aesthetic’, they “further the historical continuity and the technical validity of the work”, in contrast to Townscape’s ad hoc placement of modern buildings in historic contexts. Rather than succumbing to Townscape’s parochial “jingoist nationalism”, Stirling and Gowan produce “the accessibility of an architectural syntax to the general culture as a whole”, where Frampton cites Eurocentric modern precedents such as L’Esprit Nouveau and Constructivism.

Frampton’s tectonic photography and models
With Frampton editing AD in tandem with AR’s Townscape campaign, it is revealing to examine his visual language in a critique of the same project published two years prior in AD. Along with five orthographic drawings, Frampton publishes four black-and-white photographs taken by Stirling documenting the incomplete building’s Brutalist use of béton brut. (Figure 1)

Frampton’s theoretical and practical tectonic interests are evident in his publication of the construction process, a rarity in modern architecture’s visual repertoire, and even rarely seen today. The phase of construction represented is prior to the presence of the modernist metaphor of glass, but instead delineated by the architecture’s “constructional and structural modes”, i.e. tectonic form. Frampton’s critical use of photography is evident in his realisation of both the capabilities and limitations of media; the “texts” of drawings or models could not represent his emerging ideas on the craft of construction. Considering Roland Barthes’s concepts of “pose”, “objects”, and “syntax” within the published photograph suggests other cultural connotations. Unlike the ‘clever perspectives’ of a professional common in 1960s publications, the eye-level position of Stirling presents a naïve rhetoric and speaks to a democratic audience. The presence of scaffolding, pipes, wheelbarrow, and laborers on
site further this importance of architecture as labour on which Frampton would also later elaborate. In his assessment of the completed building in 1964, Frampton would publish two full-page colour photographs by Richard Einzig, one shown in Figure 2.

Again, utilising Barthes’s system of analysis, in relation to “photogenia” one notes the presence of colour, and a crispness of material detail. The publication of colour photography during Frampton’s editorship was limited, as black-and-white was the dominant technique in British publishing until the mid-1970s. Where John Donat notes that the ubiquity of black-and-white photography influenced the production of “black-and-white architecture - The International Style”, Einzig’s use of colour suggests the project departs from the modern canon. Frampton retrospectively notes that Einzig’s use of a plate camera represented ‘the specific textures of metal, glass, and brick’ as “almost palpable (tactile)”.

This colour and texture provides a literal and metaphorical relief from modernism’s flat surfaces and evokes an older tradition of construction. In its “pose”, the front-on and slightly lowered position looks up towards the façade - a modern photographic standard - yet unlike modernist photography, this angle is used to reveal not a façade, but a hovering form with significant depth. Through the flattening technique of the plate-camera, creating a two-point rather than three-point perspective, Einzig’s photograph appears more like an elevation drawing with the suggestion of depth, which mimics Frampton’s own mode of orthographic drawing for his AD covers examined later.

Opposite to Townscape’s photographic tradition of ‘experiential emphasis on nearby surfaces’, Einzig captured the building’s irregular tectonic forms. Furthermore, with the presence of other “objects” – a person and trees in the foreground - the building does not stand as an empty and isolated modernist representation.

Other tectonic ideas manifest when noting Frampton’s publication of models. A chronological survey demonstrates that Frampton originally photographed models to represent incomplete projects, yet in 1962 in a review of Martin’s and St John Wilson’s completed college housing Frampton publishes drawings, photographs, and the architects’ model. Frampton retrospectively cited the work of the Martin/St. Wilson Studio as ‘British neo-brutalist’, and again in opposition to AR’s Townscape campaign, it is interesting to note that this case study, also a school project, reflects his didactic desires for architecture.
The inclusion of the model prefigures ideas explored in the IAUS 1976 exhibition, entitled The Idea as Model, whose catalogue Frampton edited. The exhibition asserted that models “represent ideas beyond the objective concerns of conventional architecture”. A model’s perceived objectivity was a popular tool in modernism, and its inclusion in AD acknowledges and critiques this tradition. The caption focuses one’s attention to the “block” and “the spatial effect of the court itself”, thus the typology of the construction which cannot be represented in the accompanying photographs. The concept of typology was gaining transatlantic popularity in the early 1960s, on which Giulio Argan would elaborate in AD December 1963, and supported Frampton’s social, historic and cultural aims for a constructed architectural praxis. Parnell concluded that Frampton’s design of fold-out and full page photographs displays “how much Frampton valued his photography”. I propose an alternative reading in light of Frampton’s first critique on the work of El Lissitzky in 1968, where he noted Lissitzky’s tendency to “incorporate graphic material into a three-dimensional format” through “loose leaf folders and fold outs”. I suggest Frampton’s conversion of the two-dimensional to three-dimensional folding page, as utilised in the representation of Caius College, is perhaps another technique in which to highlight the importance of construction. In summary, through these different representations Frampton understands that specific visual codes highlight contextual, constructive, or typological meanings, which are central to his later tectonic framework. I will proceed to analyse a fourth mode of ‘text’, the drawing, as evidenced in Frampton’s reconstructed cover designs for AD.

Frampton’s tectonic orthographic drawings
In contrast to the nationalism of AR, a survey of the European modernists featured in Frampton’s AD monographs – a few examples Greek architect Aris Konstantinidis, and Italian architects Gino Valle, and the studio of Angelo Mangiarotti and Bruno Morasutti – suggest an early regionalist leaning. However, paramount to my argument is that these figures and works, who failed to be canonised within mainstream English architectural publishing, are revisited in Frampton’s Studies in Tectonic Culture three decades later. It is not only Frampton’s selection of content, but also his redrawing of other architects’ projects, and his use of drawing conventions which highlight his tectonic language. Where Frampton utilised the term ‘scenography’ to condemn theatrical architecture, here it is important to reveal another definition is ‘the representation of objects in perspective’. Perspective representation, controversially employed by Gordon Cullen in his publication Townscape (1961), was synonymous with the Townscape movement’s theory and practice, as “all Townscape theory prescribed was the design of urban architecture with reference to actual views and sequences of views”.

Figure 2. Full-page colour photograph of Stirling’s and Gowan’s completed building (Einzig, Richard, 1964. Photograph, AD 32, 2 (February 1964), 86).
A survey of all Frampton’s crafted covers for AD reveals that he utilised only orthographic or axonometric projection. This rigorous, precise and architecturally-specific visual language is markedly different to the rhetoric of Cullen’s sketch-like perspectives, whose “apparent negligence” highlights the process rather than the resultant forms.48 Parnell has observed that during Frampton’s editorship, compared to previous editor Theo Crosby, “there were less abstract covers and more drawings and photographs of buildings”.49 For example, Figure 3 displays the cover of the Italian issue of March 1964, depicting a plan of Mangiarotti’s and Morassuti’s Baranzate Church, and an elevation of Gino Valle’s Zanussi Factory.

These projects are stereotomic, concrete structures, which may be perceived as an Italian equivalent of Brutalism, and both analysed in his Studies in Tectonic Culture (1995). First, Frampton’s layout rejects the Beaux-Arts tradition of analytique projection showing plans, sections, and details of one work, all on one sheet.50 Secondly, Frampton further emphasised this neo avant-garde layout through his re-drawing of both architects’ drawings; the plan is constructed from two-dimensional line work, and depth is created in the elevation through colour and sciagraphy. Yet on closer inspection of the elevation - namely the building-ground relationship bottom left, and an open window to the top left - breaks the conventions of elevation projection. Frampton’s re-drawing as a ‘text’ promotes an architecture of construction in three dimensions without the optical distortions of scenographic perspective.51 In another example to support Frampton’s anti-scenographic drawings, Figure 4 shows his cover for AD in October 1962, depicting an abstraction of Leonardo da Vinci’s Vitruvian man symbol as shown in Figure 5.52

It is important to note that da Vinci’s 15th century symbol was a Renaissance reinterpretation of Vitruvius’s classical ideal man.53 The Vitruvian symbol ‘assigns a particular depth to architectural representation’, representing the classical “way of seeing and making”.54 This perspectival scopic regime was central to both the Renaissance and Townscape tradition, and through his re-drawing Frampton critiques the mediating role of representation, he provides a modern reinterpretation of classical values. Frampton alters the original in two ways; first, the body is abstracted to a series of platonic solids. Second, similar to Le Corbusier’s Modulor diagram, he removes all painterly effects and perspectival depth, such as the details on the body, the background hatching, and the foreshortened hands and feet. In his treatise De Architectura, Vitruvius stated that within classicism the signified is architecture, and “that which gives it significance” - or in post-structuralist terms, the
In the Renaissance reinterpretation of the Vitruvian ideal man, the signified geometry remains as architecture, whilst the signifier of the body now represents **humanist** principles. Frampton’s visual language of architectural drawing alters these signifiers, removing the Renaissance centrality of the body and Townscape’s centrality of the eye in the creation of meaning within architectural praxis.

In contrast to the picturesque ideology of Townscape, classicism possessed no understanding of “image”, as there was “little sense in understanding an image of the building except as a symptom of its whole disposition, and consequent symmetry”, i.e. scientific principles. This difference in the relationship between theory and practice - synonymous to the picturesque and irrelevant within classicism - suggests Frampton’s critique is of Townscape in two ways. First, rather than tracing the original asymmetrical body, Frampton arranges his abstracted solids into symmetrical forms. This drawing process does not replicate a scenographic logic, but introduces an ordering system and an intellectual logic, indicative of Frampton’s emerging theoretical position. Secondly, Frampton’s translation of signifier and signified into architectural forms creates a visual analogy between theory and practice, and supports the classical idea of *techne*, defined by Gevork Hartoonian as “the unity of means and end”. In other words, architectural meaning must not be representational in character, it must be ontological. Frampton’s utilisation of architectural drawing also suggests that theory and practice cannot “derive its legitimacy from some other discourse”, yet must be the expression of construction itself, or in other words, belong to a theory of tectonics. These two case studies illuminate a larger trend where Frampton repeatedly edited other architect’s drawings for *AD*’s covers. In this way, his role is more than that of a curator, but through the “text” of drawing he takes on an authorship role, writing his own position into the designs of others.

To conclude, a re-assessment of the representation of post-war British architecture is important as these relationships between visual and verbal language continued to infiltrate post-modern and 21st century theory and praxis. Through several examples indicative of Frampton’s editorial tendencies at *AD*, I revealed how his theoretical and visual language presented a counter-position to the proponents of Townscape, how his carefully crafted covers presented a neo avant-garde and Eurocentric position, and I conveyed these tendencies as the earliest manifestations of his tectonic
position. This paper presents a novel framework from which to examine a continuity across Frampton’s career through his four modes of visual “texts”, rather than under the aphorisms of “Brutalism”, “critical regionalism”, or “tectonics”, and provides a contextual understanding to the linguistic debates that would follow in architectural journals and exhibitions throughout the 1970s, and the British tectonic debates that would emerge in the 1980s. Frampton himself noted the continuity of his position in 1982: “I sometimes look back at different things I’ve written and think that I’m just saying the same thing over and over again, I should probably just stop, you know, because I don’t seem to be going into, sort of, new territory very much.”
Endnotes

1 Thomas A. Markus, Deborah Cameron, Words Between the Spaces: Building and Language (London: Routledge, 2002).
2 Diana Agrest, “Postscript”, in Diane Agrest, Stan Allen, eds, Practice: Architecture, Technique and Representation (London: Routledge, 2003), 163-178. Like Agrest who notes the “mediated character of representation itself”, Robin Evans’s understanding of representation acknowledges the linguistic and reflexive relationship – or to use his term, the “translation” – that occurs between practice and theory, noting that “words effect vision”. See Robin Evans, “Translations from Drawing to Building”, AA Files 12 (Summer 1986): 3-18.
4 Emre Altürk, “Architectural representations as a medium of critical agencies”, The Journal of Architecture 13, 2 (2008): 133-152. Beatriz Colomina’s concept of representation belongs to the latter. Whereas Agrest’s and Evans’s concern is the relationship between architectural construction and ideologies, and that representation does not simulate reality, Colomina’s investigations within “the space of publications’ leads her to assert that ‘representation is architecture”. See Beatriz Colomina, Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1994).
11 English Townscape was a nationalist movement promoted by AR’s editorial team between the 1940s and early 1970s. The movement promoted a popular modern architecture that could be inserted into the historical urban fabric. Gordon Cullen’s infamous sketchy perspective representations in AR are symbolic of the movement’s theoretical and practical aims (or lack thereof).
John Macarthur, *The Picturesque: Architecture, Disgust and Other Irregularities* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2007), 198. To support my argument, Macarthur has also noted the similarities between Venturi’s American scenography and English Townscape tendencies; the “doyen of post-modernism, Robert Venturi, had his first publication in the AR as a Townscape study of the Campodogolio, and both *Complexity and Contradiction* and *Learning from Las Vegas* have considerable debts to Townscape”. Macarthur, 202.


Forty, “Common Sense and the Picturesque”, 177.

Forty, “Common Sense and the Picturesque”, 178.


For an excellent critique on Banham’s scenographic approach, see Macarthur, “Disgust”, in *The Picturesque*, 57-109.


Manfredo Tafuri cites Frampton’s article as a seminal piece of criticism dealing with “the problems of meaning”. Tafuri, “L’Architecture dans le Boudoir: The Language of Criticism and the Criticism of Language”, *Oppositions* 3 (May 1974): 37-62. For a contrasting semiotic analysis of Stirling’s and Gowan’s project, and an introduction by Frampton, see Peter Eisenman, “Real and English: The Destruction of the Box”, *Oppositions* 4 (October 1974): 6-34.


Frampton, “Leicester University Engineering Laboratory”, 61.


A survey of AD issues from August 1962 to March 1963 shows no colour photographs, and colour is sparingly used on select drawings and advertisements. The first colour photograph was published in April 1963, and Einzig’s photographs in May 1963 are the first two full page photographs in AD during Frampton’s editorship.


What does history have in store for architecture today?

43 Giulio Carlo Argan, “On the Typology of Architecture”, AD 33, 12 (December 1963): 565. It is interesting to note in this piece that Argan defines typology and formal development as “techtonics”.
46 In 1968, Banham wrote that counter to Townscape, the neo avant-garde to “Continental modern architecture”, and it is clear Frampton is advocating “an intellectually coherent English classical tradition in architecture’. Banham, ‘Revenge of the Picturesque’, 268.
47 Macarthur, Picturesque: Architecture, 201.
48 Macarthur, Picturesque: Architecture, 204.
52 It must be noted that two years prior, Banham published the Vitruvian man in an article for AR, and I would suggest Frampton was aware of this. See Reyner Banham, “1960: Stocktaking”, AR 107, 756 (February 1960), 93-100.
54 Hartoonian writes, this regarding of Le Corbusier’s Dom-ino to modernism. Gevork Hartoonian, Modernity and Its Other: A Post-Script to Contemporary Architecture (Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 56. Also Banham noted in 1960’s London, the classical tradition and its symbol Vitruvius were revived in an attempt to reject Townscape and ‘to get back to architecture. Banham, ‘1960: Stocktaking’, 93-100.
55 Hartoonian, Ontology of Construction, 6-7.
56 Macarthur, Picturesque: Architecture, 52.
57 Hartoonian, Ontology of Construction, 11.
58 Frampton, Studies in Tectonic Culture, 2.
59 Frampton, “Rappel à l’Ordre”, 90-103.
60 For example, for the February 1964 cover Frampton redraws Stirling’s and Gowan’s Engineering Building plan, and converts the colour scheme to a Constructivist colour scheme of red, white, and grey, which foreshadows his theoretical observation in his later review of April 1964. Another example is his special issue on Switzerland in September 1962 where Frampton constructed an axonometric projection of a villa by George Bréra for the cover.
61 A recent example is an exhibition at the Graham Foundation, Chicago, entitled ‘Spaces without drama or surface is an illusion, but so is depth’ (2017), presents photographs, models and drawings where contemporary practitioners were invited to rethink the ways that architecture “oscillates between reality and scenography to answer questions about space, depth, context, façade, and representation”. “Spaces without drama”, domusweb.it, http://www.domusweb.it/en/news/2017/02/20/spaces_without_drama.html (accessed 12 May, 2017). Another relevant exhibition commences May 2017 at the CCA, Montreal, entitled “Exhibiting Architects: Four Courses by Kenneth Frampton”, CCA.qc.ca, http://www.cca.qc.ca/en/events/49514/educating-architects (accessed 15 May, 2017).