

KENNETH FRAMPTON DOCTOR HONORIS CAUSA UPM

Laudatio

PUBLISHED IN

UPM Madrid, enero 2017

Textos Críticos. Ediciones Asimétricas. Madrid, 2017

La suspensión del tiempo. Diario de un arquitecto. Los Libros de la Catarata.
Fundación Arquia. Madrid, 2017

KENNETH FRAMPTON DOCTOR HONORIS CAUSA UPM

Laudatio

"Neither marble, nor the gilded monuments / Of princes, should outlive this powerful poem."

Thus begins William Shakespeare's Sonnet LV (55) which ends with: "So, till the judgement day come, you live in this poem, and dwell in lover's eyes."

This wonderful and Horatian sonnet would seem to be written by Shakespeare for someone who, like Kenneth Frampton, has dedicated his life to poetry, to the poetry of Architecture. Someone convinced that words remain more than works.

Do the words remain more than the works? The ideas with which the works are constructed remain more than the construction of those ideas.

Kenneth Frampton trained as an architect at the prestigious Architectural Association in London. And there, in the center of London, he designed and built in 1962, in collaboration with the also English architect Douglas Stephens, an 8-storey apartment building that is listed as a grade 2 historic monument.

Today he arrives here as Doctor Honoris Causa of the UPM for his words, for his written works and his teaching which, if we follow the Shakespearean sonnet, are capable of remaining in time, in the memory of men, better than our built works.

Kenneth Frampton has written a lot and very well and very clearly. So clear that he has been able to exert a profound and extensive influence on many of the best contemporary architects.

Suffice it to recall here how his clear distinction between stereotomic architecture and tectonic architecture, by the hand of Semper, has been effective germ of many of the most interesting architectures built in recent years. And with Gotfried Semper, Hanna Ahrendt or Ossip Mandelstam, just to mention three of his favorite authors who are now among us.

From 1962 to 1964 he was editor of the important English magazine A.D. Of his books I would especially like to point out *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, from 1980, where he already featured the most important Spanish architects. Or *Towards a Critical Regionalism* from 1983, or *Studies in Tectonic*, from 1995. Or *Labour, Work and Architecture*, from 2002. Or the recently released *A Genealogy of Modern Architecture*, so recent that there has not yet been time for the Spanish translation to appear.

As a teacher he has done an enormous amount of work in the various universities he has attended, although it is worth mentioning that he still works as a Ware Professor at Columbia University in New York. From there he has supported, from his classes and as director of many doctoral theses, many young architects from all over the world. In a special way to a large group of Spanish architects of this Polytechnic University of Madrid

to whom he has always attended with his proverbial generosity. If we were to mention them all today, we would never finish.

I must remember here as in 1985 wrote a beautiful text to preface a book with the title *Young Spanish Architecture*, some edited in a fit of madness that gave very good results. Many of the architects included therein have been many of the professors of projects that today teach at the Spanish University, especially in this our UPM. The design, pure Massimo Vignelli, was inspired by *Oppositions*, the journal of architectural thought produced by the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, the IAUS in New York, headed by Frampton himself with Peter Eisenman and Mario Gandelsonas. Frampton's text was obtained by the architect Miguel Angel Alonso del Val who was then at Columbia and who later came as my assistant at the Madrid School of Architecture and who is the current director of the School of Architecture at the University of Navarra.

Writing these words in New York on the last day of 2015, I had in front of me an autograph letter from John Ruskin to the painter George Richmond. In it, a long text with a beautiful watercolor drawing by Ruskin himself, made a precise analysis of Richmond's painting to whom he generously gave very good and clear advice. Ruskin, who being a remarkable painter, has gone down in history more as a theoretician. We all know his *Seven Lamps of Architecture* or *The Stones of Venice*. And I remembered how many times, always, Frampton has done the same, with his time and dedication, with theory, teaching and turning to so many young architects.

Perhaps this is not the time to list the enormous merits of the Doctor Honoris Causa whose curriculum and prestige are well known.

But I would like to acknowledge my gratitude to Professor Frampton because he has always defended, in private and in public, in words and in writing, that the Madrid School of Architecture of the UPM is the best in the world. Thanks be to him.

And if we start with Shakespeare, I would like to end with Cervantes. In chapter VIII of the second part of *Don Quixote*, Cervantes sings a hymn to humility that I think is perfect for praising Kenneth Frampton's humility:

All these and other great and different feats are, were and will be works of fame, which mortals desire as prizes and part of the immortality that their famous deeds deserve, our works must not go beyond the limit that the Christian religion we profess has set for us. We must kill pride in giants; envy, in generosity; anger, in quietness of spirit; gluttony, in not eating enough; lust and lasciviousness, in the loyalty we keep to those we have made the mistresses of our thoughts; sloth, in walking everywhere in the world. You see here, Sancho, the means by which the extremes of praise that good fame brings with it are achieved.

Kenneth Frampton's good reputation has led him to deserve this appointment as Doctor Honoris Causa of the Polytechnic University of Madrid. Or, to put it more concisely, I will turn once again to Federico Garcia Lorca and his "I write so that they will love me". Because we all love Kenneth Frampton, master!