1. Introduction
Initially, trained as an architect, Kenneth Frampton has designed and realized little and has instead devoted his life to architectural education. In the preface to his most recent published work Labour, Work and Architecture, Frampton modestly asserts that he is ‘more strictly speaking a writer on architecture rather than an architect or even an architectural historian or, for that matter, a theorist or a critic’. This research paper is a summary of the major works of Kenneth Frampton and something of a recapitulation of the thoughts of this well recognised and influential writer on architecture.

2. An Early Biography
Kenneth Frampton was trained at the Architectural Association (AA) in London from 1950 to 1956 and graduated to a practice in London during the prime era of the British welfare state. Following two years spent in the British Army, an experience Frampton remembers as a ridiculous one, he went to Israel for a year, an experience he remembers as a positive one, architecturally speaking, “in that it was a simpler country with a basic building technology”. Frampton became technical editor of the journal Architectural Design in the early 1960s.
In 1965 he left England for the United States to teach at Princeton. He later talked of his awe at the primal scene when first arriving in the United States, flying over New York and seeing enormous fields of lights across the megalopolis. He also talks of his strong politisation by America in his early years in the country, particularly of the strong effect the student unrest in the late 1960s had on him. Also, prior to coming to the States, Frampton had never seen production and consumption on such a scale before, and this gave him an awareness “of the stakes, which could somehow be concealed in Europe”. Around this time Frampton also developed a strong interest in the Russian revolution and its enormous energy “from a cultural as well as a political point of view”. The work of Camilla Gray, The Great Experiment: Russian Art 1863-1922 and the work of Hannah Adrendt, The Human Condition are two works that both had huge influences on Frampton in his early period in America. The later work by Adrendt, although ‘not a Marxist thesis, but certainly a political one’ had a key influence on politising Frampton and still serves as an important reference to his work. During his early years Frampton was working in Princeton alongside such reputable names as Tomas Graves, Peter Eisenman and Tomas Maldonado, the last of whom Frampton also credits with having a strong influence on his politisation. Through Maldonado, Frampton came across Herbert Marcuse’s Eros and Civilisation. These influences strongly impressed upon Frampton and led him to him to his strong Marxist positioning. Frampton moved to from Princeton to Columbia and the Institute of Architecture and Urban Studies where he once again joined with Eisenman. In New York they started the journal Oppositions ‘out of the strange amalgam of [Diana] Agrest and [Mario] Gandelsonas’s Francophile semiotics, Vidler’s emerging Tafurianism, Eisenman’s formalist predilections’ and Frampton’s own born-again socialism’. In the first issue of this journal in 1973 Frampton published Industrialisation and the Crisis of Architecture, a Benjaminian approach to historical phenomena, strongly influenced by the work of Hannah Adrendt, which he pursued in Modern Architecture.
Throughout the 1970s the arch nemesis of Kenneth Frampton was Robert Venturi. In Frampton’s view, Venturi espoused a populist critique. The Whites, the group at Columbia including Frampton and the so called five-architects (Eisenman, Graves, Charles Gwathmey, John Hejduk and Richard Meier) became polarised against the Grays of Venturi, Vincent Scully and Robert Stern. Frampton reacted especially strongly to the book of Robert Venturi and Denise Scott-Brown, Learning from Las Vegas, and to the later paper of Scott-Brown, Learning from Pop. Frampton strongly condemns the Venturi’s glorification of Las Vegas. He says that “the socio-political critical faculty” has been seduced by the so-called democratisation of consumption and by the inevitability of that, which I have characterized as the ‘instant utopias of Los Angeles’”. He is annoyed that the Venturi’s glorify what he sees as the organization of society “towards self defeating ends, on a sociopolitical basis that is totally invalid?”. Scott-Brown replies with a strong personal criticism of Frampton, and declares him a hypocrite when she retorts: “there is something distasteful about sitting in plush American university…..and taking superior armchair-revolutionary pot shots at the capitalists that support you there”. It was in this climate that Frampton wrote Modern Architecture: A Critical History that was first published in 1980, though it was begun in 1970. Following from this well-regarded history text Frampton’s next major work was his seminal essay, Toward a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Revolution which definitely

3. Toward a Critical Regionalism, 6 Points for an Architecture of Revolution

In 1982 a concise anthology of essays was published in a book entitled The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture. This book gathered together some of the leading critics in the field of cultural criticism. The preeminent art critic and editor of The Anti-Aesthetic, Hal Foster joins the views of Jean Baudrillard, Rosalind Krauss, Fredric Jameson, Douglas Crimp, Craig Owens, Gregory L. Ulmer, Fredric Jameson, Edward W. Said and Kenneth Frampton in this critic of postmodern art, architecture and culture. All critics, save Jurgen Habermas, hold the belief that the project of modernity is a deeply problematic one. What follows is an attempt at a careful review of the criticism and theory of Frampton presented through the Six points for an architecture of resistance. Frampton’s essay begins with an extract from the text of History and Theory written by Paul Ricoeur (X). Ricoeur describes the phenomenon of universalisation as the subtle destruction of the “creative nucleus of great cultures and of “the ethical and mythical nucleus of mankind”. He claims that “the great civilisations of the past are being replaced by a mediocre civilisation” where “everywhere throughout the world, one finds the same bad movie, the same slot machines, the same plastic or aluminium atrocities, the same twisting of language by propaganda”. Mankind “by approaching en masse a basic consumer culture”, “stopped en masse at a subcultural level”. Ricoeur states that “every culture cannot sustain and absorb the shock of modern civilisation” and that “There is the paradox: how to become modern and to return to sources; how to revive old, dormant civilisation and take part in universal civilisation”. Frampton, takes up this presented paradox in the first of his six points, titled Culture and Civilisation, by first aligning this presentation with the state of modern building which “is now so universally conditioned by optimized technology that the possibility of creating significant urban form has become extremely limited”. He describes the practice of architecture as being polarised between “the high-tech approach predicated exclusively upon production” and “the provision of a compensatory façade to cover up the harsh realities of the universal system”. Until the 1960s the “shape and significance
of urban fabric” was still possible to control due to the “dialectical interplay between civilisation and culture”. At this time the essentially 19th century city fabrics became dominated by the “two symbiotic instruments of Megalopolitan development - the freestanding high-rise and the serpentine freeway”, which have caused the “the victory of universal civilisation over locally inflected culture”. Frampton pessimistically states that the paradox presented by Ricoeur is been “circumvented by the apocalyptic trust of modernisation” and even more pessimistically “the ground in which the mytho-ethical nucleus of a society might take root has become eroded by the rapacity of development”. Frampton asserts that ever since “the Enlightenment, civilisation has been primarily concerned with instrumental reason, while culture has addressed itself to the specifics of expression. Today as, Hannah Adrendt presents it, the ‘in order to’ for civilisation has become the ‘for the sake of’; utility of meaning generates meaninglessness”.

Frampton develops an in-depth analysis of The Rise and Fall of the Avant-Garde because the “avant-garde is inseparable from the modernisation of both society and architecture”. Avant-garde architecture has played a positive role with regard to the progressive trajectory of the Enlightenment and hence, therefore, has been an instrument for the propagation of universal civilisation. However, during the middle period of the 19th century the avant-garde “assumed an adversary stance towards both industrial process and neoclassical form”. However, despite the Gothic revival and the Arts-and-Crafts movement modernisation continued unabated and by the end of the 19th century art has distanced itself from the “harsh realities of colonialism and paleotechnological exploitation leading to the avant-gardist Art Noveau movement “retreating to nostalgic or phantasmagoric dream worlds “where it takes refuge in “the compensatory thesis of art for art’s sake”. The progressive avant-garde grows in force with the coming of Futurism and the 1920s sees the last occasion that the “radical avant-gardism is able to identify itself wholeheartedly with the process of modernisation”. The 1930s, however, bring war, revolution and economic depression for a chronically insecure newly urbanized mass. According to Frampton this results in “the interests of both monopoly and state capitalism are for the first time divorced from the liberative drives of cultural modernisation”. Faced with the politics and corruption of Stalin’s USSR the “former left-wing protagonists of sociocultural modernisation “ take a diluted or “holding position” articulated by Clement Greenberg as “Today we look to socialism simply for the preservation of whatever living culture we have right now“. Since this time, Frampton states, the arts have “continued to gravitate…..towards commodity” and in the case of the postmodern architecture “towards pure technique or pure stenography” and that the modern day postmodern architects are merely feeding the media-society with gratuitous, quintistic images rather than proffering, as they claim, a creative ‘rappel a l’ordre’ after the supposedly proven bankruptcy of the liberative modern project“.

Andreas Huyssens stated that “The American postmodernist avant-garde, therefore, is not only the end game of avant-gardism. It also represents the fragmentation and decline of critical adversary culture”. Frampton calls for closure of the modernisation and avant-garde movements, when he says that “modernisation can no longer be simplistically identified as liberative” because “of the domination of mass culture by the media-industry” and because the trajectory of modernism brought the world “to the threshold of nuclear war and the annihilation of the entire species”. Also, that avant-gardism can neither be sustained as a liberative movement, “in part because its initial utopian promise has been overrun by the internal rationality of instrumental reason”.

Frampton quotes Herbert Marcuse who states that “when technics becomes the
universal form of material production, it circumscribes an entire culture, it projects a historical totality - a world”.

Following this critical review of the trajectory of modernisation since the Enlightenment, Frampton makes his call for architecture to assume a arriere-garde position:

“one which distances itself equally from the Enlightenment myth of progress and from a reactionary, unrealistic impulse to return to the architectonic forms of the preindustrial past. A critical arriere-garde has to remove itself from both the optimisation of advanced technology and the ever-present tendency to regress into nostalgic historicism or the glibly decorative. It is my contention that only an arriere-garde has the capacity to cultivate a resistant, identity-giving culture while at the same time having discreet recourse to universal technique”.

Frampton attempts to ground this arriere-gardism in a rooted yet critical strategy by introducing the term Critical Regionalism as coined by Alex Tzonis and Liliane Lefaivre in The Grid and the Pathway who by way of general definition state that regionalism “upholds the individual and local architectonic features against more universal and abstract ones”. Frampton states that “it may find its governing inspiration in …the tectonic derived from a peculiar structural mode, or in the topography of a given site. He goes onto specify however, that critical regionalism depends on maintaining a high level of critical self-consciousness”. He warns against mixing Critical Regionalism up with “simpleminded attempts to revive the hypothetical forms of a lost vernacular “ and particularly with “the communicative or instrumental sign which is the primary vehicle of Populism”.

Frampton uses the architect Jorn Utzon, as he will do on numerous occasions in his writing, as an example of one who is able to achieve “a self-conscious synthesis between universal civilisation and world culture”.

The Megalopolis continues to grow at an uncontrollable and uncontrolled rate. In response to this formless sprawl Frampton calls for The Resistance of the Place-Form. Kenneth Frampton seeks ways to resist the "infinite megalopolis" of sprawl and commodification. He proposes strategies of resistance through the creation of regionally inflected zones. It shows in the continual loss of density and texture in places under the pressure of market efficiency, and in the increasing similarity of places and buildings constructed with standardized techniques.

As, David Klob presents it: “In order to resist the reduction of places and buildings to tokens of exchange that are optimal for their brief function, the same everywhere and gone tomorrow, Frampton urged that we emphasize local particularities of design and construction.”

Key to this idea is the fact that “the universal Megalopolis is patently antipathetic to a dense differentiation of culture“. However, local identities are not easily traded in for newer fads. Hence, Frampton presents Critical Regionalism as offering the sole possibility of resisting the rapacity of the of the development of the universal Megalopolis. “Its salient cultural precept is "place" creation; the general model to be employed in all future development is the enclave, that is to say, the bounded fragment against which the ceaseless inundation of a place-less, alienating consumerism will find itself momentarily checked.”

Frampton is not recommending a simple return to traditional place making. Local modes on their own can be oppressively narrow and exclusive, but when cross-bred with the universal technical civilization they could create bounded areas that might resist leveling. Hannah Adrendt writes in The Human Condition:

“The only indispensable material factor I the generation of power is the living together
of people. Only where men live so close together that the potentialities for action are always present will power remain with them and the formation of cities …..is therefore the most important prerequisite for power”

Frampton once again here opens an attack on Robert Venturi. He takes strong issue with Venturi’s glorification of “the non-place urban realm” and his assertion “that Americans do not need piazzas, since they should be at home watching television”. In support of Adrendt, Frampton writes that “such reactionary attitudes emphasize the impotence of an urbanized populace which has paradoxically lost the object of its urbanisation”. In Culture versus Nature: topography, context, climate, light and tectonic form Frampton proposes that Critical Regionalism “involves a more directly dialectical relation with nature that the more abstract, formal traditions of modern avant-garde architecture allow”. He expresses a hypothesis close to Heidegger’s etymology. He proposes that what is evident in the case of topography for the individual structure applies to a similar degree in the case of an existing urban fabric. Although he states that “despite the critical importance of topography and light, the primary principle of architectural autonomy resides in the tectonic rather than the stenographic”. In the clearest hint towards his theory of tectonics Frampton states that “this autonomy is embodied in the revealed ligaments” and that “the discourse of the load borne (the beam) and the load-bearing (the column) cannot be brought into being where the structure is masked. He warns that the tectonic is not to be assumed as the purely technical as it is “more than the simple revelation of stereotomy or the expression of skeletal framework”. Stanford Anderson wrote:

“Tektonik referred not just to the activity of making the materially requisite construction….but rather to the activity that raises this construction to art form….The functionally adequate form must be adapted so as to give expression to its function. The sense of bearing provided by the entasis of Greek columns became the touchstone of this concept of Tektonik”.

The tectonic speaks of “the presentation of a structural poetic rather than the re-presentation of a façade“.

Frampton marries this idea of the tectonic further with his ideas of Critical Regionalism in his later works and this is reviewed and investigated in subsequent sections of this paper. Also in the last section of his essay entitled The Visual Versus the Tactile Frampton proposes that:

“the tactile resilience of the place-form and the capacity of the body to read the environment in terms other than those of sight alone suggest a potential strategy for resisting the domination of universal technology…..the liberative importance of the tactile resides in the fact that it can only be decoded in terms of experience itself: it cannot be reduced to mere information, to representation or to the simple evocation of a simulacrum substituting for absent presences……in this way Critical Regionalism seeks to complement our normative visual experience by readdressing the tactile range of human perceptions”

“The tactile and the tectonic jointly have the capacity to transcend the mere appearance of the technical in much the same way as the place-form has the potential to withstand the relentless onslaught of global modernisation”.

4. Rappel a l’Ordre
By the start of the 1990s Frampton begins to redirect his efforts somewhat from attempting to ground architecture in critical regionalism to a hypothesis based on tectonics and the ‘poetics of construction’. He departs from the hypothesis that ‘as far as the relative autonomy of architecture was concerned, built form was as much about
structure and construction as it was about the creation and articulation of space'. The aim of this redirection was to ‘recover the nineteenth-century notion of the tectonic in an effort to resist the contemporary tendency to reduce architecture to stenographic effects’. In 1990 the journal Architectural Design carried Frampton’s paper entitled Rappel a l’Ordre: The Case for the Tectonic which sets out the hypothesis that Frampton develops through the 1990s.

The paper begins with, again, another attack on the ideas of Robert Venturi, particularly in this case, the “decorated shed: that all too prevalent syndrome in which shelter is packaged like a giant commodity”. Frampton again uses that which is proclaimed by Venturi as an example of the ‘destitution of commodity culture’ which lies at the heart of the destruction of the environment and cultural degeneration.

As before Frampton again calls for a return to certain rear-guard positions, “in order to recover a basis from which to resist”. He parallels this situation for architecture with that facing Modernist painting in the middle of the 1960s, articulated by Clement Greenberg in the terms:

‘Having been denied by the Enlightenment of all tasks they could take seriously, they [the arts] looked as though they were going to be assimilated to entertainment pure and simple, and entertainment itself looked as though it was going to be assimilated, like religion, to therapy. The arts could saved themselves from this leveling down only by demonstrating that the kind of experience they provided was valuable in its own right, and not to be obtained from any other kind of activity.’

Frampton poses the same dilemma of architecture. He asserts that, similar to this predicament for painting, “architecture must of necessity be embodied in structural and constructional form”. The emphasis “on the latter rather than the prerequisite of spatial enclosure, stems from an attempt to evaluate twentieth-century architecture in terms of continuity and inflection rather than in terms of originality as an end in itself.”

Frampton further states that although it may be “disconcerting to recognise that there may well be a fundamental break between the figurative origins of abstract art and the constructional basis of tectonic form, it is at the same time liberating to the extent that it affords a point from which to challenge spatial invention as an end in itself: a pressure to which modern architecture has been unduly subject.” Instead of the recapitulation of avant-gardist tropes, or the postmodern tendency of historical pastiche or the unnecessary and superfluous use of sculptural gestures, he calls for a “return to the structural unit as the irreducible essence of architectural form.” “In a moment that oscillates between the cultivation of a resistant culture and a descent into value-free aestheticism” it is time to question the new.

The notion of the tectonic is here introduced by Frampton. The term ‘tectonic’, is derived from the Greek tekton, meaning carpenter or builder but it first receives its poetic connotation when the term appears in Sappho, where the tekton, the carpenter, assumes the role of the poet. The term is first elaborated on in a modern sense in the mid-nineteenth century in the writings of Karl Botticher and Gottfried Semper.

Any review of modern day tectonic theory is surely incomplete without an in-depth review of the work and ideas of Gottfried Semper, however, due to the hectic schedule of this author only a detailed reading of the works of Semper was possible. Unfortunately, suffice to say here that Semper viewed “the history of architecture as a process of symbolic and formal development”. The two parts of Semper’s theory are “first the notion that architecture derives its essential forms from four primordial or original motives found in the technical arts of ceramics, roofing (carpentry), moulding (terracing and masonry), and weaving (walling).” The second is his ‘dressing’ theory; that the textile motive for the wall underwent an intricate process of formal
development, as the conceptual rudiments of weaving evolved into textile wall hangings and later into solid wall dressings that emulated in style their original textile origin.” Frampton traces the history of modern architecture, through analysis of a number of the more famous of modern architects, “through the lens of the techne”. The tectonic unifies “diverse works irrespective of their origins. In this process well-known affinities are further reinforced, while others recede and hitherto unremarked connections emerge asserting the importance of criteria that lie beyond superficial stylistic differences.” Frampton writes of the tectonic nature of the work of Petrus Berlage, Frank Lloyd Wright, Auguste Perret, Louis Kahn, Carlo Scarpa, and Jorn Utzon, many of whom are dealt with in greater detail in Frampton’s later work, Studies in Tectonic Culture. However, key to Frampton’s thinking is the idea of the tectonic lying suspended between a series of opposites, above all between the ontological and the representational, and other contrasts such as the contrast between the culture of the heavy-stereotomics, and the culture of the light-tectonics. Of this later contrast, one tends “toward the earth and opacity and the other toward the sky and translucence“. Without shifting from his theory of critical regionalism, Frampton proposes that we should design and build so as to dramatise the act of construction; “the presentation and representation of the built as a constructed thing.” But in revealing its tectonic character as a built and standing thing, the building will need to take account of local differences in climate and materials and construction techniques. This will produce something more than the scenographic. Quoting from Sigfried Giedion, Frampton now states his general goal as “A ‘transavantgardist’ desire to return to the timelessness of a prehistoric past . . . as a potential ground from which to resist the commodification of culture.”

5. Studies in Tectonic Culture
Studies in Tectonic Culture may definitely be described as an architectural theory book, and probably Kenneth Frampton’s most theoretical of books. Studies in Tectonic Culture may also be recognized as more original, complex and personal a book than Modern Architecture. In this text Frampton looks in depth at a number of key architectural figures of the past and by doing so constructs a historical genealogy for critical work that follows. Therefore, it has a greater assignment to present day architecture than the historical review of Modern Architecture. Stan Allen also proposes simply that Frampton’s Marxist side is to the forefront in Modern Architecture but that it is his Heideggerian side that is to the forefront in Studies in Tectonic Culture. Since the late nineteenth century, the concept of space has been an integral part of architectural thinking, and we cannot help but evaluate architecture in spatial terms. Kenneth Frampton seeks to redress this imbalance by focusing on the art of construction, i.e., the tectonic. He claims that “inasmuch as much as the tectonic amounts to a poetics of construction it is art, but in this respect the artistic dimension is neither figurative nor abstract.” He emphasises that the built comes into existence out of the constantly evolving interplay of three converging vectors, the “topos, the typos and the tectonic“.

Frampton uses the work of a number of different architects as the basis for a thematic discussion. The heart of the book devotes one chapter each to the work of six architects; Frank Lloyd Wright, Auguste Perret, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Louis Kahn, Jorn Utzon, and Carlo Scarpa. Frampton postulates that the tectonic elements of Perret's work include an expressed structural skeleton as an ordering principle, the emphasis on the joint and separation of materials, and a reinterpretation of traditional features. He asserts that Perret provided
inflections in his work to differentiate the hierarchical importance of different building types and elements.

Many of Jorn Utzon's projects, including many of his less renowned works, are featured and extensively discussed, in the chapter dedicated to Utzon. Frampton analyses Utzon's work by structural types and notes Utzon's overriding concern for the expressivity of structure and construction. He discusses the concept of pavilion and pagoda in the context of the Sydney Opera House, and observes that this work is proof that a tectonic concept and a structurally rational work do not always occur together.

Mies van der Rohe, following the precedent of Schinkel, sought a discipline of clear construction as the means to combine a rational order with the poetics of construction. For Mies, a structure was a philosophical idea. Frampton includes a critique of both Mies's early brick country houses from the 1920's as well as his more renowned later works.

Perhaps the quote of Louis Kahn best surmises Frampton’s views in Studies in Tectonic Culture: ‘Space is architecture when the evidence of how it is made is seen and comprehended’.

Frampton draws not only his theory of the tectonic from the works of Gotfried Semper but also aligns the crisis facing architects today with the crisis that faced Semper in 1851, “when he first realized that had already been effected through machine production and the substitution of materials, as this was then manifest in such processes as casting, molding, pressing, and electroplating. Over the last century and a half this cultural devaluation has greatly increased its scope”.

Frampton ends Studies in Tectonic Culture by again taking a strong political position and uses a quotation from Guy Debord to form his position. Debord claimed that the media “has allowed power to assume that it no longer has to take responsibility for its decisions just as it encouraged science to enter into service of spectacular domination.”

6. Architecture for the New Millennium

In June of 1999, Kenneth Frampton presented a keynote address to the Twentieth Congress of the UIA in Beijing. This speech was later edited and republished in The Journal of Architecture, in the Spring of 2000, entitled Seven Points for the Millennium: An Untimely Manifesto. Although much of this speech is a recapitulation of what has already been documented in this paper, it is still an interesting and revealing exercise to dissect the seven points developed by Frampton.

Frampton, with obvious disappointment and maybe even a hint of bitterness, begins his assessment of Architecture and society: environmental education and the future of the profession with the assertion that the profession is now faced with the challenge of trying to determine the scope of its role in the next century due to the “demise of the socialist project with which architecture was once so intimately involved.” Frampton points to the need to enlighten “society as a whole with regard to certain cultural and ecological issues” and he proposes that “to cultivate an adequate client base, the education of the society in the field of environmental design should be given the highest priority.” He also proposes that the profession should adjust its pedagogical goals and that it admits that “the practice of architecture is still ultimately a craft, however much its processes may be qualified by techno-scientific methods and applications.” Frampton emphasises three areas that are still essential to the development of the architect; history, design and technique. He proposes that architectural history should be thought as cultural history. That design should follow from the initial hand drafting of initial concepts, to the continual building of concept models and that computer-aided design should be used for drafting and modelling in relation to the other two modes. Finally, of technique, he proposes that the teaching of technology may be best approached through
two strategies “(i) the teaching of current technique through analytical case-studies of contemporary building culture and (ii) the teaching of technology through simplified comprehensive design projects in order to expose the student to the task of synthesizing different techniques”.

In The relative autonomy of architecture and its socio-cultural role Frampton defines “architecture as pertaining to the constructed enclosure of volumes set aside for human occupation and use”. Hence, “(i) architecture as opposed to any other art is irredeemably mixed up with the life-world (ii) architecture has a quintessentially tectonic character whereby part of its intrinsic expressivity is inseparable from the precise manner of its construction (iii) the tectonic does not preclude the equally essential embodiment of architecture as a spatial assembly (iv) and these dimensions - the tectonic and the spatial are complementary and equally pertinent to the inflected articulation of macro and micro space on which the socio-cultural potential of architecture so evidently depends (v) in tectonic and spatial terms built form may be as representational in its implications as it is ontological (vi) architecture unlike the other arts cannot convincingly attain or aspire to the critical autonomy of modern art.

In The crises of land settlement in the age of the megalopolis Frampton repeats his criticisms articulated in Critical Regionalism a decade and a half before. Although, in this article he does reserve special criticism for the present “unremitting suburbanization” of the United States. He asserts that the “dissolution of the nineteenth century provincial city structured about the railroad has been brought about by the deliberate maximisation of private transport, sponsored by the oil and automobile lobbies and by the corresponding contrived decline of public transport in all its aspects”. He despondently asserts that “if there is a single apocalyptic invention in the twentieth century it is the automobile rather than the atomic bomb.” “Two essential factors must be seriously addressed if we are to come to terms in a socio-ecological sense with the current rate of urbanisation: (i) the provision of adequate public transport systems….. and (ii) the general establishment of more collective, ecological patterns of land settlement in both the First and Third Worlds.” Frampton asserts that although this knowledge is well known what is lacking is “the political and ideological will to bring these models into being. The sobering fact brings one back to the importance of education in a general sense because until the society begins to be more adequately informed and thus concerned as to the measures needed to redress the current environmental imbalance nothing fundamentally will change.”

In Landscape form as a redemptive strategy Frampton is again pessimistic in finding any significant means of improving either the socio-cultural or ecological character of the urbanised space due to the megapolitan development now taking place on a global scale. He is reduced to proposing a ‘greening’ strategy, based on reductive strategies such as the shading of parking areas (once glorified by Venturi) with planted trees and the replacement of asphalt with pre-fabricated concrete paving elements. Frampton proposes that even such minimal changes will offer much cultural benefit and for this reason ‘architectural and planning schools throughout the world should give much greater emphasis to the cultivation of landscape as an overarching system rather than concentrating exclusively…. On the design of buildings as free-standing objects’ (X). Frampton explains the distinction between what he has termed Product-form versus place-form. The former being “the forms of which are largely determined by the
production methods employed in their constitution” in contrast to the later which
describes the topographical element, cast into the ground as a heavyweight site
component. Frampton proposes a capacity for the place-form to resist the homogenizing
tendency of the universal technology.
In Megaform as urban acupuncture and Frampton again pessimistically repeats that:
“the contemporary environment is now so conditioned by maximised technology that
the possibility of creating significant urban form has become extremely
limited……….and the restrictions imposed by the dominance of automotive distribution
and volatile play of land speculation serve to limit the scope of urban design to such a
degree that any intervention tends to be reduced either to the manipulation of elements
predetermined by the imperatives of production, or to a kind of superficial masking to
which modern development seems to gravitate in order to facilitate marketing while
maintaining some modicum of social control.”
It is depressing to think that these thoughts are almost identically worded as those
written in Toward A Critical Regionalism, published a full eighteen years before the
coming of the new millennium.
In a strongly politicised conclusion to the speech, Rationality and Power, Frampton
again calls for social resistance. He quotes the Danish planner Bent Flyvbjerg who
states:
“we need to rethink and recast the projects of modernity and democracy and of modern
polities, administration, and planning, in terms of not only rationality but of rationality
and power…..Instead of thinking of modernity and democracy as rational means for
dissolving power, we need to see them as practical attempts at regulating power and
domination.”
Prior to finishing in a very apocalyptic tone, Frampton, in something of a contrast to his
general tone, and to his repeated calls for an architecture of resistance and for real
transformations in building codes, urban zonings, environmental laws and the present
state of the architectural practice and architectural schools, he is highly complementary
of the best of current architecture worldwide. He commends how this architecture is
conceived, built and equipped at the technical level.
However, he closes his speech by saying:
“In undermining tradition and religion, modernity and democracy condemn the species
being to the unending arduous task of producing itself. Architecture , it should by now
be clear, is in some specific sense inseparable from this relentless procedure.”

In his most recent work, Labour, Work and Architecture, Frampton criticises
“architecture that presents itself as exuberantly plastic wherein sculptural
concatenations are proffered as the substance of a unprecedented ‘value-free’
expression”. Frank Gehry is one of the main protagonists of this strain of architecture
that proliferates today, who as Hal Foster states has embraced “the disconnection
between the skin and structure”. Frampton writes:
“the sculptural character of this genre and of the way in which this is closely connected
to the spectacular in as much as a great deal of its impact largely depends on its
dissemination as an image through the media. Here, one can easily see how the cult of
the free-standing aesthetic object is closely linked to the populist franchising of, culture,
to the so-called Bilboa effect, wherein spectacular imagery serves to simulate global
market forces, which play themselves out of the many different levels, including the
current competition between rival city-states as they struggle for their economic
sovereignty in today’s post-industrial, tourist-orientated, commodity culture.”
One can only but think of Gehry’s recent addition to the Chicago cityscape at Millennium Park. Frampton calls for a move away from this whimsical architecture of the computer age and for an architecture that shows a greater concern for the balance of tradition and innovation. He concludes by writing that architecture: “pertains to its own time and to moments that project beyond it, both forwards and backwards. It is this dichotomous condition that constitutes both its weakness and its strength: weak partly because of its marginality in relation to the dominance of maximizing technology, and strong because at its best it not only testifies to its own time against the commodified never-ending newness of fashion but also because it is a built guarantor of the public-realm as a symbolic and political arena. Such will surely remain its prerogative providing it is not seduced by either the populism of kitsch or the experimentation of empty avant-gardism.”

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