

KENNETH
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DOCTOR HONORIS CAUSA UPM

· Laudatio ·

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments /
Of princes, should outlive this powerful rhyme

It would seem that this marvellous and horatian sonnet was written by Shakespeare for someone who, like Kenneth Frampton, has dedicated his life to the poetry of Architecture: someone convinced that words endure longer than works.

Do our words endure longer than our works? The ideas with which works are built endure longer than the construction of these ideas.

Kenneth Frampton studied to be an architect at the prestigious Architectural Association School of Architecture in London. And there, in the heart of London, in 1962, in collaboration with another English architect, Douglas Stephens, he designed and built an 8-storey apartment block, which has been grade II listed as a building of special architectural interest.

Today he is being conferred with a Doctor Honoris Causa by the UPM for his words, for his writings and for his teaching which, in the words of the Shakespearean sonnet, are capable of enduring in time, in the memory of mankind, better than our built works.

Kenneth Frampton has written much, and he has written very well and very clearly. So clearly that he has been capable of exercising a profound and far-reaching influence on many of the best contemporary architects.

I need only to remind you how his clear distinction between stereotomic architecture and tectonic architecture, following on from Semper, was the seed for many of the most interesting architectures built in recent years. Along with Gotfried Semper, Hanna Ahrendt and Ossip Mandelstam, to name but three of his favourite authors, which are now also mine.

From 1962 to 1964 he was editor of the leading architecture magazine, *A.D.* Of his books I should like to especially mention *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, written in 1980, in which the most important Spanish architects are included; and *Towards a Critical Regionalism*, 1983, or *Studies in Tectonic*, 1995; as well as *Labour, Work and Architecture*, from 2002, and the recently published *A Genealogy of Modern Architecture*, so recent in fact that a Spanish translation has not yet appeared.

As an educator, Frampton's teaching has had a profound influence on the many universities where he has been posted over the years, although I should like to give special mention to the position he continues to occupy, that of Ware Professor of Architecture at Columbia University, New York. There, in his classes and as director of many doctoral theses, he has nurtured and supported numerous young architects from all over the world, and in particular a substantial number of Spanish architects from this Polytechnic University of Madrid, whom he has always looked after with his proverbial generosity. If we were to name them all here today, we would never end.

I should like to recall how in 1985 he wrote a beautiful text as introduction to a book entitled *Young Spanish Architecture*, which a few of us published in a moment of madness and which turned out to be quite successful. Of the architects included in the book, almost all are now tenured professors teaching in Spanish universities, and especially here in our own UPM.

The pure Massimo Vignelli design, took its inspiration from OPPOSITIONS, the journal of architectural thought produced by the New-York based Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, the IAUS, led by Frampton with Peter Eiseman and Mario Gandelsonas. The inclusion of the Frampton text was the work of the architect Miguel Angel Alonso del Val who was in Columbia University at the time; he later became my assistant at the School of Architecture in Madrid and is currently Director of the School of Architecture at the University of Navarre.

Now is perhaps not the moment for enumerating the enormous merits of our Doctor Honoris Causa, whose curriculum and prestige are so widely known. Nevertheless I should like to acknowledge here today my gratitude to Profesor Frampton because he has always stated both privately and in public, orally and in writing, that he considered the Madrid School UPM School of Architecture in Madrid to be the best in the world. Our gracious thanks to him.

And if we began with Shakespeare, I should like to end with Cervantes. In chapter VIII of the second part of Don Quixote, Cervantes sings the praises of humility, which so aptly describe the humility of Kenneth Frampton:

“All these and a variety of other great exploits are, were and will be, the work of fame that mortals desire as a reward and a portion of the immortality their famous deeds deserve,...what we do we must not overpass the bounds which the Christian religion we profess has assigned to us. We have to slay pride in giants, envy by generosity and nobleness of heart, anger by calmness of demeanour and equanimity, gluttony and sloth by the sparseness of our diet and the length of our vigils, lust and lewdness by the loyalty we preserve to those whom we have made the mistresses of our thoughts, indolence by traversing the world in all directions seeking opportunities of making ourselves, besides

Christians, famous knights. Such, Sancho, are the means by which we reach those extremes of praise that fair fame carries with it.” The fair fame of Kenneth Frampton that has led to him meriting this conferral of Doctor Honoris Causa by the Polytechnic University of Madrid.

Or, to say it more concisely, I turn once again to Federico Garcia Lorca and his “I write to be loved”. Because we all love him, and love him very much: Kenneth Frampton, maestro!

ACB