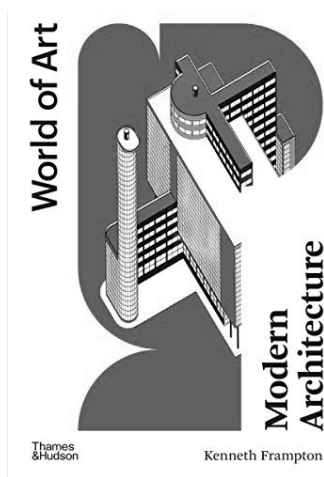


Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, New York, Thames and Hudson, 735 pp. – 2020 (5th edition)

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Since its first publication in 1980, *Modern Architecture* has been recognized as an essential book on the modern movement in architecture. Kenneth Frampton's latest fifth edition is a significant improvement from its earlier fourth edition in 2007, employing a much more open and comprehensive approach both geographically and theoretically. The author's sharp observations on critical works in the modern movement have inspired generations of students for an ethical and intellectual approach to architecture. Profoundly influenced by the phenomenology of Hannah Arendt and the critical theory of Walter Benjamin and Theodor W. Adorno, Frampton recognizes the constraints on building culture by the economic and political structure of capitalism

and examines each building as a phenomenological experience of the human subject. His texts and selection of images weave deep sociological and philosophical insight with keen spatial, formal, and material observations. In doing so, he advocates for an architecture of resistance, which is based on the intrinsic uniqueness of the bodily experience of the human subject. Previous editions of *Modern Architecture* have been criticized for inaccessibility and Eurocentrism. Apparently, the first edition was the product of the author's days as a technical editor for *Architectural Design* in London and one of the co-editors of *Oppositions* in New York City. His writings were within the tradition of modern Western architectural historiography, alongside books by Sigfried Giedion, Manfredo Tafuri, and Rayner Banham. Frampton admits that "a disturbing Eurocentric bias has been evident in almost all the received histories of modern architecture" in the preface to the fourth edition. With the fifth edition, the author aims at widening "the scope of the book to redress the Eurocentric and transatlantic bias of previous editions". Frampton's corrective effort is transformative. Both quantitative and qualitative changes coincide. The new book has 736 pages, 311 more pages than the fourth edition. The total number of illustrations is 813, with 396 more than the previous one. These added texts and illustrations embody Frampton's intention of repositioning the book in the contemporary architectural

community. When we compare all five editions together, this objective appears to be most decisive. The first edition of *Modern Architecture* (1980) has three parts, including three chapters in Part I, 27 chapters in Part II, and four chapters in Part III. Without changing the primary organization, the second edition (1985) adds a new chapter on critical regionalism in Part III, evocative of the author's classic essay, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance (1981)". The third edition (1992) introduces another chapter titled "World architecture and reflective practice". Despite the title, this chapter mainly discusses architecture in the four well-developed countries of Finland, France, Spain and Japan. The fourth edition (2007) adds a long chapter, "Architecture in the Age of Globalization: topography, morphology, sustainability, materiality, habitat and civic form 1977-2007", to analyze the recent changes brought by globalization. Thus, the first four editions develop gradually. The new fifth edition reveals much more significant changes. Frampton adds two more chapters to Part II, which deal with architectural developments in Czechoslovakia and France between the two world wars. Part III now has only five chapters. The last chapter of the fourth edition, "Architecture in the Age of Globalization", is a coda in the new edition. The 14-page chapter on "World architecture and reflective practice" in the fourth edition is replaced with Part IV, entitled "World

Architecture and the Modern Movement', with 275 pages of texts and illustrations. Following Luis Fernández-Galiano's *Atlas: Global Architecture circa 2000* (2007), Frampton divides the world into four global regions: The Americas, Africa and the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe. Each chapter covers many countries and architects of the world in the last fifty years. As the author admits, the USSR and some South Asian countries are missing, and the book is still too short to sufficiently cover the architecture of the world. Nevertheless, Part IV is a solid introduction to the global history of modern architecture. Carefully selected photos and drawings help the readers access the works of often underrepresented architects of Africa, Asia, America, and Europe such as Kamran Diba of Iran, Swoo-Geun Kim of South Korea, Alberto Kalach of Mexico, Raul Mehrotta of India, Diébédo Francis Kéré of Burkina Faso, Kabbaj, Kettani & Siana of Morocco, and Kashef Chowdhury of Bangladesh. The fifth edition is more accessible to readers unfamiliar with certain socio-philosophical theories such as phenomenology and critical theory. Part IV allows readers to approach chapters or subchapters independently. With this change, the author seems to encourage readers to access all other parts of the book similarly, as a collection of vibrant pieces. The book is much less a theoretical monolith but is instead an effort to map diverse, rich traditions of modern architecture in the world. At the beginning of Part IV, Frampton

clarifies that he is guided by the efforts to identify "another deeper strand of 'regionalism' that is critically creative in itself, but also 'critical' in the sense of its fragile and unique poetic character". In this new edition, Frampton remains as consistently insightful and critical as he has always been, now with the eagerness to explore the world beyond the transatlantic region. The fifth edition of *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* offers a concise and consistent history of global modern architecture. This book is filled with Frampton's profound knowledge and brilliant insights into the contemporary world and its architecture. Of course, a more thorough study of specific countries and architects would be desirable. He could also address certain issues such as gender and racial inequality as well as the environmental crisis at regional and global levels more substantially. Perhaps those issues might be better addressed by new generations. Despite some limits, *Modern Architecture* is one of the best – if not the best – books available to begin the study of the global history of modern architecture.

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