

# Interview with Kenneth Frampton

Kenneth Frampton, Yehuda Safran, Daniel Sherer

CRITICISM

**Yehuda Safran (YS):** It is a great pleasure to see you, Ken. What Daniel and I want to do today is to renew our conversation with you, one that has endured over many years. That is: to pick up certain threads of our ongoing exchange, by asking you, *viva voce*, the questions that we sent in advance.

**Kenneth Frampton (KF):** A rather protracted kind of conversation! On-again, off-again.

**YS:** Yes, we have always had a conversation, but every time it is different, though in a certain sense, it is a continuous dialogue, and hence the same conversation.

**KF:** Yes, why not?

**YS:** And now, this conversation is marked by your imminent departure for London. As you may recall, our conversation started with my arrival in New York over two decades ago at the threshold of your office. But now this period is coming to an end, as you are not only retiring from Columbia, but also taking your leave of New York altogether. So, that is an even bigger chapter, we could say.

**YS:** Shall we start?

**Daniel Sherer (DS):** Yes. Let us do that. In the introduction to your book, *The Other Modern Movement: Architecture, 1920-1970* (2021), you trace a genealogy of the idea of an “other” modern architecture. This is a family tree that diverges from traditional accounts of the modern in significant ways. You trace this idea back to the Darmstadt colloquium of 1951, *Mensch und Raum*, where, among others, Hans Scharoun outlined what you call a “maximalist functionalism,” a more humane and expressive functionalism that you oppose to the more doctrinaire functionalism of the interwar period. You also refer to Martin Steinmann’s and Claude

Lichtenstein's debate on *Die Andere Moderne* of 1985, now largely forgotten, which you revived in mentioning it, and Colin St. John Wilson's 1995 attempt to delineate an alternative history of modern architecture under the rubric of a return to Alvar Aalto's ideas. Now, could you say something more about this idea of an "Other Modern," and about what inspired you, in a more general sense, to write this history of forgotten modernities?

**KF:** There is a certain amount of accident – in fact quite a large amount – in the origin of the phrase "The Other Modern Movement." Apart from the use of the word "other," to which we could return, there is also the fact that I ended up at Mendrisio, which, by the way, involves certain chance occurrences. One important one arose because I was on the jury for a competition for a building in Buenos Aires, a museum of Latin American art that had been privately assembled by the collector who financed the museum. In fact, Mario Botta was on that jury, and, on that occasion, he invited me to Mendrisio, to the newly established Academy of Architecture, which he founded. This says a lot about him, by the way, because he persuaded the powers that be in Bern to start an Italian-speaking university with three faculties dedicated, respectively, to information, religion, and architecture. In any case, who was lecturing there in my kind of "bailiwick", as the British say, but Francesco Dal Co. So, I had a little problem because I had to give a lecture where he was giving the main number. And so, I decided to give one *à côté*, and what was the main reason? Well, let us go back to 1980, which is the year of the Venice Biennale. And so, I was still preoccupied with trying to convey to students that the Modern Movement, as it is conventionally called, was not a homogeneous phenomenon, by any means. And this leads us straight to the question of language. So, I put together this lecture series with these figures to convey to students that it was a very varied language and it had a lot of expressive possibilities. I gave the lectures in English, and they were translated into Italian and they were published by the Archivio di Madano, which is in Mendrisio, another kind of expansion of the "Botta empire." They have a small publishing side, so they published it.

**DS:** So it organically grew out of all of that.

**KF:** It grew out of all of that, that is how all the lectures came to be. The other thing about "otherness" is certainly Colin St. John Wilson, which brings up, of course, Aalto, as you rightly pointed out. He is not in the text, of course, but, clearly, I was choosing figures that were not so central. There was one side, and the most extreme example of this would be Dudok, who was very fashionable in England in the end of the 1930s, because of brick, after all, you know.

**DS:** Yes.

**KF:** And it is sort of more palatable, in a way. It is not white. For that moment. So, things like the Curzon Cinema, for example, by Burnet Tait & Lorne of 1936. It is a somewhat Dudok-like work, and there are other bits and pieces. Anyway, Dudok is certainly not in *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (1980), and generally he was somewhat not aligned.

**DS:** He was some sort of heterodox figure.

**KF:** That is right. Kind of influenced by Wright.

**DS:** As were many of the Dutch at the time.

**KF:** Yes, but in a different way, more directly. And he built “a lot,” too, because Hilversum was the center of Dutch radio, and they built an ample city around it. And many of the buildings were by Dudok.

**DS:** One of the more stimulating parts of the book deals with Vilhelm Lauritzen and the idea of radio as a modern medium of communication. And then you made the connection to that extraordinary building, the Haus des Rundfunks (1921-31) of Hans Poelzig, and you said that the irregularity of the space was key to the acoustics. Which brings me to the second part of the question: You actually gave two specific, very succinct reasons for what you meant by the “other modern movement.” One, you said, was marginality vis-à-vis the canonized systems. The other was a kind of litmus test which is, in fact, honored throughout book. The test is: Did these figures that were somehow brilliant yet marginalized, or significant yet marginal, respond to the challenge of creating new typologies with respect to unprecedented programs? Like, for instance, radio. So, when you raise the question of criteria, you are also raising the question of what Manfredo Tafuri called – even though you do not cite Tafuri – the history of problems, what the German intellectual historians call *Problemggeschichte*. Not just architectural problems, but wider technological advances and sociological developments. So, in fact, architecture has to keep up with, even as it contributes in its own way to, a wider sociocultural field. Is that a fair assessment?

**KF:** Yes, of course. I mean, well, that is a too quick an “of course.” But because I am, so to speak, a child of the 1950s from the point of view of architectural education, the issue of “program” – which was very foreign in a way to American schools and, in fact, to the entire American *modus operandi* vis-à-vis architecture. The emphasis on the program, which was in Britain in the 1950s because of welfare state, etc., was maybe too prominent. So, in a way, I had that in the back of part of my own kind of personal formation.

**DS:** And “program” is not function. “Program” is something else.

**KF:** Yes, it is more than that, of course.

**DS:** Although it is true that after the arrival of Gropius at Harvard, there was the notion that became part of corporate modernism of the bubble diagram, which is kind of related to the program.

**KF:** That was a crude version of the idea. Well, where proximity was everything, you know, and hierarchy of proximity. There is a bigger idea of what the project is. I love the fact that...well, I did not know for a long time that “project” was involved with the idea of throwing.

**DS:** Yes indeed. *Pro-iacere*, to throw forward. Sartre wrote about that, the idea of the project as an endeavor inherently linked to the subject, to the genesis of the subject. Then, there is the existential idea of being cast into the world, against one’s will, or better, in no relation to it: an idea tied to Heidegger’s notion of thrownness (*Geworfenheit*). But Ken, you

just reminded me of something else. Another degeneration of the “program” into something in the 1990s and 2000s called the “programmism” of Rem Koolhaas. That became a kind of ideology, too. A watchword.

**KF:** Yeah, but you know, is this not amazing?

**DS:** Am I wrong?

**KF:** No, you are right, but that is the paradox about Rem, because there is this thing in Utrecht called the Educatorium. Obvious influence of Russian Constructivism.

**DS:** He was obsessed with it. That is because of you, partly—I remember you telling me that at the AA early on you introduced Rem to certain aspects of Russian Constructivism.

**KF:** Maybe. But what I think is so sick is that it reveals a big contradiction in Rem, in that there is this one impulse, which is hedonistic and libertine, mixed with the most awful Puritanism. It is very weird... Have you seen the film “Rem”? If you have not, you have to see it. Made by his son. Well, you get the feeling that this is a man who has been very successful, et cetera, but basically, in becoming an architect and being an architect, has constantly been torturing himself. He never smiles in the entire film...

**YS:** You should finish your critique of this auditorium in Holland by Rem. You started saying there is this fold, yes?

**KF:** Yes. Well, it is a restaurant, but it is also the same thing pointing towards a terrace. But then there is this glass wall, and then there are these two stupid doors. What is the problem? What “is” the problem? Why would you do this totally perverse thing of these two doors? It is incomprehensible to me! Anyway, where were we?

**DS:** Well, the next question concerns these two figures, the Czech Jaromír Krejcar and the Dane Vilhelm Lauritzen.

**YS:** We wanted discuss divergent functionalisms, especially the Czech one, the so-called “Emotional Functionalism” of Krejcar, which differed notably from the interwar functionalism of the Bauhaus.

**KF:** Yes, well, I mean it is hard to know, or to know in full, more fully, the cultural ramifications of “Emotional Functionalism.”

**KF:** You know, there was also Karel Teige’s adaptation of Purism, exemplified by his *Modern Architecture in Czechoslovakia* (1929), but it was not Le Corbusier’s concept of Purism. What was it, exactly? It is not so easy to know what it was.

**YS:** It was more inspired by, I would say, Russian Formalism. And Constructivism...

**KF:** Yes, true, but ...

**DS:** And the Czechs, as you point out, are, culturally speaking, suspended between France and Russia, if I can put it that way.

**YS:** Linguistically, the Czechs were able to produce their own school of Formalism, somewhat like that of the Russian Formalists, yet different. Because Roman Jakobson, after he left Moscow, he did not go straight to New York. He went to Prague.

**DS:** The Prague Linguistic Circle.

**YS:** And this of course led to the formation of the Prague School of Linguistics.

**DS:** Ken, this offers a parallel to what you have noticed about the Devêtsil. And even to Jan Mukarovsky, who wrote about the semiotics of art and architecture. Actually, what we are dealing with here is not only a parallel, but possibly also an intersection between different architectural cultures and lines of inquiry. And this notion that the Czechs are wedged between France and Russia. In this way, they are between, as it were, Western Europe and the East. And Constructivism and the whole question of what it means to be a Purist. But guess what? You are right! It is not Corbusian at all!

**KF:** No, it is not. I mean, it is vain in a way, also more hedonistic. And the link to Paris is important, I think.

**DS:** But here is something I am amazed by: We are all familiar with *L'archéologie du savoir* (1969) by Michel Foucault, but you really embarked upon an archaeology of Functionalism in this book.

**KF:** By accident.

**DS:** Some of the best things come about by accident.

**KF:** Precisely. Returning to Dudok, what I think is absolutely amazing is this department store, Bijenkorf. It is the key building by him. That I discuss. After all the work that was kind of somewhat conservative, even to the business of schools with thatched roofs in Hilversum and using brick all the time, et cetera, and a certain influence of Wright – he does this department store.

**DS:** Oh, that's the one with the thatched roof: the Fabritius school.

**KF:** Yes.

**DS:** Extraordinary work. I mean, talk about the vernacular!

**KF:** Yes indeed. The department store is also obviously influenced by the Russians.

**DS:** This next question jumps forward to the post-war period, Ken. In your book *Labour, Work, and Architecture*, which was one of the first books that I read, the first book I read after your *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*.

**KF:** You mean the essays?

**DS:** Yes, the collection of essays. The first thing I read was the Loos essay: a remarkable text. And then you published an interesting essay about Ulm, "Apropos Ulm". There, you reassess the legacy of the Hochschule für Gestaltung both in relation to its continuities with the Bauhaus and in terms of its originality. As you say, Ulm is quite different from the Bauhaus as it has a less convoluted history than that of its Weimar precursor institution. You also stress the very deliberate integration of industrial design, architecture, and technological development. You point out at the outset of the essay that Ulm – whose specificity you capture in terms of the dialectic between curricular development and critical theory – is important not for the actual number of graduates from that school who moved into practice or realized their objectives, nor for the actual achievements in the field of industrial design and related spheres, but for what you call

the “extraordinarily high level of critical consciousness that it managed to sustain in its daily work.” Now, the reason that I want to ask this question is because it seems to me that you have touched upon a nerve here which is key to your entire historiographical adventure, which is somehow the raising of a critical consciousness through design and architecture. Would you say that is a fair assessment of what you would do in general, not only with Ulm, but in general? It is like a clue, a *detail révélateur*.

**KF:** Well, of course it is, but the other thing I felt and I have said, but never written it quite like that, is that the United States was a very important experience for me, and Princeton was also. “Princeton” being Maldonado.

**DS:** Tomás Maldonado. He was there? I did not know that.

**KF:** He was. When Ulm came to an end, he was brought to Princeton by Emilio Ambasz. It was an Argentine connection, of course.

**DS:** Right.

**KF:** I first met Maldonado in Ulm, actually, and at the same time, Claude Schnaidt. Actually, there are three figures who are key, I think, to the critical position upheld by Ulm. One is Gui Bonsiepe, the other is Tomás Maldonado. And then there is Schnaidt. Both Maldonado and Schnaidt are no longer alive, but Bonsiepe is. They were all of the left, but Bonsiepe was both intellectual and pragmatic, and involved somehow with agricultural reform, or something like this, in Latin America. In any case, those are the three figures, and there is this huge contradiction in all, of course, between that kind of critique and the move into industrial design, and also the reflection of industrial design back on architecture, such as architecture was taught in Ulm. There was another important figure, Herbert Ohl, who ran the building program in Ulm, and it all emphasizes, of course, prefabrication so it is a kind of industrial design. Anyway, what I think is the contradiction is this situation of the economic miracle of Germany after the war, and Braun electronic equipment being a classic example where in fact one is talking about designing rather exquisite consumer objects. So, there is this kind of contradiction.

**DS:** But there is also Max Bill.

**KF:** Yes, well Max Bill is of course the architect of the building but he is also the overriding ideological figure. So, the American denazification program wanted to create a school of politics dedicated to the memory the Geschwister-Scholl, the White Rose.

**DS:** The anti-Nazi resistance.

**YS:** In Munich.

**KF:** Bill persuaded the powers not to do a school of politics but a school of design.

**DS:** There it is. Kind of neo-Bauhaus in a way.

**KF:** Yeah, right, well Bill had been formed by the Bauhaus, of course. He probably was a direct pupil of Hannes Meyer, but I am not sure about that.

**YS:** But the whole ambition is a little bit out of date, is it not?

**KF:** It is and it is not, you know, because it is part of the attempt of Germany to recover from the catastrophe. Friedrich Meinecke (1950) wrote a historical book called *The German Catastrophe*, right?



**DS:** Yes. That is a curious book. I have read the first part of it. He was a terrible anti-Semite, Meinecke, but a liberal. Very amazing.

**KF:** Another contradiction!

**DS:** By the way, I found out something. Recently I was appointed Visiting Professor of architectural history at the IUAV (Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia) in Venice. I gave an introductory lecture on the early phases of Rossi's trajectory and when preparing this I found out that the Ulm had an amazingly unexpected "other history of the modern movement" impact on the young Aldo Rossi. There was a collaborator of Rossi by the name of Luca Meda, who worked on the Monument to the Resistance in Cuneo of 1962.

**KF:** By the way, a beautiful work!

**DS:** Which is, I recall, your favorite work of Aldo Rossi. There were in fact two collaborators on the Cuneo Monument project, Luca Meda and Gianugo Polesello. In fact Luca Meda, before collaborating with Rossi, had previously studied under Max Bill and Maldonado at Ulm. This, or so it seems to me, is why the Cuneo Monument owes something to Bill; there is indeed something Bill-like about it: a reading that is supported by my colleague at the IUAV in Venice, the perspicacious Gundula Rakowitz, who points out that, according to Polesello's own first-hand testimony, Meda had more to do with the design than Polesello.

**KF:** I see that.

**DS:** But is that not interesting about the young Rossi and the legacy of Ulm?

**KF:** Fascinating!

**DS:** I came upon this unexpected connection in a publication on Luca Meda published two years ago and that is where I found it. (N. Braghieri, S. Carboni, S. Maffioletti, *Luca Meda. Architecture, Design, Drawings*, Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2021.)

**KF:** Amazing.

**DS:** The next question is about Álvaro Siza.

**KF:** This idea of ambiguity?

**DS:** This idea of ambiguity, which was brought up not only by you, but by Zygmunt Bauman, whom you cite. For instance, you speak, in *Labour Work and Architecture* (2002) of Álvaro Siza in terms of the liberating power of a certain ambiguity within the so-called Modern Movement. You offer a close reading of these two works, the Duarte house and the Teixeira apartment, and you show the constitutive ambiguities not only in their genealogies vis-à-vis Adolf Loos, Aalto, and possibly Frank Lloyd Wright, but also the way he deals with certain spatial and formal and technical elements. For instance, you said the *poésie d'équipage*, which brings to mind, for me at least, Le Corbusier of the *objets à réactions poétiques*. But it is very different, is it not?

**KF:** Well, Le Corbusier, in a sense, has both.

**DS:** Both what?

**KF:** Well, that suite of furniture they made for the Salon D'Automne of 1929 is very much poetry of equipment, I would say.

**DS:** Yes.

**KF:** But *objets à réactions poétiques* is another thing. I mean, it has got to do with connections to Surrealism.

**DS:** Yes, even though he would deny that he was close to the Surrealists.

**KF:** Correct. He was close to André Breton, I think, and also in rivalry with Breton.

**DS:** But anyway yes, Álvaro, let us go back to that question.

**KF:** Well, there are two houses in particular where the ambiguity is present.

One is the Beires House, which is a cube, but it has a whole chunk eaten away. And the other is the Duarte house. And what is clear in both cases is the depth of Álvaro's culture, because they both involve use of references from the modern tradition. So that with the Beires House, the back of the house has components which could come from Dutch Functionalism or Mendelsohn, and then the kind of cubic thing that is then blown apart.

By the way, the people who worked for him at that time used to call it the "Bomb House", because it looked as though it had exploded. (Laughter)

But then the ambiguity, because...well, first of all, the references, but secondly, the fenestration, because it combines both casement and sash windows, which is a very strange thing to do. And because sash windows come from Britain, and I think the story is that this kind of window was put onto ships as ballast going to Portugal. That is, the arrival of sash windows.

But then the other thing I have to say, which is very personal, is that

when I first saw the images of this house, I thought that the fenestration, particularly the casement windows, mixed casement and sash together.

But the "delicacy." I thought these things had to be made of steel. But they are not made of steel, they are made of wood, which testifies to the kind of exquisite carpentry that was still possible at that moment. So then you have on the one hand, you have these references to the Modern Movement,

syntactically, but combined with references to craft culture, but very complex craft culture to combine together sash windows and encasement windows.

And by the way, Álvaro's drawings for this fenestration are now in the Museu Serralves and a person called Emerson has written a beautiful text on it. Álvaro understands deeply how all this is made. What is the standard and all that. I mean, they are so exquisite, these working drawings for this fenestration.

So, I think that, in itself, is extremely ambiguous on so many different levels. The combination of modernity and a very much mediated vernacular. And while I cannot prove it, maybe there is even sort of traces of Pierre Chareau's and Bernard Bijvoet's *Maison de Verre* in the fenestration. I mean, it is so sophisticated. And the other one, the Duarte House, is also sophisticated, but there the references are Loos.

**DS:** Yeah, that is what I was going to say. The displacement of the Loosian *Raumplan*.

**KF:** Yeah, right.

**DS:** And the cladding.

**KF:** Mixed up with Palladianism.

**DS:** Yes, On the exterior.

**KF:** Narrow bay, wide bay, narrow bay. That is the module that is operating



across it. I think it might go in the other direction, but certainly in the cross, the front elevation, so to speak, is modified in this version. Well, it is not so complex as the Beires House, but still. What is amazing is the culture of the person. I mean, the fact that he knows what the tradition is, deeply, and is able to play with it and to make something else out of it. That is a great thing, but it involves ambiguity, it involves conjunctions, which are to some extent coming from different origins and have a kind of contradictory aspect. The most beautiful thing is that he drew this little house in Moledo do Minho for a banker, the Casa Alcino Cardoso, which is the conversion of an old vineyard and a little cottage of the person who ran the vineyard, et cetera. Álvaro told me he had to fight to keep the vines in the vineyard because the friends of the banker, clients, said, "Oh, you should get rid of these vines. You should plant orange trees, which do need much maintenance. They are much more profitable." And Álvaro was involved in a fight to get them not to do that. That also is a dimension that goes beyond being what is a "professional architect." It involves a deeper cultural dimension. That is what is so incredible about him, I think.

**DS:** Unusual.

**KF:** The levels of cultural involvement.

**DS:** It is the exact opposite of the ingrained cynicism of Rem.

**KF:** Oh, totally. Well, there is no comparison.

**DS:** No, I am saying for the kind of *extrême*.

**KF:** Yeah, but Rem is simplistic by comparison.

**YS:** Siza did like Rem's Casa da Música in Porto.

**KF:** Maybe he did, yeah.

**YS:** Well, I think that project is almost...

**KF:** Well, anyway, the Portuguese built it. They must have detailed it.

**DS:** With all the tiles.

**KF:** When I heard that he got that project, I was kind of absolutely...

**YS:** Flabbergasted.

**KF:** Yeah, I was, a bit.

**YS:** Yeah, but you are right. It was Rem, but it was also the Portuguese who built it.

**DS:** But, you know, Ken, when I went to the architecture school that Siza did in Porto and I saw the library and I thought, "This is a kind of an *ostranenie*," or "making strange", of Aalto, in Viktor Shklovsky's sense of the term.

**KF:** Yes.

**DS:** And he did that, too. He is somehow like a wizard: he has the uncanny ability to take something that we know from these heterodox modernists, e.g., Loos or Aalto, and then he could turn it all around and make it his own. That is a kind of power that he has. And Yehuda knows about this power of Siza far better than I do.

**KF:** First of all, he is an outstanding draftsman. Well, there is his wife. Many of the things in his style of drawing are coming from the wife, actually. Particularly human beings.

**DS:** Amazing drawings.

**YS:** Well, his original ambition was to be an artist.

**KF:** A sculptor.

**YS:** His father prevented him.

**KF:** Not an unfamiliar story! Yes, and you know, at some point, Pierre-Alain Croset, in Bergamo, curated an exhibition of Álvaro's sculptures. Because the original was to be a sculpture.

**YS:** Wooden sculpture. Our friend Paola Iacucci also showed the wooden sculptures in a gallery in Milan.

**DS:** And the way he draws! It reminds me somehow of a T. S. Eliot-like effacement of the personality.

**KF:** Yes, but also like a creatively ironic view of his own being in relation to "making." I think that is how I would describe it. But anyway, it is a bit elaborate.

**DS:** Let us move on and talk about Aldo Rossi versus Osvaldo Matthias Ungers. You subsumed them under the general rubric of Neo-Rationalism, in *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, which, as a general proposition, is of course defensible, but also debatable, as they are very different. Basically, Ungers is searching for an ultimate statement of principle, but he shares that with Rossi, and Rossi does make that statement in *The Architecture of the City* (1966). But they are so different. I mean, incredibly different.

**YS:** Essentially different.

**DS:** One of them is fascinated, from his Cologne background, with Nicholas of Cusa, you know the idea of the house inside of the house inside of the house – that proto-Leibnizian idea. You know, the monad, right? Remember, he did that not only with his own house, but he made these ideas related to Magritte, the house inside of the house without proportion?

**KF:** Yeah, but is that not in the museum?

**DS:** Yeah, in the museum, you are right. On the other hand, there is nothing like that, really, in Rossi. I mean, Rossi is more didactic, in a way. I am talking about his theory not his practice.

**KF:** Right. But Rossi is also more overtly metaphysical, though, is he not?

**DS:** Totally.

**KF:** Whereas Ungers is not.

**YS:** Well, both are Catholic.

**DS:** Yes. Both are Catholic. A German Catholic and an Italian Catholic.

**KF:** Yeah, they are. Well, anyway, I suppose the term "Neo-Rationalism" is sufficiently open to...

**DS:** Plasticity.

**KF:** Yeah, I mean, you know, it is a kind of genre. And you could say Léon Krier is also part of it. For what it is worth.

**DS:** We are, in fact, talking about Ungers *versus* Rossi. But what is your view of Ungers, then? That is really the intention behind the question.

**KF:** Well, I think that the best moment of Ungers as an architect is in Cologne, where he does his own house but also an apartment block in brick/concrete, which is kind of Brutalist, you can say. Also very controlled,

very resolved, I think. And then he goes to Berlin to become a professor. He was very encyclopedic and had an unbelievable library.

**DS:** He was a real intellectual, no doubt. For instance, he wrote about Alberti in a very intelligent way.

**KF:** Also influenced by Russians and so on. There is a young architect, called Jürgen Sawade, who was the right hand of Ungers when Ungers became a professor in Berlin. And he and Sawade – well you know, had all of this is sort of history that is not very carefully... No one has worked on it, really. The Green Archipelago that Ungers and Rem worked on together.

**DS:** The young Rem, who worked on it with Ungers, during Rem's period at Cornell.

**KF:** That is a beautiful project.

**DS:** A great project. That is such a fascinating project, and it is better than what is rather conventionally called "the sustainable" now, I mean, it is something so...

**KF:** And also, of course, it is related to *The Communist Manifesto* (1848).

**DS:** It is.

**KF:** Take your population out of the capital.

**YS:** Put it in the country.

**DS:** Anti-urban ideology.

**KF:** Yeah, right. Absolutely.

**DS:** And that is actually the best thing that Pier Vittorio Aureli really ever did, was write about that. In my view, he wrote beautifully about that.

**KF:** Yeah. Well, he should. You know, Ungers was also very well-trained by Egon Eiermann, and there is an essay by me called "In the Name of the Father" which is comparing the ambassador's house by Ungers in contrast to the embassy by Eiermann. They are not quite facing each other.

**DS:** You are talking about the building in Washington, D.C.?

**KF:** Yeah, right. In a way, Ungers was a "builder" architect. He wanted to build. I mean, there is a question as to whether Aldo Rossi ever wanted to build.

**DS:** In certain ways, he did not really know how.

**KF:** I think of him as kind of intellectual, artist, metaphysician... yeah, very much.

**DS:** But atectonic.

**KF:** Yeah, by definition.

**DS:** But it is apt you bring up Eiermann, because the Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche chapel is like an object lesson in tectonics.

**KF:** Yes. Well, Eiermann was more tectonic.

**KF:** Yeah, well, Ungers was more technocratic. Also, he believed in the capacity to build in the sense of... well, when he went to Cornell.

**DS:** The fight with Rowe?

**KF:** Yeah. And I was there when Colin persuaded his wife.

**DS:** Ungers's wife?

**KF:** Yeah. Anyway, I was witness to Colin saying to Ungers, "You must come!" and stuff, but I mean, they quarreled almost immediately.

**YS:** But do you know why? Do you not think that there is something else very interesting? And I thought about it quite a bit because I taught at Cornell for a certain period, and this gave me occasion to reflect. And everybody was talking about the fact that no sooner had Ungers arrived that they began to quarrel, and they were at the different ends of the corridor.

**DS:** Spatial politics.

**YS:** And hardly talked to each other. I was fascinated by this quarrel and believe I came to an interesting conclusion which is that they had something in common in the discussion of collage, except that they understood it in totally opposite ways!

**DS:** Oh, you mean with the Green Berlin? [ed. *The City in the City: Berlin, a Green Archipelago*, 1977]

**YS:** Yes. The collage that Ungers invented was exactly the opposite of the collage of Colin.

**KF:** Well, they have such different ideological positions.

**DS:** And yet what would have attracted Colin to Ungers, I wonder?

**KF:** Well, yeah, I mean, God knows. I mean, why was Colin so insistent? I do not understand.

**DS:** He was enamored of the entire project at first, and then totally had a rift.

**KF:** It is really not so easy to understand. But anyway, Rowe “was” Cornell, so to speak, before Ungers arrived, and Ungers represented another...

**YS:** Alternative.

**KF:** Yeah.

**YS:** Anyway, let us move to the next question, which is about Ernesto Nathan Rogers. Did you ever meet him? I ask because we were speaking before of heterodox modernists, and he was noted for coining the very suggestive phrase, “the orthodoxy of heterodoxy”.

**KF:** No. I never met him.

**DS:** But you met Ungers, it seems. Many times.

**KF:** I did. And actually, there are certain moments in your life where you cannot quite believe it, but before Ungers died, he asked me to come and see him, in fact, which I did. He was living in another house with his library. He was a very special guy.

**DS:** This was in Germany?

**YS:** In Cologne.

**KF:** Yes.

**DS:** So you were friendly with him?

**KF:** Yes.

**DS:** So, you were obviously closer to him than you were to Rossi?

**KF:** Oh yes, and I was closer to Ungers than I was to Rowe, really.

**DS:** Did you meet Rossi?

**KF:** Yes, I did, but in (pauses and laughs). Well, Rossi was very much part of the Institute (the IAUS – Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies) at some point. But he understood that I was not exactly his...

**DS:** Cup of tea?

**KF:** And vice versa. I mean, you know, people recognize each other.

**DS:** Something similar happened with Vittorio Gregotti. At first, Rossi was a student of Gregotti and the assistant of Gregotti. Then they diverged.

**KF:** And understandably so, because they represented totally different worlds.

**YS:** But can you tell us more about your kind of endless fascination with Gregotti?

**KF:** Well, I think he is important. I really think that, what is it called, *The Territory of Architecture*?

**DS:** *Il territorio dell'architettura* (1966).

**KF:** You know, that book still has not been translated into English. I mean, I think that is an important work, because I think this question of landscape, and integration with landscape, is fundamental. I just think landscape is very basic in this moment of history we are living in. I mean, what can you do with a megalopolis? Nothing, right? Except, maybe, landscape interventions. Well, you can also do architecture. But all these departments of planning and urban design in universities all over the world, but particularly in the United States. I mean, give me a break! What are we talking about, "planning and urban design"? There is no "planning and urban design." There is this amazing quote of Mies. In 1951, he says somewhere, I do not have this reference quite right, and it would be better in a German accent, but he says: "That is why we cannot build cities anymore. Old cities, planned cities. It goes on like a forest and we have to learn to live in the jungle and even do well by that." This is what he actually says, Mies! And I mean, this is 1951, for God's sake! In Chicago, of course, he has been in the States for not a very long time.

**DS:** Whereas Le Corbusier writes here, in *Poésie sur Algiers* (1950), "Urban planning is precisely the expression of a society's vitality."

**YS:** When it exists!

**KF:** Thanks for that, by the way. Good.

**DS:** That is thanks to Yehuda's library.

**KF:** But what is amazing is that I have this book, the second edition of a Le Corbusier book, coming out with Thames & Hudson. That is a funny story because I was talking to Gianfranco about it. It is Jean-Louis Cohen who recommends to Hazan me to write a book on Le Corbusier. Why? I do not know. Why did Jean-Louis do that? Whatever. Anyway, this book that I wrote in English, of course, was translated into French and first published by Hazan in French, and now there is going to be a second edition of that with more or less the same text. However, back of my head is the idea that I ought to write some kind of postscript: What do we think of this man, now? But what you just said... Well, you must know, you both must know this book that impresses me, which is Gianni Vattimo's *The End of Modernity* (or. ed., 1985), which I am kind of bit hooked on, that book.

**YS:** That is unfortunate (laughs)

**DS:** In a way, it is very different than Jürgen Habermas, who you are also interested in.

**YS:** We are hooked on! But you see, you could not be hooked on both.

**DS:** Well, they are contradictory.

**KF:** They are contradictory, yes.

**DS:** In any case, you were talking about Le Corbusier.

**KF:** Well, just the fact to say, what we think of him now, in 2023? I mean, I do not know, maybe I will not write it, but anyway, it is sort of in my head that I should.

**DS:** Well, I did not mean to intervene, but I thought it was pertinent to bring up the Corbusian side.

**KF:** Yeah, right. Anyway, I mean, why do I bend towards Gregotti? Well, because of that, I mean because of... Actually, a very interesting thing is that a kind of colleague/friend, whose name is David Haney has just written a very unbelievably scholarly work. What is it called? I cannot remember exactly. But anyway, it is about the Third Reich and landscape.

**KF:** Friedrich Ratzel.

**DS:** The great nineteenth century German geographer.

**KF:** Yeah, who is somehow in this story, after all. And it is an important reference for Gregotti, Ratzel. This idea of anthropogeography is the concept.

**DS:** Yeah, but this was very important for the *Annales*, as well, with different protagonists, not all German, especially as regards the themes of rural history, agriculture and human geography. For Lucien Febvre, who wrote an entire book on the subject, *La Terre et l'évolution humaine* (1922) and there was of course also his immensely significant co-protagonist Marc Bloch, and eventually also, of course, Fernand Braudel.

**KF:** That is interesting.

**DS:** Well, not just Ratzel, but the overall idea of human geography, geography of what they called, in a suggestive formulation, "*l'homínisation de la terre*". It involved the entire revolution in historiography in France. In part it had its academic and cultural origins, with the Alsatian Marc Bloch, in Strasbourg, this new kind of history, so open to German ideas, more than other French historians.

**KF:** I see, yeah, right.

**DS:** So this was on both sides of the Rhine, left and right, left and right. Marc Bloch!

**KF:** This is all very fascinating. Anyway, where are we?

**DS:** Gregotti! This idea of Gregotti, if I am maybe more specific, about building the site as opposed to just taking the site as it is. That is also part of the story about landscape, is it not?

**KF:** It is, yes, I think it is. And that is also part of Álvaro's story as well.

**DS:** Yes!

**KF:** Because...

**DS:** Boa Nova.

**KF:** Yes, but also when you look at these early drawings of Malagueira, for example. It is like you are looking at an archaeological something, and you have a feeling that it is...

**YS:** It is in the earth.



**KF:** Yeah. He is trying to...

**YS:** Carve it out.

**KF:** Yeah, or to bring it up and out, as though it is latent in the site.

**YS:** Right

**KF:** And that is the importance, I think, of Scharoun. Those schools for Darmstadt...

**DS:** And the Philharmonie, where he compares the staggered spaces of the interior to the terraced vineyards of the Rhineland.

**KF:** Unbelievable. Well, he represents the "other," in a sense.

**DS:** Yeah, but that is a kind of a Neo-Expressionist reading.

**KF:** Yes.

**DS:** Is that not amazing? It is very rich, this idea of the landscape. It goes in many different directions.

**KF:** I think it is, I think it is.

**DS:** Aalto, too, with the Paimio.

**KF:** Of course. Well, also, the drawings, even Säynäätälö. I mean it is clear.

**YS:** The landscape. Very much so.

**KF:** Also, there is a connection to Perret in early Gregotti.

**DS:** Oh, absolutely. The office building (1959-60) he did with Giotto Stoppino and Ludovico Meneghetti in Novara. Clearly inspired by Perret.

**DS:** So, I want to boil down the next question, the one dealing with techno-scientific rationality as a red thread in your work from the Industrial Revolution onwards. This, or so it seems to me, really left a huge mark on your way of thinking. On the one hand, what are the consequences, in your view, not only for society and culture, but for architecture and its antinomies? When one looks at "*techne*", techno-scientific rationality and its trajectory square in the face, are we not placed, as Nietzsche said, before an abyss in which, when we look back at it, the abyss stares back at us? The more that science dominates, the more we have this horrifying situation where *techne* has the potential to displace, or at least to distort, key dimensions of our humanity. So, my question is: How does the dialectic of the autonomy and heteronomy of technoscience express itself in the work of modern architects such as Le Corbusier? Now, Le Corbusier, according to Tafuri, and this is *a propos*, Tafuri being an unorthodox Marxist, he says that the Obus Plan for Algiers of 1932/33 is the unsurpassed lesson of bourgeois rationality because it brings together techno-scientific rationality, nature, and human habitation, which is self-directed, because everyone can build their own type of...

**KF:** Oh yes, that is amazing.

**DS:** Yes. And he said that this, and this is a very Leninist idea: Lenin said that we must not forget that the great works of Tolstoy and the great works of Shakespeare, when we build the socialist revolution. We should incorporate their value into our revolution. To bring together, to truly synthesize, at a monumental scale, Nature, Reason, and the City: Tafuri said that this is the unsurpassed lesson of Le Corbusier. And what do you think? I mean, do you

think that Le Corbusier's idea of this kind of monumentalization of nature and the Plan Obus, along with technology, is a viable solution?

**KF:** There are so many things involved at once, are there not? But in the book *The End of Modernity*, which, of course, is very much predicated on Nietzsche and Heidegger, you know.

**DS:** You are talking about Vattimo.

**KF:** Vattimo, and also this very interesting figure, Arnold Gehlen. I have this thing about Philadelphia that when the train glides into Philadelphia, you park just before you get to the station, there are these industrial buildings on either side, like eight stories, nine stories, and all the windows have been smashed. But there they are there, and they are because of where they are which is around the railway line. They have no use to anybody, and no one is going to sink money into them to demolish them or convert them. They are just there. And it has been like that since 1965. And no one can do anything with them. No one is going to demolish them. I mean, it is a dark image, very dark. And, you know, the question of science, technical science. Recently, I had a lot of dental work done by a very expensive and technological wiz-kid. And he is aware of the fact that, at this micro level, this kind of hyper-technology has its own brilliant effectiveness, but at the larger scale, we do not know what to do with anything. All this science. Climate change, we cannot even get it together to start even.

**DS:** This a very interesting insight, Ken. At the micro level, it helps us; at the macro level, it is a disaster.

**KF:** Yeah. Impotent!

**DS:** But Le Corbusier precisely wanted to be monumental, almost in an ancient Greek way. I am talking about before Chandigarh, in the pre-war period in Obus.

**KF:** But it is also inspired by...

**DS:** The massive curved sea wall.

**KF:** Yeah. By the nature of the landscape.

**DS:** Right, yes, exactly. That is the point. That is why I brought it up.

**KF:** I did not know that Tafuri had written that.

**DS:** He said it is the unsurpassed lesson that we cannot go beyond. So, you basically agree?

**KF:** I do. Of course. I mean, what can you do with the megalopolis? There is a lovely line in Hannah Arendt where she says, "Where each individual will be free to add one more object."

**DS:** Well, there it is. Just like the Plan Obus.

**KF:** I mean...the megalopolis.

**DS:** But Yehuda, that is like your friend, Yona Friedman. The idea being, they share one thing with Le Corbusier (even though they are so different): Le Corbusier said that each person can determine their own housing...

**YS:** Sure.

**DS:** And that is a kind of reformist utopia.

**YS:** Yeah. Yona Friedman, in fact, followed on that idea. But, you know, the irony was, I went to visit him, he lived in an apartment next to the part of the subway in Paris which is on stilts. So, the view from his window was like

some of his drawings – metal structure in the air, except that nobody lived there, but the subway was passing, making terrible noise. So much so that he lost his hearing, you know? Funny man.

**KF:** Yeah.

**YS:** Yeah. He was so intelligent and so disconnected. It was extraordinary.

**DS:** So, I have a swerve now.

**KF:** You are changing the topic – the question – we are moving on to a new one.

**DS:** Yes, we are moving, into a totally different direction, yet back to the genealogy of the modern. And when we were talking about other moderns, Ken, we were talking about the marginal and the central, among other things. In *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, you put in one of the editions, the edition I own, an unbuilt church, beautiful colored axonometric, classic thing, of Alberto Sartoris. And Sartoris is so amazing because he is both marginal and central to the history of modern architecture. He is the man, according to Dennis Sharpe, who invented the term “Functionalism” before anyone else, and certainly before the Bauhaus. My question to you is, many people could have been put in here, and we are not asking why you left him out, but he is a very interesting figure because he is both central and marginal. And color, and the way he uses color. Totally radical. What is your view of this amazing figure?

**KF:** I must say I am a bit ashamed of the fact that his Lighthouse Cathedral, I think it is called...

**DS:** That is what it is.

**KF:** It is on the cover.

**DS:** And then you do not discuss it.

**KF:** No, right.

**DS:** And you are not ashamed that it is on the cover, you are ashamed that you do not discuss it?

**KF:** That is it. And I met him once. Of all places, in Enna, which is in the center of Sicily. I think I was with Jacques Gubler, you know? Jacques Gubler was close to Sartoris. I think he knows of, or has, an enormous archive of Sartoris.

**DS:** He became practically Swiss, Sartoris. Well, he was born in Turin, actually, but he became Swiss.

**KF:** Well, there is a kind of buried treasure in all this. Jacques Gubler, wonderful person, by the way. If you have a chance to kind of involve him. You know who knows him very well is Joan Ockman, because Robert Slutzky and Joan Ockman together were close to Jacques Gubler. And Jacques Gubler taught in Mendrisio, by the way.

**DS:** I met him. I had a very great conversation with him. He also very important for a lot of Italian architects now.

**KF:** Also obsessed with malt whiskey and jazz.

**DS:** Yes indeed! But getting back to Sartoris...

**KF:** Yeah, well, anyway Sartoris. Okay, so this book, *Encyclopédie de l'architecture nouvelle: ordres et climat méditerranéens*, published by

Hoepli, in 1948-49. This brings us to Thomas Stevens. Thomas (Sam) Stevens. There was this beautiful bookstore called Alec Taranti in Fitzroy Square, and Sam was always in there and pulled out this Italian publication of the *Encyclopedie*, and it was a big influence. Not on people like James Stirling or the Smithsons or so on, but certainly on Douglas Steven, for whom I worked, and also Sam worked for at some point. Anyway, it was an influence that was sort of both there and not there, because you cannot say it produced a sort of school of early Neo-rationalism in Britain. You cannot say that. But nonetheless, it was part of the London scene. And I first encountered the book in that way. That is quite independent of my choosing this image for the cover of the first edition. Why did I choose that image? Because I wanted something which was emblematic, but which was kind of hard to say who or what it was.

**YS:** Not connected.

**DS:** Almost anonymous.

**YS:** Both emblematic and not connected.

**DS:** And in a way, Sartoris had that quality.

**KF:** Yeah. Maybe in his own work, actually.

**DS:** Yes. It was sort of speaking the entire language, self-reflexively.

**KF:** Yeah. The little churches and stuff.

**DS:** Houses.

**YS:** And he became more Ticinese without being one.

**DS:** And he was the kind of grandfather of the “Scuola del Ticino,” in a way, right?

**KF:** Yes, in a way. Before this discussion, I was reflecting on my encounter with that whole school.

**DS:** Like Luigi Snozzi.

**KF:** Yeah, and also Aurelio Galfetti.

**DS:** And eventually Mario Botta, too.

**KF:** Yeah, of course.

**YS:** Snozzi was an extraordinary figure.

**KF:** Yeah, very.

**YS:** Do you remember, we did an exhibition of him?

**KF:** Have you ever been to Monte Carasso?

**YS:** Of course.

**KF:** Yeah, I have not. That was very stupid of me. I mean, like, he invited me, but somehow, for whatever stupid reason, I could not go. You know, one always has regrets for those moments you do not do something, you know? Anyway. Monte Carasso is an impressive, discreet little work. It is great, I think.

**DS:** And also, Galfetti is amazing.

**KF:** Yeah, amazing. And with Flora Ruchat-Roncati, they do this sports facility in Bellinzona, near the river. Exquisite work, I think.

**YS:** This was the urban work of Snozzi, Bellinzona, yeah?

**KF:** Yeah, well, also Snozzi and Botta together. They did the project for Zürich, and then they did the project for Perugia. Both of them are megaforms, you know? And, Snozzi was definitely a left-wing guy, much

more than Botta. And what is fascinating is a monograph on Paolo Mendes da Rocha by Annette Spiro. It is a beautiful little book.

**YS:** I know Mendes da Rocha. I went to see him.

**KF:** He is amazing. But anyway, at the beginning of that book, there is a photograph of...

**YS:** Did you meet him in São Paulo or somewhere else?

**KF:** In São Paulo. I met him before in Lisbon, but of course, it was a really weird event when we were both made honorary fellows of the Society of Portuguese Architects by virtue, I think, of Eduardo Souto de Moura.

**DS:** Right.

**KF:** It is so long ago. And I remember that he spoke Portuguese, of course, so he basically dominated the scene.

**YS:** Mendes?

**KF:** Yeah, with smoke and talk. I did not really meet him, but I was in the same room. But then I met him again, in São Paulo, briefly, in that empty office.

**YS:** Right.

**KF:** But the monograph I am talking about has this very beautiful photograph of Snozzi and Mendes together, looking at student work.

**YS:** Oh, really?

**KF:** Yeah, beautiful photograph. And then Snozzi writes the introduction.

**DS:** But Ken, I had a very specific reason for asking about Sartoris. I am teaching a course at Princeton now called "What Color is the Modern?" It is about chromophobia, chromophilia, and modern architecture. And he certainly falls under the chromophilic category. But when he builds, he does not always use color. It is in the axons. The reason why I am bringing this up, is that when designing the course, and diving into the color bibliography, I found Mark Wigley's book about whiteness interesting, but rather problematic, as it ignored so much of the color in the highly rich and varied traditions of modern architecture. All of this is of course ultimately related to this idea that goes back to Semper of the inherent color of materials, which Mies picked up, and then the added color of pigment, which Le Corbusier wrote about. In a way, Sartoris is more on Le Corbusier's side, and he was very close to Le Corbusier. Can you say something about this idea of chromophobia and chromophilia in Sartoris and in modernism, which you do not touch on, really?

**KF:** No, that is true.

**DS:** And it has to do with the problem of black-and-white photography, too, which of course has obscured the chromaticism in much of modern architecture in its heroic period.

**KF:** I think that is really very pertinent, yes, the black-and-white photography.

**DS:** But you have noticed this.

**KF:** Yes. Well, it brings up all sorts of thoughts, does it not? I mean, like Luis Barragán's use of color.

**DS:** Absolutely, as an indigenous marker. And Lina Bo Bardi.

**KF:** Also, it has a kind of sensuous presence in a way, you know, the way Barragán uses it.

**DS:** And the earth tones.

**KF:** Yeah, right. I mean, it becomes a real element.

**DS:** Almost a compositional element. Well, deeper.

**KF:** Well, Le Corbusier uses color a bit like that, also.

**YS:** Yes

**DS:** He does. And from 1985 to 1997, the architect Jean-Louis Véret restored the original exterior and interior color scheme of Villa Savoye, as part of a more general state-funded renovation. Another restoration campaign occurred in 2022, using stratigraphic analysis of the layers of paint on the interior (which had already begun, in part, as early as 1997). The exterior color, which on the ground floor is painted a shade of green which the architect himself called *vert anglais*. There is an interview I found with the old concierge, who was quite an old man indeed when he was interviewed about it, and he said: "Monsieur Le Corbusier wanted the *vert anglais* because of the lawn, so that the building could look like it was floating above the green plane of the ground." And the interior, he had this whole thing involving the Salubra Paint Company, which he worked for.

**KF:** The wallpaper.

**DS:** Right.

**YS:** He uses color, but only indirectly, in the sense that the color is on the threshold of the windows.

**DS:** That is right.

**YS:** So that when the light comes in, it picks up the color.

**KF:** It glows.

**DS:** That is absolutely right, Yehuda, and in the course, it came up that Le Corbusier was reading Charles Blanc, the great color theorist, who in turn was reading Goethe. But Goethe's idea of the emotional power of the subjectivity of color was opposed to the Newtonian idea of the objectivity. It seems that he is in the middle between the two, Le Corbusier, though, unlike Wright and Mies, he was more interested in color applied on the architectural surfaces through pigment rather than in the inherent colors of materials.

**YS:** Also, one must recall however the question of chromatic materiality, in another connection because Goethe's theory of color is based on material color whereas Newton's theory of color is based on color as an abstraction.

**DS:** Correct. That is correct. But Goethe also talked about the medium through which color emerges. In other words, the context, whether it is a turbid medium...

**KF:** I mean, all of this is a fascinating topic, is it not?

**DS:** Yes, and I do believe that I am not trying to play catch you, but I am saying that this is a kind of undiscovered country, in a way, in your book on *The Other Modern Movement*, because Sartoris is one of the figures that we need to look at.

**KF:** No question about it. Yes.

**DS:** Even late Loos in Prague, the interior cladding/

**KF:** Well, also.

**DS:** But what I mean is...

**YS:** And the Müller House.



**DS:** Not only that, there is an element of rich color palette on the top floor interior.

**YS:** Also in the country house, the Khuner Villa, of 1929-30.

**DS:** Full of color, yeah. And at first we do not associate Loos with color. But it is there.

**KF:** Yeah.

**DS:** So, the last two questions. The first centered is on Arnaldo Momigliano's idea that in antiquity the historian must be an eyewitness, but in modernity is not. But you have been an eyewitness, Ken!

**KF:** Of some things.

**DS:** Well, you met Le Corbusier, you met Aalto, right?

**YS:** Tell us. Meeting Le Corbusier. How was it?

**KF:** He was just very sweet. Because we were publishing the last *Unité*, I was there to talk to him.

**DS:** When was this?

**KF:** It is, again, the early 1960s. 1962 or something like that.

**YS:** Yes.

**KF:** I mean, that was a big mistake in my life, I think, you know? I had a position in that magazine which I gave up to come to the States.

**DS:** You mean *Architectural Design*?

**YS:** It appears to you, in retrospect, as a great error.

**KF:** Total error. Being who I am, with all my naive aspects, I had this access to Europe.

**YS:** Through the magazine.

**KF:** But also because I wanted to have this access to Europe. I did what I did in that short period, but I should have stayed there, you know? I could have done much more than I did!

**DS:** But we would have been at a loss if you did not come here, Ken! Returning to Le Corbusier. You told me a story years ago that he was giving a lecture in an architect's office in London. Le Corbusier made those beautiful charcoal drawings and one of them was stolen, or all of them.

**KF:** No, the whole story there is...actually my memory of it is a bit mixed up. But when Le Corbusier was awarded the Gold Medal of the RIBA, I think in 1958, Neave Brown, who was in my year, was very responsible for organizing an event which was a dinner with Le Corbusier, with Sir John Summerson present. I thought John Summerson initiated it, but I now think it is probably Neave Brown. So, we all sat around, this kind of group of close figures: Neave, John Miller, Adrian Gale, and Patrick Hudson and myself.

**DS:** So you were about 35 at the time?

**KF:** No, no, younger. I guess we were in our late 20s.

**DS:** Wow!

**KF:** Something like that and so, of course, there was a problem with language because none of us spoke French, of course, and vice versa. So, he drew a lot. And Neave went off with all the drawings. We never saw the drawings! (Laughter.)

**DS:** So when you met Mies...

**KF:** Well, it was very brief. That was because of Peter Carter, who had been a partner of Colin St. John Wilson at some point. So, when I went to Chicago and had this contact with Peter Carter. I just saw Mies, basically, I just said hello to him. But Peter Carter worked for Mies. I have a lovely story, you will love this story. A long time ago, I went to University College Dublin for the first time to a review of student work or something like that. And the director of the school was someone called Cathal O'Neill. He lived in an unbelievably beautiful cubic brick, quasi-Georgian house in the middle of a domain which was covered in thick gravel.

**DS:** Amazing! So, when you walked on it, you would kind of...

**YS:** Wobble. (Laughter.)

**KF:** Talk about metaphysics! Then, there were these trees that were at regular intervals completing the composition. Anyway, an extraordinary place. And so, the Irish were in the habit, coming out of University College Dublin, of going to Chicago and working for Mies. That was a big number for the Irish.

**YS:** Kevin Walsh.

**KF:** Yeah, exactly. There is a lovely story about Walsh with the old man. The shadow of Mies comes up behind him, looks at his drawing board and says, "Yeah... you 'could' do that. I would not do that." (Laughter.) And Kevin wrote, "I knew I had to get out there and then when I heard that!"

**DS:** The notoriously laconic Mies.

**KF:** Yeah, right. So anyway, I am talking to Cathal, then I was able to talk about Peter Carter and then Cathal O'Neill says, "You know, after a while I thought he had gone." And I thought "Gone? What is that?" And later, I go with Shane de Blacam and other younger people to an Italian restaurant and – in order to continue drinking – terrible food. So, I turn to Blacam and I said, what is this "Gone"? He said, "Oh, you have to understand something. I mean, here in Ireland the competition is very keen. And when someone emigrates, after a while you speak about them as being 'gone'."

**DS:** That is hilarious.

**KF:** And he says, "If they come back and you see them on Grafton Street, you say, 'Are you back or what?'"

**DS:** That is very funny. Did you ever meet Aalto?

**KF:** Yeah, I did. With Jim Stirling in the Sherry-Netherland Hotel in New York.

**DS:** Of all places.

**KF:** Because Aalto had just arrived from Helsinki, 14-hour trip at that time, I think.

**DS:** Was he working at that time on the MIT, or was it earlier?

**KF:** No, it was later. But he was the second person to receive the Jefferson Medal. The first person was Mies, and Aalto was the second after they invented this distinction.

**DS:** What was your memory of your interaction?

**KF:** So, we are with the students and Jim sees this figure at the bar and says, "I think that is Alvar Aalto over there." And it was! So, we go and talk

to him. And he was full of stories, of course. Finally, Elissa comes down to...

**YS:** Rescue him.

**KF:** That is the only meeting.

**DS:** And Louis Kahn?

**KF:** Yeah, but not really. In Ada Carmi's apartment in New York. He was playing the piano, but I did not really meet him.

**DS:** He was a pianist.

**KF:** Yeah. Musical story. Musical family.

**DS:** Well, I had brought all of this up because of the idea of a direct exposure to...

**KF:** Yeah, you mean the history?

**DS:** Yes, because as historians, as a rule, we are obliged to deal with both primary and secondary sources, emphasizing of course the former. Here you have the horse's mouth, as it were.

**KF:** Yeah, right.

**DS:** You met Corb once or twice?

**KF:** Twice.

**DS:** And the second time?

**KF:** Well, it was when we were doing the Briey en Forêt. I went to the studio in Paris.

**DS:** Oh, in the Rue de Sèvres. And so you saw his studio?

**KF:** I did.

**DS:** And what was your impression of that space?

**KF:** A bit sad, in a way.

**DS:** Why do you say that?

**KF:** Well, you know, just because it was a very linear space.

**YS:** Like a corridor. In photos it looks like a corridor.

**KF:** Yeah, a bit.

**DS:** And you thought it was sad somehow, because it was not corresponding to something?

**KF:** Well, I thought so. I do not know exactly. But anyway, it was nice meeting him. He was very genial, contrary to myth.

**DS:** Thank you so much, Ken. You know, we have really covered everything. It has been very illuminating.

**KF:** Actually, there is something else we could talk about which is the crisis of architectural education.

**YS:** Right.

**KF:** And there is something which you contributed to, Yehuda. It seems to me, the seminars you gave at Columbia were very free and very charismatic. Really very positive aspects of the scenes. One of the problems today, I think, is how one introduces material with the right amount of density and with a certain freedom that stimulates young people to...

**DS:** Look into it.

**YS:** To think for themselves.

**KF:** Yeah. And also, to understand that culture is very easily destroyed, and the cultivation of it is absolutely crucial.

**DS:** A light touch. I think this is what one needs when you are dealing with weighty themes. You need to have, as you put it Yehuda, an approach that can be called *leicht und zart*.

**YS:** Yeah. It is a task.

**DS:** It is not easy. Italo Calvino says just about the same thing in *Six Memos for the Next Millennium* (or. ed. *Lezioni americane*, 1988), in the lecture on "Lightness."

**YS:** But you see, in order to be able to address all these topics without reading from paper, you have to not only know something, but also digest it to such an extent that it can become spontaneous.

**DS:** I always felt, when I read your work, Ken, that Arendt had a huge impact on it.

**KF:** Enormous.

**DS:** More than the others.

**KF:** Yeah, she is still around in my head.

**DS:** Anyway, thank you, Ken.

**KF:** Of course, it was a pleasure. With the port and all that stuff. And... it was very nice. I mean, the golden moment.

**YS:** The golden moment?

**KF:** Yeah. The Columbia moment, when the two of you would show up in my office. (Laughter.)

**YS:** Right!

**KF:** That was very pleasurable.

**YS:** Ah, the golden moment.

**KF:** It was!

**YS:** We will miss you, Ken.

**Kenneth Brian Frampton** is a British architect, critic and historian, regarded as one of the world's leading historians of modernist and contemporary architecture. He is an Emeritus Professor of Architecture at the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation at Columbia University, New York, where he taught for over 50 years. Frampton studied architecture at Guildford School of Art and the Architectural Association School of Architecture, London. Subsequently, he worked in Israel, with Middlesex County Council and Douglas Stephen and Partners (1961–66) in London, during which time he was also a visiting tutor at the Royal College of Art (1961–64), tutor at the Architectural Association (1961–63) and technical editor of the journal *Architectural Design (AD)* (1962–65). Frampton has also taught at Princeton University School of Architecture (1966–71) and the Bartlett School of Architecture, London, (1980). In 1972, he became a fellow of the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in New York (whose members also included Peter Eisenman, Manfredo Tafuri and Rem Koolhaas) and a co-founding editor of its magazine *Oppositions*. In 2017 the Canadian Centre for Architecture, which holds Frampton's archive, held an exhibition titled *Educating Architects: Four Courses by Kenneth Frampton* that examined aspects of his teaching at Columbia University, that informed his key publications.

Besides his seminal essay "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance" (in H. Foster, ed., *The Anti-Aesthetic*, 1983), among his most important books are: *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (1980, fifth ed. 2020), *Studies in Tectonic Culture: The Poetics of Construction in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Architecture* (1995), *Álvaro Siza* (2000), *Le Corbusier* (2001), *Labour, Work and Architecture* (2002), *Genealogy of Modern Architecture: A Comparative Critical Analysis of Built Form* (2014), *L'altro Movimento Moderno* (2015). He is the recipient of many awards, among which are the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement by the Venice Architecture Biennale (2018), the Commander of the Order of the British Empire (2021), and the Thomas Jefferson Foundation Medal in Architecture (2022).

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